

# LORRIE & DON GRAMER

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*“The Life and Future of the Church is built in the  
Hearts and Homes of its Families.”*

Lorrie & Don Gramer

## SUMMARY

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### **NATIONALLY**

- Have worked closely with the US Bishops Secretariat for Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth on the development of a pastoral strategy for Marriage-Building Parishes designed to implement the US Bishop’s National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage. Had significant success utilizing and advancing these ideas while Directors of the Office of Family Life in the Diocese of Rockford.
- Created a “model” utilizing 8 Building Blocks of a Marriage & Family Building Diocese/Parish that involves the intense evangelization of lay couples and singles, giving support to our clergy, and the raising up and training of marriage and family champions, (or “missionaries” as Archbishop Kurtz calls us), to carry-out the work of MarriageBuilding Parishes and a MarriageBuilding Church.
- Lorrie was President-elect and then President of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers from 2009-2011 with the charge of implementing the National Pastoral Initiative through 4 innovative and effective National Conferences on becoming a Marriage-Building Church. Don was Region VII Representative on the Board and developed a new Marriage-Building Resource Guide sent to every Parish in the U.S. every year from 2010-2013.
- Have a desire to begin a MarriageBuilding Crusade/Crusado inviting the best Marriage and Family Evangelists and Musicians in the Country to begin evangelizing couples and families in large venues across the USA;

### **DIOCESAN/PARISH**

30+ Years’ experience as Diocesan Family Life Directors, Diocese of Rockford, IL accomplishing the following:

- Prepared over 25,000 couples for Sacramental Marriage;
- Recruited, trained and workshopped leaders in the ministry to the engaged including “Fully Engaged” and “FOCCUS” marriage inventory tools, Engaged Encounter and “Faithful and Forever” (program we created);

- Created, developed and implemented “*Pathways to the Sacraments*,” as a way to invite irregularly married couples to marriage convalidation including preparation for the Sacrament;
- Developed “*Mary’s Mantle Ministries for Brides & Grooms*,” as a way to be more intentional in support of brides and grooms in the parish through prayer, Parish awareness and a *Spiritual Toolkit* for use in their new home;
- Oversaw the development of Remarriage program “The Two Shall Become One”;
- Currently working on a manual titled “How the Parish Can More Intentionally Prepare Couples for Sacramental Marriages” to make the time of preparation more evangelistic, better integrated into the life of the parish and with ways to follow-through the first year with “HOMESPUN HOLINESS” ideas and materials to begin spiritual traditions in the home;
- Strengthened the already married by leading *Living in Love Retreats* and Days of Recollection, teaching Communication Skills programs like *Mastering the Mysteries of Sacramental Love*, PAIRS, and *World Class Relationships*, and making numerous other Marriage Programs available by training and promotion;
- Developed **Marriage-Building Sundays** with a *Blessing & Prayers* for both married couples and the widowed who are celebrating the anniversary month of their wedding, to introduce and bless the Engaged and introduce and bless the Newly Married; Anniversary Cards; Posters and Banners to lift up marriage; etc.
- Created and ran **Marriage and Family Specialization** for Diocesan Program of Ministry Formation;
- Working with other program developers from outside the Catholic Church like Focus on the Family, FAMILYLIFE, and Les & Leslie Parrot to make their programs suitable for Catholic audiences;
- Worked with couples in crisis and now through the development of a **Parish MarriageCare Ministry** and a new *MarriageCare Novena*;
- Work with: Rose Sweet to train leaders to work with the Divorced and the first to train parishes in the Catholic’s Divorced Survival Guide; with Suzy Yehl and RAINBOWS for children of Divorce; and by coordinating and being part of the team for **REBUILD**, a 2-day experience to help Catholics rebuild their life after divorce;
- Offered the Joyful Again! Retreats for widows and widowers and a number of other efforts to develop a parish ministry to provide support for the widowed;
- Created, hosted and presented: *Mother & Daughter Teas* for 9-12 year olds and their Mothers on issues of growing up; **ROCK SOLID** retreat for 10-14 year old boys and their fathers and “*Growing in Grace*” an overnight for 13-16 year old girls and their mothers on issues of growing up and relationships; Trained others to do the same;

- Created and hosted over 25 **Christian Mothers Retreats**, an annual event in January to support Catholic moms with over 3500 attending since its inception;
- Formed parish youth through talks on Marriage and Relationships, Rallies, Conferences and skills programs like PAIRS for Teens;
- Developed process and materials to *Consecrate* over 25,000 homes to date to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary as a means of evangelization;
- Hosted Conferences for college-age young adults and am working with others to create a program on “**RELATIONSHIPS and VOCATION for Catholic Singles**” that will offer skills and the witness of married couples, religious and clergy;
- Have coached Clergy (Priests and Deacons) through Clergy Conferences, Assembly Days, Deanery Meetings, and other means to bring about a fundamental transformation in the way the parish ministers to marriages and families;
- Established over 80 Parish **MarriageBuilding Teams** in the Rockford Diocese to lead this transformation as a MarriageBuilding Parish along with forming the non-profit MarriageBuilding/ConstruyendoMatrimonios USA as a way to engage other diocese in this effort;
- Expanding a Parish MarriageBuilding Guide previously developed for use by individual parishes;
- Continuing to create and develop innovative materials and resources addressing the vast needs of marriages and families.
- Hope to establish, or assist in the establishment of, a Pastoral Academy (both English and Spanish-speaking) that addresses the essentials of a vibrant ministry to Catholic Marriages, Families, Youth and Single Adults that develops leaders and learners transformed by the Gospel; utilizing a Core Curriculum, Retreat Day(s), and Integrated Specializations -- all with the goal of transforming the domestic and parish church in light of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s desire for a holy house...in our hearts and in our homes!

## EXPERIENCE

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2013-  
Present

*MarriageBuilding/ConstruyendoMatrimonios USA, Inc.*

- Founders and President
- Non-Profit to create MarriageBuilding Parishes as part of the implementation of the National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

- Conference Speakers, Clergy Day Leaders, REBUILD Coordinator and Speakers, Resource Developers
- 1983-2013 *Diocese of Rockford, IL*
- Co-Directors, Office of Family Life: Coordinate Marriage Preparation, Remarriage, Marriage Enrichment, Divorced & Widowed, Parish Marriage Ministry Teams, etc.
  - Associate Director, Diocesan Pastoral Services (2005-2013) (Lorrie)
  - Co-Directors, Diocesan Retreat Center (1990-2012)
  - Co-Directors, Youth & Young Adult Ministry (1995-2006)
  - DCCW Family Affairs Chair (1985-2014) (Lorrie)
- 2004-2013 *National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers (NACFLM)*
- *President, President-elect, Region VII Representative on the Board*
- 2013-2014 *Ascension Press*
- Consultant for review and recommendations of marriage & family programs.
- 2012-2014 *Healthy Relationships California, largest recipient of Federal Grant for Marriage Education (Lorrie)*
- Consultant
  - Founded, Marriage-Building CA to serve the 12 dioceses of California with Marriage Skills Programs
- 2011-2013 *National Catholic Young Adult Ministry (NCYAMA) (Lorrie)*
- Advisor and Board Member representing Marriage and Family Ministry
- 2007-2009 *Pastoral Initiative Task Force for USCCB and NACFLM*
- Chair (Lorrie), brought together national leaders, apostolates and ministries to develop strategic plan of implementation for National Pastoral Initiative for Marriage
- 1982-1983 *Holy Spirit Catholic Parish, Fargo, ND*
- Parish Co-Coordinator for Youth and Family Ministry
- 1982-1983 *Resurrection Catholic Parish, Eveleth, MN*
- Parish Co-Coordinator for Youth and Family Ministry
- 1969-1977 *Chief Warrant Officer II Donald A. Gramer, U.S. Army*
- Helicopter Pilot, *Viet Nam*, Operations Officer, *Ft. Hood, TX*, Property Officer, *Ft. Polk, LA*

1974-1982 *Worldwide Marriage Encounter, San Antonio, TX*

- Volunteer Coordinators for Ft. Hood, TX, Ft. Polk, LA, and Diocese of Duluth, MN

## EDUCATION

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### DEGREES

- 2015 Masters in Leadership for Family Ministry  
*Dominican University, River Forest, IL (Lorrie)*
- 2001 Bachelors of Science, *Western Illinois University, Macomb, IL (Lorrie)*
- 1985 Masters in Adult Christian Community Development with emphasis in Family Ministry, *Regis University, Denver, CO (Don)*
- 1980 Bachelors in Religious Studies with emphasis in Youth Ministry, *College of St. Scholastica, Duluth, MN (Don)*
- 1976 Associates Degree in Business Management, *Central Texas College, Killeen, TX (Don)*

### CERTIFICATIONS

- 2015-2016 Working with Military and their Families (*complete. 2016*), *Dominican University, River Forest, IL*
- 2014 Theology of the Body, The Writings of St. John Paul II on Gender, Marriage & Family, *Theology of the Body Institute, PA*
- 2014-2013 Theology of the Body I, A Head and Heart Immersion *Theology of the Body Institute, PA*
- 2012-2013 *PAIRS, PAIRS for Teens and PREP Skills Programs, Facilitator Training World Class Relationships, Trainer and Train the Trainers, Sacramento, CA (Lorrie)*
- Mastering the Mysteries of Sacramental Love Skills Program, Rockford, IL*
- Fully Engaged Facilitator Training and Train the Trainers, St. Cloud, MN*
- 2009 Pastoral Theology Classes, *Ave Maria University (Lorrie)*

- 1998 Parish Ministry to Families, *Creighton University, Omaha, NE*
- 1994 FOCCUS Facilitator Training and Train the Trainers, *Archdiocese of Omaha, NE*
- 1985 RAINBOWS for All God's Children (Children of Divorce or Death) Facilitator Training, *Chicago*

## **SPECIAL ACTIVITIES PARTICIPATION**

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- 1994 1<sup>ST</sup> World Meeting of Families, *Rome, Italy*
- 1997 2<sup>nd</sup> World Meeting of Families, *Rio de Janiero, Brazil*
- 2015 7<sup>th</sup> World Meeting of Families, *Philadelphia, PA*
- 1979 US National Gathering sponsored by National Conference of Catholic Bishops kicking off the Decade of the Family, *Kansas City, MO*
- 1983-2014 National Conferences of the National Association of Catholic Family Life Ministers
- 2011-2012 National Conferences on Lay Ecclesial Ministry, *St. John's University, MN.*
- 2013-2015 Annual J.S. Paluch Vocation Seminar for National Leaders, *Chicago, IL*
- 2009 Observer of the USCCB November Meeting which approved the **MARRIAGE: Love & Life in the Divine Plan**, US Bishops Pastoral Letter on Marriage ( Was on Review committee)
- 2014, 2015 Participated in Catholic Leadership Conferences

## **EPISCOPAL SUPPORT FOR OUR WORK AND FOR MARRIAGEBUILDING USA**

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### **LIASON**

- 2013-Present Bishop George Rassas, Auxiliary Bishop, *Chicago, IL*

### **ADVISOR**

- 2013-Present Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, President, USCCB, Archdiocese of Louisville

