

# A passion for making marriages work

By Mary Ann Chezik

What do Worldwide Marriage Encounter, Engaged Encounter, Living in Love and its related programs, and the Pastoral and Matrimonial Renewal Center all have in common?

They are all ministries that were developed and fostered by one dedicated priest, Jesuit Father Chuck Gallagher, over the last five decades. Now in his 80s, he is still passionate about helping couples live the sacrament of matrimony to its fullest potential as the living sign of Christ's love for his bride, the church.

"Marriage is such a glorious thing for the significance of the Gospel and the well-being of the church. It is one of the seven ways in which Christ is most present to us: through the married couple to the parish. The church makes a mistake when it asks, 'What can we do for our married couples?' It should encourage and equip the couples to ask, 'What can we do for our church?'"

That was what drew him to Marriage Encounter in the late 1960s when he first attended a weekend: "After the weekend, after the couples had rediscovered one another and discovered their importance in the church, they were spurred to action. They wanted to serve together, and they became active

in marriage preparation, in religious education, in other lay ministries. They were ready to take on responsibilities."

Are the newer "Preparing to Live in Love" and "Living in Love" programs replacements for or upgrades of the Engaged Encounter and Marriage Encounter weekends?

"One plants seeds for the other; they are parallel," he said. "They both help young couples to see that there is more to marriage than appears in their own eyes. Both sets of programs hold out to couples the church's ambition for them in marriage and shows them the possibilities, asking, 'Don't you want to aim for this?'"

Couples of all ages can attend Marriage Encounter and Living in Love Weekends, as well as the eight-session "Living in Love Every Day" group sessions that follow a LIL weekend.

When he began working with engaged couples, he would ask if they believed they could be married for life. They answered, "Yes!" Now he says that they usually answer "No." They come with great ambitions, but also with a lot of doubt.

"They need to see marriages that are working, where the couples are happy and in love, in order to see what their marriage can be. So many today are deprived of

any education in the church that the mentoring they get in "Preparing to Live in Love" is an eye-opener for them."

Father Chuck calls it an "ambition program" — "we don't back off from telling them what the church teaches, but we put it into a positive perspective." And he also has some advice for parents who complain about who their sons and daughters are dating.

"I want to say to them: 'What are you going to do about it? Are you taking responsibility for who they will marry? Who are you inviting into your home? You should load your house with good young men and women.' Put good examples in front of them and encourage them to keep good company."

Father Chuck encourages priests to invite couples personally to attend a weekend to enrich their marriage.

"Priests often do themselves a disservice by announcing something from the pulpit and just expecting people to show up. People really need the personal invitation. I don't think priests realize how much couples believe in them. Tell the couples, 'Don't go because you need this weekend; go because you deserve this weekend.'"

Father Chuck sees the sacrament of matrimony as significant not just for the couple, but for what the couple can bring to the church: "The couple is the living expression of Jesus' identity with

us. It is the living sign that reveals the church to itself."

To Father Chuck Gallagher, there is nothing more important than opening the eyes of couples to that truth, so that they can truly live their sacrament and become a gift to the church.

(For more information on the written works of Father Chuck Gallagher as well as the programs mentioned in this article, go to [www.pmcusa.org](http://www.pmcusa.org).)

In the Diocese of Camden, the following Marriage Encounter Weekends will be held in 2012:

March 2-4, Avalon

April 13-15, Avalon

June 1-3, Vineland

Sept. 21-23, Vineland

Oct. 26-28, Avalon

Nov. 30-Dec. 2, Avalon

Call Michele and Bob Dooley for more information and to register, 609-827-7117.

Living in Love Weekends will be:

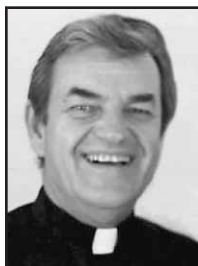
Feb. 11-12, St. Charles Borromeo, Washington Township

March 3-4, St. Vincent de Paul, Mays Landing

March 24-25, Holy Eucharist, Cherry Hill

April 14-15, Our Lady of Hope, Blackwood

For more information or to register for any of these programs, go to [www.livinginlove.org](http://www.livinginlove.org)



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CHUCK  
GALLAGHER

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### Don't Cry, Baby...

## WEDDINGS AREN'T WHAT THEY USED TO BE

Deptford, NJ. — Time was, back in the "good old days," the Bride's Father would hire a Hall, a Bartender and a four-piece Band and order a dozen Roses from the nearest florist. The Bride wore a \$25.00 gown, the Groom wore a dark suit and the attendants dressed in their street clothes! No wonder those Brides hide their wedding photos! There wasn't much to look at.

But, things have changed. Parents have come to realize that their daughter's wedding day should be the most important and memorable day of her life.

### The Age of the Wedding Planner

Nowadays, weddings are planned down to the smallest detail. Imagine your wedding as a large Jig-Saw Puzzle, with hundreds of small pieces labeled with things like, "Menu" "Hall Décor," "Cake," "Cocktails," "Hors D'oeuvres," "Toast," "Maitre D'," and "Flowers."

Then, add "Table Décor," "Parking," "Bridal Suite," "Open Bar," "Linens," "Photography," "Chair Covers," and many others.

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In the words of Adelpia's Evelyn Balis, "We are committed to excellence in the management of details, big and small with care and love, providing peace of mind and real value for the Bride, Groom and Guests."

*Please enjoy a tour and Video at the Adelpia by calling Dan or Ginny at 856 845 8200. See our magnificent Ballrooms and Décor. We do wedding receptions for 50 to 500 with customized plans to fit any budget. Let us show you how we plan "Theme" Weddings and how everything is done in our own premises. There is no cost or obligation. 856 845 8200*

## Toeing the bridal party line



Ashley and Stephen Orihel were married Oct. 1, 2011 at Christ the King Church in Haddonfield.

## A loving, unrehearsed gesture

By C. Vincent

They were sitting side by side, rather than facing each other, and they were eating in silence. They were an older couple. She was dressed nicely but looked as though she hadn't spent much time on her hair. She had her left leg propped on the chair in front of her.

He — the man I assumed was her husband — was gaunt and a little stooped, and he reminded me of Max von Sydow, currently nominated for a Best Supporting Actor Oscar for playing a man who does not speak in "Extremely Loud and Incredible Close."

I thought of other roles the actor has played. The knight who tries to cheat death in Ingmar Bergman's "The Seventh Seal." An artist in "Hannah and Her Sisters." Jesus in "The Greatest Story Ever Told."

The man and woman didn't talk. She seemed to be concentrating harder than

she should on a plate of food. And what was that flat white object on the table? With another object, like a small black brick, on top of it?

Squinting, I finally realized it was a dry erase board and eraser. I assumed the woman might have recently had a stroke and lost her speech, either temporarily or permanently, and used the board to communicate.

How had her life changed, I wondered. What was left of her former life? Was she a mother? An attentive grandmother? A meticulous housekeeper, or someone who liked to work in a garden? She might have been fiercely independent before, but now? How was she adapting to this new role?

And what of him? What was his part to play?

They finished eating, and sat quietly for a few moments. Then the man took her right hand in both of his and kissed it.

C. Vincent is a freelance writer.