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Marriage Ministry Committee  
Archdiocese of Agana  
Guam USA

March 22, 2019

Dear Rich and Chris, Lisa & Steven, Glenn & Elisa, Eugene & Maridel, Richard & Gina, Michael & Terry, Ray & Fina, Joe & Lynn, Pauline & Robert,

I am sending this story to everyone on my Newsletter list. But I had to thank you in a special way for your love and support for me personally and the essential ministry of Marriage and Family Life. **It is people like you who assure me that all will be well in Guam with couples helping other couples to live the vocation of Matrimony.**

**More than a year ago, Rich and Chris Rosario called me from Guam USA to tell me they had been appointed to lead the Marriage Ministry Committee of the archdiocese and asking if I would be willing to come back to Guam to help them with the project of restructuring ministry to Marriage and Family Life.**

Chris & Rich and their committee and I spent months planning a whole week of events that took place February 6 through 10, 2019. The first day, I had a wonderful meeting with Archbishop Michael, Fr. Jeff, and Fr. Carlos. It was my first time to meet Archbishop Michael and all four of us want to be sure we were all on the same page about what we were hoping to accomplish during a week of meetings.



Archbishop Michael Byrnes & me



Fr. Jeff San Nicolas: Vicar General/Moderator of Curia



Fr. Carlos Vila JCL – Judicial Vicar

The next day I meet with priests and deacons to share ideas about marriage preparation and how to make use of the married couples in their parishes in this key ministry. Archbishop Michael, Jeff and Carlos also took part in the meeting to help with clarification of archdiocesan policies and help with questions that surfaced.

We also talked about the importance of **gathering data from couples preparing for marriage, from parishes, from sponsor couples, and from petitioners for annulments (about their experience of marriage preparation)**. We are developing on-line questionnaires for the archdiocesan website. The data gathered will help us understand what is happening with engaged couples, what parishes are providing for marriage preparation & marriage enrichment, feedback from sponsor couples, and what might be done to help couples avoid the trauma of divorce and the process of petitioning for an annulment. As far as I know, the Archdiocese of Agaña will be the first diocese in the world to make use of real data to determine what is happening in pastoral ministry and use that information to affirm what is working well and clarify what needs to be improved.

**We created Handouts for all the meetings during the week which included Resources for clergy and laity, the Journey through Lent for couples to use, and ~ in case anyone did not already have a copy ~ Tom Neal's presentation: *Marriage and family life: Ground Zero for the present and future of our Church*. Every meeting began with a prayer and then we spent some time asking people to share what they thought was important in Tom Neal's presentation. My plan was to make Tom Neal's presentation a "foundation" for restructuring marriage and family life ministry in the Archdiocese of Agaña.**

The next day, we had a meeting for the **Sponsor Couples who will serve as Trainers** for future Sponsor Couple Training session as they are needed.

The next day we had a meeting for **Experienced Sponsor Couples**. This was a delightful gathering that included some couples we took part in the first Training I directed in Guam in 1977.



The meeting for Experienced Sponsor Couples. Some were from original training in 1977.

The following day, we also had a meeting for **Every Body who wanted to talk about Marriage and Family Life**. Their assignment ~ after they registered for the meeting ~ was to reflect on Dr. Tom Neal's presentation: *Marriage and family life: Ground Zero for the present and future of our Church*. We sent this as an email attachment to each person who registered.



On Saturday we had a **Training for new Sponsor Couples**. There were 18 new couples and a number of experienced couples who helped with the training. I think I have never had so much help during a training session. As usual the experienced sponsor couples are wonderfully effective in sharing the reality of Matrimony and motivating the new couples to believe they CAN DO this ministry.



Training Day for new sponsor couples.



Mike Duenas/Terry Untalan



Ray & Fina Fernandez



Sheila and Jason Lujan



Brenda and Daniel Marciel



Ana Alicia & Christopher Cruz



Al and Corina Rivera





Sunday: Archbishop Michael celebrated Eucharist & blessed the 18 new Sponsor Couples.



The Marriage Ministry Committee: Lisa & Steven (not in photo) Stettenbenz, Glenn&Eliza Paulino, Fr.Rob, Rich&Chris Rosario, Eugene & Maridel Santos

**Here is part of the letter I received last week from Archbishop Michael:**

*.... "The Archdiocese of Agana is very appreciative of your expertise and the time you gave to conduct Christian marriage preparation training on Guam during your visit last month. Your work in Christian marriage preparation and family life is commendable.*

*The workshop geared for clergy was enlightening. The workshop was interactive whereby clergy made comments, asked questions which were answered; and, sponsor couples presented testimonials about their experiences with engaged couples. I understand the workshops for the current and newly commissioned sponsor couples, as well as the marriage enrichment segment of the training were just as inspiring. As a result of your training, an additional 18 new sponsor couples were commissioned to guide engaged couples with their Christian marriage preparation and family life.*

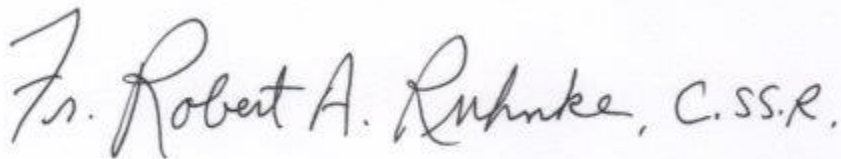
*You returned to Guam and we are very thankful for helping us strengthen our Christian marriage program. God bless for all the work you do."*

*Sincerely,*



**Most Rev. Michael J. Byrnes, S.T.D.  
Coadjutor Archbishop of Agana**

**Peace and Love,**



**Rob Ruhnke**