



# FAITH

IN OUR FUTURE

## MAKING CHRIST AN INTEGRAL PART OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: THE NAZARETH PROJECT

The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph at Nazareth inspires our newest effort to strengthen the vocation to marriage and family life. The Nazareth Project, a ministry of the recently-opened John Paul II Center, gathers various archdiocesan programs into one area, intensifying our focus on supporting adults entering into and living the sacrament of marriage, as well as those whose marriages have ended.

The John Paul II Center is a designated recipient of the \$5 million *Leaders of the Future Endowment Fund* established through the *Faith In Our Future* Campaign. The Center will also receive funds from the \$3.5 million *Living Our Faith Fund*, established to put new initiatives on solid footing.

These resources will help support the Nazareth Project's programs, which fall into three areas of concentration: marriage preparation, marriage and family ministry, and ministry to those who are separated or divorced.

### **BUILDING ON SACRAMENTAL STRENGTH: MARRIAGE PREPARATION**

Ministry to the engaged touches thousands of people throughout the archdiocese every year. The Nazareth Project expects to serve nearly 2,000 engaged couples a year, including 250 to 300 Hispanic couples.

As part of their preparation for marriage, engaged couples attend a day or weekend retreat. The Nazareth Project organizes archdiocesan-wide retreats, including recruiting and training married couples to share their time, experience and stories.

Engaged couples also participate in FOCCUS (Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding & Study), a user-friendly inventory with individualized feedback to help couples learn more about themselves and their relationship. The Nazareth Project provides FOCCUS materials and training for married couples to serve as facilitators. As this program's resources move online, the Nazareth Project will need additional funding to support technology updates in parishes already facing financial challenges.

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*More on reverse side.*

*Jesus Christ: the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.*

Starting in July 2008, the Nazareth Project will offer marriage preparation for Hispanic couples. The initial program will be located in central Milwaukee. Funding from the *Faith In Our Future* Campaign helps the archdiocese reach out to even more engaged couples, guiding them in discovering the full meaning and power of the sacrament of marriage.

### **SUPPORTING THE DOMESTIC CHURCH: MARRIAGE AND FAMILY MINISTRY**

Vatican II called family “the church of the home.” The Nazareth Project aims to increase programming for married couples at every phase, picking up where the engaged couples ministry leaves off and encouraging lifelong spiritual formation.

This area of ministry offers the greatest opportunities for growth. Current programs include the annual Jubilee Celebration for couples married 25, 50, or 60+ years, which this year drew more than 100 couples. The Nazareth Project also promotes education in Natural Family Planning and could use funds to train more NFP teachers.

The archdiocese has co-sponsored efforts with groups such as Worldwide Marriage Encounter, and worked with other dioceses on programs such as Retrouvaille, for couples experiencing challenges in their marriage. With additional funding, the Nazareth Project could significantly increase opportunities to strengthen families.

One step is to recognize successful parish programs and offer them as models to other parishes. The Nazareth Project also seeks to launch a biennial Family Life conference, gathering a wide array of resources on marriage and parenting. Such a conference could further individual parish efforts, as

well as archdiocesan support. There are unlimited needs. Courses on help in parenting, strengthening marriages, offering help to troubled ones, are all part of the Nazareth Project.

### **REACHING OUT TO HEAL: MINISTRY FOR THE SEPARATED AND DIVORCED**

Parishes throughout southeastern Wisconsin offer support groups for people experiencing the pain of separation or divorce. The archdiocese offers two annual retreats in cooperation with New Horizons Ministries.

The Nazareth Project seeks to increase opportunities for healing. Starting in 2008, it also plans to offer conferences on validation for couples married outside the Church, helping them overcome impediments to celebrating the sacrament.

### **IMPROVING ACCESS: STAFFING AND FACILITIES**

Perhaps the most pressing need facing the Nazareth Project is lack of personnel. The programs and initiatives described above are guided by one staff member with the help of a part-time aide. Adding to staff will increase the Project’s visibility and effectiveness.

The focus of the Nazareth Project is on strengthening individual marriages, couple-by-couple, family-by-family. Making Christ an integral part of every relationship creates results reaching far beyond individuals. Support for these efforts helps build a strong base for the future of our Church and our society as a whole.

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