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Clergy, laypersons trained in marriage preparation program.



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<p>Father Rob Ruhnke, C.Ss.R, noted author and marriage preparation expert, presents his "For Better & Forever" curriculum to diocesan priests and deacons assembled in Hattiesburg.</p>	<p>Father Rob Ruhnke, C.Ss.R., author of "For Better & Forever" marriage preparation manual, discusses program materials with religious educators from parishes throughout the Biloxi Diocese.</p>
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<p>BY SANDY KINNAN</p> <p>HATTIESBURG MS - The weekend of January 21-23, 2011, at St. Thomas Aquinas Parish was the scene of a diocesan-wide event to train pastors, deacons and lay members regarding the marriage preparation program, "For Better & Forever".</p> <p>The weekend was sponsored by Sacred Heart Parish in Hattiesburg, and featured noted author and marriage expert, Redemptorist Father "Rob" Ruhnke from San Antonio, Texas.</p> <p>Father Ruhnke met with several pastors and deacons on Friday morning to acquaint them with the "For Better & Forever" curriculum. An excellent discussion ensued among the participants.</p>	<p>Father George Murphy from St. Joseph Parish in Gulfport also shared valuable insights with the group.</p> <p>Later that day, Father Ruhnke met youth leaders from parishes across the diocese and covered a wide range of topics of particular interest, such as dating and how to build circles of friends that share similar values.</p> <p>On Saturday, Father Ruhnke and Sandy Kinnan, one of the coordinators for the event, welcomed 26 couples from throughout the diocese to a full day of marriage preparation training.</p> <p>Sister Therese O'Connor from St. Joseph Parish, Gulfport, helped set the stage for the day by giving a historical overview to the</p>	<p>participants concerning how the original training of engaged couples was established in the diocese.</p> <p>Father Ruhnke then elaborated on the "For Better & Forever" materials and covered topics including spirituality, finances, communication, sexuality, families of origin, and the bishops' 2010 publication: "Marriage: Love & Life in the Divine Plan". The assembled couples enjoyed interacting with each other and discussing their previous experiences with marriage preparation in their respective parishes.</p> <p>On Sunday afternoon, Father Ruhnke met with religious educators from several parishes, leading a discussion on numerous topics related to Catholic education of youth. There</p>	<p>was a valuable exchange of ideas and the group departed with added enthusiasm and ideas to strengthen their valuable roles as educators.</p> <p>Many participants from the weekend sessions expressed their appreciation for the quality of Father Ruhnke's presentations and the text that he had published, "For Better & Forever" (in English, Spanish and Vietnamese). The program achieved its objectives: update and strengthen the marriage preparation activities within the Biloxi Diocese, introduce materials across cultures, and help to build life-long marriages.</p>
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