

Father Al Jowdy's testimony

One of my most profound moments of renewal since ordination, took place not on a retreat among fellow priests or religious, but in a hotel conference room filled with married couples!

Twenty-five years ago I was invited to attend a Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend experience as a priest. On that powerful Weekend, as the couples reclaimed and celebrated the romance and commitment that brought them together, I was able to renew my devotion and commitment to the people I serve. It seemed to me then, and does still, that it is no easier and no more difficult for a married couple to make their relationship priority number one, than it is for a priest to choose to love his people just the way they are and vice versa.

I was fortunate to present Marriage Encounter Weekends in the Atlanta area for many years. I recall with affection the hundreds of couples on those Weekends, who got off the world's treadmill and took a fresh look at themselves and their priorities. Marriage is a Sacrament of God's love and family life is the "domestic church". Whenever a couple works hard to enrich their relationship, they build up the Body of Christ and bring joy to heart of their pastor and others they interact with.

Marriage Encounter is not marriage counseling, and it is not designed for deeply troubled relationships. It is for good marriages to help them to become even better. **Father Al Jowdy**, pastor of Saint Lawrence Catholic Church.