

## Making Marriage Better

*Spouses can rekindle the romance  
and strengthen the bond of their marriage*

by Mary DeTurris Poust and Dennis Poust

WE'VE NEVER BEEN a Valentine's Day kind of couple, not because we're not romantic or deeply in love — we are both of those things — but because we recognize the hyped-up romance of Valentine's Day is more about selling cards and flowers than about strengthening a relationship or demonstrating true love.

That being said, when we started dating almost two decades ago, our first Valentine's Day was as romantic as they come. It started with both of us buying each other the exact same card. It was, to us, just one more example of the fact that we were, and remain, a couple truly in sync. A visit to The Cloisters museum in upper Manhattan and an Italian dinner in the Bronx were the proverbial icing on the Valentine's Day cake that year.

But, as often happens to even the closest couples in the best of marriages, life can take its toll. After 15 years of marriage, three children, one miscarriage and two cross-country moves, we began to get bogged down in the daily details that can rob married love of its passion, its romance, its soul.

The blissful feelings of those early days, when we recognized each other as soul mates, best friends and lifelong loves, started to get buried under the obligations and stress that come with parenting and professional lives, volunteer service and homeownership. It was becoming harder and harder for us to see the couple we had once been.

We talked about how to reignite the fire of love and considered attending a Worldwide Marriage Encounter ([www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org)) weekend, but neither of us was committed enough to make it happen. Our marriage was good. Did we really need to spend a whole weekend working on it? What if the Marriage Encounter brought up old hurts or tensions that would pull us apart?

Finally, after several people told us that Marriage Encounter would be the best weekend of our married lives, we mailed the registration form, sent the kids to a relative and headed out.

Marriage Encounter is a Catholic program that offers to "turn a good marriage into a great marriage." Over a period of two days, we explored ideas and feelings we hadn't thought about in a while — or ever, in some cases. But the weekend didn't dredge up problems or dwell on the negatives. In a gentle and life-affirming way, it gave us an opportunity to stand side-by-side, looking out at the future as one. Through the powerful witness of our presenting couples and priest, we learned that we could create a married life of joy, passion and excitement, even in the midst of our daily challenges and struggles.

Marriage Encounter didn't force us to share our deepest feelings with strangers, as we feared. Its focus was on listening to the presenters and spending time alone as a couple, where we could give each other some much-deserved attention — something that had been sorely lacking in our lives.

We expected our marriage to return to business as usual after we left our Marriage

Encounter cocoon, but that was not the case. We still have our fights and struggles, but we manage those setbacks better and bring real healing to any divisions.

When we look back on our past 15 years of marriage, on all the anniversaries and birthdays and Valentine's Days, there is no question that the best gift we ever gave our family was our Marriage Encounter weekend. We look toward the future now and see a life where the intense feelings of love and joy in being a couple do not have to diminish with age or time or struggles. This is because we have made a decision to love; because we have been reminded of our great gift and have been given the tools to keep that gift alive and flourishing; and because we have put God back into his rightful place in our marriage. Now, nothing seems impossible.♦

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For more information about World Wide Marriage Encounter: Call 800-710-WWME Or send name and address to [Info@wwmeMARI.org](mailto:Info@wwmeMARI.org)

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