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THE PRESIDENT *Fr. Tom Ascheman, SVD*

Nativity Scene – Learning a Language of the Spirit

This Christmas you may have an opportunity to view a “Live Nativity.” There will be one at the Methodist Church in Epworth on Wednesday evening during the second edition of “Epworth Country Christmas.” Later, this coming weekend, Marlene and her husband are planning on going to the live display at the Bean Farm in Scotch Grove, IA. [www.thebeanfarmofscotchgrove.org/live-nativity.html]

When I was a little boy, my family put out a nativity scene in preparation for Christmas. Though the figures were made of plaster, they were fully alive in my imagination. I remember the fascination and wonder I felt when playing with the crib scene, it is one of my earliest memories of spiritual awakening. In those days, I also played with plastic models of farm animals and soldiers; but those games didn't have the same impact. Looking at the statues of Mary, Joseph and the Baby, rearranging the Shepherds and Wise Men, making room for the Camel, the Ox, the Donkey, and the Sheep was all part of the game. They were so fascinating, and they awakened in me a *spirit of wonder*. It was a beginning for my religious experience and an early language-lesson to nurture a spiritual life.



Both my early experience of wonder and the Live Nativity Scenes owe a debt to the splendid religious genius of St. Francis of Assisi. Did you know that he was one of the original staggers of a Live Nativity? It started in 1223 when Francis, exercising the office of deacon, was visiting the

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small Italian town of Greccio to celebrate Christmas. St. Bonaventure (d. 1274) in his Life of St. Francis of Assisi tells the story the best:

“It happened in the third year before his death, that in order to excite the inhabitants of Greccio to commemorate the nativity of the Infant Jesus with great devotion, [St. Francis] determined to keep it with all possible solemnity... he prepared a manger, and brought hay, and an ox and an ass to the place appointed. The brethren were summoned, the people ran together, the forest resounded with their voices, and that venerable night was made glorious by many and brilliant lights and sonorous psalms of praise.

[St. Francis] “stood before the manger, full of devotion and piety, bathed in tears and radiant with joy; the Holy Gospel was chanted by Francis, the Levite of Christ. Then he preached to the people around the nativity of the poor King; and being unable to utter His name for the tenderness of His love, He called Him the Babe of Bethlehem.

“Master John of Greccio, who (had) become a dear friend of this holy man, affirmed that he beheld an infant marvelously beautiful, sleeping in the manger, whom the blessed Father Francis embraced with both his arms, as if he would awake Him from sleep...”



Last Sunday, December 1, Pope Francis visited the town of Greccio. While there, he signed a brief apostolic letter on the meaning and importance of the Nativity Scene. I have appended a copy.

Pope Francis opens his letter by emphasizing the simple yet powerful message that this Christmas tradition communicates.

“The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus’ birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.”

May you all have a WONDER-FILLED Christmas.



Don't miss it!

Experience the WONDER of Christmas tomorrow evening!

This unique hometown event might even be a bit magical. . . .

- A FREE event
- Citizens, businesses, churches and visitors join together to celebrate the season
- You can take in the sights and sounds close to home
- You can volunteer
- The DWC community is lending our voices, our creativity and even the big guy from the North Pole!

**Advent Luncheon – 11:50 A.M. – 1:00 P.M. on Wednesday, December 4, 2019
Modified Class Schedule**

The annual DWC Advent Luncheon is scheduled for 11:50 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 4, 2019. In order to accommodate this college-wide event, classes this day will be held on a modified schedule. Please carefully note the starting and ending times for each class period, as follows:

Wednesday, December 4, 2019 – Modified Class Schedule

Undergraduate Classes

9:00 a.m. class	9:00 – 9:50 a.m.	No change
10:00 a.m. class	10:00 – 10:50 a.m.	No change
11:00 a.m. class	11:00 – 11:45 a.m.	Ends 5 minutes early
1:00 p.m. class	1:15 – 2:05 p.m.	Start delayed 15 minutes
2:00 p.m. class	2:15 – 3:05 p.m.	Start delayed 15 minutes
3:00 p.m. class	3:15 – 4:05 p.m.	Start delayed 15 minutes
4:00 p.m. class	4:15 – 5:05 p.m.	Start delayed 15 minutes

ESL Classes

9:00 a.m. class	9:00 – 10:50 a.m.	No change
11:00 a.m. class	11:00 – 11:45 a.m.	Ends 5 minutes early
1:00 p.m. class	1:15 – 2:05 p.m.	Start delayed 15 minutes
2:00 p.m. class	2:15 – 4:05 p.m.	Start delayed 15 minutes

Faculty Annual Performance Evaluations:

Self-Evaluation and Planning Goals Due No Later Than December 13, 2019

In accord with the Divine Word College Policy Handbook, undergraduate and ESL faculty are reminded that self-evaluations and annual planning goals are due to the respective Chair/Director by Monday, December 2, 2019. If necessary, individual faculty members may request extra time to submit these documents but not later than Friday, December 13, 2019. The annual faculty performance evaluation/planning requirement does not apply to adjunct faculty.

- Faculty Self-Evaluation: Provide a narrative self-evaluation addressing performance goals from previous year's Annual Plan (if applicable) and actual performance in each area of teaching effectiveness, professional engagement, and service (see DWC-PH, 9.01.04)
- Faculty Annual Plan: Provide specific performance goals related to teaching effectiveness, professional engagement, and service for the following academic year (see DWC-PH, 9.01.05)

VICE PRESIDENT FOR FORMATION DEAN OF STUDENTS

Fr. Bang Tran, SVD

Advent Luncheon

Scheduled for Wednesday, December 4, at 11:50 A.M. to 1:00 P.M, in the dining room. Please check the Student Board for the modified class schedule on that day. All students are obligatory to attend.

Student Music Recital

Thursday, December 5, at 1:00 P.M, in the main chapel. Please come to support your classmates.

Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration

Scheduled for Saturday, December 7, beginning with a solemn Eucharistic celebration at 3:00 P.M in the main chapel and immediately followed by a banquet in the dining room. Please wear formal attire or cultural dress. All are welcome!

Final Week

There will be two masses (8:00 A.M and 8:00 P.M) during the final week. Best of luck on your final exams.

Feast of the Immaculate Conception

Will be celebrated on Monday, December 9, at 8:00 P.M. It is in this feast of the Immaculate Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary that both missionary Sisters Servant of the Holy Spirit (SSpS) and Perpetual Adoration Sisters (SSpSAP) commemorate the founding day of their congregations. Please kindly remember in your prayers all the sisters of both congregations, especially Sr. Carol Welp, Sr. Yustina Intan, Sr. Aprilia Untarto, Sr. Elsa Castellano and Sr. Margaret Kissani on this feast.

Merry Christmas

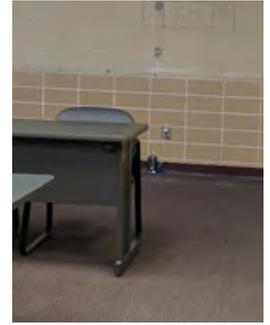
On behalf of the Formation and Student Life Committee, wishing you and your loved ones a wonderful Christmas season, and may the birth of Christ warm your heart, home and community with love, joy and peace.

VICE PRESIDENT FOR OPERATIONS

Mr. Steve Winger

Classroom Updates

Over Christmas break, Housekeeping and Maintenance will update four classrooms on the main floor. Updates include new carpet, ceiling fans, paint and removal of old chalkboards.



DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Sandy Wilgenbusch

Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend at Divine Word College

February 29 – March 1, 2020

Worldwide Marriage Encounter is an opportunity for *married couples* to deepen their relationship – to focus on each other and their relationship.

It is also an opportunity for *religious men and women and seminarians*--those whose vocation involves close caring communication with others--to learn more about themselves and how they can build strong relationships with those to whom they minister.

All members of the DWC Community are invited to participate in the weekend experience. *There is no cost for any student, SVD, faculty or staff member to participate.* Spouses are also free of charge. Contact Jeff and Janet Francois to register – 563-608-3305 or jljwwme08@gmail.com

You will find a flyer containing additional information in your mailbox soon. A copy is also included as an addendum to this issue of *the LOG*.



Keep calm
and
Study On!





December 4 – DWC Community Christmas Luncheon 11:45 – 1:00 p.m.

December 4 – Epworth Country Christmas 5 - 7:30 p.m.

December 5 – Student Music Recital 1:00 p.m.

December 5 – Student Art Work Past and Present 5-7:00 p.m.
Wine and Cheese Reception

December 6 – ESL Term B Classes End

December 6 – Student Resource Center – Essay Structures 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.

This workshop explores how to effectively structure essays, including introductions, thesis statements, topic sentences, transitions, body arrangements, supporting claims, and more.

December 7 - Our Lady of Guadalupe - SVD Hispanic-American Ministry 3:00 p.m. Liturgy

December 10 - ESL Poster Presentation 12:30 – 1:30 p.m. Student Resource Room Hallway

December 12 – Employee Christmas Social 3:30 – 5:00 p.m.

December 13 – Christmas Break Begins

Continues through Wednesday, January 8, 2020

December 16 - Dubuque Police Department Dive Team Training

Pool: 9 a.m. - 1 p.m.



The Holy See

APOSTOLIC LETTER

ADMIRABILE SIGNUM

OF THE HOLY FATHER

FRANCIS

ON THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE
OF THE NATIVITY SCENE

1. The enchanting image of the Christmas crèche, so dear to the Christian people, never ceases to arouse amazement and wonder. The depiction of Jesus' birth is itself a simple and joyful proclamation of the mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The nativity scene is like a living Gospel rising up from the pages of sacred Scripture. As we contemplate the Christmas story, we are invited to set out on a spiritual journey, drawn by the humility of the God who became man in order to encounter every man and woman. We come to realize that so great is his love for us that he became one of us, so that we in turn might become one with him.

With this Letter, I wish to encourage the beautiful family tradition of preparing the nativity scene in the days before Christmas, but also the custom of setting it up in the workplace, in schools, hospitals, prisons and town squares. Great imagination and creativity is always shown in employing the most diverse materials to create small masterpieces of beauty. As children, we learn from our parents and grandparents to carry on this joyful tradition, which encapsulates a wealth of popular piety. It is my hope that this custom will never be lost and that, wherever it has fallen into disuse, it can be rediscovered and revived.

2. The origin of the Christmas crèche is found above all in certain details of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem, as related in the Gospels. The evangelist Luke says simply that Mary "gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn" (2:7). Because Jesus was laid in a manger, the nativity scene is known in Italian as a *presepe*, from the Latin word *praesepe*, meaning "manger".

Coming into this world, the Son of God was laid in the place where animals feed. Hay became the first bed of the One who would reveal himself as “the bread come down from heaven” (*Jn* 6:41). Saint Augustine, with other Church Fathers, was impressed by this symbolism: “Laid in a manger, he became our food” (*Sermon* 189, 4). Indeed, the nativity scene evokes a number of the mysteries of Jesus’ life and brings them close to our own daily lives.

But let us go back to the origins of the Christmas crèche so familiar to us. We need to imagine ourselves in the little Italian town of Greccio, near Rieti. Saint Francis stopped there, most likely on his way back from Rome where on 29 November 1223 he had received the confirmation of his Rule from Pope Honorius III. Francis had earlier visited the Holy Land, and the caves in Greccio reminded him of the countryside of Bethlehem. It may also be that the “Poor Man of Assisi” had been struck by the mosaics in the Roman Basilica of Saint Mary Major depicting the birth of Jesus, close to the place where, according to an ancient tradition, the wooden panels of the manger are preserved.

The *Franciscan Sources* describe in detail what then took place in Greccio. Fifteen days before Christmas, Francis asked a local man named John to help him realize his desire “to bring to life the memory of that babe born in Bethlehem, to see as much as possible with my own bodily eyes the discomfort of his infant needs, how he lay in a manger, and how, with an ox and an ass standing by, he was laid upon a bed of hay”.^[1] At this, his faithful friend went immediately to prepare all that the Saint had asked. On 25 December, friars came to Greccio from various parts, together with people from the farmsteads in the area, who brought flowers and torches to light up that holy night. When Francis arrived, he found a manger full of hay, an ox and a donkey. All those present experienced a new and indescribable joy in the presence of the Christmas scene. The priest then solemnly celebrated the Eucharist over the manger, showing the bond between the Incarnation of the Son of God and the Eucharist. At Greccio there were no statues; the nativity scene was enacted and experienced by all who were present.^[2]

This is how our tradition began: with everyone gathered in joy around the cave, with no distance between the original event and those sharing in its mystery.

Thomas of Celano, the first biographer of Saint Francis, notes that this simple and moving scene was accompanied by the gift of a marvellous vision: one of those present saw the Baby Jesus himself lying in the manger. From the nativity scene of that Christmas in 1223, “everyone went home with joy”.^[3]

3. With the simplicity of that sign, Saint Francis carried out a great work of evangelization. His teaching touched the hearts of Christians and continues today to offer a simple yet authentic means of portraying the beauty of our faith. Indeed, the place where this first nativity scene was enacted expresses and evokes these sentiments. Greccio has become a refuge for the soul, a mountain fastness wrapped in silence.

Why does the Christmas crèche arouse such wonder and move us so deeply? First, because it shows God's tender love: the Creator of the universe lowered himself to take up our littleness. The gift of life, in all its mystery, becomes all the more wondrous as we realize that the Son of Mary is the source and sustenance of all life. In Jesus, the Father has given us a brother who comes to seek us out whenever we are confused or lost, a loyal friend ever at our side. He gave us his Son who forgives us and frees us from our sins.

Setting up the Christmas crèche in our homes helps us to relive the history of what took place in Bethlehem. Naturally, the Gospels remain our source for understanding and reflecting on that event. At the same time, its portrayal in the crèche helps us to imagine the scene. It touches our hearts and makes us enter into salvation history as contemporaries of an event that is living and real in a broad gamut of historical and cultural contexts.

In a particular way, from the time of its Franciscan origins, the nativity scene has invited us to "feel" and "touch" the poverty that God's Son took upon himself in the Incarnation. Implicitly, it summons us to follow him along the path of humility, poverty and self-denial that leads from the manger of Bethlehem to the cross. It asks us to meet him and serve him by showing mercy to those of our brothers and sisters in greatest need (cf. *Mt 25:31-46*).

4. I would like now to reflect on the various elements of the nativity scene in order to appreciate their deeper meaning. First, there is the background of a starry sky wrapped in the darkness and silence of night. We represent this not only out of fidelity to the Gospel accounts, but also for its symbolic value. We can think of all those times in our lives when we have experienced the darkness of night. Yet even then, God does not abandon us, but is there to answer our crucial questions about the meaning of life. Who am I? Where do I come from? Why was I born at this time in history? Why do I love? Why do I suffer? Why will I die? It was to answer these questions that God became man. His closeness brings light where there is darkness and shows the way to those dwelling in the shadow of suffering (cf. *Lk 1:79*).

The landscapes that are part of the nativity scene also deserve some mention. Frequently they include the ruins of ancient houses or buildings, which in some instances replace the cave of Bethlehem and become a home for the Holy Family. These ruins appear to be inspired by the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* of the Dominican Jacobus de Varagine, which relates a pagan belief that the Temple of Peace in Rome would collapse when a Virgin gave birth. More than anything, the ruins are the visible sign of fallen humanity, of everything that inevitably falls into ruin, decays and disappoints. This scenic setting tells us that Jesus is newness in the midst of an aging world, that he has come to heal and rebuild, to restore the world and our lives to their original splendour.

5. With what emotion should we arrange the mountains, streams, sheep and shepherds in the nativity scene! As we do so, we are reminded that, as the prophets had foretold, all creation

rejoices in the coming of the Messiah. The angels and the guiding star are a sign that we too are called to set out for the cave and to worship the Lord.

“Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us” (*Lk 2:15*). So the shepherds tell one another after the proclamation of the angels. A beautiful lesson emerges from these simple words. Unlike so many other people, busy about many things, the shepherds become the first to see the most essential thing of all: the gift of salvation. It is the humble and the poor who greet the event of the Incarnation. The shepherds respond to God who comes to meet us in the Infant Jesus by setting out to meet him with love, gratitude and awe. Thanks to Jesus, this encounter between God and his children gives birth to our religion and accounts for its unique beauty, so wonderfully evident in the nativity scene.

6. It is customary to add many symbolic figures to our nativity scenes. First, there are the beggars and the others who know only the wealth of the heart. They too have every right to draw near to the Infant Jesus; no one can evict them or send them away from a crib so makeshift that the poor seem entirely at home. Indeed, the poor are a privileged part of this mystery; often they are the first to recognize God’s presence in our midst.

The presence of the poor and the lowly in the nativity scene remind us that God became man for the sake of those who feel most in need of his love and who ask him to draw near to them. Jesus, “gentle and humble in heart” (*Mt 11:29*), was born in poverty and led a simple life in order to teach us to recognize what is essential and to act accordingly. The nativity scene clearly teaches that we cannot let ourselves be fooled by wealth and fleeting promises of happiness. We see Herod’s palace in the background, closed and deaf to the tidings of joy. By being born in a manger, God himself launches the only true revolution that can give hope and dignity to the disinherited and the outcast: the revolution of love, the revolution of tenderness. From the manger, Jesus proclaims, in a meek yet powerful way, the need for sharing with the poor as the path to a more human and fraternal world in which no one is excluded or marginalized.

Children – but adults too! – often love to add to the nativity scene other figures that have no apparent connection with the Gospel accounts. Yet, each in its own way, these fanciful additions show that in the new world inaugurated by Jesus there is room for whatever is truly human and for all God’s creatures. From the shepherd to the blacksmith, from the baker to the musicians, from the women carrying jugs of water to the children at play: all this speaks of the everyday holiness, the joy of doing ordinary things in an extraordinary way, born whenever Jesus shares his divine life with us.

7. Gradually, we come to the cave, where we find the figures of Mary and Joseph. Mary is a mother who contemplates her child and shows him to every visitor. The figure of Mary makes us reflect on the great mystery that surrounded this young woman when God knocked on the door of her immaculate heart. Mary responded in complete obedience to the message of the angel who

asked her to become the Mother of God. Her words, “Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (*Lk 1:38*), show all of us how to abandon ourselves in faith to God’s will. By her “fiat”, Mary became the mother of God’s Son, not losing but, thanks to him, consecrating her virginity. In her, we see the Mother of God who does not keep her Son only to herself, but invites everyone to obey his word and to put it into practice (cf. *Jn 2:5*).

At Mary’s side, shown protecting the Child and his Mother, stands Saint Joseph. He is usually depicted with staff in hand, or holding up a lamp. Saint Joseph plays an important role in the life of Jesus and Mary. He is the guardian who tirelessly protects his family. When God warned him of Herod’s threat, he did not hesitate to set out and flee to Egypt (cf. *Mt 2:13-15*). And once the danger had passed, he brought the family back to Nazareth, where he was to be the first teacher of Jesus as a boy and then as a young man. Joseph treasured in his heart the great mystery surrounding Jesus and Mary his spouse; as a just man, he entrusted himself always to God’s will, and put it into practice.

8. When, at Christmas, we place the statue of the Infant Jesus in the manger, the nativity scene suddenly comes alive. God appears as a child, for us to take into our arms. Beneath weakness and frailty, he conceals his power that creates and transforms all things. It seems impossible, yet it is true: in Jesus, God was a child, and in this way he wished to reveal the greatness of his love: by smiling and opening his arms to all.

The birth of a child awakens joy and wonder; it sets before us the great mystery of life. Seeing the bright eyes of a young couple gazing at their newborn child, we can understand the feelings of Mary and Joseph who, as they looked at the Infant Jesus, sensed God’s presence in their lives.

“Life was made manifest” (*1 Jn 1:2*). In these words, the Apostle John sums up the mystery of the Incarnation. The crèche allows us to see and touch this unique and unparalleled event that changed the course of history, so that time would thereafter be reckoned either before or after the birth of Christ.

God’s ways are astonishing, for it seems impossible that he should forsake his glory to become a man like us. To our astonishment, we see God acting exactly as we do: he sleeps, takes milk from his mother, cries and plays like every other child! As always, God baffles us. He is unpredictable, constantly doing what we least expect. The nativity scene shows God as he came into our world, but it also makes us reflect on how our life is part of God’s own life. It invites us to become his disciples if we want to attain ultimate meaning in life.

9. As the feast of Epiphany approaches, we place the statues of the Three Kings in the Christmas crèche. Observing the star, those wise men from the East set out for Bethlehem, in order to find Jesus and to offer him their gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. These costly gifts have an allegorical meaning: gold honours Jesus’ kingship, incense his divinity, myrrh his sacred humanity

that was to experience death and burial.

As we contemplate this aspect of the nativity scene, we are called to reflect on the responsibility of every Christian to spread the Gospel. Each of us is called to bear glad tidings to all, testifying by our practical works of mercy to the joy of knowing Jesus and his love.

The Magi teach us that people can come to Christ by a very long route. Men of wealth, sages from afar, athirst for the infinite, they set out on the long and perilous journey that would lead them to Bethlehem (cf. *Mt 2:1-12*). Great joy comes over them in the presence of the Infant King. They are not scandalized by the poor surroundings, but immediately fall to their knees to worship him. Kneeling before him, they understand that the God who with sovereign wisdom guides the course of the stars also guides the course of history, casting down the mighty and raising up the lowly. Upon their return home, they would certainly have told others of this amazing encounter with the Messiah, thus initiating the spread of the Gospel among the nations.

10. Standing before the Christmas crèche, we are reminded of the time when we were children, eagerly waiting to set it up. These memories make us all the more conscious of the precious gift received from those who passed on the faith to us. At the same time, they remind us of our duty to share this same experience with our children and our grandchildren. It does not matter how the nativity scene is arranged: it can always be the same or it can change from year to year. What matters is that it speaks to our lives. Wherever it is, and whatever form it takes, the Christmas crèche speaks to us of the love of God, the God who became a child in order to make us know how close he is to every man, woman and child, regardless of their condition.

Dear brothers and sisters, the Christmas crèche is part of the precious yet demanding process of passing on the faith. Beginning in childhood, and at every stage of our lives, it teaches us to contemplate Jesus, to experience God's love for us, to feel and believe that God is with us and that we are with him, his children, brothers and sisters all, thanks to that Child who is the Son of God and the Son of the Virgin Mary. And to realize that in that knowledge we find true happiness. Like Saint Francis, may we open our hearts to this simple grace, so that from our wonderment a humble prayer may arise: a prayer of thanksgiving to God, who wished to share with us his all, and thus never to leave us alone.

FRANCISCUS

Given in Greccio, at the Shrine of the Nativity, on 1 December in the year 2019, the seventh of my Pontificate.

[1] Cf. Thomas of Celano, *First Life*, 84; *Franciscan Sources*, 469.

[2] *Ibid.*, 85; *Franciscan Sources*, 469.

[3] *Ibid.*, 86; *Franciscan Sources*, 470.

Love

ONE ANOTHER AS I HAVE LOVED YOU ~ JOHN 15:12

"Love needs time and space; everything else is secondary. Time is needed to talk things over, to embrace leisurely, to share plans, to listen to one another and gaze in each other's eyes, to appreciate one another and to build a stronger relationship. Sometimes the frenetic pace of our society and the pressures of the workplace create problems. At other times, the problem is the lack of quality time together, sharing the same room without one even noticing the other." ~ Pope Francis



A WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER WEEKEND

is for any married couple* desiring a richer, fuller life together. Experience a quiet, meditative environment to focus on one another and their relationship.

Presentations by three married couples and a priest focus on a variety of topics — personality, unity, listening, forgiveness, prayer, affirmation, community, change, and more. Following presentations, couples have time for reflection and discussion in the private.

This is a Catholic experience open to married couples of all faiths.

SCHEDULE: This non-residential weekend will start at 7:00 a.m. Saturday and conclude late Sunday afternoon. Couples will return home Saturday night.

COST: The application fee has been waived for employees of the college and their spouses. At the end of the weekend, couples are asked to prayerfully consider contributing what they can to defray the cost of the weekend.

**WWME is faithful to the Roman Catholic Church's teaching that marriage is a covenant between one man and one woman. Any reference to marriage or couple made by WWME is in this context.*



FEBRUARY 29 - MARCH 1, 2020

Divine Word College, Epworth, IA

For more info or to sign up, contact:
Jeff and Janet Francois
563-608-3305 • jljwwme08@gmail.com

Testimonials and praise.

“Marriage Encounter yes! You are doing such important work in our church, especially in this world we live in. I will pray for you and your movement.”

Pope Benedict XVI, Jan 23, 2008

“This weekend was the most joyous and most stimulating time of our lives. We have had the chance to see how each of us needs to be loved and to give love.”

“Having had over twenty years of marriage behind us we thought we could learn little and improve little. We learned much and are still improving.”

“Not only did we experience a deep sense of unity and joy during the weekend, but the intimacy and excitement continued after.”

“Our weekend was without qualification the most fantastic and moving experience of our lives.”

“Our weekend will be a dramatic high point in our lives for years to come.”

“Thank you for the most rewarding weekend of our lives. We are looking eagerly to many exciting years together. We wish every young couple could have a Marriage Encounter Weekend.”

“We want you to know we thought we had a great marriage. But Marriage Encounter helped make it fantastic!”

*a lifetime
of love*



**FEBRUARY 29 -
MARCH 1, 2020**

**Divine Word College,
Epworth, IA**

A WORLDWIDE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

WEEKEND is a weekend away from the responsibilities and practicalities of ones' daily life in order to expand and deepen that life. It is not a retreat, a marriage clinic, or a sensitivity group. It aims is to help participants develop communication skills where feelings and thoughts flow more freely, resulting in greater love, renewed dedication, and more joy in living out one's calling in life.

WWME began as a way of improving communication between husbands and wives, but the skills can benefit anyone whose vocation involves close, caring communication with others. The weekend is designed in such a way that priests can fully participate.

SCHEDULE: This weekend will start at 7:00 a.m. Saturday and conclude late Sunday afternoon.

PRESENTATIONS given by a team of Catholic couples and a priest focus on a variety of topics — personality, unity, listening, forgiveness, prayer, affirmation, community, change, and more. These topics translate easily to the relationship between a priest and his parish or any group to whom he ministers. Following presentations, priests have time for individual reflection as well as reflection on their relationship with God, those to whom they minister, and the Church. Dialogue is an important part of the weekend. Informal dialogues are arranged with another priest making the weekend.

COST: The registration fee for the weekend has been waived. At the end of the weekend participants are asked to prayerfully consider contributing what they can to defray the cost of the weekend.



**FOR MORE INFO,
CONTACT:**

Fr Jim Bergin, SVD
563-845-9197
jbergin@dwci.edu

**TO SIGN UP,
CONTACT:**

Jeff and Janet Francois
563-608-3305
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Testimonials and praise.

“Marriage Encounter yes! You are doing such important work in our church, especially in this world we live in. I will pray for you and your movement.”

Pope Benedict XVI, Jan 23, 2008

“Whether you do it for your people or do it for yourself, just take a weekend off from your ministry and make a Worldwide Marriage Encounter. It was the most important weekend that I spent in my 25 years of priesthood. I really believe that those whom I have served as a pastor since my weekend would agree.”

Fr. Dennis Hughes Diocese of St. Petersburg, FL

“I gained a profound respect for the Sacrament of Marriage. In a ministry where almost all of the Priest’s time is spent with people who are, will be, or have been married, this understanding I gained from the weekend has been invaluable.”

Fr. John Curran

“I began to understand just how important love was in my life. The fact that people loved me and that it was all right for me to love in return, was the beginning of a major transformation in my priesthood.”

Bishop John J Kaising D.D.

“If you are Tired of being just another human doing, instead of a human being, the weekend helps you reflect on your own experience of the ministry and your value as a person. The weekend humbles priests to see how holy their people are in their courage to live out their Sacrament. I sensed the awesome presence of the power of the lord as he moves the hearts of his people..

Fr Tom Devery

“One of the most profound moments of renewal since ordination, took place not on a retreat among fellow priest or religious, but in a hotel conference room filled with married couples”

Fr. Al Jowdy

“What a rich experience the Marriage Encounter weekend has been for me these past thirty-five years. Invaluable! The weekend has helped me become a better priest and bishop, as well as appreciate this powerful ministry in the Church.”

Most Reverend William Skylstad Diocese of Spokane, WA

“Before living the weekend, I thought I knew everything about the life of a priest. But after the End of the week, I truly learned about the lives of marriages, their families, and as parents they can change the lives of their children”

Father Minhyun Cho –Archdiocese of Newark, NJ