**“Amoris Laetitia” and Marriage Encounter**

Scrolling through Pope Francis’ “ Amoris Laetitia “ I get very strong sense of affirmation from him for what we are doing in Marriage Encounter.

I suggest the following strategy could get more recognition and support from Bishops/ Priests/ Parishes

In light of much of what Pope Francis and the Synod say in Amoris Laetitia I suggest that in Western Unit and maybe other units and nationally we work on a strategy to approach Bishops, Diocesan Marriage Offices and Parish Priests / Parishes (maybe even the Australian Bishop’s Conference). We need to alert them to the value of what we are doing and how we can help them with many of the suggestions Pope Francis makes. Below some dot points of what we already do /and may be able to help more with.

* Strengthening marriages - - thus preventing breakdowns (as in para.307 below) - - Pope Francis has many suggestions what can be done(most of which we do!) - - dialogue and sharing feelings high among them.
* Chapter 4 entitled “Love in Marriage” has some paragraph worth dipping into. Para. 120 Growing in Love; para 123 Life long Sharing; para.126 Joy and Beauty;para.131 Marrying for Love; para.136 Dialogue; para.142 Passionate Love; para.163 Transformation of Love. I find these very affirming of what we do in M.E.
* Couples enriched and with growing confidence in the gift they have in their Sacrament of Marriage and the graces / helps God keeps providing are already helping, but can been encouraged to help even more with:
* Marriage Preparation, even Engaged Encounter revived; - - Input and witness in High Schools; - - - Mentors for the Ministry for Newly Weds or similar; - - Family Planning Educators; - - - Retrovaille - - (a program which grew out of M.E for those in troubled marriages); - - The list could go on - - - with things M.E. couples have felt called to do after their weekend and being involved with circles etc.

Having Parishes involved with all of the above. (They need not be controlled / run from the Diocese) Pope Francis especially in Chapter 6 Pastoral Perspectives keeps stating that parishes should be providing helps and supports for marriages and families. (para 201 has words about the importance of speaking to the real needs of families and those in them; providing values and attitudes clearly needed today that may vary from those commonly held.)

All of the above and lots more could be seen to be **longer range offshoots covered by our Vision and Mission statements.** Maybe they are outside of our Non-Negotiables - - but they are resulting from couples and priests formed and supported by our weekends and on- going community support. We need to alert our bishops and priests and parishes and schools how valuable M.E is in providing much of the above and other benefits in our dioceses and parishes and schools. Hopefully once they realise treasures are at hand in couples and priests formed and given confidence by M.E., they will help us fill weekends with couples and encourage priests to take part. I also hope that they will appreciate that what we and other groups such as “Smart Loving” offer, can be practical means of doing much of what Pope Francis and the Synod seem to be wanting.

 “Amoris Laetitia” and Marriage Encounter [some paragraphs that affirm what we do]

The paragraphs below could be helpful for future advertising and for talking with or to bishops / priests / parish pastoral councils etc and for mass talks - - From Chapter 6 Para 200 - - Synod Fathers: “ *Christian families, by the grace of the Sacrament of Marriage are the principal* *agents of the family apostolate, above all through their joy filled domestic churches (There is more in this paragraph worth reading)*

*Para 201 “It is not enough to show generic concern - - - Enabling families to take up their role as active agents of the family apostolate calls for an effort at evangelisation and catechesis inside the family.*

*Para 202*

“***The main contribution to the pastoral care of families is offered by the parish, which is the family of families, where small communities, ecclesial movements and associations live in har­mony”.***

*Para 204 Training of lay leaders (Good to study / reflect on this paragraph - - How M.E fits into the suggestions in it.*

*Preparing engaged couples for marriage ditto*

* ***Marital love is not defended primarily by presenting indissol­ubility as a duty, or by repeating doctrine, but by helping it to grow ever stronger under the impulse of grace. A love that fails to grow is at risk. Growth can only occur if we respond to God’s grace through constant acts of love, acts of kindness that become ever more frequent, in­tense, generous, tender and cheerful. Husbands and wives “become conscious of their unity and experience it more deeply from day to day”. The gift of God’s love poured out upon the spouses is also a summons to constant growth in grace.*** (Ch. 4 Love in Marriage, towards the end of Para 134)

About pastoral accompaniment being important especially for younger couples

* ***In this re­gard, experienced couples have an important role to play. The parish is a place where such expe­rienced couples can help younger couples, with the eventual cooperation of associations, eccle­sial movements and new communitie***s. (Para 223)

In the section which deals with pastoral care for troubled marriages[

* ***Today, more important than the pastoral care of failures is the pastoral effort to strengthen marriages and thus to prevent their breakdown.(***Last sentence Para 307)

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