

# HUG ME

*Help Us Grow In Marriage Encounter*

Summer 2008

## Convention Celebrates 40 years for M.E.

*by Bob & Joyce Leonetti*

“Love one another as I have loved you”. We have all heard John’s gospel many times. They form the vision of Worldwide Marriage Encounter. They set a high bar, a mission of renewing the church and changing the world. This great and holy adventure began 40 years ago with a few couples, a priest, and the Holy Spirit presenting an adaptation of an outline first presented in Spain by Father Gabriel Calvo. From these humble beginnings, Worldwide Marriage Encounter and its message of love has spread to over 90 countries, enriching the lives of millions of sacraments.

In late June, almost 2,000 people gathered in Ontario California to celebrate the occasion of WWME’s 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. The theme was “One World, One Family, 40 Years”.

High points included a videotaped address by Father Chuck Gallagher, the American priest who was the driving force behind WWME, and a letter from Father Calvo himself. Being an international convention, there was much sharing of the rich cultures that make up our WWME family.

Section 3 was privileged to help the Pan-African Secretariat leaders with their airfare, thus allowing them to attend the convention. We met with them, presented them with gifts, and included them in our Section 3 picture.

The main message of the convention was even though we are proud of our past, we must look toward an even brighter future.

Presenters talked about the conversions that occurred on our original weekends. They talked about the precious gift that we were given on the weekend. They spoke of the relevance of the weekend message in today's world and our responsibility to keep the dream of a "New World" alive and well. The liturgies were moving and the music very special. Saturday evening presented attendees with multiple opportunities for fun; an ethnic dance show, a coffee house and a DJ were among the choices.

No one has stepped forward with a proposal to host the 2010 Convention as yet but Section 3 would like to give a try; **possibly right in South Jersey!** We'll keep you posted. Let us know if you'd like to help.



**Convention Attendees:** Section 3 was well represented at the M.E. convention held in Ontario, California. Shown in the foreground are Fr. Joseph Ateh and Francoise Njefi, leaders of the PanAfrican Secretariat.

## Leadership Update

*by Joe & Thea Hegarty*

Thanks to the gargantuan efforts of Bob & Michelle Dooley and a host of community and team couples, South Jersey's first Experience went off without a hitch. Eight Sacraments were encountered. Any concerns we had about couples returning home during the week and being, in a sense, contaminated by the world were very quickly dispelled. The couples were focused and worked hard.

The community provided welcome support. Michelle's idea to invite the couples for dinner prior to the evening sessions made up for the void created by not having meals together as on the weekend.

The "devisatating" Fr. Sanjai presided over the closing Mass, ably assisted by Fr. Jim Cassadia with musical (guitar) accompaniment by Fr. Steve Rapposelli, who also made the Experience. What a blessing for us in SJME to have fine young priests like these giving of their time, talents, and treasure. The Shore community was out in force, not only preparing and setting out dinner for us after Mass on Sunday, but also as part of our Mass celebration.

## Dolans Inspire M.E. Community

*by Msgr. Skip Barth*

Everyone loves the rose for its beauty and magnificent aroma. But it is only the avid gardener who can appreciate it totally. The avid gardener knows better than anyone how to produce the perfect rose. The selection of the type of stalk is important for it

determines the flower, but it is the preparation that produces the perfection. It takes years of learning when to plant the stalk; how to properly prepare the soil; the type and amount of fertilizers to use; the quality and amount of water to use; what chemicals must be applied to thwart the aphids and other destructive agents. There are those, too, who can properly prepare the roses in an artistic display for all to admire, cherish and love. But the artistry could not occur if the gardener didn't provide the perfect roses. It all begins with the art of planting the rose stalk. It is that knowledge and art which separates the true gardener from the person who can prepare the presentation and the person who can only enjoy the final product. The gardener knows that unless the roots are perfect, the rose won't be perfect.

In life we have all seen those who can start something and graduate to higher planes, forgetting what started them on their original path. Indeed, some, as they strive for higher power or accolades, even look down on those who follow them. They forget their humble beginnings in their desire for higher status. I have seen that in industry as people step on one another to get ahead. I have seen it in the Church for those who forget they were called to serve not to be served. And, yes, I have seen it in Marriage Encounter for some who rose to higher ranks and forgot their humble beginnings.

It is time to single out a couple who found a conversion and a new way of life on their weekend. It's a couple who were selected for higher things by those who saw their talents and ability. They were selected to be team and, in time, they were selected for higher office. They served in that higher echelon and they served admirably. But they never once forgot where it all began. They never looked for greatness. They never turned their back on what they found in the roots of Marriage Encounter. What they found, they want for every couple. While it would be nice to be the rose everyone admires, they know the weekend is the root that makes the beautiful flower and they never once flinched in their dedication to the weekend.

I've known Mike and Nancy Dolan for a number of years from the time they left their native Colorado to settle in Jersey until now. I've given weekends with them and I have been so impressed with the perfection of their talks, their delivery, but, above all, with their great desire to share with couples what they found years ago. Their earnestness rubs off on the presenting teams. It engulfs the couples on the weekend. They dare to

challenge others to find and enjoy what they have. And couples rise to that challenge. At one time, we had a banner on the weekend – “to be so close that when one cries, the other tastes salt.” To me and to you, Nancy and Mike are the fulfillment of that banner. To know them is not only to know a couple deeply in love, but to know and share with a couple who live what God’s plan for marriage truly is.

Nancy and Mike may have stepped down, but what they accomplished in us and in others will continue to live on. It is our hope and prayer that, like them, we will never forget the roots of Marriage Encounter, the weekend, is what the movement is all about. It is the weekend that invites couples to live God’s plan. It is the weekend that brings couples to understand that God loves them so much He presented them with the gift of a spouse. Nancy and Mike, we thank you for your commitment, your dedication, your challenge and, above all, your love.

## **Love Notes for Mike and Nancy**

You are more than team to us, You have always inspired us to not settle for comfort or the easy way. We learned from you never to say no when it comes to reaching out to couples who deserve the word of God in their sacrament and we love to share theater talk with you. Your couple love truly shines out to us and brings us great joy. God bless you. See you in NYC. Love & peace, Mike & Janet Turco

. You made a wonderful difference in the lives of others. Love, Michael and Anne Hill

While your leadership and knowledge in the Worldwide Marriage Encounter movement set you apart from others it’s your loving and caring for others that makes you special. You take the time to write a note of encouragement, have the fortitude to challenge all to live out the ME mission and be there for others in need. You have a special place in our hearts and we are a stronger couple today because you included us as companions on your journey. Peace & Love, John & Theresa

Thank you your friendship most of all. We applaud your qualities of honesty, loyalty, insight, and a steady hand always forging toward furthering The Mission. We love you, Tom and Dorothy Von Holtum

Trust US! You are incredible apostles and we are the couple we are today coz we did trust you. Love Ya, Bob & Michelle

Our friendship goes back so many years and our love for you and your children is endless. Thank you for the gift of your relationship and of you sharing your lives with us. We will cherish the many Christmases we spent with you and hope there are many more to come. May Jesus bless you with health and whatever else He has in store. Sometimes His humor hurts! Love, Peace & Joy, Bill & Penny

We remember when you first came to our Marlton ME Circle. We were somewhat nervous because we now had another team couple in our community. That soon left us only to be filled with admiration and joy. Thank you for touching our lives and many others. HDWFTYT? FANTASTIC! (smile). Love, Michael and Sheila Abair

We appreciate the treasure you have been and continue to be for SJME. We love you. Joe & Thea



*A Special Couple:* Mike and Nancy Dolan embody the saying, “so close that when one cries, the other tastes salt.”

## Love Notes From South Jersey

**Dear Ron and Pat:** Happy 50th wedding anniversary! What a wonderful accomplishment and gift. You are a beautiful example of God’s plan for married couples and an outstanding role model for encountered couples. We love you, the Medford/Shamong/ Tabernacle Love Circle.

**Dear Pat Sabo:** Our love and prayers are with you as you go into surgery on August 21. Love, the Medford/Shamong/ Tabernacle Love Circle

**Dear John Perides:** Congratulations on your new book and article in the current issue of SJ Magazine. Love the the Medford/Shamong/ Tabernacle Love Circle

**Dear South Jersey Communities:** We praise you for all the hard work you do to keep M.E. going. We are all part of a one body serving our Lord to fulfill the blessed union of marriage, we are proud to be apart of the South Jersey Community, we love you all, Many Blessings, Bill & Sherry Marion

**Dear John & Theresa.** Thank you so much for all of your hard work in being our first workshop couple. We know how much work you put in to making our talks the best that they could be. We love you and you both mean so much to us. Love, Larry & Peggy Schrader

**Dear Bob & Michelle,**We don't know where to begin. Your patience and guidance have helped to make us want to be the best that we can be for ME. We feel like you are like angels guiding us on this journey. Thank you for all of your help and please know that we really appreciate all that you do. We love you.Larry & Peggy Schrader

**Dear Joe & Thea,**We want to thank you for how supportive you have always been to us. From our first kick off to the Experience that we will be presenting together..you have been there with us. Your sense of humor, kindness, energy & enthusiasm for ME has made us want to be a part of it. We love you, Larry & Peggy Schrader

## **Beach Day**

Join us and other M.E. couples at 58th & the beach in Ocean City, NJ. There'll be sun, fun, dialogue, games and prizes for the kids on a guarded beach. Bring your lunch. We'll supply the drinks.

Saturday, September 6  
11 am-3 pm  
RSVP Bob and Joyce Leonetti

609-398-1373

[pfloyd@verizon.net](mailto:pfloyd@verizon.net)

## **Marriage Encounter** **Coming Events**

### **Beach Day**

September 6

Call Bob & Joyce Leonetti

609-398-1373

### **Prom**

October 4

Call Mike & Shawnda Mammi

856-694-5742

## **2008 Marriage Encounter**

### **Weekend Dates**

September 19-21

October 17-19

December 5-7

For more information go to [www.mesj.net](http://www.mesj.net)  
or call 1-800-688-9963.

The HUG ME newsletter is published four times a year by South Jersey Marriage Encounter for the use and enjoyment of all South Jersey Marriage Encounter couples. Letters to the editor, articles, photos, love notes and comments are welcomed and should be sent to Joe and Thea Hegarty at [davnell@verizon.net](mailto:davnell@verizon.net).

The editors reserve the right to edit any submitted materials for length.