

## Couples Can Fall in Love Again

The following format can be used with revisions, for personal and local information, to submit an article to your local Catholic Newspaper.

Offered by Jack & Angel LaBate

You may have heard about a Marriage Encounter Weekend during a Mass at your Parish or perhaps one of your friends approached you and encouraged you to attend, but they really didn't tell you much about their experience. This is because it is difficult to put the Weekend into words since each couple is different and they experience the Weekend in their own way depending on where they are in their relationship. Hopefully what follows will give you more insight into what this amazing Weekend experience is all about.

Marriage Encounter started in 1968, here in the United States, when a Priest recognized that with all the distractions in a couple's life, such as both husband and wife working, travel, materialism and the focus on self fulfillment that married couples needed a way to keep their relationship at the center of their lives. He dreamed of providing an experience which would focus on effective communication to help couples achieve a higher level of closeness in their marriage, a closeness that would keep the passion and the excitement of their love for each other alive and vibrant so that their marriage would become the precious gift God intended it to be.

The Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend is an experience for couples with good marriages, who want to improve and enliven their communication to deepen their love for one another.

Our Weekend started on Friday night at a local hotel and ended at 4:00PM on Sunday afternoon. The format of the Weekend was a presentation by one of the three Presenting Teams and a Priest. The presentations were shared experiences of the Presenting Couples and the Priest as to how they used the communication technique and how it helped them communicate more effectively. We must say the presentations were exciting, meaningful and relatable. At the end of every presentation we were given a question to reflect on as it related to our own relationship. During the reflection time we separated, one of us stayed in the conference room and one returned to our own room. We were asked to write down our thoughts and feelings about the question. There were no right or wrong answers, the questions were posed in a way to help us discover more about ourselves and each other. At the end of the reflection period we met in the privacy of our own room to read and discuss the reflections. We learned so much about ourselves and each other. Each presentation built on the other and the communication technique, called Dialogue, was used throughout the Weekend, so that by the end of the Weekend it was natural and easy for us to use. It is a very effective technique.

Some of the key topics covered were the importance of feelings in our day-to-day communication and getting to know more about ourselves, our personality styles and our behaviors and how they affect our communication and relationship. Other presentations included how we were subtly trained by what we saw in the marriages of our parents and other members of our family. And because of this training we came into our marriage with many expectations. When these expectations are not met we become disappointed and in our disappointment we tend to compensate by getting involved in other activities, which lessens the time we have for each other. We learned about areas in our marriage that we often avoid, which, over time, caused more distance in our relationship. There was a presentation on listening and we learned how to identify our obstacles to listening and how to listen with our hearts. We learned what God wants for us in our relationship and what the true meaning of our sacrament is. We heard about the importance of trust in our relationship and in this presentation we began to understand the depth of our love for one another. To help keep our relationship a priority, we were given 5 tools on the Weekend. These five tools helped us to integrate all that we learned on the Weekend into our everyday lives.

The communication technique helped us to know more about ourselves and one another. We were able to achieve a keener awareness of one another and our understanding improved. The more we communicated the closer we became. The barriers that separated us were removed. Our communication did improve. We found new ways to love and care for one another, which brought back the joy of being married. The Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend has done wonders for our relationship. We made our Weekend in November, 1975 and the Communication Technique we learned continues to help us live out the promise we made to each other on our wedding day.

You deserve to experience a Weekend that you will treasure the rest of your lives. God bless you and your marriage.

For more information or to sign up for a Weekend, please check out our website at [www.wwmeatlanta.org](http://www.wwmeatlanta.org). or call us at **866-ATL-WWME (866-285-9963)**

**Upcoming Weekend dates are June 20-22<sup>nd</sup> , August 22-24<sup>th</sup> and September 19-21<sup>st</sup>**

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**Atlanta Area Leaders for Worldwide Marriage Encounter**