



ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

A Key Step of the M.E. Weekend

There are many difficulties involved with encountering oneself. Most people fear taking an honest look at their inner selves, so few actually encounter themselves. It's a big risk because you may not like what you find. This is normal but, I believe, worth the risk because you cannot share with your spouse what you do not know.

Another difficulty most of us have with seeing the positive side of ourselves is because of our upbringing; we were taught that self-love is a form of pride, and therefore wrong. Self-love is absolutely necessary before you can love anyone else. False pride may be wrong, but true self-love is very right. Also, self-encounter is difficult because no one wishes to face their own failures, weaknesses, shortcomings and faulty behavior. But, it is worth the risk. We must accept ourselves as we are, with all our limitations, and with hope.

Marriage Encounter and all our F I. R. E. S. programs are based on the concept of 'vivencia.' I describe 'vivencia' as our lived experience, which encompasses our personal witness, hopes and life pursuits, as well as the disposition of our past, present and future in its fluid state. Through *our* vivencia we discover how we were shaped, who we are now and who we are becoming. We discover the strengths and weaknesses we bring with us into our marriage relationship. The main goal then, of Encounter With Self, is to discover one's own vivencia in order to be able to share that vivencia with your spouse in a deep and loving way.

One major obstacle to self encounter is acting in a way which covers up those feelings that reveal who you really are. I call this wearing masks. When you wear a mask, you're not allowing your spouse to see you as you really are. It is very, very difficult to sustain a close, loving relationship until the masks are identified and removed.

It helps me to maintain a positive self-image by remembering that God created us in His image and likeness. We all have worth. We are of God's family. I share this with you because it is disastrous to both yourself and your spouse to have a negative self-image.

We strive then, in the Marriage Encounter experience, for everyone to achieve a positive self-image. The importance of clearly understanding and honestly accepting our inner life is brought out by Jesus in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God." (Matthew 5:8)

We can get a better appreciation of this revelation if we believe we can indeed "see God," working in our lives (vivencia). All we need to do is have the purity of heart to honestly look into ourselves to discover and accept what our vivencia is.

Fr. Gabriel Calvo is the Founder of Marriage Encounter. His website is www.family-experiences.org



Remember please:

There can be no unity without reconciliation;
There can be no reconciliation without dialogue;
There can be no dialogue without Encounter With Self;
There can be no Encounter With self without self-honesty.

GABRIEL CALVO