

BUKAS-LOOB SA DIYOS
Covenant Community
Phoenix

A Community of Encountered Couples and Families
Joyfully invites you to share the Fruits of our Marriage Encounter Weekend

THE SUBSTANCE OF THE "ENCOUNTER"

The Encounter presented by Bukas-Loob sa Diyos is open to couples married sacramentally in the Catholic Church. The Marriage Encounter is an invaluable experience of renewing our marriage relationship. It enriches the process of communication between husband and wife. It guarantees to make "good" marriages "better" and "not-so-good" marriages "good"! It is presented in a full weekend detached from the usual everyday distractions.

An "ecclesial team" trained and prepared for ministering the Encounter process conducts the weekend: a "Team Priest" and at least two "Team Couples" who manage together its instructional and experiential components.

Most, if not all, who have received the Encounter experience have fully rediscovered their marriage relationships, strengthened their conjugal and family life and become fully aware of the living presence of God in their marriage and family life.

WHAT IS THE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER?

The Marriage Encounter Weekend is a positive and personal experience for a couple, which offers them a technique of loving communication that they can use for the rest of their lives. It is an opportunity to look deeply into their relationship with each other and with God. Also, it is a time to share their feelings, their hopes, fears, joys and frustrations.

Marriage Encounter is not a retreat, nor is it a marriage clinic or sensitivity course. It is not a time to look at the past, but rather to look to your future together. The weekend is a positive, simple, common sense experience between husband and wife, that revitalizes marriage by helping couples to see what their relationship could and should be.

WHAT IS THE MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER FOR?

Marriage Encounter is for any couple who wants to enrich their marriage. The weekend is designed to expand and deepen the joys a couple share together whether they have been married for a short time or for many years. Marriage Encounter is also for priests and religious who want to revitalize their relationship with the people of God and develop an even deeper appreciation for their own vocation.

WHAT HAPPENS AT A MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER?

An atmosphere is created on the weekend in which the couple can concentrate exclusively on one another. A series of talks is given by a team of trained couples and a Priest. Each talk gives the husband and wife the opportunity to look at themselves as individuals and to look at their relationship with each other, with God and with others. Marriage Encounter starts with the love you have for your spouse and helps you build, expand and deepen that relationship. The weekend shows you the way to do this and provides you with the means - the rest is up to you! **The only talent one must have to make a Marriage Encounter is the talent to love and a desire to make a good marriage even better.**

DOES THE WEEKEND RESPECT THE COUPLE'S PRIVACY?

Yes! Marriage Encounter emphasizes communication between husband and wife through a weekend experience, which is free of the every day distractions and tensions. You concentrate on your spouse to such extent that you are hardly aware of the other couples who are in the Encounter. The presentations are given to the group as a whole. After each presentation, the husband and wife have time in the privacy of their room for their own personal sharing; using the communication technique they are learning that weekend. **There is no group discussion.**

HOW DOES A MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER ENHANCE A MARRIAGE?

The fundamental difference between marriages that are good, average or poor is the level of communication between husband and wife. In all marriages, there are times when we take each other and our relationship for granted. **The Weekend presents each couple with the opportunity to get off the "Modern World Treadmill", to stop and to take a fresh look at the "two of us, our marriage and our priorities".** We learn a communication technique which shows and encourages us to explore the important areas of our life together in a spirit of love and understanding. **The Weekend offers every couple the insights, the tools and the confidence to enrich their marriage and to strengthen their love for one another. For many couples, "Their Weekend" is one of the most significant experiences of their lives!**

PROCESS AND CONTENTS

There is a "rhythm" in the encounter process -

- the presentation of a truth;
- the personal reflection; and
- the conjugal dialogue.

A truth drawn from Scripture or from Church teaching and made alive by shared experiences of the presenting team. The "encounter truths" build up in four stages:

- The "I" stage
- The "YOU" and "I" (or "WE") stage;
- The "WE", "GOD and COMMUNITY" stage.

The "total" truth about ourselves as persons, as spouses, as parents and as members of the Church, unfolds as the weekend progresses. After a truth is presented, we are given time for "**personal reflection**" on these truths. During these reflective times, we learn to commune with the interior life that each of us has.

The conjugal dialogue is the heart of the encounter process. We express our deep-rooted feelings and responses to our spouse, and listen actively to our spouse's feelings and responses. The dialogue allows us to commune with our spouse and as we probe into the depths of each other in our relationship of consecrated love, we are given the opportunity to finally commune with the spirit of love -- the apex of our marriage triangle.

The **content** of the encounter is the new covenant -- **the covenant of love** -- which is the core of Christian Life. It is in this new covenant which we receive and place as the foundation of our marriage, our family and our community. At the center of the encounter is a profound opening of our spirit to the Being who is Love -- GOD.

Our process, therefore, is to be **"bukas-loob"**; Our Content -- the One who "fills us" -- is **"DIYOS"** - the person of God.

FOUR

The following are some **frequently-asked questions** from couples who may be unsure if the Marriage Encounter is for them, and our responses:

"We already have a good marriage."

Response: The difference between a "good" marriage and a BEAUTIFUL marriage is the Marriage Encounter experience. Even if many difficult marriages are made right in the Encounter, many more couples with already good marriages have received continuing blessings after the Weekend.

"We already have good communication between us."

Response: Please take a closer look. Can you truly communicate with each about your intimate feelings, aspirations, fears, anxieties? Do you have oneness and accord in your major decisions?

"We're too busy. We don't have time."

Response: Isn't a weekend a small price to pay for the joy, the peace, the blessings and the power of a lifetime made fuller by the Encounter? All you have to do is give one weekend to each other.

"We're too young."

Response: That's wonderful! Wouldn't you want to prevent growing old too fast, growing old alone? Wouldn't you want to be trained in living fully with each other as early as possible?

"We're too old."

Response: Then, you can be young again! Don't you agree there's always something new in you? Isn't there something you may have missed because you were not always aware of what was really in your spouse's mind and heart? Wouldn't you want a fresh look at each other?

"I don't feel at ease in Spiritual Retreats"

Response: That's how many of us felt before (and even during) our Encounter Weekend. But when we saw and met others like us who had successfully coped with the initial "uneasiness" we soon felt very much at home with the "spirituality" of the encounter. And later, we wanted more of it.