

MARRIAGE TRAINING WEEKEND

FRIDAY NIGHT PRESENTATION

23rd MAY 2008 Christchurch

Presenters: Simon & Therese Roughan

A very warm *Welcome* to each and every one of you.

We welcome Bishop Barry, our priests, distinguished guests, overseas speakers, & you married lovers.

Thank you too for that beautiful liturgy and waiata this evening.

Welcome to you all as delegates from your own Diocese and importantly from your parish, in this wonderful work of marriage ministry.

My name is Simon Roughan, chairman of our Christchurch Diocese Marriage Educators Committee.

Standing next to me here in my lovely wife Therese, (originally from Wellington) who has endured...no, shared

32 years of fun and adventure with me, as we raised a family of seven lovely children.

We are so recently brand new Grandparents of little six month old Joshua, here in Christchurch, and it's so cool.

But back to my role as chairman of our Christchurch Diocese Marriage Educators Committee,

I am but one of a potent committee here in Christchurch who have worked hard to ensure that this weekend is an enriching weekend for you as parish marriage educators.

We want to ensure....

- 1. that you receive nourishment for the valuable work you do in your parishes,**
- 2. that you enjoy this time for networking and sharing,**
- 3. that you as a couple grab this time as an opportunity of rejuvenation and fun for your own marriage relationship.**

Our MTW committee is made up of...

Our esteemed convenor Fr Simon Eccleton

Suzi & Diggs DeGouveia

Janeen & David Kan

Gerard Duignan

Mike Stopforth

Fr Carl Telford

Myself

& our stunning Registration Secretary, *my wife Therese.*

We take this opportunity to bring you all together for this weekend to reflect on how we as catholic marriage educators, can truly impact on our engaged couples, of just how precious this task is....

.....to encourage a: *formation of the heart.*

We all know the first miracle performed by Jesus. (**John 2: 1-11**)

It was performed at the Wedding Feast at Cana, when Jesus was prompted by his mother to do something about the diminishing supply of wine to the wedding guests. Jesus, not grumpy and tetchy like the generation Y around us, obeyed his mother and instructed servants to fill large earthen vessels with fresh water. He asked that these vessels be brought to him. This was his first public act known as the miracle of turning water into wine.

The church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of the goodness of marriage and the proclamation that henceforth marriage will be an effective sign of Christ's presence.

Now what can we as Marriage Educators take from this example of Jesus?

We the ordinary married couples with a love and a desire to follow the teachings of Jesus, - here within his universal church – we are very instrumental in bringing young engaged couples to an understanding of the sacredness of marriage

Are we not part of this miracle at Cana...of converting the ordinary, say the water,(represented by our infatuated engaged couples) into something vital, tantalising, alive and exciting, (a marriage that both challenges and blesses those in it) like good quality wine.

We each of us are intimately involved in this miracle at Cana, where, by preparing an engaged couple to treasure the gifts contained in this love sacrament we participate with God to convert something seemingly ordinary (like water) into something of true quality (like an exquisite wine).

And here's the thing....

Not once does the scriptural reference say that the wine had to be **perfect!**

The miracle stands....

Water was changed into quality wine!

Let's get that **perfect** notion out of our minds.

Let's get that fantasy of a perfect marriage out of our minds.

Let's get that fantasy of the perfect wife out of our minds.

Let's get that fantasy of the perfect husband out of our minds

We can do a huge disservice to our engaged couples, if we as Catholic Marriage Educators don't get rid of this fantasy idea of a perfect marriage.

The glossy magazines feed off this fantasy.

The media feed off this fantasy.

Jesus changed ordinary water into good quality wine.
He never said perfect.
Thank goodness.

I await another place to be with Jesus where all will be perfect!!!

So for all of us here now....we are on a *pilgrim journey*.

The themes from our other conferences...
Or now called Marriage Training Weekends.

Marriage is a journey
Bridging the gaps

So we know Marriage is a **journey of adventure and discovery**.
That means a mixture of....
Tough times, busy times, fun times, sad times, and lots of laughter
We marry each other every day....it remains a work in progress.

We are pilgrims here together learning to love our spouses as Jesus taught us.
To love with forgiveness,
love unconditionally,
forgive as he forgives,
enjoy the fun times,
and love so tenderly
that we heal each other.

Jesus had this ministry of healing.
He was very busy...
He made the lame to walk, he drove out demons, he cured lepers, he made the blind to see...

Our destiny as followers of Jesus is also a task of healing.
That is a natural role that arrives out of truly loving one another.

We are co-healers with Jesus.
It is through healing that we reach quality of living.
Jesus challenges us to be truly human,
.....and that means rising through the struggles and tough times
Using **love** as our medicine.

Lets recap for a moment as to who we are:

We as a single human being carry deeply interior wounds and hurts simply from the journey of life as a child, maybe mum and dad struggled in their parenting, maybe we lost a parent in our early life, maybe we witnessed tragedy.

Then maybe with teenage struggles up into adulthood, we were led into the wrong group, we faltered from the wisdom offered by our parents. We lost our way.

We each carry this interior sensitive self that has built numerous shields, psychological shields, some intentional, some quite subconsciouslylots of body armour, lots of disguise techniques, simply just to get through and survive, in our rugged society. A society that also mocks our faith, or the family traditions and beliefs we hold dear.

So when we “fall in love”, when we meet this delicious delightful creature that I want to spend the rest of my life with.....we bring to that new relationship two different sets of interior wounds and body shields.

We bring with us two sets of Family of Origin experiences and traditions, we bring two sets of unique problem-solving skills with us, we bring different communication styles with us, we bring histories of sibling battles, perceptions of unfairness, harsh discipline memories, bullying episodes at schools, unresolved revenge, other hurts, jilted lovers, jilted friends, broken promises,a whole array of hurts and scars, some buried deep beneath the surface.

Our pre-marriage programmes are designed to uncover little bits of this, say in FOCCUS, or through other presented styles.

But we often carry hidden wounds and scars with us. Some conscious, some not so conscious or obvious.

Some of us don't use the Sacrament of Reconciliation enough to receive absolution for some of these hurts, and for our sins.

We are after all human beings.

It is us as human beings that we are talking about.

Two loving human beings brought together in the presence of God to marryuntil death us do part.

We have a Jesus mission here to love, to forgive, to heal.

To achieve this the shape of the weekend has a focus on achieving a true balance as a person.....by reflecting on the whole person.

Here we borrow from the holistic health model that is used in alternative medicine: particularly in my own field of chiropractic health care: and in the **wellness health care model**: namely, the triad of health.

Each equal side of the triangle represents a side of us,
a side of us as persons,
that collectively completes the whole (the totality) of who we are.

This gives meaning to the 3D view of who I am.

In the context of the wellness healthcare holistic viewa deficiency or overload in one or more of these areas may show an exhibition of symptoms often in an entirely different perspective.....

Let's take an example of say disabling acute low back pain ...

Acute low back pain can often be triggered by a spinal injury (structural) due to a sprain or strain say from heavy lifting,
or is its primary trigger could be due to excess kidney acidity, (chemical) (uric acid excess – dietary cause)(or lactic acid excess – from excess exercise),
which then manifests as acute lumbar spinal muscle cramps (looks like acute low back pain).

Or is it triggered by an emotional overload, (emotional) for example the powerful emotion of **fear**,

Fear is the impending paralysis within the body,
(we know fear in many forms such as phobias...people cannot get on an aeroplane for instance)

This fear is interpreted by the back muscles just the same or akin to a heavy lifting strain...

for example fear in deciding to move forward, say in some big life decision, or maybe fear regarding a new career decision.

So that describes the triangle.

Over the top of this triangle of structural, chemical & emotional is the umbrella of our spiritual existence.

As practising Catholics we are acutely aware just how huge this Spiritual part of our life truly is. The Spiritual aspect (that aspect of knowing we are connected to an all powerful loving God) drives very much the shape and meaning of that triangle of our human form.

In this example, of the disabling acute low back pain the potent Spiritual factor could be our loss of Hope.

This spiritual loss of connectedness to God, of us lacking hope, has huge impact on all three aspects of our physical health....

structurally we are more tense, with muscles and tendons shortening and tightening,
chemically we are more acidic due to a heightened anxiety state,
emotionally we are in a state of fear, and mental hopelessness.

Maybe it is a time when we have lost an awareness to trust in our God to guide and protect us in times of new territory. That is when we have our psalms to turn to, for example the *Lord is my Shepherd* where we are assured He is always with us

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Our theme for this weekend **Formation of the Heart** comes from Pope Benedict XVI in his first letter *Deus Caritas Est/ on Christian Love* (2006) ...which reflects on the underlying need for Christians who are called to ministry in the church to be well prepared, not only professionally but also personally..

“ Individuals who care for those in need must first be professionally competent: they should be properly trained in what to do and how to do it...[However] in addition to their professional training, these charity workers need a “formation of the heart”: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others”

Deus Caritas Est 31a.

With this in mind the whole weekend is about leading to a deeper *formation of the heart* for our delegates.

So we now wish to outline how the weekend will unfold.

We undertake this work as marriage educators to prepare young engaged couples into a new understanding of a sacred marriage.

We have topics to cover, to facilitate the process of their own understanding, and to guide them through some instruction/ some essential teaching.

But this weekend is about your own hearts being formed, your own love sacrament being blessed as we explore this triad of health.

1. Firstly we wish to explore the **structural** elements of us as persons...
 - a. Our Communication styles
 - b. The Personal issues we bring
 - c. Skills we carry eg problem solving
 - d. Issues around Finances

These structural elements often define who we are, and how we relate to others. These structural elements allow us to better appreciate our self knowledge and an appreciation of our differences.

2. Secondly we explore the **chemistry** of us as persons...
 - a. This covers our personality type / our personality match
 - b. Our lifestyle aspirations and hidden expectations
 - c. Our parenting scripts
 - d. Our sexuality, our attractiveness, our intimacy needs

Here we delve into the chemistry of intimacy. Of how we can heal by the power of gentle love.

Then we explore the level of intimacy needing to equate to the level of commitment. To better appreciate chemical attraction beyond the honeymoon.

3. Thirdly we explore the **emotional/ psychological** side of the triangle.....
 - a. The hidden hurts and woundedness I carry.
 - b. Our readiness to commit to another
 - c. The support, influence and value of our friends
 - d. Our understanding of a lifelong covenant
 - e. Our network of family & friends as support structures

This is so valuable to ready oneself to be open & honest with our life partner, and to allow the revealing of our weaknesses & faults in the context of a loving environment.

4. And importantly to explore our **spiritual** nature....
 - a. The essence of our personal relationship with God
 - b. The importance of our faith practices
 - c. The appreciation of our self worth
 - d. The context of our family of origin, with its values

This area of our self is vital as we are all spiritual beings.
This is to better appreciate the Theology of the Body, that God's design of beauty is actually in his people.

We have some amazing Speakers for you this weekend.
They are each going to cover one of these topics from the three sided triangle, plus the umbrella of spirituality that covers every part of our human existence.

We have broken from the tradition of Workshops.
...quite deliberately.

We knew we were attracting a bunch of very intelligent, clever, smart, gifted, and committed delegates to this weekend here in Christchurch.
So in true adult education style we want you to participate in this process of learning.
You all already know so much.
You have learnt from the University of hard knocks.

The Speakers are here to impart knowledge, no doubt about that.
But they are also here to challenge us.
They will provide challenging questions for us to process immediately after their presentations.
We will remain in this great hall together.
We want your inputs, your wealth of experience, the shared knowledge, the depth of your lived lives, flowing back to us the group gathered here.

We as marriage educators proclaim best what we do by our lives.

We all know that we teach marriage best by living it.
In essence we need to walk the talk.

At this point I would like to invite you to listen to this lovely young couple here on the stage with us, **James & Monique Kearns**.

For me to finish off...

We are all here to learn, to share, to have fun.....

To share lots of hugs.
Please give lots of hugs.

You are all gorgeous people for the work you do in this Ministry of preparing the ordinary into something so extraordinary.

Jesus is intimately involved with us in changing water into quality wine.

Thank you.

Simon & Therese Roughan
