

# Alaska WWME 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual World Marriage Day Dinner-Dance & Inviting Celebration

By James & Shaharriet Houchins

"To God be the Glory"! All the months of anticipation and planning ended on February 2, 2007. Alaska Worldwide Marriage Encounter's Third Annual World Marriage Day Mass, and Dinner-Dance Inviting Activity began with the celebration of the WMD Mass. The Mass was the highlight of the evening and was like celebrating a wedding at "High Mass". There were 9 concelebrating priests including, Frs. Vince Blanco (OLOG), Tom Brundage St. Michaels, Fred Bugarin St. Anthony's, Patrick Fletcher Our Lady of Fatima, Elmendorf AFB, Dan Hebert Holy Cross, Ron Licayan St. Patricks, Tom Lilly SEAS, Jaime Mencias, Ben Torreto SEAS, and Arch Bishop Roger Schwietz, the presider. Couples began arriving hand in hand with the "sparkle" of love in their eyes. As vows were renewed and tears flowed down the faces of lovers; priests were in awe of that wonderful Sacrament of Matrimony they celebrate so much. At communion WWME couples receiving Jesus as one Sacrament poured forth as they were the majority in our celebration. It was obvious the "non-ME couples" could feel this WWME love and comfort during the Mass as they watched this special bond WWME couples share. Musicians and vocalist of St. Patrick's Parish beautifully orchestrated the music. During the Mass our feeling of peace was like a baby wrapped tightly in a blanket held close to his Mother.



Next began the dinner and dance. We created an ambiance of "Jesus' love out poured" as WWME couple table hosts served the couples and priests seated at their tables. They started table conversation with cute questions pulled from a box of conversation hearts specifically about marriage. The Marriage Encounter dream began to take form as couples shared about their Weekend experience and how WWME has changed and shaped their lives. Priest shared with other priest and couples about their Weekend

experience. WWME couples weaved testimonies about ME and there was laughter and remembrance of WWME Conventions and events through the years. We were honored to have former Alaska Exec. Couple Bill & Donna Burke and Larry & Cathy Ward celebrating with their 2<sup>nd</sup> generation ME kids, Ron & Tammy McCallion (our Entertainment Couple) and Tony & Caryn Bromirski (one of our speakers). Larry & Judy Helgeson, Lutheran ME Execs. celebrated and spoke about Marriage Encounter's many faith expressions around the world. Mike & Dodi Malloy took complimentary photographs of couples and priests to commemorate the evening as well as a special WWME group photo we presented to Arch Bishop Schwietz. Our feeling experiencing all of this was like the MasterCard lost dog commercial with the ending line "Coming home ~ Priceless".

Our "WWME Teens", Cierra Houchins, Joe and Asia Tunilla, Alicia Burke, David Mills, Christian Shaut, Katy and Chris Reintsma, and Ian Ward kept water and tea glasses filled and plates cleared. Dayle worked to assure guest's coats were checked.



**Cierra Houchins**



**Ian Ward serving  
Richard & Chong Napoleon**

Our WWME Kitchen volunteers headed by Bill & Sherry Tunilla included, Don & Martha Schindler, Matt & Dedra Williams, John & Mary Duer, and Chef for the evening Wally Wong supported by his wife Donna Pearce and Braxton Bundick (volunteer chef in training), prepared the presentation of this wonderful meal on plates and after all were fed joined us on the dance floor for the "Cha Cha Slide".

Area businesses donated prizes (i.e., a free night at the Millennium and Sheraton Hotels, Dinner at Moose's Tooth, Gweenies, Alaska Tab and Bind, etc.) Couples with winning tickets yelled with excitement like Michael Jordan and the Chicago Bulls winning the NBA Championship.

As all the excitement was going on more and more WWME love surrounded us as we recognized George & Jackie Palmer as our oldest married couple with 51 years and 8 months, and a "WWME hopeful" Sven & Megan Walsted as our youngest married. We

also honored our longest religious with Arch Bishop Roger L. Schwietz with 39 years and Sr. Jo Gaugier with 52 years and our youngest Fr. Tom Lilly with 3 1/2 years.

The air in the room smelled like sweet perfume and couples felt giddy like teenagers in love and they radiated like our Alaska Northern Lights. The couple romance and priest love and support were very apparent. Tables filled full of couples and priests celebrating. Decorations inspired by Judy Christensen adorned the tables as the mirrors reflected back the aura of the room.



**Fr. Dan Hebert and WWME Alaska Presenting Team Priest Fr. Ron Licayan**



**Doug & Kimberly Jones, Bryan Schroder & Mary Gore, Grant & Cheryl Roderer**

At our last National WWME Convention we focused on the theme "In God We Trust" and that is exactly what Alaska WWME volunteers did and God delivered a wonderful, memorable evening for everyone in attendance. Our Alaska WWME is alive and serves as a beacon for marriages all over Alaska. We want Alaska marriages illuminating so brightly that all the lower 48 states can see. Our Alaska dream in accordance with our WWME mission statement "of renewal in the Church and change in the world one couple /priest at a time" is to "dream big" and imagine non-ME couples being pulled off the streets like magnets to find out how they can feel and be a part of what we have as WWME couples and priests.

In conclusion, our, priests and couples in attendance along with our WWME Teens will forever be influenced by what they witnessed from the 2007 World Marriage Day evening and the ripple effects will be felt for generations to come.



James & Shaharriet Houchins, WMD 2007 Coordinators  
Alaska Weekend Pillar Leadership and Presenting Team