

# An Open Letter

By Jim & Marcia Waterman

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Dear Ones,

We would like to introduce ourselves to all of you. We are Jim & Marcia Waterman. We made our Weekend in November, 1979. This is the first time we have felt compelled to write a letter to our M.E. Community. We would like to share with you why. Please be open and listen to what we would like to share with you, because we have a tale to tell you.

When we made our Weekend, we went because we wanted to improve our communication. We judged that we had a good, stable marriage. But the area of communication between us bothered us. Our Weekend wasn't anything like what we had expected. When we left Sunday night, we were on cloud nine, in love, and we were the closest we had ever been in ten years of marriage.

But what we didn't take with us on that Sunday night was the commitment to dialogue. For whatever reasons, and there were many, we felt we could stay close, just as we had been on our Weekend, without dialogue. We thought we could stay "encountered," if you will, by being involved with the community with whatever things were available—open circles, love spirals, picnics. You name it; we did it if we were able.

We stayed close for awhile, but always looked for excuses not to dialogue, or excuses why we didn't have to. **What it came down to was this: we wanted to change our relationship, like it was on the Weekend, but not enough to change our way of life.** So we put down our pens one day, and never picked them up again.

We went about our life together, kidding ourselves and others into thinking we had changed. We had caught something valuable on our Weekend, we knew it between us, but we wanted to work at it our way—not God's way. He called us loud and clear, but we didn't listen hard enough to accept it. We didn't believe that the way to discovery and closeness for us, and ultimately from us to Him, was through the tool of dialogue. The Weekend was becoming a memory.

Then about a year after our Weekend, we both came to the awareness that things were not right between us. It wasn't working our way. The closeness we had experienced on our Weekend was gone. We felt like strangers a lot, living in the same house, sharing the same bed—but never really knowing where each other was really at. The feelings of alienation, resentment and loneliness were almost unbearable at times. We became almost desperate.

We sat down one night and talked, and we decided to look at the tool of dialogue again. We made no promises that night, except to try and give it our best shot. We both felt the urgency to let the other know who we were and to know the other. We tried dialogue one more time for no other reason but for our painfully alienated relationship. We wanted it to be better than it was that night.

It was awkward at first it felt like a duty—and a chore too. But we kept trying. And then things started to change and get better. Things have been changing ever since. We are changing almost everyday right now. We both feel loved and lovable again. Right now we are the closest we have ever been in eleven years—closer than we were on our Weekend. We have found such a freedom and love in our relationship we never thought possible. The freedom we found was the freedom to be exactly the persons God made us to be. We've stopped being strangers to our own selves and to each other. We have the freedom to be ourselves, and not the masks we had accumulated over the years.

Now we would rather take poison than not dialogue. We've come to love it. Through the support and help of other couples, we've been able to adapt our dialogue technique so that it is simple and is able to focus on the feeling in question—and nothing else. We could say a lot more right here, but this is turning into a book and not a letter.

What we are really trying to say to you is this: if you are not dialoguing at all, or if only once in awhile, as a special favor to us (and especially for yourselves), pick up your pens tonight if you can and are so inclined. Just try it tonight and maybe tomorrow night. A miracle could happen to you like it happened to us. We feel blessed and special that God gave us a second chance. He will give you a second chance too, if you want it enough.

Encounter is not all the kissing and the hugging and getting together with other couples — it's none of that. The bottom line is this: it is a serious call by God to both of you to be truly one holy, catholic, and apostolic in your Sacrament of Matrimony. This is how He wants us to live out our Sacrament. God's message is that through knowing and loving each other we can come to know and love Him; and, hopefully, someday be with Him, through and with each other—not alone. He called us all to the Vocation of Marriage, and this is what He calls us to do with our marriage.

If things are not exactly as you think they should be in your relationship, please just pick up your pens tonight and be for each other. Take a look at your relationship right now. Is it exactly where you want it to be? Are you feeling close to each other right now? Like you felt on Sunday night? Could your relationship stand to be a little bit better? We took a look and decided to take our second chance. Take your second chance, or your third, or your fourth if need be.

Praying that you try again.  
In love and hope,  
Jim & Marcia Waterman