

Worldwide Marriage Encounter

Georgia-Tennessee

WEDS Leader Resource Guide



Mission Statement: *Worldwide Marriage Encounter's mission of renewal in the church and change in the world is to assist couples and priests to live **fully, intimate, and responsible relationships** by providing them with a Catholic "experience" and ongoing community support for such a lifestyle.*



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“Love One Another as I Have Loved You!”

Dearest Couples,

We want to thank you for taking the words of Saint John Paul II to heart, to “Be not afraid!” Really, being a WEDS Leader is only as challenging as you desire to make it. The reality is, as long as two or more are gathered and dialoging, you are holding a WEDS meeting at its very basic. You can make it that simple, or you can organize with spreadsheets, eVites, and PowerPoints with an overhead projector! It’s up to you and your personality styles! Either way, this guide helps you understand the “How’s” and “Why’s” of WEDS Leadership.

This guide was “fearfully and wonderfully made”, and we can’t say enough good things about it! Please take the time to read through it, digest it, and put its ideas into use! Being WEDS leaders is overwhelming at times. But you are not alone in this journey. Behind this handbook are many wonderful people who continue to provide love and support to other couples!

Your biggest challenge, (and you’ve already accepted it!), is to live out the sacramental life that being a married couple calls you to be. Living a sacramental life is similar to being a disciple of Christ. We have to have fortitude and continue on the path that God has laid out for us, even when faced with great discouragements. It is you who makes the difference. Don’t keep your wonderful light hidden. Thank you for your “yes”, and may God continue to bless you and your WEDS group!

All our love,

Roger & Annie Borrello
Rev. Fr. Joseph Brando
Georgia-Tennessee Ecclesial Team

Guide to the Guide

Welcome to the WEDS Leader Resource Guide. This guide was created to help you in leading your WEDS group. While this guide has a lot of useful information within its pages, it is meant to be a dynamic guide – feel free to add notes, resources, and other information that you come across as you lead your WEDS group. Also, if you do come across additional resource information, make sure to let the Community Team know so they can add it to the next WEDS Leader Resource Guide update!

This resource guide is divided into five sections:

The **first** section includes background information regarding Worldwide Marriage Encounter, its structure, and WEDS.

The **second** section discusses the duties and responsibilities of being a WEDS leader. This includes tips on how to establish or maintain a group, as well as what makes a WEDS group prosper. Look in this section for WEDS group and Community responsibilities.

The **third** section includes information about the most important aspect of WEDS – dialog! Haven't quite gotten that technique down, or know a couple that has reached out for help? Take a look at the dialog section.

The **fourth** section includes information about presentations for your WEDS group. Tips, topics, and how to create one can be found in this section. We all know the hardest part about holding a WEDS meeting is finding someone present!

The **fifth** section is a wealth of resources to use for your WEDS group – communication samples, scheduling help, presentation ideas, prayers, rules for sharing examples, and the all-important WWME and WEDS contacts list.

We hope and pray that this WEDS Leaders Handbook helps to make your ministry a bit easier. This guide, plus your ideas, couples, and energy, should lead to a prosperous, nurturing, and fun WEDS group. Know that you stand on the shoulders of many couples and priests who walked this journey before you. You have the support of many other couples who believe in the mission of Worldwide Marriage Encounter. Know that God walks with you. God bless!

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Why You Matter

Welcome and Thank You

Thank you for serving the Georgia-Tennessee Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) Community as a WEDS Group Leader. You have answered God's call to assist couples and priests in their desire to live a new and radical lifestyle of integrating and practicing the Five Tools we all learned on the Weekend:

1. **Constant attention to our Communication, including Daily Dialogue.** Feelings drive behavior and to fully understand our behavior we need to understand our feelings. Sharing feelings brings about unity in our relationship.
2. **Attention to our sexual relationship.**
Our daily caring, respect, tenderness, and romancing leads to passionate love-making.
3. **Praying for each other, including couple prayer.**
The couple who prays together stays together.
4. **Journeying with others.**
It is so important to be with other couples who are working on their relationship.
5. **Re-evaluation.**
We need to be making good choices and decisions each day for the good of our relationship and our family.

In addition, it is important to make frequent use of the "Decision to Love!"

History of Worldwide Marriage Encounter

The story of Marriage Encounter began in 1952 when a young priest in Spain, Father Gabriel Calvo, began developing a series of conferences for married couples, whose focus was on the development of an open and honest relationship within marriage and learning to live out a sacramental relationship in the service of others. Each presentation ended with a question designed to encourage the couple to look at the concepts presented in terms of their own relationship. For approximately 10 years the "marriage teams of Pope Pious XII," as the presentations were called, traveled throughout Spain with this series of conferences for married couples.

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is considered the first marriage enrichment program offered to married couples.

In 1962, Father Calvo presented the conferences as a weekend retreat to couples in Barcelona. The experience was very successful and rapidly spread throughout Spain. In 1966, Father Calvo and a couple addressed the International Confederation of Christian Family Movements in Caracas. The Weekend spread to Latin America and to Spanish speaking couples in the United States. In 1967 a couple and priest presented the Weekend to seven couples and a few priests at the Christian Family Movement convention at Notre Dame University. By the summer of 1968, 50 couples and 29 priests were presenting Weekends in the United States.

By January of 1969, a national executive board was formed to coordinate the development of the movement in the United States and Canada. In New York State, under the leadership of Father Chuck Gallagher and a couple, the movement was growing rapidly. Philosophical differences with the national leadership began to appear. In New York, stress was placed on the follow-up to the Weekend, as well as on the Weekend itself. There was strong emphasis on the development of a Marriage Encounter "community" to provide support for living the values learned through the Weekend, especially for dialogue. In addition, the renewal of the Sacrament of matrimony was a strong focus, as a means for renewing the Catholic Church. Thus developed Worldwide Marriage Encounter. As a result, Worldwide and National Marriage Encounter both exist today as two different expressions of the original Weekend developed by Father Gabriel Calvo.

In the fall of 1971, the decision was made to spread the Worldwide Marriage Encounter experience throughout the United States and to other parts of the world. Teams traveled first to Grand Forks, North Dakota with the assurance of financial support, personnel, and training from the New York family, until the new unit could support itself. The only condition was that once self-support was realized, the same assistance would be given to other areas. The Weekend reached the west coast in December at Santa Barbara.

At about the same time, Worldwide Marriage Encounter began its international expansion with team couples being sent to Belgium and England. The expansion continues today and as of 2010, the Weekend is now offered in numerous languages and dialects in over 90 countries.

And the rest, as they say, is history!

Worldwide Marriage Encounter Structure

Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME) is directed by an International Council, presently headed by one couple and one priest, and consisting of member representatives from around the world – there are approximately 88 countries where WWME is active. They meet periodically to set policy and guidelines for the Movement worldwide. Each country has its own leadership but we belong to one worldwide family.

In the United States, WWME is headed by the National Executive Team. They coordinate the entire United States which is divided into 19 geographic regions. Thirteen Regions give the Weekend in English, five in Spanish, and one in Korean.

A Region is divided into areas called “areas,” “diocese,” or more precisely “Encounters”. The size of an encounter varies, depending on the population and geography, but if it doesn’t present a sufficient number of Weekends, it cannot be an independent Encounter.

The activities in each local area Encounter are coordinated by a leadership team. This will be either an “Executive Team” couple (aka Encounter Area Leader) or an “Executive Ecclesial Team” (a couple and a priest serving together). The structure within each local Encounter is determined by the Encounter, modeled after 4 Pillars.

The Pillars of Our Movement

The WWME ministry has four pillars, which provide structure for its functions. Like the four legs of a table, the Pillars are all needed to keep the ministry strong and vibrant. If one is missing, broken or short, the ministry could become unstable or fall. The four pillars are:

The Weekend Pillar: This Pillar is responsible for the direct support of the Weekend experience, and experience we all have in common, including Inviting, Registration, Hosting, and Prayer Couples. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Marketing, such as parish bulletins and brochures, and press releases
- Registration and applications for the weekend
- Prayer Couple coordination
- Weekend hosting coordination
- Super Sunday coordination

The Presenting Team Pillar: This Pillar is responsible for the formation of Presenting Team Couples and Priest, writing Weekend talks, scheduling Teams for Weekends, and providing overall leadership for the Local Area. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Presenting team formation
- Weekend talks
- Workshop couples

The Community Pillar: This Pillar takes care of couples after the Weekend including WEDS Groups, Community activities, and encouraging inviting. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- WEDS formation and support
- Community events, such as the World Marriage Day Ball and fall events
- Parish Enrichments
- World Priest Day coordination

The Structure Pillar: This pillar is responsible for overall support functions such as web site, finance and newsletter, which serve to keep the other Pillars in balance. Duties include, but are not limited to:

- Encounter and Region finances
- Spirit Newsletter
- Social Media

To find your local Encounter pillars, see the contacts pages in the resource section.

Within the Georgia-Tennessee Encounter there are also other expressions of the WWME Movement, which includes a Hispanic weekend coordinator couple, and at time of this writing, an Episcopal weekend coordinator couple, and a United Methodist weekend coordinator couple.

Witness, Enrich, Dialogue, Support: WEDS

This is where YOU come in!

WEDS on the Weekend refers to the dialogue process, **Write, Exchange, Dialogue, Select**. After the weekend, a Worldwide Marriage Encounter **Witness, Enrich, Dialogue, Support** – or WEDS – Group (often called a Community, Love Circle or Share Group in other areas) is a group of couples that have experienced a Marriage Encounter Weekend. The purpose of the group is to provide ongoing support for their marriage relationship, family life, and all other relationships around them. The group meets regularly, usually on a monthly basis; a presentation is given followed by a 10/10 and a sharing. The sharing is optional; no one is required to share. A few business items may be discussed and information with regard to upcoming events are announced. The meeting also includes prayer, socializing, and refreshments. After attending a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend, all are welcome to join a WEDS group.

In addition to the regular meeting, some WEDS groups plan family activities such as summer cookouts, Christmas Caroling, 4th of July parties, ice skating, birthday celebrations, baby showers, etc.. Some gather on a separate night with their families to pray the Rosary. Belonging to a WWME WEDS group is like having an extended family – people who genuinely care about you and are there to share your good times and walk with you during your troubled times.

WEDS groups are formed throughout each of the areas. It is suggested that a couple join a group that is nearest their home. However, a couple can join any group that they feel most comfortable with, or meet on days most suited to their schedule. WEDS groups are arranged by geographic areas (which translates into churches) for convenience. There are about 15 WEDS groups in the Georgia-Tennessee Encounter. See the reference section for a list of all the WEDS groups in your area, including meeting times and contacts for each of the groups.

The WEDS Group Mission

A WEDS Group mission is to focus encountered couples/priests in the renewal of the church and to support and encourage fully intimate, responsible relationships for them.

WEDS provides support of sacramental spirituality through prayer, presentation, daily dialogue, sexuality, and open and honest communication.

WEDS provides enthusiastic support for the Weekend and commitment to a monthly gathering of encountered couples/priests that remains focused on the values and purpose of WWME.

WEDS is designed for those who have shared the weekend experience so that they may help to develop and strengthen our Marriage Encounter Community.

Through WEDS we hear and act on the final instruction:

Go Forth to Love and Serve

What is a WEDS Group?

- A small group of encountered couples who meet regularly to share their lives with each other.
- A time for listening to a short presentation and then for dialoguing with your spouse.
- A place where couples share what works in their dialogue.
- A time for continuing the growth in our marriage relationships.
- A community of married couples who support each other through the good times and bad.
- A regular night out with your spouse.
- An opportunity to share your relationship with God and your spouse with others.
- A time to focus on our spouse and our family life.
- An opportunity to socialize with other married couples who believe in marriage, like being married, and aren't afraid to admit it.

Purpose of a WEDS Group

- To reach out to renew the church by showing and sharing our love to others.
- To unite in community and sincerely try, as couples/priests, to develop our spirituality through daily dialogue, sexuality, and prayer.
- To recruit for the Weekend which allows us to spread our special gift of the Weekend to couples/priests.
- To provide monthly presentations that challenge and motivate.
- To enthusiastically support the needs of the Weekend by volunteering to help, sponsoring a couples/priests by praying for them, and supporting them afterward as they struggle in today's modern world.
- To provide ongoing support to assist every couple, priest, and religious who has made a WWME Weekend
- To encourage couples/priests to be open and apostolic in seeking God's plan in their relationship.
- To live the lifestyle proclaimed by the Weekend based on dialoguing daily, integrating the Five Tools in our lives, supporting the WWME Weekends and other WWME Experiences, inviting others to the Weekend, supporting the Church, being involved in the parish, and much more.
- To seek and call forth gifts that couples/priests could contribute to the welfare of the community.
- To support and motivate every couple, priest, and religious attending to live an intimate and responsible relationship, which is God's desire.
- To accept responsibility as part of the Community Pillar regarding Community events.

A WWME WEDS group is essential to the fulfillment of the WWME Mission!

Symbols, Signs, and Songs



Love One Another

On our wedding day we made a promise to love one each other forever. This symbol reminds us of that vow and why Jesus brought us together.

The ***heart*** stands for our love which time has never broken. From it we find the strength to forgive when angry words are spoken.

The entwined ***rings*** show how our two lives are joined into one. And how dependent we are on each other for understanding and compassion

The ***cross*** is a sign of our faith in the Lord who blesses us each day. It is He who enriches our marriage in every possible way.

And so we will renew our vows every day to each other as we follow the greatest commandment of all – that we ***Love One Another***.

Greetings

The hand sign of greetings used between Encountered couples is derived from the alphabet signs for the letters I, L, and Y. It is the American Sign Language hand sign for I Love You and has long been special to the Marriage Encounter community.



WWME Song

I'll Never Find Another You

There's a new world somewhere, they call the Promised Land.
And I'll be there someday, if you will hold my hand.
I still need you there beside me, no matter what I do
For I know I'll never find another you.

There is always someone for each of us, they say.
And you'll be my someone, forever and a day.
I could search the whole world over until my life is through
And I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey, so stay by my side.
If I walk through a storm
You'll be my guide, be my guide.

If they gave me a fortune, my treasure would be small.
I could lose it all tomorrow and never mind at all,
But if I should lose your love, dear, I don't know what I'd do
For I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey so stay by our side.
If we walk through a storm
You'll be our guides, be our guides.

If they gave us a fortune our treasure would be small.
We could lose it all tomorrow and never mind at all,
But if we should lose your love, dears, we don't know what we'd do
For we know we'll never find another y'all.

Being a WEDS Leader

There are many aspects to being a WEDS Leader, but it starts with a WEDS Group. There are basic elements that a WEDS Group should have and there are certain things that make a WEDS Group prosper versus weakening the Group. The responsibilities of the WEDS Group Leaders are two-fold – there are responsibilities to the WEDS Group and to the WWME Community as a whole. Between establishing or maintaining a WEDS Group, to conducting a WEDS Meeting, to Community know-how – this section will help you navigate these responsibilities.

Basic Elements of a WEDS Group

Certain essential elements should be present in order to live out the Mission Statement of WWME and a WEDS Group:

- A WEDS group should consist of a minimum of two couples, priests or religious.
- The group should be open to embrace new sacraments (couples). New members bring energy and vitality to the group, which fulfills the mission and values of WWME. We are a family who welcomes all who have made a Weekend.
- The group should meet regularly, **at least** once per month. The wisdom of WEDS is that meeting routinely and consistently provides support and builds stronger communities.
- Meetings should consist of prayer, presentation, **dialogue, and sharing of feelings**. It should also include discussion of ways to support the Weekends and information about what is going on in community events. It is an opportunity to build a family.
- The presentation should deal with some aspect of relationship, family or faith and should reflect the WWME mission and values.
- Socializing beyond the WEDS Group meeting, as a group, is encouraged and can contribute to the spirit of community within the group.
- The group should actively support the mission of WWME by inviting couples, priests, and religious to experience the WWME Weekend and by assisting with Community events and weekends.
- The group should be connected to the Local Area and to the WWME family by consistent communication and/or meetings, and should be open to further formation on the values and mission of WWME.

What Makes a WEDS Group Prosper

...And What Weakens a WEDS Group

WHAT MAKES A WEDS GROUP PROSPER	WHAT WEAKENS A WEDS GROUP
<i>Focus is on relationship</i>	<i>Focus is only on socializing</i>
<i>** Be a Couple**</i>	<i>**Relationship Takes a Back Seat**</i>
<i>Couples care about each other</i>	<i>Gossip</i>
<i>** Be Lovers**</i>	<i>** Negative talk about others**</i>
<i>Couples believe in dialogue</i>	<i>Not committing to dialogue</i>
<i>** Be Dialoguers**</i>	<i>** Devotion of Couples Weakens**</i>
<i>WEDS Format is followed</i>	<i>WEDS format not followed</i>
<i>** Be Faithful to Schedule**</i>	<i>** Meeting is too Long/Erratic**</i>
<i>Sharing guidelines are followed</i>	<i>Sharing guidelines not followed</i>
<i>** Establish a Quiet Atmosphere**</i>	<i>** Sharing becomes Intimidating**</i>
<i>Sharings are accepted as gifts</i>	<i>Sharings are answered</i>
<i>** Be a Good Listener**</i>	<i>** Sharing is a Problem/Judging**</i>
<i>New couples are special</i>	<i>WEDS Group becomes “clickish”</i>
<i>** Welcome New Couples**</i>	<i>** Inward Focused Group**</i>

WEDS Group Leader Responsibilities

WEDS Group Leaders are responsible for supporting couples in maintaining their couple relationship and supporting them in the habit of daily dialogue. Additionally, Leaders are responsible for guiding their WEDS Group in supporting the Weekend by inviting couples and helping with arrangements to put on the Weekend. Finally, Leaders and their WEDS Groups are responsible for supporting their respective parishes in the renewal of the Church. Here's how!

WEDS Group Leader responsibilities are:

- Establish and/or maintain a WEDS group in your area and invite new couples to join.
- Conduct a regularly scheduled WEDS Group meeting.
- Ensure that the WEDS Group and meetings stay focused on WWME values.
- Maintain a master list of WEDS Group members and provide the list to all Group members.
- Coordinate and assist with scheduling and rescheduling monthly meetings, as needed.
- Delegate and establish needed WEDS Group Couples (see delegation section below).
- Stay excited, promote WWME and daily dialogue, and keep the WEDS Group alive!

WEDS Group Leader Community responsibilities are:

- Obtain and provide WWME Community information to the WEDS Group members.
- Provide information concerning the WEDS Group to the Structure Pillar (see contacts in resource section).
- Assist with a Weekend with your WEDS Group (see Community Responsibilities below).
- Attend Community meetings and events as much as possible.

Let's dive into these responsibilities further...

Establishing or Maintaining a WEDS Group

For one wonderful Weekend, we are transported to a world free of interruptions where we can focus all our attention and energy on ourselves and our marriage. Then we are back in the “real world” struggling to keep the excitement of the Weekend alive in our relationship. Without some sort of support, much of what we learn on the weekend is forgotten. A viable and active WEDS Group is important to sustaining that Weekend feeling. If there is not a WEDS Group in the area, feel free to start one. If you are the WEDS Leaders for the Group in your area, then there are some important things the WEDS Group should have in order to maintain its viability.

Make sure to reach out to the Community Pillar if you are interested in starting a WEDS Group (see contacts in the resource section). This pillar has multiple resources for you and people that have been there before who can offer tips or tricks to help you through the process. Once a group of couples is identified, agree on a regular time to meet at least once a month and make sure to let the Community Pillar know that you have successfully started the group, so that your group will be kept in the loop regarding community events.

Recruiting

Inviting Events

One of the best ways to establish a WEDS Group or attract new couples and priests to your existing WEDS Group is to get couples in your parish, or the parishes of your members, to attend a Weekend. You do this by having an inviting event at those parishes, called a Super Sunday or pulpit talk (see resources for sample talks). Just contact the Weekend Pillar couple responsible for Super Sunday events (see contacts in the resources section) and then follow these steps with them:

- Determine a few dates that will work for you (or your delegate) with the Weekend Pillar couple.
- Contact the parish and let them know that you would like to have an inviting event for WWME at all of the Masses and ask if any of the dates would work for them.
- Let the Weekend Pillar couple know the date decided so they can arrange the speakers.
- One week prior to the event, place a notice in the parish bulletin announcing the event.
- Make sure to have at least three of your WEDS Group members there to help distribute brochures after each Mass.

Romance Dinners

Romance dinners are similar to inviting events, but are more WEDS Group-driven and with just a few couples invited to a home or a church. The purpose of a Romance dinner is to provide the atmosphere and opportunity for couples attending to reminisce about their dating days and get a taste of what a Weekend would do for them. It can be held anywhere that a kitchen and large room is available. The results from hosting Romance dinners is remarkable – typically 90% sign up for a WWME Weekend. It is important to close the deal with an Inviting Presentation. See

the reference section for more information, planning documents, and sample talks to help your WEDS group host a successful Romance dinner.

WWME Weekends

An important way to maintain or grow your WEDS Group is to make sure and capture the couples from your parishes who attend a Weekend. Once couples from your parishes make the Weekend, then it is up to you (or your delegate) to make personal contact with that couple at the end of the Weekend. Here are some tips to help you (or your delegate) with that:

- Assign a different WEDS Group couple to attend each Weekend Sing-Out to introduce themselves and invite any new couples from your parishes.
- OR-
- Assign a specific WEDS Group prayer couple to pray for a specific new couple and have them attend the close of the Weekend to meet them and personally invite them.

If possible the WEDS Group Leader should not be a prayer couple – allowing you to circulate and warmly meet and greet all couples that could be feeding into your WEDS Group.

Remember, the more contact you have with a newly encountered couple, the better the chance of them attending your WEDS Group. A little hand-holding in the beginning goes a long way to establish a comfort level for the new couple. It is important to develop a personal relationship with them from the very beginning. Here are some ideas on how you (or your delegate) can do that:

- Send a welcome letter (see resources).
- Call them to personally invite them to your WEDS meeting.
- Invite them to coffee or dinner.
- Go with them to the Weekend Reunion.
- Drive them to their first WEDS meeting.

Continued and Strong Leadership

Without a WEDS Leader, a WEDS Group will not survive. Someone has to step forward and commit at least a year at a time. The role is able to be fulfilled by one couple, but it is also possible to have other forms of leadership. Here are some options:

- One WEDS Leader couple
- One WEDS Leader couple with multiple delegated couples
- Two WEDS Co-leaders which involves two couples with overlapping two-year terms

Recommended TERM LIMIT: 1 to 2 years

Recommend BACK-TO-BACK terms: NO

Recommend MULTIPLE TERMS: YES

Outside the WEDS Meeting

Another way to maintain a viable WEDS Group is to plan and participate in events outside of the typical WEDS meeting. The Group can only be enhanced by building a family with the couples we share with, so it is important to go beyond our monthly WEDS Group Meeting to come together for other gatherings and events. These events can be fun, philanthropic, family-oriented, or anything in between. Here are some ideas:

- Game night – Newlyweds Game or fun board games.
- Eating – BBQs, picnics, or progressive dinners
- Events – pool parties, bowling, dancing or sports games.
- Service – singing at a nursing home, support a food bank or soup kitchen.
- Invite each other to special family occasions – christenings, graduations, weddings, etc.

Be Organized

Of course, an organized WEDS Group is a WEDS group that will prosper. There are many aspects that should be organized within a WEDS Group, but the most important is the contact list. Create a list of all the couples in your WEDS group, including address, telephone numbers, email addresses, Wedding anniversary, birthdays, Weekend anniversary, and children's names and birth years. This list should be distributed to the WEDS Group. See the resource section for an example format, but know that any format is fine as long as it works for you.

Delegation

Yes, all of this may seem very overwhelming for one (or two) couple(s) to do, but don't worry, you have a whole WEDS Group to help you! Delegation is key to a maintaining a successful WEDS group. Not only does it reduce the responsibilities of the Leaders, but it gives other couples a sense of ownership in the group and helps them to feel more comfortable in possibly taking over the leadership role later on. Here are some tips on how to delegate responsibilities to a couple:

- Match the responsibility to the couple.
- Ask them, don't make the decision for them.
- Set up a face-to-face meeting and tell them that you think they would do a great job.
- Be encouraging! Remember, you are giving them an opportunity to share their love and serve others.
- Help them – especially the first time – make sure they are comfortable and successful.
- Step back and trust that they will do it.

Here is a list of different tasks involved in running a WEDS Group. These tasks are an easy way to breakdown the responsibilities between delegated couples:

- Meeting invitations and maintaining a current WEDS Members list.
- Hosting and presentation scheduling – including presentation suggestions/outlines
- Event coordination – for Community/WEDS events, and can be for all or just one
- Prayer/Caring Coordinator Couple – for Weekends or vigils.
- Parish/Inviting Contact Couple – for WWME or special events.

Most of these are self-explanatory, but look to the resource section for further descriptions of some of these delegation opportunities.

Conducting a WEDS Group Meeting

The WEDS group should meet at least once per month and on the same day every month. The home is the best location for a meeting, and meetings can rotate from home to home, or if necessary, at your local parish. The time should remain consistent from meeting to meeting, but if necessary (to aid the host or presenting couple) can vary about an hour. The host couple does not have to be the same couple presenting at the WEDS meeting. As leaders, there are multiple ways you can have your WEDS group couples sign up for hosting or presenting at a meeting – pass around a signup sheet each meeting, assign and then ask if the schedule works, or utilize an online sign up format such as www.signupgenius.com. See the resource section for an example format and information, but know that any format is fine as long as it works for you.

WEDS Group Meeting Guidelines

Here are some general guidelines WWME recommends in order to successfully conduct a monthly WEDS Group meeting. Typically a meeting is divided into three parts – business, presentation, and fellowship. Feel free to switch the business and presentation portions, but we recommend keeping fellowship at the end. This social time is usually enhanced by asking couples to bring a snack or side dish to share while host couples provide the basics or main dish. Remember, each part should be treated equally and with the same importance. See the resource section for sample formats of agendas or signup sheets, ideas, prayers, presentations, etc. to use during the meeting.

- Email an invitation to all members, prospective members, and priests at least 2 weeks prior to the meeting date. The invitation should include the words WWME and the date, time, location, and what to bring (see resources).
- Create a meeting agenda to distribute if there is a lot of business to cover (see resources).
- Begin the meeting on time with a prayer (see resources).
- Introduce new couples/priests (wear nametags if needed).
- Read “Message to WEDS Members” to put couples in the right mindset (see resources).
- If possible, address baby-sitting needs – a couples’ older children could help with this.
- End the meeting on time with a prayer (see resources).

Business Portion of the Meeting – recommend maximum of 15 Minutes

- Welcome everyone to the meeting.
- Announce Wedding and Weekend anniversaries for the month.
- Announce and encourage attendance at any community events (see Community Responsibilities below).
- Announce and encourage attendance at any WEDS Group events.
- Allow delegated couples to make announcements (see delegation section above and resources).
- Plan any upcoming events sponsored by the WEDS Group, or schedule a separate meeting to plan any upcoming WEDS events.
- Circulate signup sheets for all the aforementioned events and opportunities for both the WEDS Group and the Community.
- Identify/request a host and presenter for the next WEDS meeting, if needed.

Presentation, 10/10 & Open Sharing – recommend maximum of 90 Minutes

- Offer the presentation – maximum 20 minutes (see presentations).
- Provide a 10/10 dialogue question and allow couples to dialogue in separate areas (see dialog) – maximum 25 minutes.
- Return together to review the “Rules for Sharing” and to share (see resources).
- Open sharing – maximum 30 minutes.
- Closing prayer and petitions – invite open prayer petitions.

Thank everyone for coming and adjourn for fellowship – open ended time

Community Responsibilities

Outside of the typical WEDS Group meeting are many WWME Community events and opportunities for your WEDS Group to be a part of the larger Community. These Community events should be announced at each WEDS meeting and attendance, or volunteers if needed, should be encouraged. Include these opportunities in the signups that are circulated. Here are the responsibilities:

WWME Weekends

When helping with a Weekend as a WEDS group, there are two main parts of the Weekend that Group members should attend:

- Friday Night Bag Drag – make it a night out with the group and do dinner afterwards.
- Sunday afternoon Sing-Out – invite potential couples for coffee before they head home.

If there are couples that made the weekend that are assigned to your WEDS Group, make sure to attend the Weekend Reunion. Also, if your group is not the Weekend host WEDS Group, then participate by taking part in the Community Prayer Chain or Weekend Sing Out. The Weekend Pillar will contact you to ask for WEDS Groups to sign up to host a weekend, but contact them if you want to sign up for the prayer chain (see contacts).

Parish Support

Through your WEDS group is also a great way to serve your parish. Each parish is different, but look for opportunities for your group to become more involved, such as:

- Participate in the holiday charity events (the giving tree, or adopt-a-family).
- Host a donut or coffee Sunday to welcome new comers.
- Set up a booth for the ministry fair (a great inviting opportunity!).
- Donate baskets of non-perishable items for parish fundraising or charity events.
- Help other similar groups, such as the Young & Married or Engaged Encounter.

Community Events

Each year there are multiple events hosted by the WWME Community that your WEDS Group should be a part of. Often volunteers are needed to help with these events and you should encourage your WEDS Group to help. Here are the main events:

- January: Epiphany Party – a family event with a recreation of the Nativity with the kids.
- February: World Marriage Day Ball – a gala, semi-formal dinner/dance event.
- June: World Priest Day – an opportunity to honor those that support our parishes.
- Summer: Typically there is one Community-wide summer event, such as a picnic.
- October: annual Red Top Mountain Experience at Red Top Mountain State Park in North Georgia – a family event complete with trick-or-treating and fun fall activities.

The February World Marriage Day Ball is a fantastic event and it is recommended that your WEDS group attend as a group. When registering, make sure to note who you'd like to sit with so that you can enjoy dinner and festivities together. There are often deals on hotel rooms so that

you can enjoy brunch with your WEDS group the following morning.

The June World Priest Day is a great opportunity for your WEDS group to honor those priests that support and run our parishes. It can be as simple as sending a note of thanks to the priests in the diocese, creating a meal for your parish's priests, packing treat bags for the priests, or even inviting them over for dinner.

The October Red Top Mountain Experience is funded by an auction where events and donated items are supplied by the WEDS Groups. Make sure to participate, both through providing an event and attending events. Contact the Community Pillar for help planning an auction event (see contacts in the resource section).

Community Meetings

Additionally, there are many community meetings that are scheduled throughout the year and are important to attend and encourage your members to attend.

- Community nights, which include a presentation, a 10/10, and sharing
- Leadership Weekends and Enrichment events
- Planning sessions (typically when there is a Leadership change)
- Community Pillar meetings
- Area-wide WEDS Leader meetings set up by the Community Pillar
- WWME National and Regional Conventions if possible

Community Communications

The Community has built-in ways to get the word out about your WEDS Group, but it requires some effort on your part as the WEDS Leaders (or your delegates). Here are the things to keep in mind:

- Send updated WEDS Group Members lists to the Community Pillar
- Send information for the newsletter or social media to the Structure Pillar (see contacts in the resource section).

Remember, you and your WEDS Group are part of a larger WWME Community – be active in it and reap the benefits!

Dialog

Dialog is important for a married couple. Why? Because God calls us to become one in our relationship and in order to achieve this unity we need to share feelings. Along with our Personality Styles, feelings are a very important part of who we are. If we are to know ourselves and each other fully, we need to share feelings. Additionally, feelings drive our behavior and often couples react to the behavior while not understanding why that behavior exists (ie. the feeling behind the behavior). This lack of understanding can cause problems in any relationship.

Dialog is important for a WEDS Group. Why? There is an old expression in Marriage Encounter that ***No One Dialogs Alone*** – it is true! We need the support of other dialoguing couples to keep our dialogue alive and vibrant. We need community and the support it brings. We need to be among other dialoguing couples to enhance our own relationship. We learn from one another. If you are fortunate enough to have a priest attend your WEDS Group the priest should “trialog” with a couple.

Characteristics of a Dialoging Couple

Does this sound familiar? A dialoging couple is a couple who:

- Writes to each other in the form of a love letter, *but also occasionally garbage dumps, misses a day now and then, feels guilty, depressed, and gets back to it again and again.*
- Writes for quality, not quantity, *but also occasionally feels like the number of words written is the most important.*
- Exchanges their notebooks lovingly, *but has been known to occasionally have a strong desire to throw the books at each other.*
- Laugh and cry with more intensity than they ever have before, *but spends a lot of time wondering if they are doing it right and not knowing what to say after reading the love letter.*
- Wants to dialog because they want to love each other more and be in communion with God.

Dialoging Technique

A recommended technique for dialoging starts with a brief prayer for self-centering and self-awareness in order to focus on one's feelings.

Write a love letter to your spouse. Begin like you would any other letter with Dear _____, and write about how you feel as you being to write, how you see your spouse and yourself in relationship to the dialog question, and describe those feelings – how does your body react and what does the feeling remind you of? Of course, end the letter as you would with any other letter – With love, _____.

Exchange letters and pray for your awareness of God's love in your relationship with your spouse. Read the letter twice – once for the head and once for the heart. Discuss reactions and

clear up any mis-understandings about what was written. Ask yourself, how does this love letter make me feel?

Dialogue on one feeling at a time, remembering that touch and eye contact are important. Identify and expand on the feeling, thinking about what other feelings you have when you have this one, when have you felt that way before, how do you see me when you feel like this, and how do you feel about my love letter?

Select the next dialog question for tomorrow and close with a prayer of thanks.

Sample Dialog Questions

While there are many resources for dialog questions (see the resource section) here are a few sample questions regarding dialog itself and to get you going:

1. How do I feel when I don't take the risk of opening myself to you?
2. How do I feel when I need to talk to you?
3. What feelings prevent us from dialoging?
4. How do I feel when I don't listen? When you don't listen?

Feelings

A feeling is a response to a situation, person or event. Feelings are important and have influence on our daily lives – the way we speak, respond, love, accept, and forgive. A feeling is a clear expression of what is going on inside and indicates the real you. Often feelings differ from the public image we attempt to portray or communicate to others. It is important to recognize feelings and share them openly with your spouse so that they do not get in the way of a meaningful unity.

Many of us have been trained to think rather than feel. We've also learned to make judgments about feelings and to determine if they are good or bad. Actions and judgments can be good or bad, right or wrong, but feelings are neither good nor bad – they are just feelings! They are morally neutral. Even negative feelings are okay to share. If left unshared, negative feelings will result in feeling completely rejected, total frustration or even a big blow-up.

It also takes patience and gentle questioning on your part and your spouse's part to help each other discover feelings. Don't be discouraged if you feel like you're not getting it right. You may have to use the techniques provided for months before you begin to truly understand the difference between thinking and feeling. Think of it as practice! It is part of the growth process and is worthwhile and valuable. Remember, there is no end to the process – unity is both a goal and a never-ending process.

When discussing feelings, here's some things to think about:

- **Using “feel” when you mean “think.”** If you can replace “I feel” with “I think” then you may be approaching the topic on a thought level instead of a feeling level. Chances are you are making a judgment even though you think you are sharing a feeling.
- **Beware of prejudging.** Instead of focusing on what you think your spouse will write, focus on your own honesty and truly searching within yourself. There is a sense of relief or joy when feelings are reached and can reveal how much growth has taken place in the relationship.
- **Explaining the cause of instead of the feeling.** If you are answering the question “why” then you are not describing the feeling, rather you are explaining the cause of the feeling. Beware of the word “because” – it is usually followed by an explanation, not a description.
- **A written reflection and dialog is not the end goal.** Writing is simply a technique used to become more self-aware and couple-aware. Dialoging will not cure differences or solve problems, instead it is meant to aid in the discovery of the other person in your marriage and the discovery of yourself.

By exchanging feelings in this way, we share our very self with our spouse and develop our ability to grow in unity together and with God.

Describing Feelings

Strong feelings are usually not hard to get to, such as joy, anger, and frustration. More subtle feelings are difficult to uncover because they tend to hide behind thoughts and judgments. It helps to find a quiet space to attempt to get to your feelings. Here are some questions to help you describe your feelings:

- Describe from experience (ie. ...the time we walked the beach, I felt....).
- Describe through color (ie. I was angry like the color red...)
- Describe through weather (ie. I was happy as a spring day...)
- Describe through music (ie. I was conflicted like a staccato piece...)
- Describe through identifying a body part (ie. I had butterflies in my stomach...)

Understanding Feelings

Each spouse can have, and usually does have, different feelings regarding the same subject. Recognize the difference in each other's viewpoints and challenge yourself to really reach out and understand the other, in turn enriching yourself. Once you've exchanged your notebooks and you've read your spouse's love letter, you may have a hard time understanding your spouse's feelings. Try these ideas for getting a true picture of the feelings described:

- Read back the feeling revealed.
- What colors surround the feeling?
- What does the feeling want me to do?
- How would you dress when you feel this way?
- What mood does the feeling put you in?

- How does the feeling smell, taste, etc.?
- How intense is the feeling (1-10)?
- What feeling surrounds it?
- How do you feel about having the feeling?
- How do you feel about sharing it?
- How do you picture me when you have the feeling?
- What do you need from me when you have the feeling?
- What increases the feeling?
- How do you feel physically with this feeling?
- Does this feeling have any texture?
- When did you feel that way before?
- Can you think of another time when we had this feeling together?
- Does this feeling have a shape to it?
- Tell me more about the feeling.

Sometimes a spouse fears the emergence of a true understanding of a feeling. There is a fear that the self may be lost or that you'll have to become the other – thinking and feeling the same.

**True empathy does not mean transforming yourself to be like the other,
rather it means feeling *with* the other.**

Presentations

The presentation. One of the hardest parts of the WEDS meeting to find a couple to fill. However, it does not have to be that hard. See the resource section for available presentation resources. Couples can present *anything* from material from a book, scripture, or write their own. Just make sure to share feelings!

Some of the best presentations are taken from a dialog. A couple can select a previous dialogue where a significant breakthrough happened in their relationship. The presentation can then be created by following this brief outline:

- Share what led up to the dialogue – where currently are you in your relationship? What was the major issue that couldn't be resolved? Or what was the significant event experienced?
- What prompted the dialogue?
- What was the dialogue like?
- What were the two major feelings?
- Which one did you decide to explore? What was the outcome?
- Was sharing open? Was it difficult? Did listening happen?
- What was it like to come together? HDYF?
- How did it change the relationship?

Couples can then dialog on the same question.

Presentation Tips

No matter what is presented, here are a few tips to help guide a couple in deciding what to present and how to present it:

- Nothing traumatic – just everyday experiences. Just as dialog is not used for true confessions, so the presentation is also not used for that purpose.
- Keep it personal – YOUR experience, YOUR relationship, YOUR dialog. Personalize by using your names instead of saying “we.”
- Although details are not necessary, avoid generalities.
- Talk between 15 and 20 minutes.
- Write out the entire presentation. This helps keep the talk focused and on topic. It is alright to read the presentation.
- Keep a box of tissue close at hand. Everyone cries sometimes – that is part of sharing feelings.
- Don't forget to bring your sense of humor.
- If you dialog on the outline, the presentation will write itself.
- Most importantly, be yourself! We all have something beautiful and unique to share – ourselves and our relationship.

Presentation Topics

This is in no way a complete list, but here are some topics to help stimulate your thinking. Feel free to revise a topic as appropriate so that it best suits you. Also, see the resource section for other presentation resources that include possible topics.

Feelings: Awareness of mine and yours
My masks or behavior patterns
Self-images and how they affect our intimacy
Compliments
Anger
Romance in our lives
Our married single attitudes and activities
Disillusionment
Joys in our lives
Fighting and confronting
Healing old and new hurts
Decisions to love
Your superiorities
Doing things together
Sex, frequency, sensitivity
My attractiveness
Fear of intimacy
Attitudes about sex
Inhibitions about sex
Our leisure time
My work and yours
Handling our money
Creating a budget with you
Working overtime
Making big financial decisions
Sharing our possessions with others
Value most/least about our lifestyle

Disciplining the kids
Our prayer life
Planning our time
Paying the bills
Our dialog
Our vacation
Our jobs
Friends
Death
Television, its effects on us
Loneliness
Listening
Living God's plan for us
Risk and confidence in our relationship
Living our sacrament
Our little church
Our hospitality
Our possessions
Our reaching out to others
Doing things together
Recreation
Our in-laws
Our health and exercise
Our eating and dieting
Lessening of the wonderment in our marriage
Our relationships with God

Creating a Presentation

When creating a presentation, it is important to appropriately prepare with your spouse, to dialog multiple times, and to write the presentation together.

Preparation

Select a topic that you have strong feelings about or chose something that is going on in your life such as a disagreement, a joy, or a daily happening. Try to pick a topic that is somewhat relevant for other couples. Sometimes all you need to do is reword the question to make it relevant. Be sure to pick a topic that both you and your spouse agree is meaningful to your relationship.

Write at least three dialog questions that relate to the topic of your presentation. Dialog on the questions you've selected at least four times. Use what was written, as well as verbal portions of your dialog, to create your presentation.

Writing

Make an outline for each of you and use a back and forth method of writing so that the group hears from each of you as an individual.

1. Introduction – give the title of the presentation and why you selected it. A short scripture reading may be appropriate that relates to the presentation. This section should last approximately 2 minutes for each person.
2. Body of Talk – this is the main portion of the presentation and should last 6 or 7 minutes for each person. To help you develop this section, here are some questions to ask yourself:
 - a. What are my feelings?
 - b. What are my thoughts, opinions, judgments, experiences?
 - c. How did we resolve the issue or problem?
 - d. What did we learn from this experience?
 - e. How did this affect our relationship?
 - f. How are we in this area now?
 - g. How are we separated/united by this topic?
 - h. How am I failing to love or act, and what are its effects on us?
 - i. What are the blocks or obstacles that I must overcome in order to grow in this area?
 - j. What do I need to change about myself to love my spouse more?
 - k. What is my plan for growth in this area?
 - l. Where do I want to be and how am I going to get there?
 - m. How does our dialog help us in this area? If it is not, then what is it that we are trying to avoid?
3. Conclusion – tie up any loose ends and summarize the talk. This portion should last 2 or 3 minutes per person.
4. Dialog question – chose a challenging question that will help the group apply what you have just shared to their own lives.
5. Sharing question – chose an easy question that each person can respond to in open sharing. It can be the same question as the dialog question.

Welcome Letter

Date

Dear _____ & _____,

Welcome to Worldwide Marriage Encounter (WWME)! We're _____ & _____, WEDS Group Leaders for the _____ WEDS Group in the _____ local community or parish. We enjoyed meeting you at the Sing Out after the last weekend.

Now that you've made a WWME weekend, you may be wondering what is next. That's what WEDS is! While the weekend was great, if you leave it at that, the fire can soon go out. If you want to keep that warmth from your weekend, come join others that share the experience of the weekend. That is what our community and WEDS group is all about.

Your upcoming Weekend Reunion is scheduled for _____ at _____ and will offer you more information regarding the Community and events. Also, within the next few weeks you will receive a notice announcing the next WEDS Group meeting. These monthly meetings are small informal groups of couples from our area who have made a weekend. The format is typically an opening prayer, a short presentation, dialog, and sharing and community news. There are refreshments and time for socializing afterwards.

None of us are perfect. We struggle from time to time in our relationship and have lapses in our dialog. We attend WEDS because it reminds us of what is important – keeping us focused on our relationship and God's plan in our lives. Please join us – our WEDS group will be incomplete without you!

Since our weekend, we've found Community and WEDS group to be a very challenging and rewarding experience. We'd like to share that with you. Be sure to bring your dialog books and a snack to share – dress is casual! In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at _____. We eagerly look forward to seeing you again soon and getting to know you!

Hugs,

Meeting Invitations

Dear _____,

Our next WEDS Group meeting will be held on _____ (date) _____ at _____ (time) _____ at _____ & _____'s house, _____ (address) _____.

_____ & _____ will be provided. (any food or drinks the hosts will be providing)

We look forward to being with you and are excited about the possibilities of what the gathering will do to enhance our relationship and the relationships of those who will be there. Please let us know if you are attending and what you are bringing to share. Don't forget to bring your dialogue book. God bless.

Our love, _____

Message for WEDS Members

On the weekend, we gained a better idea of how really special we are. As WEDS members, our dedication is as brother and sister, and servant to each other and to others.

Sometimes we forget why we've joined together in a group. Remember, by uniting in Christian community and by trying to sincerely, as couples, dialog daily, we reach out to renew our Church by showing and sharing our love to others. First, by spreading our special gift – the weekend – to couples, priests, and religious. We support community nights and the Weekend by enthusiastically responding to calls to help, to sponsor, and to pray. We support couples after the Weekend as they struggle with dialog and the challenging idea of renewing the church and the world.

However, polishing up our own relationship comes first, but it's only part of the picture. We are united in a broader effort. A WEDS Group meeting can be a beautiful, rewarding, loving, and shared experience, but like the Eucharistic banquet, the heart of the Church liturgy, it is not complete until we hear and act on the final instructions: Go Forth to Love and Serve

Please help bring the gift of the Weekend to all.

WEDS Group Roster

Children						
Weekend Date						
Wedding Anniv						
Email						
Phone						
Address						
Names						

Presentation & Hosting Schedule

Option 1:

Month	Presenters	Hosts
January		
February		
March		
April		
May		
June		
July		
August		
September		
October		
November		
December		

Option 2:

Host	Month	Presenter
	January	
	February	
	March	
	April	
	May	
	June	
	July	
	August	
	September	
	October	
	November	
	December	

There are also online resources, such as www.signupgenius.com, which allows couples to access the schedule and sign up for what they see fit. It only requires an initial set up by the group leaders.

Calendar Sample

XXXXXXXX WEDS Group YYYY Activities

January

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Epiphany Party, DD, tt:tt pm, location

February

WWME Weekend DD-DD

World Marriage Day Ball, DD, tt:tt pm, location

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

March

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Pulpit Talks, DD, all masses, locations

April

WWME Weekend DD-DD

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

May

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

June

WWME Weekend DD-DD

World Priest Day potluck, DD, tt:tt pm, location

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Attend Sing-out, DD, tt:tt pm

July

WWME Weekend DD-DD

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Attend Sing-out, DD, tt:tt pm

WEDS event, DD, tt:tt pm, location

August

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Community event, DD, tt:tt pm, location

September

WWME Weekend DD-DD

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Bag drag, dinner after, DD, tt:tt pm

Sing-out, coffee after, DD, tt:tt pm

October

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Redtop, DD-DD

November

WWME Weekend DD-DD

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

Attend Sing-out, DD, tt:tt pm

December

WEDS Meeting, DD, tt:tt pm

There are also online options, such as Google Calendar, that allow WEDS group leaders to email or “push” events out through a shared calendar that couples can then connect to their own calendars. Find out more here: <http://www.google.com/calendar/about/>

Presentation Ideas

There are many resources available to help you or our group's couples come up with a presentation. Check the WWME Atlanta webpage for dialog questions that could be turned into presentations at wwmeatlanta.com. Or look at the national WWME site at www.wwme.org for other ideas. Other websites that could help include:

eMatrimony

eMatrimony is an online magazine for supporting, Encouraging, and Challenging the WWME Community. www.ematrimony.org

Encountered Resource Library (ERL)

The resource library is a go-to source for documents related to WWME. There are presentations, dialog questions, ideas on how to build community and much more.

<http://erl.wwme.org/home.htm>

For Your Marriage

For Your Marriage is a website put together by the U.S. Conference of Bishops in support of marriage as part of their National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage. This website has a wealth of information on Catholic marriage. www.foryourmarriage.org

Marriage – Unique for a Reason

Marriage – Unique for a Reason is a website put together by the U.S. Conference of Bishops with resources to assist with the education and catechesis of Catholics on why marriage is unique and why it should be promoted and protected. <http://www.marriageuniqueforareason.org/>

If you know of any other resources, let your Community Pillar know (see contacts at the end of this section).

Prayers

Opening Prayer Ideas:

Option 1:

Dear Lord, thank you for the many blessings you have bestowed on me this day and for allowing me to be here this evening.

Grant me the grace to share what is deep within me. Help me to realize that sharing a piece of myself will be an investment in my relationship and my WEDS group. This will result in an increased awareness of my feelings, my spouse's feelings, and the feelings of others.

Help me to realize that when someone shares something with me, they are taking a risk and giving me a private piece of themselves, one that I should hold close to my heart and not share with others.

Give me the strength to listen with my heart. When I truly listen with love in my heart, I hear the whole person and experience the feeling being described by them. I do not have to agree or disagree. I only have to listen in the way You told me to love. Help me to listen more deeply. When I do, others share more freely. Allow me to be aware of the non-verbals, being careful not to interrupt or give advice but to accent and not judge what is shared.

When I listen to another's sharing of feelings, it is a source of strength and revelation to me as I learn that I am not alone in my struggles, questionings, doubts, fears, and thankfully, joy.

Amen.

Option 2:

We come together in prayer.

Dear Lord, you once said, "If two of you agree on earth about anything for which they are to pray, it shall be granted to them by my heavenly Father. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

We come together in your name, Lord. We join our hands, our minds, and our hearts in prayer. Hear our prayers, dear Lord, and answer them.

Amen.

Option 3:

Keep us, O Lord, from pettiness. Let us be thoughtful in word and deed. Help us to put away pretense, and face each other in deep trust without fear or self-pity. Help us to guard against fault-finding and be quick to discover the best in each other in every situation. Guard us from

ill-temp and hasty judgment. Encourage us to take time for all things – to grow calm, serene, and gentle.

Help us to be generous with kind words and compliments. Teach us to never ignore, to never hurt, and to never take each other for granted. Engrave charity and compassion on our hearts.

O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to you.

Amen

Closing Prayer Ideas:

Option 1:

Loving God, my life is filled with so many good things, with challenges at work, with opportunities at home, with possibilities to learn and grow.

I thank You for the gifts I have received tonight and ask You for the wisdom to manage them.

Help me resist the temptation to pile on more and more good things until what I truly love is lost from sight.

Give me the courage to throw out the things I do not need, so that I may, in time, uncover my own true self and my deepest happiness, which is You.

Amen.

Option 2:

Lord, help us to remember when we first met and the strong love that grew between us. To work that love into practical things so nothing can divide us.

We ask for words both kind and loving, and for hearts always ready to ask forgiveness as well as to forgive.

Dear Lord, we put our marriage into Your hands. In Your name we pray, Amen.

Other Prayers

A Prayer for Marriage

God our Father, we give you thanks for the gift of marriage;
The bond of life and love, and the font of the family.

The love of husband and wife enriches your Church with children,
Fills the world with a multitude of spiritual fruitfulness and service,

And is the sign of the love of your Son, Jesus Christ, for his Church.

The grace of Jesus flowed forth at Cana at the request of the Blessed Mother.
May your Son, through the intercessions of Mary,
Pour out upon us a new measure of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit
As we join with all people of good will to promote and protect the unique beauty of marriage.

May your Holy Spirit enlighten our society to treasure the heroic love of husband and wife,
And guide our leaders to sustain and protect the singular place of mothers and fathers
In the lives of their children.

Father, we ask that our prayers be joined to those of the Virgin Mary,
That Your Word may transform our service to safeguard the incomparable splendor of marriage.
We ask all these things through Christ our Lord, Amen.

Staying in Love

When we first fell in love, Lord, our love for each other was so intense, so alive. We realize, Lord, that love can't remain at that level day in and day out, but help us, at least occasionally, recapture some of those precious feelings and emotions that we so often experienced when we were falling in love.

Lord, don't let either of us ever allow our marriage to turn into a taken-for-granted relationship. And when we are tempted to blame our partner for any dullness that may occasionally exist, remind us, Lord, that it is the responsibility of each of us to continually try to put a little more vitality and romance into our lives.

It's up to each one of us to go out of our way to make the other feel needed and appreciated and special – to praise each other, complement each other, give each other the security of feeling truly loved.

Let us learn, Lord, not only how to rekindle the spark that started our love but also how to turn that spark into a flame that will grow brighter with each passing year.

To Have and to Hold

There are so many people on this earth craving to be loved, to be needed, to be a part of someone's life, longing for the blessing that we possess and often take for granted.

Let us realize, Lord, how privileged we are to be able to wake up each morning and greet the dawn with a comforting hug and a quiet moment in bed together, sharing our plans for the day.

How lucky we are to be able to spend our days working toward the fulfillment of goals and dreams that are shared with someone we love.

How fortunate we are to have the security of knowing that we can come together at the end of each day to give a bit of warmth and laughter and companionship to one another – to be able to enjoy the security of our home, the love of our family, and the intimacy of our relationship.

When we lie together in our bed each night, Lord, let us remember to take a moment to join our hands and thank you for the special privilege you have given us in being able to share our lives with a partner who has chosen to love and to cherish us for the rest of our days.

A Prayer for the Spirit of Jesus in Our Society

O, Jesus, come back into our society, our family life, our souls and reign there as our peaceful Sovereign. Enlighten with the splendor of faith and the charity of Your tender heart the souls of those who work for the good of the people, for Your poor.

Impart to them Your own spirit, a spirit of discipline, order, and gentleness, preserving the flame of enthusiasm ever alight in their hearts.

May that day come very soon when we shall see You restored to the center of civic life, borne on the shoulders of Your joyful people.

Amen

Nothing

There is nothing, no circumstances, no troubles, no testing that can ever touch me until first of all it has gone past God and past Christ, right to me.

If it has come that far, it has come with a great purpose, which I many not understand at the moment, but I refuse to become panicky.

I lift up my eyes to Him and accept it as coming from the throne of Christ for some great purpose of blessing to my own heart.

No sorrow will ever disturb me, no trial will ever disarm me, no circumstance will cause me to fret. For I shall rest in the glory of what my Lord is: that is the rest of my victory.

Amen

A Prayer for the Sanctification of Priests

O Mary, Mother of Jesus, you were with Jesus at the beginning of His life and mission. You stood beside Jesus when He was lifted on the cross and gave His life for all.

We ask you now to be with our priests who give themselves in service to God's people. Intercede for them that they may grow in holiness, proclaim God's Word with courage, celebrate the sacraments with joy, and be among God's people as Jesus, the Good Shepherd, was.

We offer this prayer to God, the Father, through your intercession, in the name of your Son, Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Expressing Our Love

It's such a pleasure to be told that we're loved – to hear words of affection and appreciation spoken by the most important person in our lives.

But most of us don't say those words often enough, do we, Lord?

It seems that the longer we're married, the more we tend to assume that our partner just automatically knows how we feel about him or her.

Remind us, Lord, that an expression of love is a gift – a gift that has the power to bring a feeling of joy and security to our partner and a feeling of warmth and richness to our relationship.

Love expressed is a gift that can strengthen the precious bond that exists between us.

Let us be considerate and sensitive enough to always take the time to express our feelings of affection fully and openly – to kiss more, to touch more, to care more – to say all those simple, necessary, and too seldom-used words: I love you, I need you, I'm so glad that you are a part of my life.

Marriage is What we Make it

Before we got married, Lord, we wanted to believe that our love for each other would automatically enable us to live together happily and compatibly.

We now realize that our life together can be only as good and as happy as each of us wants to make it.

We have learned that marriage is an adventure that is as demanding and challenging as it is rewarding and pleasurable – and its success depends on the willingness of each of us to always give it our best.

When we fail to do so, Lord, don't hesitate to step in and straighten us out. Keep reminding us that a successful marriage is not just an accident or a matter of luck.

It's an accomplishment that's achieved through much understanding, a lot of accepting, a lot of overlooking, and a whole lot of loving.

It's a joy that's earned and sustained by not only a lot of giving, but also a lot of giving in.

Marriage Takes Three by Perry Tanksley

I once thought marriage took just two to make a go, but now I am convinced it takes the Lord, also.

And not one marriage fails where Christ is asked to enter, as lovers come together with Jesus at the center.

But marriage seldom thrives and homes are incomplete until He's welcomed there to help avoid defeat.

In homes where Christ is first, it's obvious to see, those unions really work for marriage still takes Three.

A Prayer before Renewing of Marriage Vows

Lord, with joined hands we come before you to renew the sacred vows we made on our wedding day – to love, to cherish, and to be true to each other in good times and in bad, in sickness and in health, for as long as we both shall live.

Let not a day pass that we are not fully aware of this blessed and beautiful promise. Endow our relationship, dear Lord, with a love that is total and enduring – a love that will enable us to minister to each other with devotion and loyalty – a love that will give us the ability to respect our individuality as well as rejoice in our oneness – a love that will enable us to attain greater heights together than we could ever attain separately.

Let us join our hands to yours, Lord, in a partnership of faith so that your daily presence in our lives will not only enrich our relationship but will make our commitment to each other grow stronger and deeper with each passing year.

Prayer of Jabez

Oh that You would bless me indeed, and enlarge my territory, that Your hand would be with me, and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain.

Rules for Sharing

There are many ways to explain the rules of sharing during your WEDS group meeting. Find one that works best for you and your group.

Option 1:

Read to the group as if you are reading it to yourself or pass out printouts of this paragraph for all to read silently to themselves:

Dear Couples,

Sharing is a gift of myself...Who I am, how I feel, my attitudes, my joys, my hopes, and my present struggles. I often feel a sense of risk as I share. To share is a decision to love, with confidence in those who love and care about us and want us to grow. It is a time to speak from the heart and to listen from the heart. To listen deeply to the sharing of others, I have to turn off the competitive urge and the urge to heal that often arises in me. It is very important in sharing to not interrupt, comment on, or react to anyone else's sharing.

Sharing is not a time to teach, to share about others, to judge or even help anyone else. Often I want to say, "You, you shouldn't feel that way," or "You'll feel better when you...." No matter how loving these statements seem, they are rejections and can turn off someone else's sharing.

Others may really struggle to say what is in their heart. I have to be kind enough to not stifle them with loving interruptions or joking comments. Their struggles to share are as much a gift to the community as the excitement, exhilaration, and joy they share with us.

The sharing of others can help us to recognize our own feelings and attitudes, but only if we listen and not prepare our own sharing. Sharing witnesses our solidarity, opens us to one another, and strengthens us as a community.

Love, Me.

Option 2:

- Sharing is voluntary.
- Everything shared at WEDS Group is confidential
- Please don't comment on someone else's sharing.
- Stick to the sharing question.
- Share for yourself with I or me messages.
- Please don't interrupt or finish someone's sentence.
- Please don't offer solutions. This is a time for listening & understanding – not fixing.
- Avoid saying I agree or disagree. Please don't judge a sharing.
- Avoid witty remarks or comments in an attempt to ease the situation or change the subject. Such comments can discourage the person from sharing again.

- Avoid preaching, using ‘you should’ or ‘you can’t’ statements.
- Try not to be uncomfortable with periods of silence. Some personality styles need time to process or formulate what they want to share.
- Be brief if you tend to talk a lot.
- Make an effort to share if you are the silent type – remember others are enriched or challenged by your sharing.
- Listen without your motor running, with an open heart. We all want to be listened to.

Option 3:

1. Everyone will have the opportunity to share; no one has to share.
2. All that is shared in this room stays in this room, just like on your weekend. Confidentiality and acceptance are what makes sharing so special and powerful in WWME.
3. Share for yourself only, not for you and your spouse, or about your spouse, or about what someone else has shared.
4. Share only what has been shared with your spouse first. Avoid big surprises.
5. Listening is as great a gift of self as sharing. Giving advice is the opposite of accepting someone’s sharing of self. Don’t interrupt or comment on another’s sharing.
6. Sharing is not a time to teach, to judge, or even to help anyone else. What may be meant as a kindness, could be seen as a rejection and can turn someone else off from sharing.
7. Husbands and wives do not necessarily share one after the other unless they want to. Not sharing together can allow for more careful listening.
8. Your sharing is a gift to your spouse as well as to others.
9. Let quiet pauses between sharing be a preparation time for the next speaker.
10. Don’t be put off if someone else shares essentially what you wanted to say. A sharing has just as much meaning coming from more than one, and your spouse may need to hear it from you.

Option 4:

Remember in open sharing, sharing is voluntary

1. Don’t comment on another’s sharing
2. Stick to the subject or topic area
3. Share yourself with “I” or “Me” sentences
4. Don’t interrupt or finish someone else’s sentences
5. Don’t interpret someone else’s sharing to the group
6. Don’t offer solutions. This is a time for listening and trying to understand, not for answers
7. Don’t judge someone else’s sharing. Avoid saying “I agree” or “I disagree”
8. This is not a time for witty remarks, clever comments, and attempts to ease the situation or efforts to change the subject. Any such happening will discourage the speaker from sharing again
9. Don’t preach. Avoid such phrases as “You should....” or “You can....”

10. Don't be uncomfortable with periods of silence. Remember that it will be awkward or difficult for some people to share. If we try to keep things moving, they may never get up the nerve to share at all.
11. Be brief if you tend to talk a lot.
12. Make an effort to share if you are the silent type.
13. Remember that others are enriched when they hear YOU share from YOUR life
14. Listen with no motor running.
15. Listen with love in your heart. We all want to be listened to and understood
16. Whatever is said during open sharing should remain in the group and is considered confidential.

Option 5:

Sharing is confidential

Sharing is....

One Way
I or Me
Describe Self
My Feelings
My Understanding
No Right or Wrong
Silence and Quiet
Leaning In
Listening!!!
Listening!!!
Listening!!!

Sharing is not....

Two Way
He, She, They
Discussion
Looking for Answers
Asking Questions
Interrupting
Having to Make Sense
Noisy or Loud
Leaning Away
Rushed
Witty Remarks or Clever Comments
Preaching or Judging

Witness Talks

Witness talks are a great way to recruit for the WWME weekends and grow your WEDS group. If your WEDS group is planning on being at the parish after each mass to pass out information and answer questions regarding WWME, the following can be used by the person making announcements prior to Mass starting:

There will be couples from the Marriage Encounter community in the ____ (location) ____ after each Mass. Parish couples are invited to visit them after Mass to learn more about Marriage Encounter and about making a Marriage Encounter Weekend.

Background and helpful hints:

Your preparation to give a Super Sunday WITNESS talk is your dialoguing way of life. Your beauty, your love for one another, and sharing the difference that the Weekend has made in your life is what will bring couples to the Weekend.

This presentation should be written, work-shopped and read, this way you will stay on track and on time.

Allow 3 minutes for the talk, since it probably will be given at the end of Mass. If the pastor allows you to do it during Homily time then the talk can be increased to 5 minutes.

Mentality: After a brief introduction, you want to quickly connect with the couples, by sharing where you were in your relationship prior to your Weekend, sharing some of the distractions and challenges you faced and the distance you felt. How you focused on the responsibilities of being married and how you lost sight of one another. This is where they are. Then share your Weekend, sharing your transformation, which will give them the urgency to attend a Weekend and finally nuts and bolts stuff.

WITNESS TALK OUTLINE (Spouse #1 is the Reluctant spouse (the one who made the excuses about going on the Weekend))

INTRODUCTION (SPOUSE #1)

Introduce yourselves, your name, parish, years married, number of children. Tell them how happy you are to be worshipping with them this am, pm. Thank Father for giving you the chance to speak about Worldwide Marriage Encounter.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP BEFORE YOUR WEEKEND: (SPOUSE #1 shares for both) Connect with them.

Tell them about your focus before your Weekend. Perhaps you were preoccupied with doing, raising the children, the job, whatever. Perhaps you were working very hard, taking care of the responsibilities of being married. Or maybe you were caught up doing separate activities, each doing your own thing. Perhaps over time you lost your focus of each other. You got busy, and

there was no time for each other and had too many distractions. Perhaps you were not communicating the way you used to. Let them know that you had a good marriage, like they do, but you had lost some of your intimacy. Focus on those things that became important to you as you tried to live out your marriage (children, career, home, church, etc). Share how you heard about the Weekend and decided to attend.

THE IMPACT OF YOUR WEEKEND: (SPOUSE #2 SHARES for both).

This is a story of your transformation.

How did the Weekend change your lives? How did your Weekend impact the way you were living your life? What did the Weekend do for you personally? What beautiful things did you discover about your spouse? What did you learn? What were your insights? What were the benefits? How did the Weekend impact your focus and the way you were living? Did you become aware of what God wanted for your relationship? How did the Weekend impact your relationship with your spouse? Your children? Your family? Your church? Your relationship with God? Your faith? What insights did you discover about the World's plan, and God's plan for marriage? What did you learn about your Sacrament?

BARRIERS (SPOUSE #1): Be brief.

What were some of the barriers/excuses you used when spouse wanted to make the Weekend? Good marriage, children, afraid, etc..

What did you discover after making the Weekend? Fears were unfounded. Weekend was not threatening. I was in control.

CLOSING (SPOUSE, #2) Use as is (alter for circumstances).

1. The Marriage Encounter Weekend experience teaches a unique method of communication.
2. It's for couples with good marriages who want to enrich their relationship.
3. The Weekend is a very private experience, there is no group sharing. All sharing is done in the privacy of your own room.
4. The Weekend is for all couples whether you've been married a year or 60 years or more. No matter how long we've been married we are still challenged by many distractions in our life and we need that special time to get away and focus on each other.
5. It is important to know that the Weekend is open to all faiths
6. Before leaving church today, please take a moment to come to the _____, where we will have an opportunity to answer any specific questions you may have or where you can sign up for a Weekend.
7. We still have a few openings for the _____ Weekend (s).
8. As you leave, if you would like a brochure, which includes information and an application please ask for one. (hold up the brochure).
9. The Weekend is a great way to celebrate your love for one another, so please do not put it off.
10. Remember, that the greatest gift we can give to our children is our love for one another.
11. For those of you who have made a Marriage Encounter Weekend, you may want to consider going again to refresh your relationship.
12. Please remember to stop by and see us.
13. Thank you for listening and have a great day! God bless you.

AFTER THE WITNESS TALK



When a couple requests a brochure, always ask if they have any questions. If they do, answer their questions. If they don't have any questions ask them if they would please fill out an application. If they won't sign the application get their name and telephone number for follow up later.

Try to get them to fill out the application and to select one of the Weekends mentioned, even if they are not sure. We can always change the date. Mention that the \$75 **application fee**, which will hold their place on the Weekend. If they ask about the cost of the Weekend, explain how we ask that they consider a donation on Sunday afternoon on the Weekend. It is a donation, based upon what you can afford and what you would like to give based upon your own experience, with the knowledge of what it costs marriage encounter to put on the Weekend. If they insist on wanting to know the cost, then tell them that the cost at this time is \$575/couple. This reservation fee has already been deducted from the cost per couple. **Emphasize the privacy of the Weekend, that they are always in control, nothing happens that they don't want to happen.**

Make sure the encountered community couples who have come to help know what to do. Let them know that they need to pick one couple to talk with, and to answer any questions the couple might have, and to sign that couple up.

COUPONS

Follow these video instructions to create some coupons to handout for savings off the application fee as incentive. Codes SAVE-35 and SAVE-50 save \$35 and \$50 off the \$75 application fee.

Link	QR Code
https://youtu.be/_5EpLHjOSUA	
https://youtu.be/KvzBou0AR8M	

Romance Dinner

The purpose of a Romance Dinner is provide the atmosphere and opportunity for couples attending to reminisce about their dating days and early marriage. We are giving them a taste of what they recapture for their relationships now – by attending a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend. This event can successfully be held in a church facility that has a full service kitchen or a school cafeteria. The space can easily be transformed into a romantic “café” with some simple decorations.

Each couple should be seated at their own private card table (complete with table cloth, flower and candle light). Waite couples/priests should be assigned to no more than 3 tables – so they can provide excellent service. (The wait couples should always attend to their assigned tables as a couple)

If the room is equipped with 6 or 8 foot long tables, use them to create an intimate space. Fold in one of the table legs and stand it up using the remaining leg outstretched leg as its ground support. You can create a wall by putting these “on end” tables side-by-side, thereby transforming a large room into a small and cozy café. String Christmas white lights along the tops of the upright tables and you’ll be amazed at the effect combined with your elegantly decorated card tables.

The results from hosting Romance Dinners are remarkable. Couples attending this style of Romance Dinner sign up at a rate of 90% or higher – and usually on the night of the dinner. It is important that you make the Inviting Presentation at the end of the evening to “close the deal”.

If you are inviting couples via church bulletins instead of WEDS couples inviting their friends/relatives, you may want to consider a small registration fee (\$10.00 or so) to limit no shows and to help make the registration process a little easier. Couples paying their fee confirms their reservation and reduces the number of calls the registration couple makes to confirm.

WWME encourages the participating members to donate what they can towards the funding of the Romance Dinner. However, if reimbursement is anticipated, please estimate the reimbursement amount ahead of the event and seek approval from the Local Area Coordinators.

Presentation

The sample talk included in this resource material is included to give you an idea of what to share with the Romance Dinner attendees after you have wined and dined them. The couple presenting will need to insert their own love story and impact of the weekend on their relationship.

The informational material can be given as is or changed as you see fit. Don’t be afraid to close the deal. Give the talk – they will want to know how to get what the other couples have – share that passion with them.

<<Him>>

Good evening, thank you all for coming tonight. We hope you have enjoyed your dinner. I'm _____, this is my wife _____. We are very excited to be here this evening to share with you an experience that has touched our lives. That experience was our Marriage Encounter Weekend.

First, let me give you a little background about Marriage Encounter. Marriage Encounter is a worldwide movement within the church designed to help married couples deepen and enrich their relationship. It is also designed to help priests and religious deepen and enrich their relationship with their spouse, which is the Church and all of its people. The weekend is for couples, priests and religious who have a good relationship, but want to make it a great relationship. So far, over 3 million couples and religious in 91 countries have experienced a Marriage Encounter weekend.

<<Her>>

We hope that you had a chance, during dinner, to talk about the questions on the handouts at your table and to reminisce about the romance which was present in your lives when you were dating and first married.

I remember when _____ and I were dating and first married and how much in love we were. We would sit for hours on end and talk or just look into each other's eyes. _____ would always tell me how nice I looked and was eager to hold my hand and put his arm around me in public. He was also very romantic. He would surprise me with a love note saying, "I can't wait to be with you tonight," or bring home flowers or small gifts. Marriage with _____ was romantic, fun, and better than anything I could ever have imagined.

<<Him>>

I remember when _____ and I were first married, we were inseparable. We couldn't stand to be apart. We went everywhere and did everything together. I was drawn to _____ fun loving and playful nature. She brightened my world and made life fun. We were passionately in love with each other and _____ was my dream come true.

After we were married a while though, our relationship just didn't seem to have that same spark anymore. The children came and we started spending more and more of our time with them. And when I did have leisure time, I usually spent it away from _____ and with friends. We quit making time for each other and I began to feel lonely in our marriage.

<<Her>>

For me, after several years of marriage, I also began to feel lonely and insecure. I was rebellious toward _____ and what he thought my role as a wife should be. I became so busy taking care of the kids, doing volunteer work, and caring for friends, that our relationship became last on my

list of priorities. I felt lonely and distant from _____ and wondered what had happened to that passion we once shared.

We began to schedule our lives around our jobs, the kids' various activities, or what program was on TV that evening. When we were alone our conversations were usually shallow like two strangers meeting for the first time. We came to accept our busy lifestyles and the way we were living. We told ourselves that it was normal that once you've been married for a while, the romance just fades away. We still loved each other, but deep down we realized something was missing in our relationship.

We know each of you has a love story of your own. As you think back, is the romance you remember when you were dating and first married still present in your lives today? If not, what's happened to it? Do you sit close to each other anymore? Do you have romantic dinners alone? Do your jobs, children, and the TV take priority over the two of you and your relationship?

As I looked ahead, I could envision a time when the children would no longer live at home and be the center of our lives. I began to worry if we could recapture the couple we were when we were first married, after being Mom and Dad for so many years.

<<Him>>

I had never been one for deep, emotional sharing with _____, but the nightly routine of "What's for dinner?" and "What's on TV?" was bothering me. I began asking myself if I still loved _____. The answer was always "yes" but I will admit I was becoming bored. Our weekend brought back the joy and enthusiasm we had when we were dating and first married. We no longer did things separately to avoid each other, we did things together to enjoy each other.

When Father talked at church about a Marriage Encounter weekend, I was hesitant. I was not going to get up in front of a group of strangers and bear my soul to them. But he stated that all sharing on the weekend is strictly between husband and wife in the privacy of their hotel room. This was a key selling point for me. The weekend was worth every moment. I can still recall the love and warmth I felt for _____ as we drove home that Sunday night of our weekend and ## years later, it is still there. Our Marriage Encounter weekend was the best thing that has ever happened to our marriage. It brought the romance back.

<<Her>>

You're probably wondering what a Marriage Encounter weekend is. The weekend begins on a Friday evening about 7:30 and ends on a Sunday evening at approximately 5:00. The weekends are held at _____ which is a wonderful way for you to get away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life. During the weekend you will hear a series of talks presented by 3 couples and a priest. These talks will reflect upon the different aspects of married life and religious life and the couples and the priest will share from their own experiences. After the presentations you are given the opportunity to return to the privacy of your own room for your own personal discussion. The weekend is oriented strictly to each individual couple or priest so you don't have to worry about any group sharing.

<<Him>>

The weekend is NOT a religious retreat. It is not an exercise in bearing your soul to everyone. It is a time for you and your spouse to share with each other without the distractions of everyday life. This weekend is for married couples and priests who want to experience the fullness that their love has to offer. All of you sitting here this evening deserve a Marriage Encounter weekend. Ask yourselves – if there was a possibility that you and your marriage could be better, that you and your spouse could be happier, would you take that chance?

We would like to invite you to take that chance and sign up for a weekend tonight. The very worst thing that could happen is that you would spend a weekend alone.

<<Her>>

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend is Catholic in orientation. But, you do not have to be Catholic to attend the weekend. It is open to all married couples, so a certain number of spaces are reserved each weekend for couples of other faiths.

You are probably wondering how much the weekend will cost you. There is a \$\$ non-refundable registration fee which confirms and holds your reservation. During the weekend you will be asked to make a free will donation to help cover the expenses.

There is a Marriage Encounter weekend scheduled for mm/dd/yy-mm/dd/yy at _____ in _____. We already have a number of couples registered for the weekend. However, we have reserved a space for all couples invited here tonight, but, space is limited so if you are thinking about going you need to go ahead and register tonight to be assured a spot on the weekend. Should mm/dd/yy-mm/dd/yy not be a convenient time for you to attend the weekend, there are other weekend dates available. Even if you are unable to attend this weekend, chances are better that you will be assured a spot on the weekend of your choice if you register here tonight. The \$\$ registration fee will carry over to the next available weekend.

<<Him>>

The wonderful meal you have received tonight was prepared by Marriage Encounter couples, who very lovingly gave of themselves. Those same loving couples will come out in a few minutes with an application form. All you need to do is fill out the application and get ready to have the weekend of your life.

If you still have doubts, talk with the couples and ask them about their own weekend and what the weekend has done for them. Everyone has had their own experience of the wonderful weekend, which changed their life. We will be here as well, to answer any questions that you may have or to tell you more about the weekend. The couples will also have information about the other scheduled weekends available. For now, we thank you for listening and we encourage you to care enough about your marriage to make it a priority and invest one weekend to make it even better. God bless you.

Invitations

Volunteers

Date

Dear _____,

We are pleased to announce that our (name the sponsor here – circle or community name) will be hosting a Romance Dinner on (date) at (place). The purpose of the dinner is for couples to be wined and dined by loving Marriage Encounter couples and at the end of the evening hear a short talk on a Marriage Encounter Weekend. Before each meal course they will hear a poem and be given questions about their dating and early marriage years. This is where the evening takes off for them as they reminisce about the romance stage of their relationship. After dessert the short talk is presented and they have the opportunity to sign up for a weekend.

You are welcome to invite one or 2 couples to the dinner and participate in the evening either in the kitchen or as the server couple for the couple(s) you invited. The dinner is free to the guests and the costs for the event will be covered by the couples who are hosting this evening. An added bonus of the night is that the servers have as much fun as the guests.

We will begin planning this event _____(if this is a WEDS sponsored event – use part of your WEDS meeting to avoid multiple meetings). If you would like to participate in any way and can't make the meeting please call _____ at _____ by _____.

We hope to hear from you.

Hugs,

name
phone #

Previous Interest

Date

Dear _____,

We have been told by the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Registration Couple that in the past you have inquired about or signed up for a Marriage Encounter Weekend, but have not yet attended a Weekend. We know that at times it is very difficult to take an entire weekend just for yourselves. Because of this we would like to invite you to be our guests at a Candlelight Dinner on _____. Please see the enclosed invitation.

This Candlelight Dinner is being given for couples like you who have expressed an interest in enriching their relationship. It is being planned and hosted by other couples who have already attended a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend. The reason we want you to be our guests is that we believe, as married couples, that we need to take time out for romance from time to time. At the end of the evening we will be telling you a little bit about the Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend, but you are under no obligation to commit to anything.

Please let us know by _____ if you can join us - we'd love to have you there. You can reach us at _____. If we aren't home, just leave a message on our answering machine.
Thanks!

Sincerely,

Priest or Religious

Date

Dear Father «PriestName»,

In an effort to invite and register couples for the upcoming (Weekend Date) Worldwide Marriage Encounter in (Location), the Marriage Encounter community is hosting a free Romance Dinner for married couples from your parish. We would like to ask if you would please place the below listed announcement in your Parish bulletins each weekend from now until (Date) if possible. We appreciate all the assistance you have given us in placing announcements in your bulletins. The Marriage Encounter movement relies greatly on couples who receive information published about upcoming Weekends from their parish bulletin announcements.

Sincerely,

Names

WWME (Local area name) Area Coordinators

address

city state zip

phone

email

Bulletin Announcement

To be placed in (Date – Date) Church Bulletins

Attention all Married Couples!! You are invited to a Free Romance Dinner on Date at time p.m. at Church Name/Location, sponsored by Worldwide Marriage Encounter. Come enjoy a quiet, romantic dinner for two and find out what a Marriage Encounter Weekend is all about. To make your dinner reservation call Name & Name at Number (open to the first 20 married couples).

Handouts

The handouts on the following pages can be made smaller and printed in a landscape format. If you choose to do this you can fit two handouts on an 8.5x11 page and save paper when printing the handouts.

We suggest that you print the handouts on colored paper – a different color for each course is more user friendly for you and the couples. It is quite wonderful to see the couples reaction to the poems and then to see them discussing the questions. Make sure the kitchen crew gets a glimpse of this scene. It's one of many of God's graces your group will enjoy in planning and hosting this experience

Handout 1

Not long ago this guy and gal met and things began to happen...

Do you remember the first day you met?
Do you remember how it happened?
How did you feel inside?

One thing led to another, and they realized they liked each other, so they went out...

Do you remember your first date?
What was it like?

Dating continued, and they discovered they really liked each other, so they kissed....

Do you remember your first kiss?
Do you remember where you were?
How did you feel?

They realized they became a steady, permanent couple and they spent all their time together...

Do you remember sharing your dreams for life with each other?
And how you wanted to live?
Talk about those dreams and schemes you both had.

They soon discovered not only did they like each other, but they had fallen in love...

Do you remember the day you two became engaged?
What was it like?
Talk about what you've just heard and read.

Soon the big day was here, the day was perfect for the wedding day jitters....

Do you remember your wedding day?
And how she was the most beautiful woman in the world?
And how perfect and handsome he was?

Their wedding day, now a treasured memory they shared. And they started their new life...

Do you remember your first apartment or house?
Where was it? How did you find it? How did you decorate it?

Do you remember your first fight as husband and wife?
And the sweet joy of making up as you held each other in your arms.

Do you remember the day you brought your first child home?

And the joy and happiness you felt as you held him or her?

And life went on. They filled up their treasure chest full of memories. Each new day and every year brought joy, sorrow, and tears. So they continued to fill each page of their book of memories with love.

The years went on and now here you sit. Your love still shines from your eyes when you share your treasured memories with your best friend.

What are the treasured memories in your life?
Reflect on these special moments.

Handout 2

AS WE ARE ONE

WHEN YOU AND I WERE WED, MY LOVE...

HOW TWO PERSONS COULD BECOME...

I LOVED YOU FOR YOUR CHARM...

AND ALL THE GLANCES AND SMILES,

BUT I DISCOVERED I BECAME...

AND IN THE FINAL PICTURE,

I MEAN, I REALLY LOVE YOU FOR...

FOR YOUR MIND AND SOUL...

AND EVERY NIGHT UNTIL THE DAWN,

I GIVE MY HEARTFELT THANKS TO GOD,

IT NEVER DAWNED ON ME,

ONE PERSONALITY.

OR PHYSICAL DESIGN.

I LONGED TO CLAIM AS MINE.

AS MUCH A PART OF YOU,

WE WERE ONE...INSTEAD OF TWO.

THE WAY YOU THINK AND FEEL,

INSTEAD OF JUST, YOUR SEXUAL APPEAL.

AND TO THE SETTING SUN...

THAT WE TRULY ARE ONE!

Delegation

Caring Coordinator Couple

As a community of Encountered Couples we are called to a journey of striving for intimacy and unity in our relationship. In addition, as a Sacrament, we are called to reach out to others with our renewed love. This is the dynamic that brings life to our relationship and makes the world a better place. When we help others, we feel better about ourselves and our life is more meaningful.

One way to reach out is to care for a Couple who is making the Weekend. The Caring Couple Ministry is extremely important to our movement. The Caring Couple is the newly encountered Couple's link into the Marriage Encounter Community. The Caring Coordinator Couple is the WEDS group's main contact for coordinating Caring Couples within your WEDS group for each WWME weekend. See the contacts for the Coordinator Couple for the Atlanta Area WWME. Contact them and let them know who you have within your WEDS Group that is willing to care for a Couple.

Responsibilities of a Caring Couple

The most important responsibility of a Caring Coordinator Couple is to invite newly encountered Couples to their WEDS Group and assign a couple within your group to Care for them. Once assigned a couple:

- Start praying for them and continue throughout the weekend.
- At least one week before the Weekend, write your special Couple a Caring Couple Letter. Send your letter to the Coordinator Couple. See samples letters below.
- Try to attend the bag-drag at the beginning of the Weekend to meet your couple, but don't let them know you are their caring couple.
- During the Weekend, make sacrifices for your couple – go to Mass and offer Eucharist up for the Couple or dialog during the extended dialog time. Light a candle and keep it burning throughout the Weekend or give up something you like
- Try to attend the Sing Out to officially meet your Couple and begin the process of building a relationship with that Couple.
- After the Weekend, call your Couple and invite them out.
- Attend the Weekend Reunion with your Couple and invite them to come to your next WEDS meeting.

Weekend Schedule

This recap of the Weekend schedule will give you an opportunity to keep track of where your couple is at various times during the Weekend so that you can make that journey with them.

Friday:

Introduction (7:30-8:00) Pray that your couple is open to participating fully in the Weekend.

Communicating our Feelings (9:00-9:30) Pray that your couple sees the difference between ordinary and intimate conversation and that they understand the importance of sharing feelings with each other. Pray that they are willing to take the time to discover the feelings in themselves and see the importance of sharing them with their spouse.

Saturday:

Encounter with Self (9:00-9:50) Pray that your couple discovers their personality style and the behaviors that help and hinder their relationship. Pray that they come to understand how their self-doubts limit their relationship.

Marriage in Today's World (10:15-10:50) Pray that your couple is able to see that it is normal to experience disillusionment and loneliness in their relationship and that in spite of this they can still make the decision to love.

Listening (12:55-1:15) Pray that your couple recognizes the difference between listening with the mind and listening with their heart.

Areas for Reaching Out to Each Other (2:00-2:30) Pray that your couple is open to sharing feelings in the sensitive areas of their relationship so that they can become more intimate.

God's Desire for Marriage (4:25-4:50) Pray that your couple becomes aware that their deepest longing as husband and wife is to live in a loving relationship and that they come to discover that God wants them to live intimately and responsibly.

Risking to Trust in Dialogue (6:40-7:10) Pray that your couple is willing to face their fears and to go beyond them to trust in their spouse's love and caring for them and risk sharing their feelings.

Impact of Dialogue in our Daily Lives (8:10-8:50) Pray that your couple understands the value of dialoguing each day.

Sunday:

Marriage as Sacrament (8:25-9:05) Pray that the couple understands the significance of being a Sacrament and what it means for the Church.

Keeping our Relationship a Priority (11:35-11:55) Pray that your couple understand that if they make their relationship a priority it will benefit themselves, their families, the Church, and the world.

Sharing in the Dream (1:25-1:50) Pray that your couple will share themselves personally and financially in keeping the dream alive for others.

Continuing our Journey (2:20-2:50) Pray that your couple makes the Weekend experience a way of life by sharing their love and journeying with couples and priest who share their values, journey with you!

Prayer Letters

Dear Couple, it is a joy for us to pray for you this Weekend. We have walked each step of the way with you in our thoughts and in prayer. Our Eucharist was offered up for you at Mass so that you may come to know an even greater love. We pray that God brings you closer and that you and your family are blessed with the knowledge of His tender love. Our hope for you is that your love for one another is renewed and that you experience a deepening and maturing of your love for one another. We do hope that your love will continue to grow through your Daily Dialogue and that your love will spill over and touch those around you. We are looking forward to meeting you to see and hear, first hand, your excitement. Please call us Sunday evening, we'll be waiting to hear from you. We want to let you know about our wonderful WEDS Group here at _____ Parish.

We love you _____ Telephone # _____

Dear Couple, you have been in our thoughts and prayers since we were asked to pray for you on your Marriage Encounter Weekend. Your names have been posted in a special place in our home for us to see, as a reminder to pray for you as you experience your Weekend. On Friday evening we thought of you and lit a candle in your honor and kept it burning throughout the Weekend. On Sunday morning during your Extended Dialogue we offered our Mass and Eucharist up for you. We prayed that you would come to know one another in a deeper, more intimate way and that your love would be renewed. Our hope is that you experience the love of Jesus in your relationship in special way and that you continue to grow in your love for one another. Remember, that through your Daily Dialogue, you have the means to keep the joy and closeness you found on your Weekend present in your lives. We are looking forward to meeting you to see and hear, first hand, your excitement. Please call us Sunday evening, we'll be waiting to hear from you. We'd like to share the joy of your Weekend with you and we want to let you know about our wonderful WEDS Group here at _____ Parish

We love you _____ Telephone # _____

Notes

Notes