



National Agenda for Marriage Ministry with Black Catholics

The Beginning of a Conversation

Friday, August 30, 2002

Quigley Preparatory Seminary
Chicago, IL

In attendance:

Ms. Diane Baker	Diocese of Charlotte, NC
Mrs. Valeria Spinner Banks	Archdiocese of Milwaukee
Dcn. Rodney Beckford	Archdiocese of New York
Bishop Gordon D. Bennett, S.J.	Archdiocese of Baltimore
Mr. & Mrs. Randy & DeeDee Borum	Archdiocese of Chicago
Mr. & Mrs. Alfred & Avis Coleman	Archdiocese of Chicago
Mr. & Mrs. Larry & Anna Conner	Diocese of Lexington
Dcn. & Mrs. John & Alicia Cook	Archdiocese of Chicago
Ms. Mildred Derrough-Pope	Diocese of Dallas
Dcn. & Mrs. Roscoe & Carol Dixon	Archdiocese of Chicago
Ms. Linda Duhon-LaCour	Diocese of Birmingham
Msgr. Ray East	Archdiocese of Washington
Dcn. & Mrs. Davis & Roberta Fair	Archdiocese of Chicago
Ms. Pearl M. Fidel	Diocese of Oklahoma City
Mr. & Mrs. Alphonso & Sheila Fuller-Rogers	Archdiocese of Chicago
Mr. & Mrs. Richard & Arlene Glymp	Diocese of Charlotte, NC
Mr. & Mrs. Vincent & Catherine Gomez	Diocese of Charlotte, NC
Ms. Andrea Weeks Hardin	Diocese of Phoenix
Ms. Cherrié Holland	Diocese of Phoenix
Mrs. Valerie Jamerson	Diocese of Lansing
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Terri Lyke	Archdiocese of Chicago
Mr. & Mrs. Andrew & Jeannette Malveaux	Diocese of Galveston-Houston
Mr. & Mrs. Douglas & Jeanette Marshall	Archdiocese of New York
Mr. & Mrs. Harold & Florence Payne	Archdiocese of New York
Bishop Joseph N. Perry	Archdiocese of Chicago
Mr. & Mrs. John & Arlene Pinkney	Diocese of Harrisburg
Mr. James E. Rademaker	Diocese of Grand Rapids
Mr. & Mrs. Mary & Cecil Robinson	Diocese of Dallas
Mr. & Mrs. Steve & Carma Teasley	Archdiocese of Milwaukee
Mr. & Mrs. James & Christina Weathers	Diocese of Lexington

Presentation by Andrew & Terri Lyke

- ❖ History
 - 1981—Marriage Ministry for the African American Community in the Archdiocese of Chicago—primarily marriage preparation (First of its kind in the country). Still exists.
 - Middle 1980s—Worldwide Marriage Encounter (African American Expression). Very short-lived.
 - Late 1980s—African American Marriage Enrichment (Archdiocese of Chicago). Served a few parishes. But little support from the community in general.
 - 1991—African American Marriage Preparation (Archdiocese of Atlanta). Still exists.
 - 1993—Arusi Retreat (Lyke). Still exists.
 - 1993—Umoja Retreat (Milwaukee). Ongoing annual event.
 - 2000—Archdiocesan Black Catholic Celebration of Marriage (Archdiocese of Chicago). Frequency not determined. But will continue.
- ❖ What’s going on around the country?
 - Lovingood Marriage and Family Mediation..... Lovingood
 - “The Greatest of These is Love” Sambrone
 - Umoja Retreat (Milwaukee) Banks
 - Lyke To Lyke Consultants..... Lyke
 - Arusi Retreat (Marriage Enrichment)
 - Ushuda Day of Reflections (Marriage Enrichment)
 - Kupidana Workshops (Marriage Preparation)
 - The African American Marriage Enrichment Program Blackman
 - Wedded Bliss, Inc. Muhammed
 - National Black Marriage Day March 23, 2003
 - “Reviving Marriage in the Black Community” October 4-5, 2002
- ❖ A new paradigm for marriage
 - Shift from our understanding of marriage as solely private
 - Stress the public role
 - Marriage as a community (Koinonia)
 - Marriage in the community (Witness)
 - Marriage for the community (Service)
 - Marriage protected by the community
 - Who are the stakeholders?
- ❖ New Vision for Marriage Ministry with Black Catholics
 - Small Group Discussion: (Newsprint, markers)
 - Mutual Invitation Process
 - What ways can my parish better lift up marriage?
 - What resources are available?
 - Diocesan Agencies
 - Church organizations
 - Church leadership
 - What national initiatives should be done?

Small Group Discussions

Group 1

- ❖ Archdiocese of New York:
 - 25-year anniversary celebrations.
 - Wants more

- ❖ Diocese of Phoenix
 - Diocesan-wide celebrations—all years
 - Does PreCana work?
 - Wellness
 - No catechists

- ❖ Archdiocese of Chicago
 - Need more support from pastors for recognition of marriages.
 - Suggest marriage advocate
 - Seeking Black marriages

- ❖ Diocese of Lansing
 - Emphasis on diocesan recognition
 - To approve parish recognition
 - Support during transition periods
 - Transitional periods-problems
 - Birth of a child, etc.
 - Substance abuse
 - Teenagers
 - Empty nest / Menopause

- ❖ Archdiocese of Washington, DC
 - Need better follow up on married couples.
 - Andrea Hughes has started a Black Family Life ministry that is Catholic, independent, privately funded, yet coordinated with our Office of Family Life in the Archdiocese of Washington.
 - She has formed an ecumenical Metro DC (MD, VA) chapter of Dr. Michael McManus' "Marriage Savers" (a national ecumenical program out of Colorado Springs, CO.) that is all Black and has an Africentric focus.
 - Call Msgr. Ray East, Office of Black Catholics, EastR@adw.org.

- ❖ No catechists
- ❖ East—Cross-communication
 - National support program needed
 - Initiative for viability

- ❖ Needs to be put into a model that is good for us.

Group 2

❖ Resources

- Marriage Ministry for the diocese
- Church leadership
- Partnering/collaboration with other community resources
- Should begin in the beginning . . . (womb to tomb)
- Economic/scholarships

Group 3

- 1) African American PreCana
- 2) Couples commit to the Church
- 3) Mentoring/support system for couples
- 4) Couples being role models
- 5) Families participating in ministries together

Resources

- 1) *Together For Life* (a book)
- 2) Knights and Ladies of Peter Claver
- 3) Pastor

National Initiatives

- 1) Materials and resources to make available to all churches
- 2) More support from the Church (Bishop Perry)

Group 4

- 1) Establish a group ministry
- 2) Visible display of marriage relationships
- 3) Print in church bulletins to share with the parish community
 - a) Weddings
 - b) Anniversaries
- 4) Celebrations during regular liturgies
- 5) There needs to be more preaching concerning marriage.
- 6) Introduce the engaged couples to the congregation
- 7) Regular renewal of marriage vows
- 8) Form a family ministry in the parish
 - a) Deacons
 - b) Lay ministers
- 9) Establish web sites as resources

Group 5

Parish

- 1) Respect
- 2) Need to begin ministry to marriages, especially young marriages.

- 3) Marriage enrichment retreats
- 4) Models for marriage
- 5) Ages/stages based support group
- 6) Celebrate marriage
- 7) Affirmations of marriage
 - a) From the pulpit, especially
 - b) Need to hear “pray for the vocation of marriage”

Group 6

- 1) Recognition/awareness/support/funding/spiritual/mentors
- 2) Marriage Encounter
Marriage Enrichment
FOCCUS (Premarital Inventory)
 - a) Priest
 - b) Deacon
 - c) Lay couples
- 3) Include in NBCC sessions
Make it a Black Catholic Ministry Initiative

Group 7

- 1) Bring marriage to the forefront in the Church by allowing/encouraging married couples to:
 - a) Be a recognized witness
 - b) Teach balance to encourage personal growth
- 2) Offer ongoing enrichment
- 3) Celebrate/recognize anniversaries
- 4) Marriage preparation classes
- 5) Marriage Encounter
- 6) Add marriage to the NBCC agenda

Large Group Comments (Summary)

- ❖ While there were some initiatives in a few parishes and dioceses, little was being done in the area of marriage ministry with Black Catholics.
- ❖ There was concern expressed about being “exclusively Catholic”. The Lykes stressed that to minister to Black Catholic marriages we have to be ecumenical. We need to be aware of our language and to be inclusive. However, we must also be clear about our point of reference as being Catholic.
- ❖ There was interest in knowing what is different about marriage ministry targeted to Blacks. What is it that makes it black? Essentially, the cultural significance is more in the context of the program than in the content. That is to say that because the presenters and participants are Black, their stories and their perceptions are all part of the collective cultural experience. The witness of marriage among Black folk, the social support, along with the inclinations and proclivities of Black people are part of the cultural context that make the programs Black. In contrast, the disciplines and expected social interactions on a Marriage Encounter are quite different on an Arusi Retreat. Social interaction is built into the program. The emphasis on the public dimension of marriage also distinguishes the program. However, the content of the presentations and the aesthetics of the space in which we gather should be intentionally geared toward African American/African culture. The symbols and concepts should be recognizably Black.
- ❖ Another principle that guides the ministry of Andrew & Terri Lyke is the concept of process over content. The process of the program, i.e., the gathering of the people, the calling on the Holy Spirit, the attentiveness of the facilitators, the attention and willingness to participate of the attendees, and the prayerfulness of the group, is what is most important. The content, i.e., the educational components of the presentation and the presentations themselves, though important and should be well prepared and presented, are dispensable for the sake of the process. No talk is so important that the process should be interrupted for its sake. Flexibility and the ability to quickly shift gears are hallmarks for effective facilitators. No formulas! Knowing when to get out of the way of the Holy Spirit is critical. Facilitators must pay close attention this.
- ❖ Bishop Perry affirmed the idea of a paradigm shift from approaching marriage as a private affair to that of a sacramental relationship between a couple, and between the couple and the People of God—the Church.
- ❖ The idea of a national symposium was presented. This would be a gathering of marriage ministry leaders and others who serve married people in the Black Catholic community to explore the essence of being Black, Catholic and married. This gathering would set forth a vision of ministry and articulate a theology that would be foundational to effective outreach. The outcomes would be published and made available to all who serve marriage in the Black Catholic community. The concept was affirmed by the gathering and will begin taking shape immediately.
- ❖ The consensus was that the efforts toward the symposium and its outcomes would contribute to making marriage ministry more significant to the agenda of the National Black Catholic Congress, and that this should begin.

Name	Diocese/Org	What's in place?	Hopes	Resources Available	Agencies to be involved
Fred & Connie Sambrone	Archdiocese of Atlanta	Currently in place in the Archdiocese of Atlanta for marriage ministry among Black Catholics is an African American Pre-Marriage Program sponsored by the Archdiocese's Office Of family Concerns. There is no specific program for married couples. Fred and I have attempted on several occasions to present programs for married couples, but each time attendance has been very poor.	There needs to be greater support from clergy for marriage ministry for Black Catholics. There needs to be greater interest from married couples to strengthen and enhance their marriage relationship.	Fred & Connie Sambrone are long-time leaders in marriage ministry. They live and serve in Atlanta, and have also traveled to other dioceses for marriage prep and enrichment work.	There needs to be involvement from the Offices of Black Catholic Ministry, as well as other offices that deal specifically with families.
Andrew & Terri Lyke	Archdiocese of Chicago Family Ministries Office Lyke To Lyke Consultants	Marriage Ministry for the African American Community (since 1982) "The Best Is Yet To Come" "Arusi Retreat" "Theology On Tap" Archdiocesan Black Catholic Celebration of Marriage	In an archdiocese as large as Chicago and with as many Black Catholics as we have, we should have long waiting lists for the programs that are available. We would like to see pastoral leaders take initiative to serve and protect marriage.	Archdiocesan Marriage Ministry Program Bishop Joseph Perry Lyke To Lyke Consultants	Family Ministries Office for Black Catholic Ministries Parish Staffs Marriage Encounter
John and Alicia Cook	Archdiocese of Chicago St. Felicitas Church Young Married Couples		We would like to see organized meetings, social gatherings to further promote a healthy marriage. We would also like to occasionally		

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			see/hear someone speak to us about what makes marriages work.		
Sheila and Alphonso Rogers	Archdiocese of Chicago St. Ailbe Church	I'm in a new parish (St. Ailbe's), but and there is nothing that I am aware of.	Opportunities for married couples to get together a few times a year to share ideas about ways blend our culture into the ministry of marriage.	The Family Ministries Office has been helpful in providing information about resources for African-American couples.	Office of Black Catholics Office of Family Ministries Office of Evangelization
Deacon John & Alicia Cook	Archdiocese of Chicago St. Felicitas Church	We are attempting to establish a ministry.	I would like to see this ministry be a place where couples can interact & discuss the challenges facing Christian couples in today's society.		

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Gretchen & Ken Lovingood	Archdiocese of Los Angeles, California Lovingood Marriage & Family Mediation	Nothing that we know of	Something that looks attractive and inviting		Office for Black Catholics Family Life Office
Acklen and Valeria Banks	Archdiocese of Milwaukee Umoja	The Ujoma program was designed for African-American Catholics where more or one is African-American	That the program be used nationwide.	We receive funding from Adult family ministries and the African American ministries. We are trying to raise money through the black parish churches.	Adult family Ministry African-American Ministries Priest Council Tribunal Office
Linda Duhon-LaCour	Diocese Birmingham Office of Black Ministry	There isn't anything in place in the Diocese of Birmingham. Any cultural adaptations in the marriage preparation classes or ceremony is strictly up to the pastor or the designated minister. As a result, any counseling, mentoring programs etc tend to reflect "white" culture rather than being culturally sensitive.	I would like to see couples be aware of what parts of their culture would be appropriately added to the ceremony. But, as importantly, I would hope that couples be aware of some pitfalls they may experience as a result of how we are socialized as a people. i.e., being raised in a matriarchal household, black men not wanting to go to counseling.	There isn't a lot available in this diocese. There aren't any black "deacon couples", only three black marriage and family therapists in the state, of which two of us live here in Bham and. Thankfully, we are both Catholic so when we do therapy it is from a Catholic perspective.	Offices of Liturgy, Presbyteral Councils, Family Life.
Nicole Younge	Diocese of Belleville	We have nothing in our parish geared to Black Catholics. It is general, mostly geared to the general population.	I would like to see a program geared to young black Catholics, what to expect, what not to expect, how being	We do not have any resources. Until now it wasn't even given a thought.	Diocesan office of worship and education.

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			<p>married and black can be different from being of another race. Things that young black families can expect during the first 5 years of marriage. How the black males acceptance in the society can affect the marriage. Having children and when.</p>		

Name	Diocese/Org	What's in place?	Hopes	Resources Available	Agencies to be involved
Mildred Derrough Pope	Diocese of Dallas Black Catholic Network	Whatever is in place in this diocese is surely a well-kept secret. Just the mere acknowledgement/respect for the African American would be welcomed. The need for advocacy with Afrocentric view a must, marriage preparation/support system just maybe the divorce rate might decline.	Afrocentric marriage ministry strong on advocacy and family support.	I am sure the diocese has some programs but in most instances they are not very welcoming and relative to the African American family. At my parish marriage programs are nonexistent.	Family ministry, Family advocates, Marriage preparation, Marriage encounter Afrocentric.
Mary and Cecil Robinson	Diocese of Dallas Black Catholic Network & St. Joseph Catholic Church	There is presently nothing that is specifically addressed to Black Catholics for Marriage Ministry. All ethnicities, races and cultures attend the same marriage preparation and marriage enrichment whether in the parish or in the diocese except for the Spanish speaking. A few years ago, there was a scheduled Worldwide Marriage Encounter Weekend for African Americans in the Dallas Diocese, but it was cancelled for lack of	It would be beneficial to be able to offer marriage enrichment and marriage preparation that also includes common challenges that might affect the relationship issues for Black Couples (E.g., racism, prejudice, diversity, etc.).	We have some Black Catholic couples who have been trained to facilitate marriage ministry who might be good resources for this area of ministry to Black Catholic couples. Mary recently participated in the three-day training for the PREP (Prevention Relationship Enhancement Program) during the Smart Marriages Conference in Washington, D.C. They have published a resource, "Fighting For Your African American	The Diocese of Dallas Black Catholic Network; Diocese of Dallas Marriage Ministry Office

Name	Diocese/Org	What's in place?	Hopes	Resources Available	Agencies to be involved
		ample registrations at the time.		Marriage" that might be a useful published resource.	
Christine J. Streams	Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux	Nothing in place at diocesan level or in parishes	A marriage preparation process design for Black Catholic couples.	None are available. The diocesan office of Family ministries states that they are not aware of any resources. Where can we find any?	Office of Family Ministries or any offices whose responsibility is working with marriage preparation.
Jacquelin S. Rideau	Diocese of Phoenix Office for Black Catholic Ministry		Perhaps this could be a goal for our small ministry to institute a marriage ministry	Marriage programs are available in most parishes in the Diocese.	I am not sure

To: Andrew and Terri Lyke

From: Ken and Gretchen Lovingood

Subject: Black Catholic Marriage Ministry

We regret that we will not be able to attend the conference. We are, however, sending some input for the forum. We wish you lots of luck in the formation of the Ministry. Please accept the following ideas and suggestions to help in the task:

1. We suggest that the first thing the group should do is give reasons why this ministry is needed. We believe that it is vitally needed, however, we must come to a concrete and concise consensus on why we need an African-American Marriage Ministry rather than have our couples ministered to by the established Marriage and Family Ministry offices in each Diocese. The answers to this question should be valuable in forming the platform and/or mission statement for the Ministry.

We believe that the way we African-Americans view marriage, family, masculinity, femininity, and the effect of the society on our children and us is more than enough reason to have a ministry that addresses those issues.

Long ago, in Marriage Encounter, we came to the realization that the concepts of the weekend, while being good and helpful to African-American couples, was lacking in awareness and understanding of the particular struggles that we encounter in this society. This was the reason we established the Black Culture Weekend then later the M.E Weekend in the African-American perspective. Even then it was difficult for the movement to understand the need we had to be ministered to in a perspective that was consistent with our particular experience. If we are to truly minister to African-American couples, we must speak their language and meet them where they are.

We realize that all couples do not experience the same things, however, there are issues and experiences that are common to all of our couples and it is vital that we help one another meet the challenges that confront us.

2. We must address the problem of divorce among African-American Catholic couples. The fact that the divorce rate is in line with the national rate is disturbing. We need to identify ways that couples can work through their conflicts without resorting to divorce. Mediation, Counseling, Marriage preparation, support from the community and church should be a high priority from the beginning. African-Americans traditionally have avoided aids such as counseling. The ministry should focus on education and information so that we can take advantage of proven techniques for supporting marriage.

3. We must alert the greater church to the need for this ministry because it won't really support us if it doesn't understand. We will be judged as separate if we do not let the greater church know that strengthening African-American couples will strengthen the whole church.

These are just a few suggestions for the meeting. We are open to giving input as you need it. Our prayers are with you as you undertake this important task.

Yours in Christ,

Ken and Gretchen Lovingood