

## BISHOP/DEANERY MEETING SET UP TIP SHEET

### RESOURCES:

WWME Priest Portfolio, 1 page handout on World Marriage Day & World Priest Day.

### RESEARCH:

Knowledge of other groups supporting Priests, i.e.: Knights of Columbus (back page of magazine, etc), Catholic Daughters of America (their Priest Appreciation is in June), Serra Club (supports vocations), etc.

### FORMATION:

1. Have a clear focus, "END IN MIND" for your meeting with the bishop. That focus is important to successfully getting a meeting with your bishop (or deanery), and important during your meeting. Are you going to introduce yourselves, establish a relationship and/or passing on information? Do you intend on forming the bishop about WWME activities in the diocese (Weekends, World Marriage Day, World Priest Day)? Are you soliciting specific support for weekends with his priests, or in WWME parish efforts? Are you trying to get a good foothold with the Family Life Office? Are you inviting him to a Weekend?  
**WHAT IS YOUR END IN MIND? HAVE SEVERAL OPTIONS TO GO WITH YOUR PRIMARY END IN MIND!**

2. Be prepared to identify what WWME has done for the Diocese and what it can do. This could include support for marriage (Diocesan honors for 25 & 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary couples), Encountered couples involvement in the parish, i.e.: marriage preparation support, priest support (presence or help with annual jubilee celebration of priests and religious), vocation promotion through World Priest Day, Prayer, & Dialogue Questions.

3. Depending on size of your diocese and leadership style of the bishop, you may have layers of people to deal with before reaching the bishop (Lay Secretary, Priest Secretary, Vicar, or Chancellor). Or, you may be able to get to him quickly & directly. Some bishops will schedule a meeting by phone and others by letter. If he resists the meeting, romance him. Remember every group in the diocese is seeking his attention and support, so be patient and persistent. Plan B, in lieu of meeting with the Bishop, is to schedule a meeting with your Family Life Director.

4. Before the meeting try to anticipate what resistance you might receive in the meeting and have answers ready.

For example: If I endorse your program, I have to endorse all programs! **Answer:** The condition of marriage and family life today is critical, Worldwide Marriage Encounter is the best proactive preventative maintenance program available for married couples. It not only benefits the couple, but it helps improve their communication and relationship with their children.

I have a shortage of priests already, it is impossible to free up a priest to help present a weekend for 20 couples! **Answer:** Ministering to troubled marriages takes up a lot of priest's time. In the long-run, getting Worldwide Marriage Encounter thriving in the diocese will lift some of that burden from your priests because it will head off potential trouble in a marriage. Additionally, couples on the weekend are encouraged to get involved in their parish and history has shown that many lay leaders in parishes and dioceses had their conversion on a Marriage Encounter Weekend. More volunteers at the parish will help your overworked priests. Our movement has priests that will come in to present the weekend here so we are not asking you to supply us with a priest.

We already have the K of C's and whomever, supporting our priests or marriages in our diocese! **Answer:** With the state of Marriage in today's world, the more the better. Program variety is a good thing. Different programs appeal to different couples.

We already have National Marriage Encounter in the diocese. **Answer:** The movement is not a Catholic Movement.. They do not have a priest on their weekends, so the couples can't take advantage of the Sacrament of Reconciliation or attend Mass. Our weekend provides fertile ground for conversions because of the presence of a priest on all of our weekends.

**In other words – be ready!**

## **PROCESS**

1. When should you seek the meeting? Anytime is a good time. However, summertime might be good as the parochial year (September –May) is a busy time. Meeting during the summer will be helpful to the diocese in planning for the next year. Try to set the meeting up several months in advance as bishop's schedules get filled in quickly.

2. How much time should you ask for? Ask for about 30 minutes of his time and expect to get 15. If the bishop likes what he's hearing or wants to know more, your meeting time may go overtime. Daytime is probably the best time for your meeting.

3. What might be the outline for the meeting? Credential yourself (who are you, your parish, who you represent, how long you've been married, children). Then let the bishop know what your agenda is and proceed to follow that agenda.

4. During your meeting, both members of the couple, or all members of the Ecclesial Team should participate in the discussion.

5. At the conclusion of the meeting, confirm the next steps for the diocese with him and be sure you and your community follow through on those next steps.