

# WWME State of the Movement

## January, 2004 - Part 1

Bob & Joy Hernandez and Fr. Chuck Kosanke

It has been five months since the day in August when the Holy Spirit set the three of us on yet another path in service to His Church. As the U.S. Secretariat Ecclesial Team, we have criss-crossed the United States and traveled halfway around the globe. We have been warmly embraced by our English, Hispanic and Korean family in the United States, and are gaining a better understanding of the unique differences in our varied cultures. The Interfaith Board, that includes representatives from each of the faith expressions who offer Worldwide Marriage Encounters, has added another dimension to our deepening knowledge of the power and vision of our Movement for all God's holy people. It is truly a joy and a privilege to represent this Secretariat and our WWME family in the United States and throughout the world.

As we begin 2004, we first want to acknowledge the years of service, dedication and commitment to our movement by four men who died during the past year: Bob Tabone, Fr. Ed Stolze, Fr. John McCluskey and Fr. Damian Gamboa. We lost four good friends, but we gain new guardian angels for our movement. We are confident all four will intercede for us with our loving Father.

### **2003 Key Accomplishments**

As we reflect on the accomplishments of our movement in 2003, we are encouraged by the continuing pilot of the **ME Experience (MEE)**, a presentation of the **Weekend talks spread over two Sundays and two weekday evenings instead of offered all at once during a weekend**. The **MEE Pilot** has been presented six times in different parts of the United States. The prospect of a parish-based experience is very appealing to our pastors and Family Life Offices and their support has been generous. We anticipate several World Council Secretariats will also present their first MEE pilot in 2004. Following the Pilot phase of the MEE we plan to make it available as an alternate format, not to replace our Weekend, but to provide an option for locations where the Weekend format does not meet the needs of the community.

The U.S. Board made a difficult, but responsible, decision to phase out the print version of Matrimony Magazine and replace it with the new "**eMatrimony.org**" online magazine. Our circulation continues to build, and we now have a means to distribute newsworthy and current information to couples and priests in the U.S. and around the world in a matter of minutes.

Under the direction of the Community Pillar, another quality WWME calendar was published, with dialogue questions for each day of the year plus additional questions each month for family, religious, or dialogue between a couple and either a priest, religious or another couple to encourage and support our dialoguing lifestyle.

The Weekend Pillar compiled and distributed an **Inviting Brochure Binder** with examples of many tri-fold brochures and one-page flyers from most of the Sections. Not only does this binder offer great ideas, but most of the documents are available in machine-readable form that can be customized for use by your Local Areas. (For

access to this **Binder** check with your Local Area Leaders). In addition, the Weekend Pillar continues to present the **Build It** Workshop to offer inviting strategies and support. This interactive workshop (that can be requested through your Section Coordinators) supports one of our four primary responsibilities of placing more couples and priests on our Weekends.

Thanks to the ongoing efforts and commitment of the Structure Pillar, and in particular Rene and Joann Lusser, we finally completed a **Legal Profile** for each of our 19 Section Corporations in the United States. Now it is important to focus on filing our annual IRS tax forms to maintain our legal compliance.

One of our grandest and most successful accomplishments in 2003 was our **WWME National Convention at DeKalb, Illinois**, otherwise known as the "Convention in a Cornfield". As anticipation for the Convention, the Weekend Pillar created and initiated a nationwide friendly competition in the form of a **Daily Dialogue Challenge**. This innovative challenge inspired many couples and priests to dialogue daily and paved the way for an "over-the-top" experience in DeKalb! For the first time, widows and widowers from encountered relationships were able to join our family as we celebrated together. We are very grateful to all the couples and priests who attended the Convention, the couples and priests in Section 7 who worked so hard for over a year on the Convention Committee and particularly to Pat & Terri O'Hara and Fr. Dennis Koopman who took on hosting responsibilities and welcomed all of us so graciously. Thanks to their responsible stewardship, not only was all the Section seed money returned, but, incredibly, an excess was available once all the bills were paid!

The Team Pillar developed and coordinated a new **Outline Sweep Experience**, which was implemented in 2003 and will be completed in 2004. This effort addresses one of our primary responsibilities of "High Quality Weekends" and has motivated many Presenting Team couples and priests across the United States to review and refresh their Weekend presentations.

One of the passionate beliefs of Bob & Huli and Fr. Mark, the previous U.S. Secretariat Ecclesial Team, was a need to refocus our movement on the mission of WWME. In January 2003, they gave each Section a **Mission Banner**, and a challenge to speak about and promote our mission to renew the Catholic Church. Our mission statement is now prominent on all of our U.S. web sites, on many of your Section sites, and, hopefully, on every document that we distribute in our parishes. We pray these actions are the beginning of a paradigm shift for our movement. Unless we understand and accept our mission, there is no purpose. Without purpose, there is no vision.

2003 was certainly filled with many accomplishments, but we did not meet all of our goals. An important goal we missed was to encounter 20,000 couples and 200 priests. We fell considerably short of that goal, encountering about 40% less than planned. We had a goal to build our post-Weekend community, but our efforts have not been as fruitful as we hoped. We point this out, not to chastise or discourage, but to motivate all of us as we begin a new year. We believe each of you possesses a "tenacious spirit". Being tenacious means giving all that you have, not more than you have. We expect everyone to give 100%--not more, but certainly not less. Tenacious people work with determination, not relying on luck, fate, or destiny for success. And tenacious couples and priests in our movement quit only when the mission is achieved, not when they're tired. Success is a little like running from a grizzly bear. You don't quit running when you get tired, you quit when the bear is tired. We will renew our Catholic Church and change the world because we keep pushing beyond what we think we can do.

Our next letter to you will offer our Vision and Direction for Worldwide Marriage Encounter in the United States Secretariat for 2004.

In God's service to you,

Bob & Joy and Fr. Chuck