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The History of Retrouvaille

HISTORY OF RETROUVAILLE

During 1977, a Worldwide Marriage Encounter presenting team couple in Hull, Quebec, Canada became increasingly concerned about the growing number of troubled couples attending their local World Wide Marriage Encounter (WWME) Weekends. Guy and Jeannine Beland were also dismayed by the fact that the Marriage Encounter experience did not adequately meet the needs of these couples in difficulty, nor, in fact, was expected that such would be the case.

The Belands presented the first Retrouvaille weekend as the French language experience in Hull in July 1977. They had made a number of minor changes to the WWME Weekend outline. Rather than expending their time on making major revisions of the WWME Weekend content, they relied heavily on a more somber, healing spirit being present throughout the Retrouvaille Weekend. They realized it was not enough, but they had to start somewhere. All of who have followed thank God they did.

Early in 1978, Ian and Gobnait McAnoy, WWME Area Coordinators of Southern Ontario, learned of the Belands' efforts. Due to the deteriorating state of marriage, especially in the populous metropolitan Toronto region, they were excited about the possibilities for this healing ministry called Retrouvaille, a French word meaning "rediscovery" or "the finding again."

The McAnoys asked Joe and Anne Hayden, the local Toronto WWME Coordinators, to take on the project of establishing an English version of Retrouvaille in the Toronto area. The Haydens responded enthusiastically and plans began to unfold in June 1978. The McAnoys asked the Haydens to include Bruce and Marg Bridger, a new couple, fresh from a May 1978 WWME weekend, as part of the project team. Ian and Gobnait were aware of the Bridger's history of pain and suffering, and had witnessed their desire for growth and the building of a healthy relationship. They believed in the potential of Bruce and Marg as a future resource of the Retrouvaille mission.

A group of nine couples and four or five priests was formed to carry out the establishment of the English-speaking Retrouvaille program in Toronto. The ministry's grafting took place in the basement of a suburban Toronto home in mid-September as the Belands and the Toronto contingent met for the first time to compare notes.

Word of this new healing ministry spread quickly. The first Weekend in Toronto occurred in October 1978 and had 29 couples in attendance. The second, in December 1978 had 21 couples. Calls came from across Canada and upper New York. In the first 24 months of existence, two Weekends were presented in Sudbury, in northern Ontario, in addition to 17 Weekends in the Toronto area averaging 25 couples per weekend.

It must be noted that the ministry flourished quickly for two reasons. Couples and priests facilitating the Weekends were mostly veteran ME team members presenting slightly modified ME talks. Secondly, the Post Weekend phase consisted only of a single renewal evening within the first week after the Weekend.

The ME community was most instrumental during the first two years in providing all necessary manpower, supplies, financial resources and administration.

Early on, however, the WWME District Board, which had formally sponsored Retrouvaille for a one-year trial period, mandated that a formal study be conducted and that recommendations be made concerning the future association of the two programs.

It was determined that Retrouvaille was a "viable, valuable and very necessary ministry, that ME and Retrouvaille clearly had distinct and different mission calls, that Retrouvaille must cease using the WWME outline and overview at the earliest possible time, and that current WWME couples must

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It was determined that Retrouvaille was a "viable, valuable and very necessary ministry, that ME and Retrouvaille clearly had distinct and different mission calls, that Retrouvaille must cease using the WWME outline and overview at the earliest possible time, and that current WWME couples must decide in which apostolate they wished to continue to work."

With a gift of \$1,000.00 seed money from WWME, Retrouvaille was set free "like any young bird...and urged to fly on its own."

Bruce and Marg Bridger and Fr. John Vella assumed leadership of Retrouvaille in September 1980. The program was scaled back to only four weekends in 1981 in order to focus on the development of a new program format.

An existing program for troubled marriages, Etre Un Couple (To Be a Couple), was already available in French to couples in Quebec City, Quebec. It consisted of a Weekend and follow up phase. Jacques and Jocelyne Gagnon, Coordinators of the program, agreed to a one-day meeting in Montreal with the Bridgers. Also present was Fr. Jacques Morin, Missionary of Africa and team priest from Toronto Retrouvaille. Fr. Jacques acted as language consultant. The goal of the meeting was to share valuable insights and exchange ideas and information that could be used to develop the new Retrouvaille program. It was determined that those couples working in the Retrouvaille ministry should experience the Etre Un Couple Weekend. Twenty-two couples and five priests, all of whom had experienced the Retrouvaille program, attended the Weekend.

Amazingly, bilingual people from the Toronto area not even associated with either WWME or Retrouvaille saw great value in the Retrouvaille effort and volunteered many hours of their time to translate the Etre Un Couple outline from French into English.

In May 1981, Retrouvaille couples attended a two-day workshop after which a committee was formed and charged with the task of developing the framework of what would soon become the Retrouvaille outline. Both Weekend and Post Weekend outlines were completed within nine months.

The first Weekend under the new Retrouvaille outline was presented in February 1982. Upon completion of the outline, the Bridgers and Fr. John Vella became the first Retrouvaille Expansion Coordinators. In 1982, training programs were presented in Halifax, Chicago, California and British Columbia. Expansion efforts in 1983 focused on the Washington, D. C. and Maryland area alone, leaving valuable time for development of the mentality/insights section of the outline.

The first annual International Retrouvaille Council Meeting was held in Toronto in November, 1983, a family reunion witnessed with pride and a good deal of astonishment by the couples who participated in breathing life into the Retrouvaille program during its first six years of existence.

The second Council Meeting was held in 1984, and a new tradition was born. This gathering together of the Retrouvaille family was a vision shared by the Bridgers and Fr. John Vella since the early days of Retrouvaille. During this meeting, leadership of the ministry was passed onto Vic and Gloria Tolle and Msgr. Charles Fortier, all of Los Angeles. Also at that meeting, Ian and Olga MacDonald of Prince Edward Island, and Fr. Jerry **Foley** of Minneapolis accepted the position of International Expansion Coordinators. Tom and Vivien Hipelius of Chicago became the International Workshop Couple.

Of those early years, Bruce and Marg Bridger write, "We prayed more earnestly for Our Lord to instill greater confidence in our hearts, to give up our desire to control everything and to trust more in His plan."

"We also invited Jesus to be present among us and to help us to be aware of His presence and His role on the team. We prayed that He would increase our compassion and our willing generosity in offering up these hours away from our families or other activities. We asked our Heavenly Father to provide us with the guidance and direction we so badly needed along this uncharted course. We prayed that the Holy Spirit would grace us with the wisdom and discernment needed during those deliberations and decisions. God's response to our petitions is most evident in the resultant program documentation. We have stated often and to many that we are truly amazed at the content of the Retrouvaille program manual. Surely all this wisdom did not come from this relatively unqualified group of seven people. No, we have not the slightest doubt that this is God's work put on paper through us."

The Bridgers further stated, "Hopefully, we have been able to establish the existence of two central themes which prevail in the Retrouvaille ministry. These themes are fundamental to our Christian heritage and emanate from our baptismal commission. The one is MISSION as stated in the

The Bridgers further stated, "Hopefully, we have been able to establish the existence of two central themes which prevail in the Retrouvaille ministry. These themes are fundamental to our Christian heritage and emanate from our baptismal commission. The one is MISSION as stated in the scripture quotation 'As the Father sent me, so I am sending you' (John 20:21), and reinforced by Jesus many times through His public life: 'You are the light of the world....In the same way your light must shine in the sight of men, so that, seeing your good works, they may give praise to your Father in Heaven' (Mt. 5:14-16). The second is SERVICE with humility: 'So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty" (Lk. 17: 9-10) May it ever be so.

FROM ROOTS TO WINGS

As the leadership for Retrouvaille moved beyond the Toronto community, expansion to new communities started to take off in the last half of the eighties, sometimes causing tension between expansion to new communities and growth in already existing communities. The 1984 International Council Meeting (ICM) determined that there would be two year terms for the International Coordinators and the International Workshop Coordinators, with no more than two consecutive terms for persons holding these offices. Funding the new international ministry was discussed and communities were asked to contribute what they could.

The 1985 ICM was held in Los Angeles, California under the leadership of Victor and Gloria Tolle and Msgr. Carlos Fortier. There it was determined that the International Coordinating team could make interim policy decisions which must be ratified at the next ICM. Bruce and Marg Bridger and a committee presented a completed preamble section to the Retrouvaille program manual, which included policies agreed upon up to that time. It was determined that couples in second marriages could not serve as team, unless the first marriage had ended by death of a spouse, nor could laicized priests be part of a presenting couple. Communities were asked to pay a \$100 initial startup fee to bring the program to new areas, and to contribute \$5 for every couple who participated in the Retrouvaille program.

At the 1986 ICM in Houston, the International Coordinating Team noted that a training weekend had been presented in Trinidad, the first off the North American continent. There was a long discussion about the post weekend phase of Retrouvaille, with desire for better participation by the attendees and a stronger impact like folks believed the weekend had. Fr. Doug Koesel of Cleveland offered to head up a committee to take feedback from the communities and to revise the outlines in time for the next ICM. A mentality was to be developed for the post weekend outlines, as had been done for the weekend outlines, and post presenters' talks were to be workshopped. Tom and Vivien Hipelius of Chicago and Fr. Jerry Foley of Minneapolis were selected as the new International Coordinating Team.

The 1987 ICM took place at a chilly inn in Baltimore. The Council approved some changes to the post weekend outlines plus a mentality for each talk. Noting the many requests for expansion to new communities, participants discussed the need for strengthening the existing communities as well as reaching out to new communities.

There were signs that Retrouvaille was becoming a better recognized ministry, such as a number of articles in national publications plus an invitation for Tom, Vivien and Fr. Jerry to speak about Retrouvaille at the U.S. Family Life convention. Pope John Paul II had also stressed in 1987 the need for ministry to hurting marriages in a talk to deacons in Detroit. Members agreed that the official name for this ministry would be Retrouvaille (some were using Rediscovery). Art and Jeanne Sheridan of Chicago were confirmed as International Workshop Couple.

By the 1988 ICM in Atlanta, some of the stresses as well as the joys of Retrouvaille were becoming obvious. The agenda for this ICM contains topics which have recycled over the years. Along with noting a significant number of new communities, the Council discussed resources needed to help new communities. Expansion beyond the North American continent was looming as well and a request was made for volunteers to serve as expansion teams. Other items on the agenda included goals and visions, publicity, the relationship to other church organizations, the need for teams and how to improve recruitment, and the need to develop articles of incorporation, a Board of Directors, and to file as a non-profit with the IRS. The International Coordinators noted that the ICMs had grown to such a size that this might be the last time we could function as a business meeting.

Since little money was coming into the international treasury, communities were urged to pay their assessment of five dollars per couple.

Bob and Kathy Steighner of Los Angeles agreed to edit a Retrouvaille newsletter and the Council

Bob and Kathy Steighner of Los Angeles agreed to edit a Retrouvaille newsletter and the Council elected Bob and Marie Pate and Fr. Jim Miller of Fort Worth as the new International Coordinating Team.

When Toronto hosted the 7th annual ICM in 1989, there were 42 active communities and inquiries from such countries as Australia, Ireland and the Philippines. Marg and Bruce Bridger and Fr. John Vella, the first International Coordinators, spoke and urged expansion to other countries. Members also agreed to let other religious denominations use our outlines and the name Retrouvaille. Msgr. Carlos Fortier expressed concern that no official outline existed in Spanish even though several Hispanic communities existed and plans were underway to expand to several other U.S cities and to Mexico. A Start-Up Manual for new communities was presented.

Agreeing that they wanted to keep the grassroots mentality, yet recognizing the need for some formal organization, Council members agreed to a plan proposed by the Pates for an executive team to make and carry out policies. As a result, the beginnings of what would become the International Board was selected, with Bob and Marie Pate and Fr. Jim Miller continuing as International Coordinating team, Joe and Lee Montelbano of Long Island, New York as Workshop Coordinators, Tim and Mary Noonan and Fr. John Braun of Springfield, Missouri as Finance Team, Mike and Judy Percy of Fort Worth as International Secretary, and Ian and Olga MacDonald and Fr. Jerry Foley as the Expansion Team. A preamble, by-laws, Articles of Incorporation and job descriptions were approved. It was decided not to limit the attendance at ICMs. Changes to the Sunday afternoon weekend outline were approved and a paragraph on family of origin was included in the Encounter with Self talk.

The Council agreed to the need for a newsletter to enhance communication, which would become the Communiqué. Bob and Marie noted that they planned to meet with the leadership of Marriage Encounter and Catholic Engaged Encounter to determine how the three ministries might work together.

The Communiqué started in February, 1990, with Pat and Joyce Clark of Youngstown, Ohio as editors. The community roster in the first issue lists communities only in Canada and the U.S. The first meeting of the International Board of Retrouvaille took place in July, 1990 in Fort Worth, enabled by a gift of \$5,000 from Twin Cities Retrouvaille.

A major concern that year was recruitment of teams to present Retrouvaille. The initial source of most new team couples, Marriage Encounter, was by now diminishing. By 1990, volunteerism, which had been the first use of Americans' free time in the 1960's, had dropped to third in their use of free time and church ministry in the same time had dropped from fourth to tenth in the use of peoples' free time. This problem of recruiting enough team couples would be repeated over and over at most ICMs from that time on.

When Ian and Olga MacDonald addressed the Council about GUIDING A TEEN-AGE RETROUVAILLE, they noted that team members were now generally coming from the Retrouvaille program and called for regional training teams and mandatory team training for new presenters. At the ICM in Phoenix that year, St. Joseph was chosen as the patron saint of Retrouvaille and Bob and Marie Pate and Fr. Jim Miller were affirmed for a second term.

Because of the demand for expansion to new communities and countries, a group met in Minneapolis in January, 1991 to discuss this growing concern. Fr. John Vella, Msgr. Carlos Fortier, Fr. Jerry Foley, Fr. Henry Camacho of Peru, Ian and Olga MacDonald, Pat and Joyce Clark, Rich and Bonnie Chase from New Orleans, Chuck and Anita Lewis of Phoenix, and John and Elaine Malakowsky of the Twin Cities agreed to divide North America into five areas with a couple in each helping with expansion and with team enrichment.. They set a goal to start three more international communities by the end of 1992. Fr. Henry Camacho shared his efforts with Retrouvaille in Peru over the past five years, where major sacrifices made it possible to do Retrouvaille for less than \$3 per couple. When the Council met in Vancouver that fall, Chuck and Anita Lewis and Fr. Jerry Foley reported on their expansion efforts in the Philippines at the invitation of Fr. Colm Rafferty.

Council attendees asked for a pilot program using couples in second marriages, noting that by now nearly half of the couples coming to Retrouvaille were in second or subsequent marriages. A committee reported on a survey of CORE, noting that COREs were either weak or non-existent in most communities, while successful COREs generally used an outline and had structured meetings. New outlines for the program were presented, aligning the mentality with the outlines, and members agreed to the establishment of an outline committee to receive any requests for future changes.

Chuck and Anita Lewis and Msgr. Carlos Fortier were selected as Expansion Coordinators and Joe and Lee Montelbano were selected to continue as Workshop Coordinators. Manila presented its first Retrouvaille weekend in October, 1991. Msgr. Carlos Fortier, Luis and Gregoria Lopez presented the first training weekend in Mexico at Chihuahua on March 13-16, 1992.

In 1992, the National Association of Family Life Ministers cited Retrouvaille in recognition of its service to families. Expansion teams agreed to the rewriting of an outline for training weekends.

At the ICM in Minneapolis, members heard about expansion to eight new English speaking communities and four Spanish speaking communities, including Chihuahua, Mexico, and plans for training sessions in Australia and New Zealand before the end of the year presented by Chuck and Anita Lewis, Msgr. Carlos Fortier, and Fr. John McCarthy of Melbourne. Loren and Angela Dunbar of Albuquerque agreed to adapt the Retrouvaille outlines for use in other faith communities.

Attendees again asked for permission to use couples in second marriages as presenters.

Roger and Pat Bate and Fr. Joe Gietl were named the new International Coordinating Team, Dan and Cathy Kiselycia of Vancouver as Secretary Couple, and Dave and Beth Sweeney of St. Louis as Finance Couple.

Expansion continued. At the 1993 ICM in Philadelphia, a report stated that 17 new English-speaking communities and three new Spanish-speaking communities had begun in the past year.

There were now 100 communities in seven countries. Weekends had begun in New Zealand and Mazatlan, Mexico. However, a problem that would rear its head regularly was also reported, namely the closing down of communities, including Thunder Bay, Ontario and Calgary. Often the reported cause was lack of anyone to fill leadership roles or lack of team couples.

The Council changed the term of board members to one non-renewable three year term, with the International Coordinators to serve another year in a non-voting advisory capacity. Jim and Karyl Davis of Atlanta became the new Workshop Coordinators. A pilot program using couples now in second valid marriages as presenters gained approval, monitored by a committee headed by Del and Mary Fisher and Fr. Harry Brown of Tampa/St. Petersburg.

The first regional meeting occurred when the northern California communities gathered for the EdPeg weekend, later to become the NORCAL weekend. Some years later regional meetings would be common events around the Retrouvaille world.

In the 1994 report at the ICM in New Orleans, 102 English and 12 Spanish communities were presenting Retrouvaille. New communities included Tehuacan in Mexico, Costa Rica, Columbia, and Georgetown, Guyana. Manuel and Josefina Perez and Carlos and Lulu Nesbitt from Chihuahua along with Msgr. Carlos Fortier reached out with weekends in Columbia and Costa Rica. The Spanish speaking communities met in July in Chihuahua. Early in 1994, Chuck and Anita Lewis along with Fr. John McCarthy reached out to Singapore. John and Elaine Malakowsky of the Twin Cities and Fr. Al Blonigen of Detroit traveled to Trinidad and Guyana for training weekends.

A second regional meeting, the Mideast, gathered in Columbus, Ohio. That year, Norm and Mary Moore became the new editors of the Communiqué, Twin Cities offered the first annual dialogue calendar at the ICM, an outline was approved for Christian Multi-Denominational Retrouvaille (CMD), Fresno presented the first CMD program, and teams in Northern California offered a weekend in a prison.

A new Reference and Start-Up Manual was available at the Council meeting, which also voted to raise the assessment to 2.5 % of the weekend income and to allow the use of couples in a valid second marriage and married laicized priests as members of a presenting team. Pat and Joyce Clark and Fr. Jerry Foley were selected as the new Expansion coordinators.

By 1995, Retrouvaille was entering the electronic age. At the ICM, hosted by the Hispanic community in Los Angeles, a new 1-800 phone number was announced, which would ring in the homes of four leadership couples (Roger and Pat Bate, Pat and Joyce Clark, Russ and Maria Powell, Bruce and Toni Fisher). The next year this would be expanded to ring in each area code of North America.

The assessment for local communities was raised to 5 % and the song Then Again was approved as an option for the Belonging talk on Sunday morning. Bill and Peg Zwaan of Delaware Valley and Fr. Marc Roselli of Long Island became the new International Coordinators, Matt and Dee Ghiloni of Columbus the Secretary Couple, Armando and Margie Martinez and Fr. Julian Gnull of San Diego the Finance Coordinators. That year concern was expressed that "grassroots had been interpreted excessively as local autonomy (as a backlash to the perceived rigid hierarchy of Marriage Encounter) resulting in the slow dying of too many struggling communities." There was a call for a

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1996 saw outreach to Bolivia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Cuba and Ireland. With roots in Ireland, Nick and Virginia O'Shea took Ed and Peg Gleason of San Francisco, Mike and Diane Janisse of Toronto, and Fr. Syl Taube of Detroit to present a weekend in Ireland and then followed up with a training weekend. Joyce and Pat Clark and Fr. Jerry Foley presented training weekends in South Africa and Zimbabwe. Msgr. Carlos Fortier and his Hispanic friends were busy with expansion, utilizing their funds rather asking help from the Retrouvaille International treasury, so the record of expansion in Central and South America is incomplete. Msgr. Fortier made several trips to Cuba to bring Retrouvaille to that isolated island. The International Board discussed whether there should be regional and international representation on the board, invited Carlos and Lulu Nesbitt and Fr. Luis Larrera to be a liaison team on the Board for Hispanic communities (which failed to get Council approval), and appointed a committee to look into representation.

The 1996 ICM in Fort Worth started the procession of flags from participating countries to begin the meeting and the Saints of Retrouvaille memorial at the closing Mass. Some of the persons already mentioned were among the names on the scroll of deceased members. The Apostles Creed states faith in the "communion of saints," a reminder that these heroes are praying for our ministry. Kenn Tetley of Melbourne, Australia had established an Internet home page for Retrouvaille.

Plans to make ICMs more spiritual and an enrichment experience were noted following a concern that some communities were losing focus, and Chuck and Anita Lewis were putting together an enrichment manual. John and Elaine Malakowsky of the Twin Cities were selected as International Workshop Coordinators.

Detroit hosted the 20th anniversary celebration of Retrouvaille at the 1997 ICM. Tom and Karen Heilers were the new Communiqué editors and Nick and Virginia O'Shea and Fr. Syl Taube were selected as International Expansion Coordinators. Members approved a process for renewing the post weekend phase of the program.

Msgr. Carlos Fortier believed that the cultural differences between Hispanic and English-speaking Retrouvaille communities was such that the Hispanics should have their own organization. As a result, Hispanics thought that Retrouvaille International was a U.S. organization and that they were outsiders. There were communication difficulties, changes in the Retrouvaille program were sometimes not passed on to the Hispanic communities, Spanish talks were being workshopped by English workshoppers, and other cultural differences separated the groups. The Hispanic communities held their own conference every two years. The new Hispanic Coordinating Team elected in 1998 was Jorge and Dora Solis and Fr. Enrique Gutierrez Sanchez of San Jose, Cost Rica. Hispanics at the 1998 ICM in Orlando questioned how they were involved in Retrouvaille International since they had their own organization.

Council members agreed to by-law changes which allowed the International Board to meet more than once annually, to appoint a couple/priest to fill vacancies until the next Council meeting, and to set up an international office responsible for the day-to-day operations of Retrouvaille International. Minor changes to the outlines, recommended by the outline review committee of Gary and Debbie Valentine, Mark and Betty Squier, and Bill and Sharon Kalber were approved and this group now became the Post Outline Review Committee (PORC). They would be helped through the process of revising the outlines by Ted and Iris Bjorn and Fr. Jerry Foley.

The Zwaans and Fr. Marc shared that they had been invited to speak about Retrouvaille at the Smart Marriages Conference, an invitation that would continue annually. 1998 marked the first display of community banners. Ted and Iris Bjorn of Alabama and Fr. Bob Jones of New England became the new International Coordinating Team, Dave and Vickie Murray of Saginaw and Fr. George Perera of Tampa the Finance Team, and Warren and Brenda Chamberlain of New England the Secretary Couple.

When St. Louis hosted the 1999 ICM, there were 160 Retrouvaille communities in 14 countries. A major concern was conflict resolution in struggling communities, the "Friday Night Communities," as couples remembered where they were when they came to their Retrouvaille weekend. The Coordinating Team's address stressed the need for more workers in the vineyard.

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A request was made to restructure the International Board to include the Coordinating Team, Deputy Coordinating Team, International Concerns Team, Resource/Enrichment Team, Expansion/Development Team, and Business Management Team. Josh and Roz Howell of San Diego were selected as International Workshoppers. Outlines for the Retrouvaille program were now available on the internet.

In 2000, the Board discussed a need for leadership training, a Spanish website, expansion of CMD communities, and the relationship to family life offices. The first Portuguese program was presented in Curitiba, Brazil, made possible when the Hispanic community translated the outlines to Portuguese and presented the first program. The ICM in Cleveland approved the restructuring of the International Board and selected Roger and Pat Bate and Fr. Joe Gietl as Deputy Coordinators, Russ and Marie Powell of Atlanta and Fr. Bob Poandl of Tulsa as Expansion/Development Team, and the transition of Josh and Roz Howell along with Fr. Bill Ortmann of San Diego as the Resource/Enrichment Team.

The post weekend outline revisions were approved for piloting. A new outline was approved for piloting the Saturday afternoon Communication talk. The Communiqué was now available on Internet, with Dick and Lucie Bellew as the new editors. E-mail prayer letters were encouraged to support couples making the Retrouvaille weekends.

At the 2001 biennial Hispanic Conference in Los Mochis attended by representatives from seven countries, Joel and Luly Dominguez and Fr. Agustin Samaniego were elected as coordinators. Fort Wayne presented a program for hearing impaired. Josh and Roz Howell resigned for health reasons and Pat and Joyce Clark agreed to replace them. Kansas City hosted the 2001 ICM, at which Jeff and Donna Heusler and Fr. Jeff Keyes of Oakland were selected as Deputy Coordinators, Glen and Cathy Hogg and Fr. Peter Lafferty of Durban, South Africa as International Concerns Team, and Doug and Barb Winston of Santa Cruz/Monterey as Business Management Team. Pat and Joyce Clark again became editors of the Communiqué.

A leadership course to develop leadership skills and attitudes, called Retrouvaille Servant Leadership, was being developed by Ted and Iris Bjorn, Dan and Paula Manning, Roger and Pat Bate, Dave and Vickie Murray, and Fr. Bob Jones, and scheduled for its first presentation in 2002. Another group of clergy was working on a mid-week renewal for priests, called Earthen Vessels, and would present this program for the first time in 2002. Mark Price, who would become well respected in the Retrouvaille community for both his acting and his insights into volunteerism, entertained Council attendees on Saturday evening with his interpretation of St. Peter.

Vancouver hosted the 25th anniversary celebration at the 2002 ICM. Council members approved the revised post weekend outlines and workbook. This year Retrouvaille had started in Italy at the invitation of the Italian bishops, with materials already translated into Italian. Glen and Cathy Hogg, Ted and Iris Bjorn, Pat and Joyce Clark, Fr. Angelo Scolozzi, Fr. Mario Barbero, and Fr. Jerry Foley presented two large formation weekends in Italy. Proof of the successful outreach to Italy is demonstrated by the fact that Rome, as noted later, will host the annual ICM in 2008.

Luis and Nina Gomez were the new U.S. Hispanic Coordinators and Dick and Barb Erickson the CMD Expansion Coordinators. Mark and Betty Squier and Fr. Jerry Foley were selected as Resource/Enrichment Team.

When the Twin Cities hosted the ICM in 2003, Retrouvaille had reached over 6000 couples in the past year. Couples from the international communities held their first meeting prior to the Council meeting. American Samoa had presented its first Retrouvaille, with outreach by Nick and Virginia O'Shea, Roger and Pat Bate, and Fr. Syl Taube. Yet there was concern that communities were finding it difficult to recruit volunteers and some were cutting back on the number of programs annually or even discontinuing the program completely.

The first CORE Discussion Guide was distributed by the Resource/Enrichment team, a by-law to utilize surviving spouses in this ministry was approved, and a revised Communications talk on Saturday was accepted. Armando and Margie Martinez and Fr. Julian Gnull of San Diego, Calif. were selected as Deputy Coordinators and Mike and Charlotte Mazzei of Santa Cruz/Monterey and Msgr. Bill Hoffman of Norcross, Ga. as Expansion/Development Coordinators.

At the 2004 ICM in Ft. Worth, Texas, Bruce and Marg Bridger expressed concern that the

At the 2004 ICM in Ft. Worth, Texas, Bruce and Marg Bridger expressed concern that the international communities did not have an adequate voice in Retrouvaille International, which consequently missed the benefits of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The Philippines offered the first weekend in their native Tagalog language. The Hispanic communities selected Gerardo and Telma Romei of Paraguay and Fr. Jimmy Gimeno of Argentina as their liaison team. At the ICM, agreement was finally reached that Hispanic communities would be part of Retrouvaille International.

Shaun Blain of California replaced Kenn Tetley and Warren Chamberlain as the new webmaster. Acknowledging that the business management office was not possible due to lack of finances, council members approved a by-law change to allow a finance couple and secretary couple. Geff and Judy Guenther of Modesto were selected as the Finance Couple, Errol and Mary Grace Lemoine of Baton Rouge as Secretary Couple, and Joel and Luly Dominguez of Chihuahua along with Fr. Mike Diaz of Spain as the International Concerns Team.

Council attendees heard a presentation on developing a community of disciples' mentality, stressing that the present grassroots mentality fostered independence while Retrouvaille had a need to work together as the number of couples attending weekends had started to decline. A decision was ratified to revise the weekend To Trust Again talk, a task assigned to a committee of Frank and Julie LaBoda of Madison, Jack and Marycarol Page of Tulsa, John and Barb Desjardins of Toronto, under the direction of the Resource/Enrichment Team.

A COMMUNITY OF DISCIPLES

The 2005 ICM in Santa Clara accepted a change in the preamble to read: "Retrouvaille is an international community of disciples dedicated to healing and renewing the covenant of marriage..." Members accepted a new vision statement, mission statement, and five year goals for growth of this ministry.

At its annual meeting, the Smart Marriages Conference recognized Retrouvaille as "the program that had the most impact on marriages." Annual regional conferences continued to multiply, with the Northeast region (New York), Southeast Region (Florida), and Lower North Central Region (St. Louis) added in 2005. Don and Janice Patterson of Joliet became the new Communiqué editors. Bishop Daniel Conlon of Steubenville and Rick McCord of the U.S. Catholic Conference used the Friday afternoon coordinators' meeting to hear testimony on the benefits of Retrouvaille as the U.S. bishops planned a pastoral on marriage. Outreach to Spain by Armando and Margie Martinez, Silvia and Horacio Alvarez of Argentina, Joel and Luly Dominguez, and Fr. Angelo Scolozzi was acknowledged. Ted and Iris Bjorn, Pat and Joyce Clark, Fr. Peter Lafferty, and Fr. Jerry Foley had presented two formation weekends in England and Scotland. Joel and Luly Dominguez and Fr. Agustin Samaniego presented a formation weekend in Nicaragua and had prepared two other Hispanic formation teams.

Frank and Julie LaBoda of Madison and Fr. Bob Jones of New England were selected as Deputy Coordinators and Bob and Laurie Pacer of Toledo and Fr. Syl Taube of Detroit as Resource/Enrichment Coordinators. Excitement mounted when Rome was chosen for the 2008 ICM, the first time members would gather outside of North America.

The 2006 ICM, hosted by the DC/Maryland and Northern Virginia Retrouvaille communities, reflected many of the trials as well as successes of Retrouvaille over the years. After years of difficulty with website issues, Catholic Online was accepted as the new website developer. A copyright of Retrouvaille program materials and a trademark was promised, as had happened frequently over many years. Considerable concern focused on what to do about same sex relationships and cohabiting couples should they register for a Retrouvaille weekend. After years of encouraging Retrouvaille in other faith communities, only the Twin Cities, Madison, and Santa Cruz/Monterey presented CMD programs.

On a positive note, council members heard of a Retrouvaille booth at the Fifth World Meeting of Families in Valencia, Spain, as well as new communities in Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Paraguay, and Mexico and interest expressed in France and Hong Kong. A French translation of the outlines was already underway. For years, Retrouvaille had good publicity in the media and now plans were to advertise in magazines to increase program attendance in local communities.

Shawn and Kim Doyle (now in Pennsylvania) and Fr. Bob Poandl of Tulsa were selected as the Expansion/Development Team. A mentor program was promised for struggling and new communities. Cleveland was chosen as the site for the 2009 ICM.

As Retrouvaille celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2007, difficulties continued with the website, with lack of team couples for local programs and formation weekends, with struggling or folding communities, and with communication between the International Board and local communities. The March 2007 Communiqué listed 104 English and 10 Spanish communities in the U.S. (some communities also offered the program in both languages), 12 in Canada, and one or more communities in Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, Ireland, Italy, Mexico, Nicaragua, Northern Ireland, Paraguay, Philippines, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, West Indies and Zimbabwe. Although not shown in the Communiqué, England presented its first program in April 2007. Cork, Ireland's first program was held May 11-13, 2007.

The 2007 ICM in Atlanta opened with Mass, celebrated by Archbishop Wilton Gregory of the Archdiocese of Atlanta. Bishop Kevin Boland of the Diocese of Savannah gave the keynote address, in which he referred to Pope John Paul II's teachings on Theology of the Body. Armando and Margie Martinez later gave the "State of Retrouvaille" report, in which they stated Retrouvaille continues to fight to strengthen marriages. Retrouvaille is now in 23 countries. Challenges to the ministry included that the report from the International Advisory Committee was not ready, online discussions were curtailed by the loss of the sharing lists, and the new website had not been delivered as anticipated. Armando asked those assembled for affirmation of Father Walt Bracken, SVD, as the Deputy Coordinating priest, to replace Father Bob Jones. Father Bob had had to resign due to health concerns. The assembly affirmed Father Walt. Fr. Bob was recognized and thanked for his willingness to serve.

During the business meeting, Article II was invoked, with a voice vote from the voters, in order to extend the term of the International Concerns team (ICON), Father Mike Diaz and Joel and Luly Dominguez, for one year, and to have the incoming secretary team serve for two years rather than three. This was done because four board positions were scheduled for discernment at the 2007 ICM. To maintain more continuity on the board, the terms of the two positions were modified. The regular rotation of the Board positions was to resume after these modifications.

For the first time, online voting was offered to 30 communities, primarily those outside the U.S. and Canada, not able to attend the ICM. They were eligible to vote for everything except the discernment of the Board positions. A number of proposals were voted on at the 2007 ICM. Proposals 1 and 2, regarding the definition of marriage, were postponed pending further study by the International Advisory Committee. Proposal 3, removing the ICM attendance requirement to vote, was passed. Proposal 4 giving lifetime voting privileges to former International Board members, and Proposal 5, giving lifetime voting privileges to former International Coordinating Teams, failed. Proposal 6, amending Article VIII of the by-laws regarding geographic representation of the Board, failed. Proposal 7 proposed: "All the proposed voting rights/privileges amendments should be combined and enshrined as an Article in our By-laws. We propose a new Article X for that purpose." This proposal failed. Proposal 8, which sought to have permanent committees established, failed. Proposal 9, the new weekend Trust Talk Outline, passed. The new weekend Trust Talk is to be presented by all Stage One couples by January 2010.

The Standing Outline Review Committee (SORC) presented their report on changes to several weekend and post weekend outlines. The changes were approved at the ICM. Due to continuing problems with the website company, legal assistance was being sought. Another major challenge to the ministry is the prospect of legal issues with same-sex marriages, as well as the issue of whether to allow co-habiting couples to register for Retrouvaille. The International Advisory Committee requested more time to study these serious matters. Elton and Ann Lewis gave a short presentation on the use of video conferencing for Post sessions, to accommodate the needs of couples who live great distances from the closest community.

Jack and Marycarol Page of Tulsa and Father Phil Brockmyre of Syracuse were discerned as the Deputy Coordinating Team. Bill and Sharon Kalber of Phoenix were discerned as the Secretary Team, and Dick and Irene Reimbold of Metro-Detroit were discerned as the Finance Team. Ken and Kathy Brcka of Twin Cities agreed to serve as the new editors of the Retrouvaille Communiqué.

Excitement began to build in Atlanta for the 2008 ICM which was to take place in Rome. Two videos were shown by Guido and Rinuccia Lamberto and Don Bernardino Giordano. A letter was read by Bishop Giuseppe Anfossi, President of the Bishops' Commission for Family Life. Madison and Detroit each offered to host the 2010 ICM. Madison was selected as the site for the 2010 ICM.

Chuck and Anita Lewis, of the San Diego community, chaired the International Advisory Committee. With representatives for every community around the world, their task was to survey communities about the marriage, and the experience of communities regarding heterosexual co-habiting couples. After surveying communities around the world, it was concluded that the frequency of co-habiting couples was increasing, and that the frequency of co-habiting couples was increasing.

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The International Board strove to live out the principles of servant leadership. It was extremely important to the IB that local communities feel supported. It was equally important to the IB to make it clear to local communities that all of us are an international community of disciples. The IB continued the practice of making at least one team available at each U.S. regional gathering, as well as the mentoring program for struggling communities who requested it. A scholarship program was begun for communities who could not pay the required 5% dues.

A settlement was reached in January 2008 with the company that had worked on the website. This concluded an extremely frustrating time for all who serve in the ministry. Efforts were made to improve the website and make it more workable for Retrouvaille servants.

In May, 2008 it was learned that His Holiness, Pope Benedict XVI, would grant a private audience to Retrouvaille on September 26, 2008, at Castel Gandolfo, the papal holiday residence. That His Holiness committed to this so many months in advance, and while he would be on holiday, made the announcement all the more remarkable.

Retrouvaille servants from seventeen countries gathered for the 2008 ICM, September 26-28. The highlight was the private audience with His Holiness. The audience was greeted and introduced to the Pope by Ennio Cardinal Antonelli, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family. His Holiness then spoke to the entire group with a fifteen minute address, calling Retrouvaille servants "custodians of a bigger hope for the couples who have lost it." Several Retrouvaille couples and priests were personally introduced to His Holiness. Later that day, opening Mass for the ICM was held at the main altar of St. Peter's Basilica, with the Retrouvaille priests all wearing bright red chasubles. By evening's end, a photo of the audience with the pope and his address were published in the Vatican newspaper, L'Osservatore Romano. Four keynote addresses by highly-regarded professors and by Don Sergio Nicolli, Director of the National Italian Family Life Office, added immeasurably to the experiences of those gathered.

Five proposals and two discernments were held at the business meeting. The first proposal, from Region 11 of the U.S. and Canada, sought to add the words "the valid marriage of one man and one woman" to the vision statement and preamble of the Retrouvaille International by-laws. This proposal failed. The second and third proposals aimed to include the words "the union of one man and one woman" within the vision statement and preamble to the by-laws, respectively. These two proposals passed. Each community was encouraged to incorporate these changes into their own local by-laws in order to receive as much protection as possible. The fourth proposal, read: "Retrouvaille International reserves the right to refuse the use of its name and materials where a community operates in a way that violates the fundamental principles of the Retrouvaille program." This proposal failed. The fifth and final proposal, offered the option of another song "Let's Begin Again" by Ray Boltz, to be played on Sunday while the prayer letters are being handed out. This proposal passed.

Frank and Julie shared the news that a Jewish expression of Retrouvaille, Tikkun HaBriet (Renew the Covenant), was being established in the Chicago area by Phil and Helen Kornick. Frank and Julie also stated that the copyrighting all Retrouvaille material had been completed. The copyrights are good for ninety-nine years. Armando and Margie Martinez were thanked for their assistance in completing this vital step to protect our ministry's material. Steps were being taken to make the website more operational. Tom Wood of the Indianapolis community began work to correct the many bugs in the system left by the previous web designers.

Father Tom McDevitt of Detroit and Allan and Teresa Sonfilippo-Wilcox of Lansing were discerned as the International Resource/Enrichment (R/E) Team. Father Mario Haby of Metro-Detroit and Elton and Ann Lewis Edmonton, Alberta, Canada were discerned as the new International Concerns team. Ireland and Panama each presented bids for the 2011 ICM. A hand vote was taken, and Panama won. Panama will be the site of the 2011 ICM.

Special thanks were extended to the entire Italian Retrouvaille Community for all of their work, as well as the Conference of Italian Bishops, most especially Bishop Guiseppe Anfossi, Don Sergio Nicolli and the entire Italian Family Life Office. In particular, tremendous thanks were extended to the three people most responsible for bringing the ICM to Rome: Guido and Rinnuccia Lamberto and

Special thanks were extended to the entire Italian Retrouvaille Community for all of their work, as well as the Conference of Italian Bishops, most especially Bishop Guisepe Anfossi, Don Sergio Nicolli and the entire Italian Family Life Office. In particular, tremendous thanks were extended to the three people most responsible for bringing the ICM to Rome: Guido and Rinuccia Lamberto and Don Bernardino Giordano. The blessings from the highest validation of Retrouvaille within the Catholic Church continue to pour out on this ministry, with unprecedented publicity and interest in establishing new communities.

In 2009, Retrouvaille continued to be a visible part of other organizations. The Winter Board meeting was held in Mexico City in January, in conjunction with the sixth World Meeting of Families. Retrouvaille manned a booth, handing out brochures in five languages: Spanish, English, Portuguese, French and Italian. Bishops, priests, nuns and lay ministers from around the world stopped by the booth to learn more or talk about Retrouvaille. The Board was delighted to again see Bishop Anfossi and Guido and Rinuccia Lamberto. The good folks of the Orlando community manned a booth at the annual Smart Marriages conference, held in Orlando in June. Father Walt Bracken and Frank and Julie LaBoda made a presentation at the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers in Twin Cities in July.

Over four hundred Retrouvaille servants from twelve countries attended the 2009 ICM hosted by Cleveland. The opening Mass was presided over by Most Reverend Gerard Lennon, Bishop of Cleveland. Don Bernardino Giordano, from the Italian community, brought a letter from Ennio Cardinal Antonelli, President of the Pontifical Council for the Family. This letter of greeting reaffirmed the Catholic Church's love and appreciation of Retrouvaille.

Two proposals were voted on during the 2009 ICM. The first proposal sought to amend the Vision Statement by removing the words, "the unchallenged acceptance of divorce has infected our world with hopelessness." This proposal passed. The amended Vision Statement now reads: "We believe that every marriage, a union of one man and one woman, deserves the opportunity to survive, be healed and thrive as a covenant of life and love. Retrouvaille is the place where we, as hurting couples, found hope and so we are passionately committed to dramatically increasing the number of couples served in both new and existing communities worldwide."

The second proposal was in regard to Article VIII of the Retrouvaille International by-laws. This proposal sought to rename the position of the International Expansion/Development Team to: Expansion and Development Team- USA & Canada and rename the position of the International Concerns Team to: Expansion and Development Team- Rest of the World. It further sought to require that those holding these positions reside in the area they represent. Finally, the proposal sought to delete the phrase: "Couples and Priests must be representative of differing geographic community

Areas." This proposal passed. This will affect future discernment of the Expansion and Development Teams. This did not affect the current Board Team of Fr. Mario Haby and EJ & Ann Lewis. The complete wording of Article VIII is in the By-Laws.

Frank and Julie, Dick and Irene and Jack and Marycarol made a presentation to and asked for feedback from the entire council regarding reformatting of the By-laws. It was affirmed by the council for the Board to form a By-laws committee to look at drafting a 'duplicate effective' version of the current by-laws, which would be presented at the 2010 ICM for a vote.

Three new board teams were discerned: International Secretary Team, Marce and Liz Gliha from Cleveland, Ohio; International Expansion and Development Team – USA & Canada, Fr. Tom Stepanski and Tom and Brandi Wood from Indianapolis, Indiana; and the Deputy International Coordinating Team, Fr. Peter Lafferty and Mike and Caryl Melly from Durban, South Africa. The communities from Detroit, Orlando and New England made bids to host the 2012 ICM. A hand vote was taken, and New England won. The 2012 ICM will be held in Boston. The Cleveland community was thanked for the outstanding job they did, hosting the 2009 ICM.

In 2010, Retrouvaille's presence at international events increased. Frank and Julie LaBoda were named as Consultants of the Pontifical Council for the Family, a five year appointment. They attended the XIX Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Council for the Family in Rome, February 8-10, 2010. They met with cardinals, bishops, theologians and diplomats. The first ever regional discernment for Africa was held in Mokopane, South Africa, with Fr. Francois Dufour and Stuart and Michele Allan being discerned as the African liaison team. EJ and Ann Lewis and Fr. Peter Lafferty and Mike and Caryl Melly helped lead this joyful event. Jack and Marycarol attended Italy's gathering and discernment for a new deputy coordinator team. Father Mario and EJ and Ann Lewis attended The International Academy for Marital Spirituality (INTAMS) conference in March, 2010 in Brussels, Belgium. In July, the Retrouvaille community in Cincinnati manned a booth at the National

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Continuing to build on the first sentence in the pre-amble, that Retrouvaille is an international community of disciples, greater efforts were made to increase communication in Spanish, beginning with the quarterly issues of the Communiqué, as well as sending correspondence to the sharing and coordinators' lists in English and Spanish.

The 2010 ICM was held in Madison, attended by 223 couples and 33 priests. Several meetings were held prior to the ICM, viz the customary International Board meeting, as well as meetings of USA & Canada regions, regions outside of the USA & Canada, Formation teams, Workshopping couples, and Community Coordinators. The ICM approved a motion to accept the duplicate effective By-Laws, thus leading the way for a revision of the ministry's by-laws. The International Advisory Council under the leadership of Chuck & Anita Lewis gave a presentation on their work, which was followed by group discussions on the future organisational structure of Retrouvaille. Tom & Bonnie Edwalds were discerned as the new Finance Couple. A motion to amend Article III (b) of the by-laws, removing the requirement that "The non-Catholic members (of presenting teams) shall be practicing Christians" failed.

Retrouvaille was invited to attend the Pontifical Council for the Family's International Congress November 25-27, 2010 in Rome. The topic of the Congress was The Christian Family, Subject of Evangelization. The invitation from Ennio Cardinal Antonelli asked for each ministry to write and present how their particular apostolate builds the 'relationship with the living Christ (as) the source of authentic evangelization.' Jack and Marycarol Page represented Retrouvaille at this Congress. Among the many blessings of this Congress, many attendees, including Bishops, made substantial inquiries for Retrouvaille to be expanded to their countries.

Several new communities were opened during 2010/2011. Halifax, Nova Scotia presented a program in April 2010, and communities were opened in Paris, France, and Bangalore, India, in January 2011.

The 7th Latin American Convention was held in Quito, Ecuador in February 2011, with an attendance of 62 couples and 8 priests. Fernando and Ana Luz Bueno were discerned by representatives of 10 countries, replacing Lorenzo and Marta Salas of Argentina. The Latin American Accord was extensively revised at this joyful, unifying event at which EJ and Ann Lewis represented the International Board. Mike & Caryl Melly also attended the convention, and addressed the gathering on the subjects of forgiveness and healing between peoples, and the need for regional strength and international unity.

An old hymn reminds us to "Throw out the lifeline, somebody's sinking today." The need for Retrouvaille as a lifeline for hurting marriages continues today as divorce still devastates about 50 percent of marriages. Meanwhile, the enthusiasm following Vatican II that "The people are the church" seems to have waned and individualism is a mark of the present generation. The initial sense of Retrouvaille as a grassroots movement, that is, from a groundswell of concern by the common folks, sometimes became interpreted instead to foster local autonomy, without a strong sense of working together or of protecting the integrity of Retrouvaille. Local communities easily got bogged down in tasks without creating a sense of vision. A community of disciples' mentality supports local autonomy and freedom but places emphasis on working together as a larger Retrouvaille community. Discipleship embraces the concept of servant leadership emphasized on the Retrouvaille Servant Leadership weekend. This demands both a high level of focus on a common task and a community dimension as members are called together in unity and sent forth to participate in the mission and ministry of Retrouvaille.

After more than thirty years, Retrouvaille is recognized as a leader in marriage ministries. Those who have involved themselves in helping other hurting couples would agree that making themselves available has been a gift to continue their own growth and kept them from slipping back

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After more than thirty years, Retrouvaille is recognized as a leader in marriage ministries. Those who have involved themselves in helping other hurting couples would agree that making themselves available has been a gift to continue their own growth and kept them from slipping back into a self-centered lifestyle which brought them to Retrouvaille in the first place. "Retrouvaille is the place where we, as hurting couples, found hope and so we are passionately committed to dramatically increasing the number of couples served in both new and existing communities worldwide." (Retrouvaille Vision Statement).

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