

News from Our National Leadership

By Bob & Joy Hernandez and Msgr. Chuck Kosanke

Dearest friends,

We have so many things to tell you! We were still glowing after our 2005 National Convention experience at Towson University then we attended the **World Council in Winnipeg, Manitoba**. This was the first World Council facilitated by our new International Coordinating Team (ICT) David & Bronny Lea (New Zealand) and Fr. John Rate (Australia). Many of you were able to meet them at the Convention and listen to their delightful love story.

The World Council was very productive, meeting at St. Benedict's Monastery September 19-25. On Monday, the Winnipeg community provided a tour to acquaint us with some of the history of the area. We visited a national historic site at the junction of the Red River and Assiniboine River called The Forks. This 6,000 year old site was a traditional aboriginal camping place & has been in continual use for transportation, trade, and settlement. We then toured the Manitoba Legislative Building and the shrine of Blessed Vasyl Velychkovsky who was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 2001 as a martyr of the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

The Council discussed many issues affecting our worldwide WWME family, particularly continuing financial concerns in the Pacific Secretariat, especially in Fiji and the Solomon Islands, in Africa, and Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka in the Asian Secretariat. The Secretariat Teams in all these areas expressed their gratitude for the prayers and generous financial assistance of the WWME couples & priests in the United States. There was much discussion on how best to provide financial support for world needs, as well as how to fund the ICT to enable them to travel to important events in different Secretariats around the world. The Council participated in several formation days, one on Extended (Deeper) Dialogue and the other on our experience and perception of Church. We also discussed community—what is each Secretariat's definition of community, how do we attract couples & priests, and how do we sustain & nourish our communities? Many Secretariats are reviewing *Sharing In The Dream* and *Continuing Our Journey* presentations and are looking to the U.S. on how to strengthen and emphasize the call to mission.

On Saturday night of the World Council, we were privileged to attend a community evening with presentation, dialogue, and small group sharing. Sunday, our World Council concluded with a celebration of the Eucharist at St. Boniface Cathedral-Basilica. Archbishop Emilius Goulet was the principal celebrant and he expressed his strong support of WWME by saying, "The Church places her hope for the future in you. We need you! We do believe that it takes strong, loving and faith-filled couples to build strong, loving and faith-filled families, which in turn build a strong and compassionate Church." Following the Eucharist, the community provided a potluck of wonderfully ethnic dishes, followed by a dancing exhibition by the newly emerging Hispanic

community, Ukrainian folk dancing, French Canadian music and folk dancing, and aboriginal dancing.

Please continue to pray for the many dedicated couples & priests around the world who struggle to bring renewal of our Church through our Weekend. They often face war, corruption, disease (particularly AIDS in Africa), limited communication, shortage of fuel & resources, poor transportation, violence, and unemployment, and yet, they persevere! We feel humbled by the sacrifices they make to help His kingdom come.

We are very excited and honored to announce that WWME—USA has been selected by Franciscan Retreats, in the name of the Conventual Franciscan Order, to receive the **2006 Franciscan International Award** which is presented to men, women, and organizations that represent the best values of our Catholic tradition. Their letter said, in part, “Worldwide Marriage Encounter is a movement, summoned by the Holy Spirit, which calls husbands and wives to reflect on their experience, remember their personal histories, renew their commitments, develop their vocabulary, hone their skills, and celebrate their sacrament. WWME represents a tremendous surge of lay leadership in the Church. You show us what might have been obvious, but needed revealing nonetheless—that “like” must minister to “like” Married couples need the witness of other married couples. While celibate priests can certainly encourage and foster the Sacrament of Matrimony, we cannot speak with your wisdom or authority. You articulate and celebrate what we can hardly imagine!” On Thursday, May 11, we will travel to Egan, MN to receive the Franciscan International Award on behalf of all our faithful WWME community in the United States. We ARE changing the world!

We are also pleased that WWME received a response to the letter we sent to His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI shortly after his election to the See of Peter. The brief letter expresses appreciation for the support of WWME and imparts the Holy Father’s **Apostolic Blessing** on our movement.

So, dear ones, we celebrate the life and vitality of WWME, of which you are a vital ingredient! We are very grateful for all you give and for all you are for the sake of renewing our Church.

We wish each of you and your family a bountiful Thanksgiving and a holy celebration of our Savior’s birth.

With much love and admiration,

Bob & Joy and Msgr. Chuck