

Strengthening Marriages at Our Lady of the Ridge

"The Sacrament of Matrimony has been instituted by Christ, in order that we might be enabled to love – love as Christ, our Master and Model, loves us."

-Fr. John Hardon, S.J.

With this ring, I thee wed." Sound familiar? To many of us, it does. The seemingly mystical moment when those words joined us to our spouse is something we will never forget. However, despite the glorious reality of what a marriage in Christ is intended to be, there are still many heartaches and struggles in the typical marital union. In light of this, the Marriage Formation and Enrichment Ministry at Our Lady of the Ridge prepares engaged couples to live within a faith-based marriage for life, and provides many different formation and enrichment programs for married couples of our parish.

"With our society placing so many challenges on our time and efforts, we need the spiritual reinforcement that our ministry can provide to those who have the need to put 'pep' into their new or existing marriage relationship," says Deacon Edwin Hill.

Deacon Hill and his wife, Marianne, coordinate the FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding and Study) program and the parish-based Pre-Cana program at Our Lady of the Ridge.

The opportunities this ministry offers are innovative, meaningful and enlightening. For example, during Pre-Cana Marriage Preparation classes, engaged couples meet with married couples who have been trained through the Archdiocese of Chicago Family Ministries Office. These married couples share their experiences on various topics and their faith in a home-based setting.

They also make the FOCCUS premarital inventory available, providing engaged couples and those working

with them a personalized profile of what is needed in their marriage preparation process.

This ministry also provides formation and enrichment programs for married couples. These programs include an annual married couple's dinner party, a movie night, and access to Marriage Encounter weekends. There are also special celebrations to honor couples who are celebrating milestone anniversaries.

"As a parish community, we acknowledge the commitments and love shared by married couples through the annual invitation for those celebrating their Golden Wedding Anniversary, as well as affirming each married couple throughout the year with our Anniversary Blessings during Mass," says Deacon Edwin.

In addition, the Marriage Formation and Enrichment Ministry publishes Catholic Couple

Articles. These articles of interest are shared with married couples either through the newsletter or the weekly parish bulletin.

Deacon Edwin and Marianne gather with other trained couples during the year to plan and implement educational and enriching gatherings that continue to support couples in their marriages. The other members of the ministerial team are Bill and Colleen Dearth, Bill and Mary Graves, and Brian and Tania Rempert.

Volunteers are gladly welcomed. For more information on the Marriage Formation and Enrichment Ministry, contact Deacon Edwin and Marianne Hill at the rectory at 708-425-3800.

