



Quo Vadis offers therapy services to:

- Individuals
- Couples
- Families
- Groups

For:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Couples/family issues
- Grief/transitions
- Marriage prep & enrichment
- Personal growth
- General Mediation

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Where are you going?

Quo Vadis Therapy Center

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Dancing with Your Star

Variables in the Dance of Marriage

Many things have to go right to commence and sustain a loving relationship between spouses. Well before the wedding day, as well as ever after, many variables, or steps in the dance of marriage, must align for a confident partnership to exist between a man and a woman.

For many couples, the words they say will stir the other's deeper longings and be the first and ongoing dance of connection between them. Words, however, are just the lyrics to the music. The tone and timing of those words, and what is communicated through body language convey timbre, rhythm, and mood for the melody. Lyrics are verbal, but communication has dynamics that are always non-verbal.

Another variable, which I don't want to overstate even as I acknowledge that it is important, is the other's appeal to our senses (e.g. physical appearance). Our sensual preferences are a real part of who we are, and they are often where the first spark of attraction to our partner originates. However, what appeals to our senses does not by itself ensure that we'll dance well with that individual.

How one person's temperament complements the other's is another variable in a couple's relationship. For example, when one person is down, can the other person comfortably move with that mood? Likewise, when one person is content or elated, can the other person participate in and feed off of that emotional energy? Ideally, when couples get the steps in this dance of disposition down, their relationship can flow with

the highs and lows of daily life together.

Values play a major role in the partnership between spouses. Each person's values shape their attitudes, interests, needs, and aspirations. Insofar as the two individuals' values can combine to create a shared identity and mutual goals for their future together, their attachment to one another generates a sense of safety and reliability with one another; that is, they move together and know to where on the floor they want to go.



This element is fundamental in the couple's dance; it lends a sense of purpose to their relationship and marks the steps on the floor to guide them amidst the changes in the music that every relationship experiences.

Breaking from the dance analogies for a moment, it's worth mentioning a few of the challenges that often affect couples' relationships. For starters, the glow of a new relationship or of being newly married tends to fade, and the humdrum of daily routines steals away earlier excitement. It's important for couples to recognize this change as natural, but it is also important to not let boredom set in and turn to resentment. It's not the change that is the problem, but the failure to adapt to the inevitable change. Another event that brings obvious change is having children. As exciting as a new baby can be, there are many stressors in having kids that can erode a

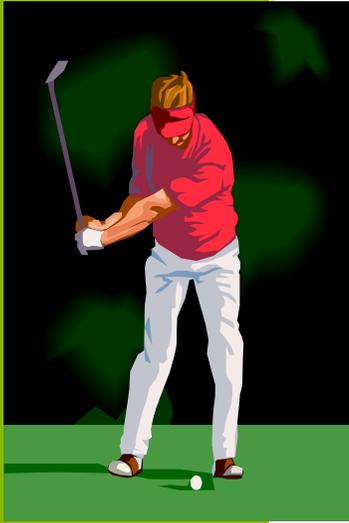
couple's relationship if sufficient attention isn't given to it. Likewise, health problems, especially those that are chronic, whether in a spouse or someone else in the family (e.g. child, aging parent, etc.), can cause crises for a couple.

Such situations like those described above can be simply facts of life as opposed to things that could have been avoided. Couples can't always pick the music to which they want to dance, but they can still choose the steps. Nor can they simply choose a different partner every time the music changes, so they must learn how to dance to the music that inevitably changes throughout their lives.

It may take some work, but learning to move together with the music can strengthen the bond between a couple because they know right where their partner is going to be amidst all the motion. This knowledge creates security, and only from that home position can couples feel safe to try new moves that are required when the music changes or that simply are meant to renew excitement in the dance that began long ago. Mistakes will be made, perhaps devastating ones, but that doesn't mean the dance is over; the music goes on. Get back to home position and decide what steps will get you smoothly across the floor. If getting back to home position is a challenge, the help of an instructor (i.e. therapist) is well overdue. Learn the dance.

In the end, if marriage is a dance, find a good partner and stay on the floor until the band goes home.

Of Golf & Marriage



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Not long ago, I attended an event that was partly focused on cultural perceptions of marriage. During the lunch break, I was having a casual conversation with someone who shared with me an interesting analogy between marriage and golf.

This individual was not connected with the profession of marriage and family therapy or the practice of psychotherapy, which, if nothing else, proves that the insights to a sound marriage are not known to just us therapists. However, after learning that I do therapy with couples, this person, happily married, moved seamlessly into an explanation of why he saw marriage therapy as a practical investment.

This gentleman shared with me that he is an avid golfer, and, I assumed, a good one. He went on to say that every year he hires a golf instructor to work with him for a limited time to analyze his technique and give him constructive feedback on what adjustments he could make to improve his game. He then made the connection to marriage therapy by

sharing that he was recently thinking that if he routinely takes the time and money to have a golf instructor tune up his game, why wouldn't he do the same in consulting with a therapist about his marriage.

As a therapist, it is no surprise that I agree with this person's comparison. However, I think I'm being objective when I say that this man's thinking is quite prudent. It can be very difficult to analyze and find defects in your own golf swing since it's nigh impossible to see all aspects of your swing as you're engaged in it. It is, therefore, helpful to have someone who is standing from a different vantage point see what is obstructed from your own view and knowledgeably comment on what can be tweaked or changed. This is what a therapist can do for a couple in regard to their marriage.

Now, I'm not overlooking that a person could videotape their golf swing and improve it on their own. Nor can I say that a couple couldn't do the same with aspects of their relation-

ship. However, I submit that marriage is much trickier than golf because marriage involves very deep emotions that go right to the core of our nature as social beings in need of secure attachments with other human beings. Emotions are part of who we are, and they serve good and useful functions, but we can also get tangled up in them. For this reason, it can be tremendously difficult to be a sufficiently objective observer of your own marriage relationship.

Using a trained and experienced therapist who can stand at a vantage point where he/she can be appropriately objective and able to advise a couple on their relationship can indeed be a very practical investment. And just like the gentleman who hires a golf coach to fix small problems and prevent larger ones, it's good to be proactive and use a therapist in the same way with your marriage. It may take much more work to heal a marriage that has a greater handicap than your golf game.

Pastoral Care & Therapy

In times of stress, it's a positive step for people to reach out to others who can help. Many people turn to their parish community; the pastor, a pastoral associate, or another trusted person in the parish. Especially in times of need, one's faith community is invaluable. It is also true that effective resources outside the parish can work in concert with the pastoral care received directly from the parish. Giving a referral to such a resource that complements, not replaces,

the parish's pastoral care can be a helpful offer.

In the years I worked as a parish minister, I met people struggling with relationships, grief, depression, anxiety, etc. I knew I needed backup or specific training to help people with certain difficulties, so I compiled a list of therapists to whom I might refer people when they needed something other than what I could give directly. Eventually, I also

received the training to be among those therapists, and transitioned from parish ministry to full-time therapy.

Because of my experience, I believe Quo Vadis Therapy Center is a unique resource for when someone you know may benefit from therapeutic assistance that values and utilizes a person's faith as a source of strength in times of difficulty, change, healing, or growth.

Conflict in the Parish Community

Alternative Dispute Resolution at Quo Vadis Therapy Center

In the several years I worked in parish ministry, I was involved with shaping various parish programs together with parishioners and other staff members. We often had to make difficult decisions, some of which were unavoidably unpopular with some people, and there were other decisions that weren't exactly what I favored.

Situations such as these increase the chances of conflict, and indeed it happens even in parish communities. However, conflict need not be in itself a bad thing. And insofar as some conflicts are unavoidable, it's important to recognize that managing conflicts well is key in any setting or relationship.

As the Archdiocese completes its strategic planning process this year to adapt to the changing demographics of our area and best serve the people in our local church and community, it's probably inevitable that some changes will cause conflict between various parties. I know from direct and indirect experience with school closings, parish mergers, and parish closings that such

events tend to create their share of conflicts. I also know from experience that, in general, parish communities are not immune to the same types of conflicts that occur in non-parish settings.

When I started Quo Vadis Therapy Center, it was my intention to not only provide Catholic-sensitive therapy services, but also to provide assistance to parishes in preventing and/or resolving conflicts. Thus, in addition to being a therapist, I am a qualified neutral (mediator) under rule 114 of the general rules of practice for the Minnesota district courts. With my experience as a therapist, training as a mediator, and background in parish ministry, I have unique credentials for helping parishes manage conflicts.

In the State of Minnesota, mediation is an alternative dispute resolution (ADR) process. ADR is frequently used to settle disputes, often to avoid the time and expense of going to court, but ADR methods are also used in a variety of situations

where lawsuits are not involved.

There are several benefits in utilizing mediation. One very important benefit is that unlike arbitration, where the arbiter listens to both sides and issues a decision, mediation seeks to enable disputing parties, as facilitated by the mediator, to create a mutually beneficial solution. This process lends itself to

preserving the relationship between disputing parties; something that is paramount in parish settings when disputes can cause hurtful division within the body of Christ, threatening the communion between

people in the parish, and perhaps slowing down the process of our spiritual conversion.

If there is a conflict in your parish that's unsettling you or others, or an assessment of how to organize structures in the parish to minimize conflict would be useful, Quo Vadis Therapy Center can offer professional services, grounded in Catholic sensibility, to address these concerns.



Discovery in the Desert Revisited

Ancient Scrolls and Family Life



A year ago, I wrote in this newsletter about certain connections between the finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls and family life. I didn't know

at the time that the Science Museum of Minnesota was planning an exhibit featuring fragments of the Dead Sea Scrolls. I recently experienced the exhibit, and was inspired to relate some other aspects of family life to these fascinating documents.

The Dead Sea Scrolls provided the world with manuscripts of the He-

brew Bible that were nearly 1,000 years older, and that much closer to the original Biblical text, than the oldest version of these Scriptures known to that point. What this finding allowed scholars to do was compare the different Hebrew Bible manuscripts from various time periods and learn more

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Quo Vadis Therapy Center

Where are you going?

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About Quo Vadis Therapy Center

QVTC is the private psychotherapy practice of Joe Pribyl. Joe is a licensed associate marriage and family therapist. Joe received his master's degree in counseling psychology with a concentration in family psychology from the University of St. Thomas. Prior to that, Joe worked as a lay minister in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St. Paul & Minneapolis, during which time he received a master's degree in Catholic Studies from St. Thomas.

Joe currently has openings for individuals, couples, and families interested in therapy to address difficulties related to depression, anxiety, family and marital stress, grief/loss, and personal growth. Joe also works with couples on pre-marital counseling/education and marriage enrichment. General mediation services are also available for dispute resolution.

Joe has presented on mental health and relationship dynamics to various groups in person and on the radio. Inquire about presentations Joe can give for parish/church groups interested in knowing more about the causes of and help for depression, anxiety, couples/family difficulties, and other therapy topics. Permission to reproduce/distribute this newsletter is granted by Quo Vadis Therapy Center, LLC. Color copies are available on

Discovery in the Desert

Ancient Scrolls and Family Life *(continued from page 3)*

about Jewish history. It was learned that despite some differences, the newer Biblical manuscripts had a remarkable resemblance to the older ones. The finding of the Dead Sea Scrolls prompted an archaeological exploration in the area where they were discovered, which led to new information about Jewish groups from 2,000 years ago that disagreed on religious thought and practice.

These findings make me think of parallels in family life. The manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible are a narrative of the Jewish people, a family history, if you will. The major stories are preserved and held in common by family members over time. How similar

that is to the specific families from which we all come! Grandpa Jim and Grandma Jane received family stories from their forebears, add stories from their own lives, and pass them all on to the next generation, which repeats the pattern. Thus, a family narrative covering many generations arises. However, as was the case with some ancient Jewish groups, disagreement or even conflict can arise among family members over how to interpret & apply the lessons of stories within the multi-generational narrative.

What can family members do when they see family events from different and conflictual perspectives? From a family therapy point of view, it's often helpful to note what transitions are

occurring in the family's narrative. Commonly, these points in the family life cycle increase stress because big changes are happening (e.g. children are entering adolescence, leaving home, getting married, or a couple is nearing middle age, or one's parents are aging and in need of special care, etc.). Conflict often results because family members may have difficulty adjusting their prior problem solving approaches to fit the needs of the present reality. No doubt, change can be hard, but it's inevitable. So, it's good to take an aerial view of where in the narrative the family is at, and decide what new steps that still fit into the family narrative will transition the family constructively to the next chapter.