

Family Light

The Challenges that the Family has to face today in the Context of Evangelization

Holy Father Francis has convened the Third Extraordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, to be held in the Vatican from 5 to 19 October 2014, on the theme "The pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelisation".



Pope Francis is inviting the whole Church to reflect on challenges faced by the family today and respond creatively and in a humane way. Challenges are plenty and finding solutions may not be very easy unless we go through a process of conversion. The Family Light wishes to reflect with you on this theme proposed by the Holy Father.

Right from the start of his tenure, Pope Francis has been talking about issues concerning the Family. In his recent Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Joy of the Gospel), Pope Francis writes about some of the challenges of today's world confronting the family. We are called to say 'no to an economy of exclusion (53-54); no to the new idolatry of money (55-56); no to a financial system which rules rather than serves (57-58); no to the inequality which spawns violence (59-60); some cultural challenges (61-67); and challenges from urban cultures (71-75)'.

Fr. John Phalen, CSC, the international President of Holy Cross Family Ministries visited us. Fr. Herve Morissette used this opportunity to interview him partly on this theme. You will feel encouraged as you go through the interview. Questions that are posed and the answers to those questions provide deeper sense of longing in us for prayer.

In the interview Fr. Morissette highlights: Fr. Patrick Peyton's call and mission, Faith formation of children, Skills and attitudes that the parents need to possess in parenting, Similarities that we find in the East and West today, Challenges that globalization brings to the families.

The Family Light introduces you to Naz whose testimony can capture our attention and his reflections take us to a deeper self. Usually, listening is a difficult task. Naz invites you to listen to the sound of your soul, which would be a challenge. He touches the key elements of what our modern families experience in today's globalized world. His personal testimony may easily resemble the experience of other couples who are involved in similar work situation. It is encouraging for us to see how Naz brings a shift in his professional life in order to listen to the needs of his family as well as his inner self. The shift in his life comes because of his *Retrouvaille* experience. This experience brings a change in his life and has a positive effect on his family and friends. Dr. Scott Peck speaks about 'the sins of the father' in his book titled *The Road Less Travelled*. Dr. Scott Peck insists that children need self-disciplined role models to develop the capacity to delay gratification. Naz is right in asking himself: "How could I shout at my children for watching TV for long hours when I was doing it myself? How was I setting an example?" He gives us tips that worked for him and I am sure we can pick up some that we ourselves can try. He concludes saying if we truly listen we will hear the whispering voice of God telling us: "I love you my child."

Referring to Simeon and Anna, Pope Francis asked: "These two elderly persons represent faith as memory. But let me ask you: Do you listen to your grandparents?" "Grandparents are like the wisdom of the family. The children learn from their grandparents, from the previous generation." By sharing his experiences of visiting homes for the aged and listening to their stories, Fr. Lourdu highlights the importance of caring for the elderly parents. After placing the concerns that our families face today, he goes on to suggest some ways in which we can face this challenge.

As the Church prepares for the Synod on Family we invite you to reflect on the same theme. Let dream with the Holy Father and realize God's dream for the family. If you feel inspired to share your insights or experience, do write to us. I wish you all a Blessed Christmas. May your family experience joy of the Light of Christ throughout the coming year.

Fr. Gali Arul Raj, CSC
Director.

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THE FAMILY

THAT PRAYS TOGETHER

STAYS TOGETHER™

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Rev. Fr. John Phalen, CSC

Rev. Fr. Hervé Morissette, CSC

Interview conducted by Fr. Hervé Morissette, CSC with Fr. John Phalen, CSC, a priest of the congregation of Holy Cross who has served as the President of the Holy Cross Family Ministries since 1996, furthering the work begun in 1942 by Servant of God, Father Patrick Peyton CSC, the Rosary priest and Catholic media pioneer. Fr. John leads and oversees all member ministries of this international Organization in 17 countries.

As you have known Fr. Peyton personally, can you say what struck you most in his personality and his pastoral ministry?



Fr. Peyton was a holy man. I think that's what most people came away with from an encounter with him, understanding that he was somebody very focused on Mary and very grateful to Mary who cured him from tuberculosis when he was a seminarian. He always talked about that. And he always talked about the Holy Rosary being the result of it. He promised that, if he became a Holy Cross priest, he would devote his priesthood to doing her work. And that's exactly what he was doing. He was very single-minded about that, praying the rosary frequently. And there is something about his presence to people. When you were in his presence, there was no one else around. He would spend the whole of his attention on you. And that kind of focus, and that kind of aura that he had shows him to be a humble man and a very holy man.

Fr. Peyton devoted his whole life to the promotion of family prayer, especially the Rosary. Today, how would you motivate families to pray the rosary together?

Well, it is difficult in our times. And I think that one of the major reasons is that people consider themselves to be too busy. They don't think they have twenty minutes for praying the rosary together. Now they have twenty minutes, half an hour and hours on end to watch TV, listen to the radio or get involved with the Internet. In a way, we have an information barrage that's too strong for families, and families have a hard time prioritizing what their time is going to be. So, I recommend that people use the time that the family already comes together. Most of them already come together for Sunday meals. So, once the meal ends and before everyone gets up and goes their way, I would recommend praying the rosary – at least a decade or two – to be able to focus on prayer together and strengthen the family prayer. I do think that people used to have the discipline of setting a special time to pray a whole rosary. And it's not impossible. In my own country, the US, a lot of people have enough time to go to soccer practice with the youngest person in the family. And that has become more important than anything else, whatever the age of the young people. And I think that's a little bit misplaced, that emphasis. There should be at least that much emphasis on praying together.

In the light of your pastoral experience, what approach would you suggest to help parents realize that they have an important responsibility to take care of the faith formation of their children?

In many families that I visited, people start talking about the older generation, and how they were taught by their parents to be praying people, to be people of faith. And they admire that. But then when it comes to their own generation, I think people suffer today, because perhaps their religious formation was not that strong. They did not internalize it in the same degree that their parents did. So, passing it on to the next generation becomes difficult, because they are not sure how they would explain their faith. They are not as confident of the faith, of the fact that there is a God, the fact that you can talk to God personally, and are sure of themselves talking about all of that. And they may not have the same practice either of going to the rosary. So, that becomes a real hindrance.

And I think that our attempt to solve the problem has a lot to do with religious education for adults. Perhaps having the young people going to religious classes and having the parents come along as well, apparently to supervise, but actually to learn about the sacraments that is so important? What it is about the rosary that is so important?

You certainly met parents who succeeded in bringing up their children in the faith. Can you mention some of the concrete ways in which they proceeded?

One way is to give the children responsibility about the rosary as soon as possible. You can start praying the rosary when you are three years old, as long as you can talk and, eventually, you can learn the *Hail Mary*. And the child can be proud of himself that, at least, he has learned that much. It may just be a *Glory be* that he knows how to say, or the *Hail Mary* or the *Our Father*. And eventually, when you see your kid grow up, becoming more of an adult, he will be able to lead the rosary and you will give the child more and more responsibility. Can they learn the mysteries? Can they memorize them? Can they lead the rosary? That way, you will motivate the young people to advance a little more rapidly, to make it more part of what they internalize for themselves, taking it for granted that the rosary is part of our lives, part of what we do. We are never going to put that aside. And the couples that I have met, the families that have success, bring their children up that way, giving them the responsibility for the rosary. So, they will know how to pray as soon as possible. And parents feel very proud that now they can lead that particular decade. In fact, the children may be the ones who eventually insist on saying the rosary and remind their parents to do it.



In other words, it is a sharing of responsibility that is important for the children.

Right.

The famous poet Kahlil Gibran made a very striking statement for the intention of parents. He wrote: "Your children are not your children." Could you elaborate on this?

Your children are not your children in the sense that your children are loaned to you. None of us owns anybody else, when it comes down to human life. There are many challenges in being a parent. When the child is first born and the child is dependent upon the parents for everything, the parents have to teach the child how to nourish himself, teach the child how to care for himself, how to speak, how to relate with other people, how to go to school, and so forth. So, for so many things, the child is totally dependent upon the parents. As the children grow and become more independent, then it is important to let that happen. Finally, I think that, a bigger challenge in taking care of children completely in all their needs is to let them go their way, like the birds who let the chicks fly out of their nests. They are going to learn how to fly on their own.

Parents have a hard time letting go of their children, because they think they own their children. Actually, they have been loaned for a time and they belong to God. And they have to do what the Father tells them to do. They have to be about the work of their Father, as Jesus says in the finding in the Temple. So, I think that the hardest part of being a parent is that you don't have control over what your son or your daughter is going to choose to do in life, who they are going to choose to marry, or whether they are going to choose to go into the religious life or the priesthood. Those kinds of things are beyond you as a parent. It's not up to the parents to determine those things. And that's a very difficult thing. In that sense, your children are not your children.

The situation in the West is different from the one we find here in the East. However, there are certainly some common characteristics that we can point out. What do you think is the most common problem that families have to face today?

I think it's busyness or the perception that we are too busy. People get upset even to wait in line. Often somebody is upset and says: "Look, I don't have all day!" I was in a line one time at a grocery store. Somebody spoke out and said: "I don't have all day!" And the person in front turned around and said: "I'm sorry, but yes you do! You have all day! God gave you all day to do with what you will!" It's up to you to decide what you are going to do. So, if you choose to be all upset about having to wait now, maybe you don't know that your rosary is right in your pocket. You could pray a rosary while you're waiting and calm down about it all. People are not as busy as they think they are. They have to choose what they are doing for themselves. Spending time with the family needs to be a priority.

Another problem, I think, is the communication between generations, because generations these days don't understand each other very well. You can look at an adult couple today who say, "Johnny spends all the time playing video games and is fighting with his mum. We don't know who his friends are. We don't even know that world of the Internet and we don't understand it. When we get on our computer, we need his help. He has to come in, this twelve year old, and he has to help you get on the computer." So, there is a bigger gap today between the generations which makes it harder for them to relate, to communicate. So, Johnny comes home and they ask him: "Johnny, what happened today?" - "Nothing" - "Whom did you meet?" - "Nobody." And he goes to his room and he is relating with people on his computer and his cell phone. But the parents have no heard of that. There is a special code that you can use, when you are on your computer. There's a POS. What that means is **Parent Over Shoulder**. In other words, "I can't talk to you the way I normally do, because I have my parent looking over my shoulder at what I'm writing." And whoever he's communicating with knows.

The Holy Father has convoked a Synod on the pastoral challenges of the family in the context of evangelization. In your opinion, what are some of these main challenges?

There is a perspective on the family that says that the family is the most essential cell of our society. And the whole society is built upon the idea of the family. Today, that's broken up by the fact that people just come and live together and they don't know how to answer the questions, "Do we want to have children? How many children do we want to have? Are we going to be with them for a life-time? Or are we just trying out our relationship here in an experimental kind of way, and we want to live from day to day, and we are fine as long as we don't have an argument. But every time we have an argument, we might be splitting up over that. Maybe, under those conditions, it's very contrary to what family is. To bring children into the world, they need to have stability, a relationship that is stable, a home that is stable, work that can nourish the family and so on. All of those things can be missing with a couple that is just experimenting with their relationship with each other.

I find there is a focus on the individual. Too much so! Individualism is rampant in our society, in every country: "I am here to satisfy my own needs, my own pleasure, and I go that far." And, of course, the family is not about just oneself. The family is about relationship with others. The family is about bringing up another generation and sacrificing to renew the human race. It's not only a love relationship between two people. It is about that, of course, but it is also about raising a new generation to carry on after us. And people are losing their perspective on that. I think that's a great failing within families.

Work situations, I think, are really creating a lot of stress in families. There are families where the spouses, the parents are not home at the same time. One comes in and the other one goes out to work. The work situation demands of them that both have to work in order to maintain the family. The stability of the family is lost. When children come after school, they are on their own. They choose what they want and they get into a lot of troubles, just being on their own. So, these are some of the challenges that we are seeing facing the family.

Are there specific challenges that the children themselves have to face?

I would say that there is a lot of tension for the young people to comply with what the peer group thinks is "cool." Now, you have to be cool these days. Being cool is being aware of what life is all about. Young people have a lot of customs and slang among themselves. Some feel, "Maybe I'm not as cool as somebody else. I don't have as many friends. I'm not in with the group that I really think is great. So, I think less of myself because of that." I think that affects the way one looks at himself. His self-esteem goes down.

There is no doubt that the family is in crisis at present not only in the West, but also here in the East, where we come to know about a number of broken marriages. What do you think could be the causes of this situation?

I think it's the creeping secularism in our society. In other words, the conviction that we can do without God. We are in charge. We know more about science. We are learning all about the genetic code. We can do things today that we could never do before. All that's happening with electronics and so on. I think that humanity becomes a little too proud of itself and feels that it has made so many advances that now we don't need faith in a God who created us, who gives us life. The society tells you in so many different ways: "It's no longer true to say that God gives us life. We're in charge of our own life and we've accomplished so many things." That attitude makes people feel that they can do whatever is good for them. And relativism goes on with it saying that there is no objective right and wrong. It's all just what's right and wrong for you: "You can have your value system, but for me I've a different value system. It does not make any difference, if I am relating to this person and I've decided to change and relate to another one and share life for a while. Nothing is stable. No big plans for the future. I'm just satisfying my own needs, my own pleasure for the moment." And I think that this mentality is creeping into our society a lot.

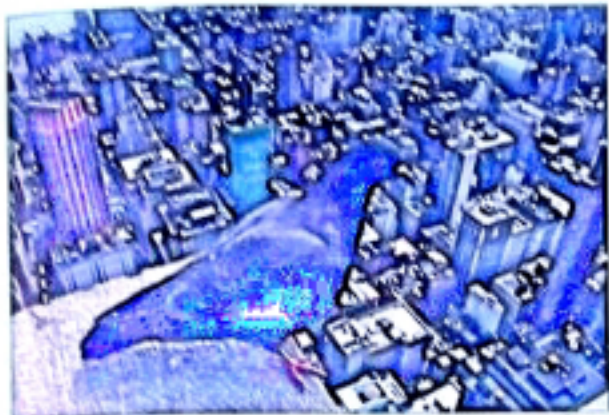
I think we need retreat-type experiences for young people to help them to understand that, in fact, there is a God and there are obstacles that present themselves in our lives, but you are going to need prayer in order to face these obstacles. And you need to see the need of a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, mediated through Our Lady and through the Holy Rosary. But I do think that it is very important for us to create those kinds of events for young people, so that they can understand that for themselves and appropriate a sense of religiosity, a sense of prayerfulness for themselves.

One of the problems that the younger generations have to face in urban areas, especially those who work in Call Centers, is the erosion of family values, because these young people have to work at night. Do you think there is something special we could do to help these young people?

I wonder if there is way we could get on their cell phones and be available to them. For instance, we have "App", an application that gives people a prayer every single day on their cell-phone or I-pad. And as they are starting work, they can say that prayer, so that all time they are working could be dedicated to God, instead of simply dedicating it to miming the West. I know that working at night is a very difficult task, because it separates you a lot from the family. So, in terms of what we can do, I think preaching about it, bringing it out in the open, helping people to reflect upon it, and maybe introduce some discipline into their lives, see what they are doing when they have a break. For instance, they can have tea together, but they could also have a little prayer, do a little re-focusing in terms of not losing their faith. I'm sure it will occur to them that they have to optimize the waking time they do have with their families.



Listening to the sound of your soul



Not long ago, somewhere in the outskirts of Amsterdam, the beautiful lilting song of a little bird was heard. Its mate, quick to recognize the titillating tune, responded with an equally bewitching song. This would go on for some time till the birds met and flew around the growing suburbs of the city. The birds romanced each other, mated, multiplied. There were thousands like them. As the city grew in size and economic importance, its sounds multiplied and magnified. The wheels of progress seemed to have brought with it more noise. The din gradually became deafening. Soon the birds could not even hear each other's mating calls. As a result the numbers of birds who could find a mate reduced drastically, and thus they rapidly became extinct. This is a true story.

It's not very different with those of us living in the urban metros. We cannot hear the call of the one above and have lost the connection. It's a real challenge to find an oasis of silence. There is so much to do that there's no time to listen, even to your own thoughts or the little nudges from your own body. The ubiquitous presence of technology is all around us. The cell phone is all pervasive. The television has made zombies of us all. The incessant use of laptops and computers has given us meta-carpal syndrome, Spondylitis and even serious mental conditions. Communication between husband and wife is very challenging given both of us work. Children have school, college, tuitions, extra classes, extra-curricular activities, dance and music class etc. Everybody is busy. Not to blame technology, it's more how we have learnt to use it.

We all come back home and switch on the TV to relax. That takes us further into the lives of other people and news of things we can do without.

I work in advertizing where deadlines are impossible. So I end up drinking with my colleague at work almost every day and get back home late. My wife Arlene has to work as well as look after the interests of the children, their food etc. We had maids but still a lot more needs to be done.

There was initial friction between my wife and I because my attention span was low and I wasn't really listening. We all had got caught up in the instant culture - instant coffee, ready to make dishes, fast food, instant thrills - TV/Internet/movies, etc. How could I shout at my children for watching TV for long when I was doing it myself? How was I setting an example?

The breakdown came some time later. We also realized that our personalities, families of origin, needs and communication styles differed significantly. There was constant bickering due to which we succumbed to a superficial and sterile world of coldness, tinsel and make believe. Needless to say we were not happy.

We then made a decision to do the Retrouvaille weekend in January 2011. This was a turning point for us.

Some of the things that we did were to cut TV time, create Family Time. Spend time daily with yourself alone in prayer or meditation. Learn to say 'No' at the office, to friends and others. Learn to prioritize. Write out our family, individual goals. Eat right. Sleep right and exercise in moderation. Delegate work at the office. Learn to be kind to strangers. Give your time to people to help. Give for charity. Help someone in need every-day, even if it's just being appreciative or giving someone a compliment. No great discoveries there, all just simple things. But it enhanced our lives immensely by acting on them, by doing them, not by just knowing them.

It's not been a perfect life. We're still struggling. But it's been much better. And the results are there for us to see. And we are happy. But there are miles to go before we sleep.

I found out the hard way that in this world which is dominated by technology the noise can be very loud and can drown out the voices of your soul, God and your loved ones. But when we pause and listen deeply we are rewarded with the sweetest sounds we will ever hear, saying I love you and all is well.



Mr. Naz

ARE WE TOO BUSY TO CARE?



Who are they looking for?

As you step into an old age Home you see many weary eyes turn to focus on you with the usual question "Is that you?" and turn away with the usual answer "Not You" and then those blurry eyes settle back to their usual depressed or lost-in-to-the-unknown mode.

I would like to share my experience with those whose parents are kept in Homes for the Aged.

During my priestly formation and ministry, I had ample opportunities to visit the old age Homes. I had the experience of listening to the inmates. They go on talking. They talk about where they lived, their past professions, their achievements and most of all about their families. When they speak about their children, who are in different places, you can never fail to notice in their voices the sadness of missing them. Yet there will be an undaunted pride in their trembling voice, when they say that their son or daughter is a successful businessman, a famous doctor, an efficient engineer, a renowned musician, an I.T. professional and so on. And they go on enumerating what are those achievements in far away places.

Moreover, there will be much joy when they speak to you about their grandchildren: how great they are, the questions they ask and the naughty things they do at home and the things they learned in the school. At the end of the talk you also feel that you miss those families. Invariably, many conclude with much sadness "I have done much for my children and today they have no time for me." Some say, "Though my children give me the needed money, medicines, clothes, books, eatables and regularly pay the rent, yet I miss them."

In an audience, Pope Paul VI told people how, one day, when he was Archbishop of Milan, he went out on a parish visitation. During the course of the visitation he found an old woman living alone. 'How are you?' he asked her. 'Not bad,' she answered. 'I have enough food, and I'm not suffering from the cold.' 'You must be reasonably happy then?' he said. 'No, I'm not', she said as she started to cry. 'You see, my son and daughter-in-law never come to see me. I'm dying of loneliness.' Afterwards, he was haunted by the phrase 'I'm dying of loneliness'. And the Pope concluded: 'Food and warmth are not enough in

themselves. People need something more. They need our presence, our time, our love. They need to be touched, to be reassured that they are not forgotten.' (Flor McCarthy in 'New Sunday and Holy Day Liturgies')

Our Indian families that traditionally took pride in the family ties and saw it as a privileged responsibility to have their aging parents at home, do not hesitate to transfer that responsibility to institutions such as old age Homes. While their babies are at the play Home and the aging parents at the old age Home, the present generation parents are at work to pay for the bills.

The few reasons that the children list out when they send their aging parents to the old age Homes are mostly the fact that they have to go overseas to earn money or to achieve great things in life. The children feel that the new culture and their lifestyle are not suitable for their old parents. Some say that their home is too small to accommodate them, or they have no time to take care of the medical demands of their aging parents which can be safely answered, at the best, by those institutions.

The children think that the best accommodations at the old age Home with the recreations, the TV, the magazines, the indoor-games, the meals and the advanced medical facilities that their money can buy are enough for the aged parents. But we see in reality the aging parents earnestly long for something that their children's money cannot buy: **THE LOVE OF THEIR FAMILY.**

Dear parents, we reap what we sow! You wanted your children to be *achievers* in society. Yes, they have achieved great things. They have become successful doctors, engineers, teachers, musicians, businessmen and they are earning the dough in many digits. They can pay for your expenses! Is it not what you wanted when they were growing? Without condemning you I want to say that, when your children were young, you happily told them that to be successful is to secure a job that pays more money, and that the sign of a life's achievements is to be wealthy and own big villas and vehicles. Today your children are running after that and have no time for you!

Truly, it is much appreciable to encourage your children to do well in studies, to shine with their talents like singing or playing music and sports. It is equally very important to cultivate values and instill spirituality in their early lives. How many times has your parish priest announced that you should send your children to the Sunday school? And you responded by saying: "My children have no time and they have to go to their computer classes, special coaching classes" and so on.

We give more importance to see our children succeed socially and be applauded by many people, but we safely neglect spirituality. If we have imparted to them the Love and Fear of God, the love of others, respect and love for their parents and elderly, if we have taught them the Gospel values, then today they will hold their spiritual and moral values which will help them to say without any hesitation, 'we need you'. The right motivations at the early age could make your children think that the material things are only a means to their happy family.

PASTORAL ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE HOLY CROSS FAMILY MINISTRIES IN INDIA.



Children's Rosary Rally organized in St. Xavier's Cathedral Parish in Kottar by the Teachers' Teams on the 13th of April 2013.



One day seminar for the youth conducted at Holy Cross Students' Home, Katapadi, Karnataka on the 2nd of October 2012.



The Teachers' Teams conducted a Rosary Rally on 27th of October 2013 in the nearby Parish Church at Kottucherry, Karaikal. Nearly 250 men, women and catechism children took part in the Rally.



Though it has become quite a cliché to quote, "The Family that Prays together Stays Together", yet the saying has its true meaning in the families that can face all the ups and downs of life gracefully. When you take time to pray as a family, then you are not only going to impart family values to your children, but you are going to grow with them. They want you, because you have instilled in them these family values. They want you because money cannot buy you. You have taught your children to pray together in the family and, today, they cannot feel that they really pray their family prayer when you are kept in an institution.

Teach your children to have a personal relationship with the Lord, so that He may guide them to enjoy every spiritual blessings. Teach your children to pray with you and they will see the value of growing together till you breathe your last. And there will be no reasons why you

can't be with them. If you can teach them or help them to learn moral or spiritual values at their earliest, and if you can take time to spend with them specially to pray with them, then in your old age you can look for your children, grand-children around you. You will be considered no more a burden by your children and others, but a good parent, grandparent, friend, neighbour, volunteer for a good cause in your locality or in the parish. Thus you will continue to contribute to your family, the Church and society as a whole.

With medical advancements and money you will not only have an opportunity to add years to your life also you will have *life* to add to those years that you are blessed with amidst your sweet home.

Fr. J. Sahaya Lourdu Raj, csc



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**May the Lord Bless you with a very meaningful
Christmas and a Happy New Year!**

Communion-building Processes and Skills for Couples



The first substantial workshop of 'COMPAS for Couples' was held on 19 - 20 November 2013. Ten participated enthusiastically in the workshop. The workshop was conducted by Fr. M.C. Abraham. He

took the group through an exciting journey of self-discovery using the tool of MBTI. Using questionnaire, discussion, introspection, sharing, and activities each participant sought to reach a deeper understanding about one's own personality and temperament. Those who attended along with their spouses found that they were able to understand their spouses much better. It was discovered that a greater understanding of one's and one's spouse's personality types and temperaments goes a long way in forging a joyful and lasting marriage. The sessions began at 9.30am and ended at 6pm on both days and was well appreciated for their content and conduct. We hope that the learnings from this program will be carried by the participants to their own families, neighborhoods and parishes and help make marriages joyful and growth-promoting for both the partners.



Retrouvaille Program

Retrouvaille – a program to help Couples Renew and Heal their Marriages. Retrouvaille India is organizing a weekend program aimed at enriching and healing marriages. This will be held from 17th to 19th January 2014 at Bangalore.

We earnestly request you to share this information with couples in need and encourage them to benefit from this opportunity.

We have publicity materials available, and couples who have gone through this program before are willing to share their experiences. Please contact us at the numbers below for more information.

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Email: retro_bangalore@retrouvaille.org

To read more about this program, visit www.helpourmarriage.com

