

How to form an evangelization team in your parish

By Peg McEvoy

You may have read about how evangelization can happen in other parishes, but how is it supposed to work in and through your parish?



Peg McEvoy

Remember that Jesus started with a group of Apostles, not just one person, and Pentecost did not happen in an individual encounter. It

happened in a “meeting.” You need a team!

How do you get a parish evangelization team started? There are no exact “cookie-cutter” approaches, but here are a few basic steps that should be included in any parish evangelization team formation.

- Pray—Ask the Holy Spirit for guidance as you begin this process.
- Talk to your pastor—If you haven’t already done so, share with him your desire to work on evangelization efforts in your parish.

Ask if he knows of other parishioners or staff members who feel called to evangelization. To find more team members, look for people who are comfortable sharing their faith with others. These may be people involved with the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, service outreach work or a catechist who would make great team members.

There may be someone active in your “coffee and donuts” fellowship who is great at greeting newcomers and strangers, but never before considered hospitality as a form of evangelization.

- Gather your group to read, pray about and reflect on *Go and Make Disciples*—This statement from our bishops gives both a faith-based rationale for evangelization and specific objectives. Even if you have read this document before, you will find new insights for today.

- Determine the needs of the people in your community—Where does the Lord desire the Gospel to be proclaimed and lived in a new way? That is where to begin.

- For the first year, choose one measurable goal for each group we are asked to focus on—This might include the unchurched, those who have stopped practicing their Catholic faith and practicing Catholics who want to deepen their faith. Each group could benefit from a targeted spiritual card campaign or a planned “invite-a-friend” Mass. Other events might focus on just one of the groups, for example, home calls and/or visits to inactive parishioners.

As always, continue to pray and ask others to pray for you. Also ask for Mary’s intercession for your efforts.

In the words of our Holy Father, Benedict XVI: “May the Virgin Mary, who accompanied with motherly solicitude the development of the newborn Church, also guide our footsteps in our time and obtain for us a new Pentecost of love. May she especially make us all aware of being missionaries, that is, those who have been sent out by the Lord to be his witnesses at every moment of our life” (Message for World Mission Sunday, May 27, 2007).

We are missionaries of the Gospel in our own land. Keep looking, as individuals and as a group, for opportunities to share the Gospel message with non-practicing Catholics, with those searching for a spiritual home, and with all those who need to be re-energized to deepen our faith—and that last one includes all of us.

(Peg McEvoy is associate director for evangelization and family catechesis in the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education.) †

‘Youths evangelizing youths’

Photo by Sean Gallagher



Franciscan Father Arturo Ocampo, pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis, sings with youths and young adults involved in *Las Jornadas*, a Hispanic lay movement in the Church, at the start of an April 18 Mass at his parish’s church.

Hispanic lay movement helps spread the Gospel

By Sean Gallagher

When Catholic immigrants came to the United States in large numbers in the 19th and early 20th centuries, they often ended up worshipping in “national” parishes founded just for their ethnic group and were ministered to by priests from their home countries.

According to Margarita Solis Deal, archdiocesan coordinator of

Hispanic Ministry, that is not the case with recent Catholic immigrants to central and southern Indiana from Mexico and Central and South America.

“This is the first time in the history of the Church in this country that we have immigrant groups coming into established parishes,” said Solis Deal. “That multi-cultural focus is new.”

This is why some newly arrived Hispanic immigrants choose to worship in

Protestant congregations, Solis Deal said.

“[They] attract their spirit and their culture,” she said. “It’s a very attractive connection. And many of those Churches also have native leaders. A pastor might be a native of Mexico or Guatemala.”

While native priests aren’t coming to this country as with previous immigrant groups, some lay Hispanics in the archdiocese are reaching out to their

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Couple’s love story shows the goal of marriage

By John Shaughnessy

When they were preparing to be married, Thomas and Lisa Brown never really considered the most important goal of their marriage.

Even after they had been married for a few years, they didn’t know how they could take their marriage to a higher, more intimate level.

Yet now, after 18 years as husband and wife, the Browns understand the true purpose of their marriage—and the way to make it as good as possible.

Indeed, they are so sure of those twin goals that they publicly share their story with engaged couples who participate in Pre-Cana marriage preparation classes in the Batesville Deanery.

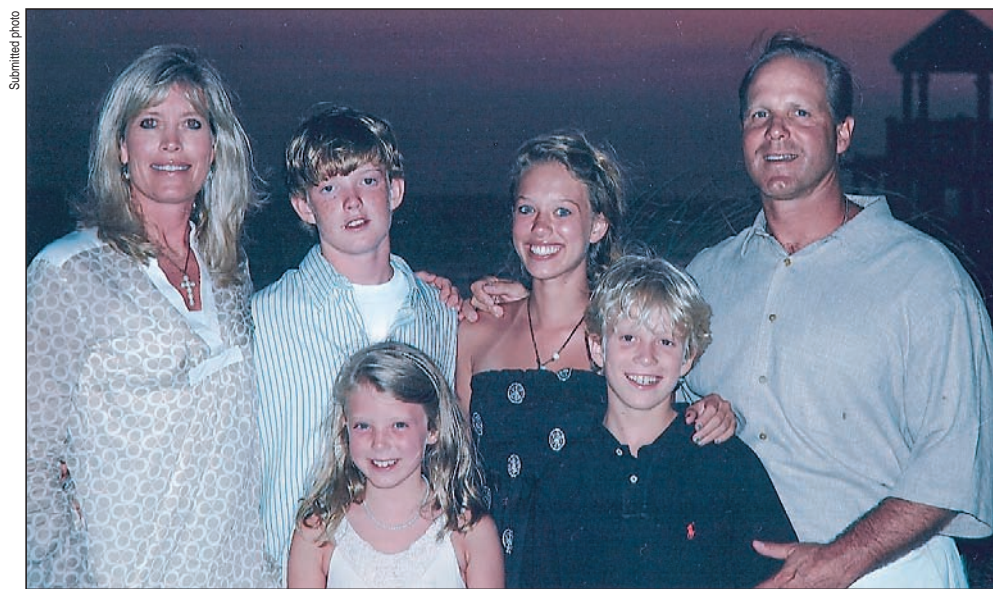
The sharing of their story reflects the Church’s and the archdiocese’s increasing efforts to use marriage preparation as a form of evangelization for non-Catholics and a way to deepen the faith of Catholics.

“Marriage preparation is a great opportunity to reconnect with Catholics who may not be active in their faith,” says Peg McEvoy, associate director of evangelization and family catechesis for the archdiocese. “It’s also a great opportunity to introduce people from other Christian denominations and other religions to the beauty of our faith as it’s expressed in the sacrament of matrimony. It also allows Catholics to deepen their faith.”

All those elements are involved in the story of the Browns, who are members of St. Louis Parish in Batesville.

The Browns’ story—including their path to a more intimate relationship—began when they were first married.

It was a time when Thomas was a fallen-away Catholic and Lisa was an involved, longtime member of the



For Thomas and Lisa Brown, their family is a natural extension of the love they have created in their marriage. Here, the family poses for a photo taken during a Florida vacation. From left, Lisa, Colin, Meredith and Thomas stand in the back row. Sophie and Beau are in the front row.

Episcopal Church. In fact, when the couple moved from Kentucky to Batesville, Lisa helped start a small Episcopalian community there. And Thomas became a part of it until his life changed during a family trip to Italy.

Understanding a marriage’s main goal

“In Rome, we went to St. Peter’s Basilica, and I had a strong conversion experience there,” Thomas recalls. “We walked in and saw the *Pieta* to the right. There were people from all over the world on their knees, saying prayers in all languages.”

It hit Thomas that those people were part of the universal Church, not just a small church in a southern Indiana community. When he came home, he had an insatiable desire to read book after book

about the Catholic faith. He also wanted to have Lisa share that faith, but his constant efforts only made her reluctant.

That’s when Thomas decided to let God handle the situation. Thomas no longer shared information about the Catholic faith with Lisa. Instead, he prayed the rosary on a regular basis, hoping she would become open to the Catholic faith. Weeks passed and then Lisa shared a revelation that stunned her husband.

“I said, ‘I think I’m going to RCIA [the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults program in which a non-Catholic prepares to become a Catholic],’” Lisa recalls. “I think he almost fell off the chair. I have to attribute that to my husband saying the rosary for me.”

That turn of events transformed their

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HISPANIC

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immigrant brothers and sisters to make them feel at home in the Catholic Church in central and southern Indiana.

Approximately 60 teenage and young adult Hispanic Catholics in Indianapolis are doing this through their participation in *Las Jornadas* ("The Journey"), a lay movement founded by the Marist Brothers in Mexico in 1965.

Their motto is "*Jovenes evangelizando a jovenes*" ("Youths evangelizing youths").

Roberto Marquez, a pastoral minister at St. Philip Neri Parish in Indianapolis, helped bring the movement to Indianapolis.

Originally from Mexico City, Marquez, 33, has been involved in *Las Jornadas* for 15 years. He oversees the formation for the young adult section of the movement for people ages 18 to 39.

Las Jornadas has groups for two age populations—those who are ages 14 to 17, and those who are ages 18 to 39.

Participants begin by taking a one-day retreat to learn about it, and later attend a four-day retreat that introduces them to the areas of formation offered in the movement.

Those still attracted to the movement can then take classes once a week for four years to receive the full formation of *Las Jornadas*.

Marquez has been busy teaching the classes in Indianapolis during the three years that the movement has been offered in the archdiocese.

"I'm very busy," he said. "It's a very nice experience. But I'm very busy."

While the participants take classes, they gradually become involved in activities organized by the movement and at parishes they belong to.

For example, youths and young adults in *Las Jornadas* in Indianapolis are planning upcoming retreats for their Hispanic peers preparing for the sacrament of confirmation and for *quinceaneras*, a festive coming-of-age ceremony for 15-year-old Hispanic girls.

"[*Las Jornadas*] is an opportunity to

provide a welcoming environment for the immigrants and to help them feel a part of a community," said Cuquis Romero, who oversees the 14 to 17 age group in Indianapolis. "Many times they come feeling a little bit lost. They don't know how to establish themselves in this community.

"*Las Jornadas* is a way for them to say, 'This is my community,'" added Romero, 37, who is also a secretary and youth coordinator at St. Patrick Parish in Indianapolis.

Her brother, Pablo, 27, has been involved in *Las Jornadas* in Indianapolis for three years. He is glad that his participation is helping him put his faith into action for others.

"It makes me feel very proud," Pablo said. "I know that I can make a difference. I cannot change the world. But I can try to change somebody's world."

And they do this not simply through programs sponsored by parishes, but by reaching out to teenage and young adult Hispanic Catholics they might meet in their everyday lives who may have little or no contact with parishes.

"It's the mission of *Las Jornadas* to have youths evangelize youths," Cuquis said. "The youths involved in the movement go out and invite others who are not involved."

Las Jornadas is one of a few Hispanic lay movements active in the archdiocese.

According to Solis Deal, Hispanic Catholics in central and southern Indiana are also involved in the Christian Family Movement and the Hispanic Charismatic Renewal.

"They have lay leaders who are also native to the community," Solis Deal said. "They understand the stories of the community. They speak the same language. They can evangelize each other, whereas our parishes struggle with that because of the lack of language skills."

(To see a list of archdiocesan parishes that offer Masses in Spanish, log on to www.archindy.org/multicultural/spanish.html.) †



"*Jovenes evangelizando a jovenes*" ("Youths evangelizing youths") is the motto of *Las Jornadas*, a Catholic Hispanic lay movement. The motto is displayed on a teenager's T-shirt at a Mass on April 18 at St. Patrick Church in Indianapolis.

Making connections, understanding are key to evangelizing Hispanics

By Sean Gallagher

Las Jornadas is a Catholic lay movement in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis that helps Hispanic youths and young adults evangelize their peers.

But how can people who do not speak Spanish help welcome recent Hispanic immigrants to central and southern Indiana into the Church here?

The language barrier can be a looming challenge, but it is not insurmountable, said Margarita Solis Deal, archdiocesan coordinator of Hispanic ministry.

"It all starts with relationships with people," she said. "There are opportunities everywhere to connect. That ministry is being done at the grassroots level."

Solis Deal said making that connection can happen when non-Hispanics come to understand the troubles many immigrant Catholics from Mexico or Central or

South America face when moving to the United States.

"The priority [now] is to give them support," she said. "They have to work two jobs. They have to put food on the table. They don't know if they'll have a job tomorrow. Their work isn't to learn English and to communicate better with their English-speaking brothers and sisters.

"Understand the plight of the immigrant so that they can be better in terms of connecting. Welcome them into the Church. If they're not welcomed into the Church, they're going to leave."

Solis Deal warned against the danger of simply stereotyping Hispanic Catholics.

"If people can kind of step out of themselves to look beyond the Hispanic title and [see] that this is their brother and sister in our Catholic faith, it helps a little bit," she said. "Once we put those labels on, however, forget it."

Matthew Souza, 53, a member of St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, is taking Solis Deal's advice to heart by helping his parish find ways to be more welcoming to the growing Hispanic population in Bartholomew County.

His interest in reaching out to Hispanic Catholics is, in part, rooted in the story of his family.

The son of a Guatemalan immigrant father and a mother from Missouri, Souza lived for four years as a youth in Mexico City when his father worked there for the Columbus-based Cummins engine company.

Souza, who led a task force at St. Bartholomew Parish to address the parish's growing Hispanic population, has also been moved by the way in which his four children have a growing interaction with their Hispanic peers at St. Bartholomew School and Columbus North High School.

Ultimately, however, Souza wants to make the Hispanic Catholics who have moved to Columbus feel welcome because he believes that is what Jesus would do.



Margarita Solis Deal

"That's the type of behavior that he would have exhibited," Souza said. "That's the core motivation."

The task force, which interviewed more than 35 parishioners representative of the entire faith community, recently made three recommendations to St. Bartholomew's pastoral council.

One was to find a replacement for Franciscan Father Tom Fox,

who has helped lead Hispanic ministry at St. Bartholomew Parish for many years, but is retiring this summer. St. Bartholomew's pastor, Father Clement Davis, is currently taking Spanish lessons and starting to say, on occasion, parts of the Mass in Spanish.

Another recommendation was to find a way to have a full-time parish staff position for someone who speaks Spanish in order "to help newly arrived Spanish-speaking members to have their needs met in a language they can understand."

The third recommendation was based on the task force's observation that the parish is already doing many good things to welcome Hispanic Catholics. Souza said that the parish doesn't need to make huge changes in this regard.

"We don't need to worry about too much big, huge, boil the ocean changes," he said. "The change is already happening. We just need to be prepared to do whatever it takes to make the change welcome."

At the start of the work that the task force performed, Souza had an interest in Hispanic ministry. Now he is passionate about it.

"I deeply, totally believe that Christ's message to us is love," Souza said. "To me, [Hispanic ministry] is a way that a community can express that, by opening its arms and warmly embracing, with love and through faith, the people who are newly arrived in the community, regardless of their skills, regardless of their past, regardless of their language." †



A shrine to Our Lady of Guadalupe stands in the narthex of St. Bartholomew Church in Columbus in December 2005. A task force of parishioners recently studied how the Seymour Deanery parish can better welcome Hispanic immigrants who have recently moved to Columbus.

'Go and Make Disciples'

Saints through the ages speak about evangelization

In 1992, the bishops of the United States approved *Go and Make Disciples: A National Plan and Strategy for Catholic Evangelization in the United States*.

Three goals of evangelization were identified in this document.

The first goal was "To bring about in all

Catholics such an enthusiasm for their faith that, in living their faith in Jesus, they freely share it with others."

The second flowed from the first: "To invite all people in the United States, whatever their social or cultural background, to hear the message of salvation in Jesus Christ so they may come

to join us in the fullness of the Catholic faith."

The third seeks a renewal of society through a proclamation of the Gospel: "To foster Gospel values in our society, promoting the dignity of the human person, the importance of the family, and the common good of our society, so that

our nation may continue to be transformed by the saving power of Jesus Christ."

The words of holy men and women throughout the history of the Church echo here and now to exhort us to work toward the fulfillment of these goals, which are summarized in three words: "enthusiasm, invitation and renewal." †

Enthusiasm



"I have the strength for everything through [Christ] who empowers me."

—St. Paul
(Phil 4:13)



"If you are what you should be, you will set the whole world ablaze!"

—St. Catherine of Siena (1347-80)



"Strive to see God in all things without exception, and consent to His will joyously. Do everything for God, uniting yourself to him in word and deed. Walk very simply with the cross of the Lord and be at peace with yourself."

—St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622)



"Be not dispirited; be not afraid; keep a good heart; be bold; draw not back; you will be carried through ... O children of a heavenly Father, be not afraid!"

—Ven. John Henry Newman (1801-90)

Invitation



"Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope, but do it with gentleness and reverence."

—St. Peter
(1 Pt 3:16-17)



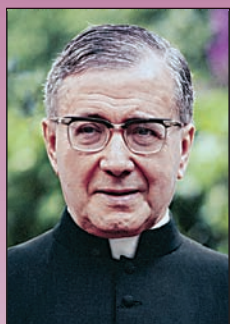
"Three things are necessary for the salvation of man: to know what he ought to believe; to know what he ought to desire; and to know what he ought to do."

—St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-74)



"Accustom yourself continually to make many acts of love, for they enkindle and melt the soul."

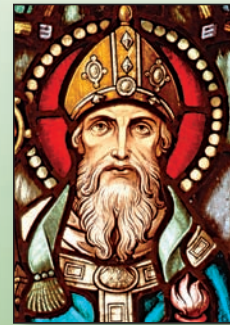
—St. Teresa of Avila (1515-82)



"Among those around you—apostolic soul—you are the stone fallen into the lake. With your word and your example, you produce a first circle ... and it another ... and another, and another ... wider each time. Now do you understand the greatness of your mission?"

—St. Josemaría Escrivá (1902-75)

Renewal



"Since you cannot do good to all, you are to pay special attention to those who, by the accidents of time, or place, or circumstances, are brought into closer connection with you."

—St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430)



"The proof of love is in the works. Where love exists, it works great things. But when it ceases to act, it ceases to exist."

—St. Gregory the Great (540-604)



"Whoever bids other folks to do right, but gives an evil example by acting the opposite way, is like a foolish weaver who weaves quickly with one hand and unravels the cloth just as quickly with the other."

—St. Thomas More (1478-1535)



"Like Jesus, we belong to the world, living not for ourselves but for others. The joy of the Lord is our strength."

—Blessed Teresa of Calcutta (1910-97)

Words from our archdiocesan patrons



"Many, many people hereabouts are not becoming Christians for one reason only: there is nobody to make them Christians."

—St. Francis Xavier (1506-52)



"Without distinction of persons, do good to all."

—St. Theodora Guérin (1798-1856)

Hospitality is a key element of evangelization in parishes

By Mary Ann Wyand

“Hoosier hospitality” for Catholics in central and southern Indiana means inviting and welcoming visitors to Masses and other parish activities.

It also involves staying in touch with newcomers then helping them connect with the Catholic faith through religious education programs as well as the sacramental initiation process for adults and children.

Evangelization starts with smiles and friendly greetings, said Ken Ogorek, the director of catechesis for the archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education.

“We can’t overstate the importance of just being friendly to folks when they visit your parish,” Ogorek said. “There is certainly more to evangelization than being friendly, but without a warm and welcoming community any other evangelization efforts are only going to go so far. This not only applies to parishioners at Sunday Mass, but also to parish staff members, who may interact with any number of visitors over the course of a typical week.”

Successful evangelization efforts are dependent on the welcoming attitude of parishioners, he said, at parishes in small towns, cities and suburban neighborhoods.

“Even a large parish in an urban setting, with some effort, can really be a warm and welcoming community,” Ogorek said. “We like to think that you can take these sorts of matters for granted, but sometimes it takes a team of people in a parish to remind a broader group of parishioners how important it is to be intentional in our welcoming efforts. That’s why we are strongly encouraging parishes to start or rejuvenate their parish evangelization team. We stand ready to help any parishioners who want to enhance their parish’s efforts at evangelization.”

Father Anthony Volz, the pastor of Christ the King Parish in Indianapolis, said visitors often tell him that the warmth and small-town feeling of the Indianapolis North Deanery faith community make them feel at home.

“It’s important to welcome new people because we want the faith to increase, and we want to bring more people to the Lord,” Father Volz said. “The sacraments are the essential ingredients to doing that, but we have to give people information about what’s going on in the parish.”

Christ the King Church is located on a busy street at 1827 Kessler Blvd., East Drive, adjacent to Bishop Chatard High School, and Father Volz said the address helps attract newcomers to the faith as well as Catholics who are searching for a new parish community.

“It’s a welcoming parish,” he said. “We help people to become involved very quickly. We’re always welcoming new ideas and new ways of helping others to get involved in Church life. People are so busy that the most we can do, I think, is to give them the information and have the Spirit work, and see if they have time to get involved, if not now then later.”

The new member welcome packet includes a rosary made by a parishioner, a holy card of St. Theodora Guérin, the Mass schedule and information about the parish’s Blessed Sacrament chapel, Father Volz said, which show people that prayer is a priority.

The packet also contains a parish directory, newsletter, list of ministries, financial report and donation envelopes, he said, to welcome people and remind them of the importance of sharing their gifts of time, talent and treasure.

“Our parish information encourages people to consider various ministries to become involved with,” Father Volz said. “The best way to get to know other people is to join a ministry and help others.”

Parish hospitality ministries range from singing in the Resurrection Choir during funeral Masses to making prayer and angel blankets that are blessed then given to people, said Melissa Buechler, the receptionist and choir director.

“Music that is familiar to people makes them feel at home and includes everybody in the liturgy,” Buechler said. “It makes them feel a part of the community. I think Christ the King is a very singing parish, and that’s very welcoming. We have an

adult choir, high school music group and children’s choir.”

Young adults in the New Albany Deanery are encouraged to focus on keeping God in the center of their busy lives and participate in parish ministries, said Jeff Jenkins, the deanery’s associate director of youth and young adult ministry.

“They’re searching for their vocation [in life] and beginning professional careers,” Jenkins said. “... The Church is trying to reach them and provide quality ministries for them. Our goal is to empower young adults to feel integrated in their parish by helping them connect to their Catholic faith and realize that there is a lot for them to

receive by going to Mass, but also to give to the parish in terms of their talents and wisdom.”

He said it’s important to reflect on the Scripture passage from the Gospel of Matthew, “For where your treasure is, there also will your heart be” (Mt 6:21).

Deanery young adult activities also encourage them to reflect on a “lifestyle litmus test,” Jenkins said. “A lot of young adults will say, ‘I believe in God,’ but they don’t go to Mass regularly. We tell them, ‘Let’s look at your life, at your calendar, and how you live day to day. How much time do you give to those things that you claim to value? How much time do you spend connecting to your faith and family? How much time do you give in prayer? How often do you attend Sunday



Christ the King Parish staff members Rose Sterger, left, and Melissa Buechler of Indianapolis prepare new member welcome packets that include a rosary, holy card of St. Theodora Guérin, Mass schedule and other parish information to help newcomers connect to the faith community.

Mass?”

Father Rick Nagel, the director of young adult and college campus ministry for the archdiocese, said “prayer takes time and requires discipline to carve out that time.

“Prayer is really spiritual oxygen that we all need to grow in our relationship with Christ,” he said. “That’s why it becomes so vital. One of the most important ways to come to know where God desires for us to go and how he chooses for us to follow him faithfully is in the silence of prayer.”

Participation in Mass and parish activities keep people rooted in God, Father Nagel said. “The goal ultimately is to have young adults put down roots in parish life, and feel a part of a parish family.” †

MARRIAGE

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marriage.

“Before my conversion and before he came back to the Church, we had a really good marriage, very solid,” Lisa says. “But that spiritual component was missing. When we added that spiritual component, our relationship went from good to great. Once we became more spiritually connected, we became more intimate as a couple.”

The Browns share the importance of that transition with engaged couples in the marriage preparation classes. They refer to Matthew Kelly’s book *The Seven Levels of Intimacy* in which the Catholic author maintains that a marriage has to be strong in four areas to be successful: intellectual, emotional, physical and spiritual.

“The only way you can have a good spiritual relationship

is to be one in your faith,” Thomas says. “You’re not whole otherwise.”

Having that spiritual connection led the Browns to understand the most important goal of their marriage—the most important goal of any marriage.

“A couple’s main goal is to get each other to heaven,” Thomas says. “And putting Christ and the Church in the middle of that definitely helps you.”

Lisa adds, “Before that, we were in a relationship to make each other feel good. Once we determined that our main goal in our marriage is to help us get to heaven and become the best versions of ourselves, our marriage had more purpose. That meant a lot to me.”

While their message is serious, their approach to sharing it with engaged couples is often light-hearted and filled with stories.

“Sometimes, people in the Church can come across a little stodgy,” Thomas says. “We try to tell a joke or two, to let them know we’re normal people, and that it can be cool to be involved in the Church.”

Sharing the joy in a marriage

That approach pervades the Batesville Deanery’s focus in marriage preparation classes.

Many of the couples who are required to take marriage preparation classes to be married in the Church have one person who is from a different Christian tradition, a different religion or no religious background. So the approach is designed to be welcoming.

“I was a little concerned about the reaction of non-Catholics who take the classes,” says Nancy Fahringer, the resource and program administrator for the Batesville Deanery. “We’ve been doing it for five years now, and haven’t had anyone offended in any way. The response to the program has been overwhelmingly positive. And it’s truly life-changing for a lot of these couples.

“By the end of the day, the couples hang around, talking. They tell us their marriage is going to be different because they have a whole new perspective about the purpose of their marriage and how to live it out. They understand that the goal is to bring your spouse with you to heaven. They understand that their marriage should be focused on their spouse, and how to bring good to them.”

Marriage preparation classes also present opportunities to explain the teachings of the Church regarding marriage, according to McEvoy, who leads the archdiocesan approach

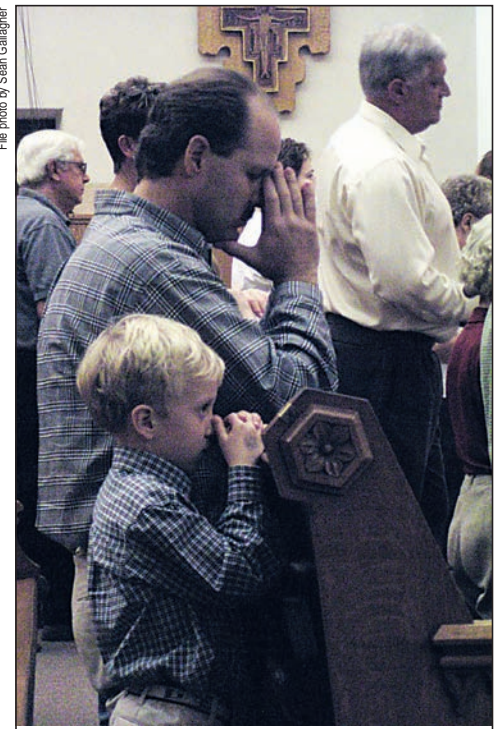
in this area.

“In all our marriage preparation, there needs to be a component of how we understand marriage in the Catholic faith, and how to understand the purpose of marriage, especially our openness to children and the building of a family,” McEvoy says. “We also have to share how our faith supports the relationship of husband and wife.”

For the Browns, who are the parents of four children, sharing their story in marriage preparation classes is their personal way of offering young engaged couples a path to find the joy they know in their marriage.

“Most of the people who are non-Catholic wouldn’t hear all the beautiful things about our faith if people didn’t share them in these classes,” Thomas says. “This may be the only opportunity to evangelize non-Catholics. Also, it helps Catholics affirm what’s special about the Church so they don’t leave in the future.”

Lisa adds, “It’s also important for them to see a happy couple who love the Church and love their faith. How cool is that?” †



Thomas Brown and his son, Beau, kneel in prayer during an Oct. 30, 2004, Mass at St. Louis Church in Batesville.

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