



Parish Heartbeats: Stories of Faith In Action



“Love and Marriage, Love and Marriage ...”



As the old song reminds us, they go together like a horse and carriage. A quaint image to be sure ... but is love enough to make a GOOD, LASTING marriage? Spend an hour with parishioners Phil and Barbara Samuels and their love for each other is obvious, even after 32 years of marriage. But they are both willing to tell you that marriage is a responsibility that requires a good foundation, active maintenance, and growth and change through the years.

Their personal experiences led them to a desire to share with others just embarking on the journey by becoming a mentor couple for the marriage preparation program. “We’re not professionals,” says Phil. “We’re just sharing our experiences and raising questions for an engaged couple to think about when they are just starting out. They are responsible for the success of their marriage ... we help them look beyond the party to the life that they will share after the wedding.”

Phil and Barbara have been ministering to engaged couples for over 20 years and in many different states. Barbara explains the commitment: “As we moved around and raised our family, we enjoyed the connections we made with the people at our parishes. The excitement and joy engaged couples feel reminds us of our early love story and the preparation we provide to them helps us to continue to work on our own marriage.”

Phil and Barbara moved to Naperville in the summer of 2010. They visited many parishes in the area before deciding to join St. Margaret Mary. “We were sitting in church before Mass one day, discussing the various parishes, when the lady in front of us turned around and said ‘I couldn’t help but overhear you. Welcome! We’re glad you’re here today.’ Phil and I looked at each other and decided immediately. This is the place we belonged.” The marriage preparation program at SMMP is headed by Deacon Terry Taylor and his wife, Maureen. Each mentor couple meets with an engaged couple five times prior to the wedding. There is a workbook provided to guide the discussions.

Phil and Barbara have worked with 2 engaged couples in the past year. “Working with these couples,” says Barbara, “reinforces our faith because we are representing the Church to them. We show them how Christ is central to the success of a strong marriage, like a braid with three strands. If you only have two, the braid unravels easily. That third strand can make all the difference in holding things together.” Phil adds, “We support them with experience and examples, right or wrong! We don’t judge them. We are genuinely interested in the success of their marriage.”



Of course marriage preparation is just the first step and St. Margaret Mary Parish recognizes the importance of continual support for married couples. The popular “Table for Two” program provides an opportunity for married couples of all ages to pause the daily routine for dinner and discussion. Marriage Encounter weekends offer more in-depth opportunities to reinforce marriage commitments, as does the Inter-Parish Marriage Enrichment Conference Day to be held this year on March 17th. Programs like Retrouvaille help rescue marriages that may be in trouble.

Written by Cabrina Attals

If you and your better half are interested in becoming a marriage preparation mentor couple, please contact Deacon Terry Taylor at (630) 369-0777.

Parish Heart Beats is an occasional bulletin column that celebrates the ways St. Margaret Mary parishioners make a difference in the lives of others.