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Think about the marriage as you plan the wedding

By ARLENE VANDERLEUN

Both the bride and groom are resplendent in their wedding attire. Both beam proudly as they meet together in ceremony before their guests.

Flowers and candle wax flavor the air. Piles of gifts await the happy couple. A bountiful buffet supper will follow.

Everything is perfect. But this couple may be in for a rude shock when they settle down to life together.

Will they fight over where to spend their vacations — or their money? How will household chores be divided? These problems may be unexpected, unless a couple has spent some of their courtship time talking or receiving counseling about such matters.

"I think so many become so immersed in the frills (of planning a wedding) that the essentials are passed by," says Myron Hornyak, a clinical social worker with Associated Counseling Services in Plymouth. "It's critical that people look at their value systems. Counseling is a worthwhile investment."

COUNSELING OPTIONS range from discussions with a pastor to in-depth goal-setting

sessions and weekend encounter excursions.

For example, the Rev. Dean Beckwith, pastor of Good Hope Lutheran Church in Garden City, has married scores of couples in his 15 years as a clergyman.

In those years, Rev. Beckwith has developed a questionnaire which he requires couples to fill out and discuss.

The questionnaire — printed on pink paper for the bride and blue for the groom — is designed to "find areas where they disagree so they're not surprised afterward." The questionnaires discuss sexuality, in-laws, money management, and attitudes about children.

"I don't think it's aimed to get people to agree on everything," he adds. "Many people appreciate it, but the vast majority aren't excited about it."

HORNYAK AND THE REV. Beckwith agree that age isn't necessarily an indication of maturity and realistic expectations of marriage.

"I refuse to make any prediction in my own mind," says the Rev. Beckwith. "I have had two couples who filled out the questionnaire and afterward they called and decided not to get married."

Mary Jane Ayotte of Westland has had similar experiences.

Mrs. Ayotte and her husband, Louis, for the past five years have helped coordinate pre-marriage classes at St. Theodore Catholic Church in Westland.

Married 10 years, the couple are deeply committed to marriage as an exciting lifestyle.

Mrs. Ayotte says her first choice for an engaged couple would be to go away for a weekend session of intense counseling, goal-setting and communication. The weekend encounter sessions are offered through the Archdiocese of Detroit.

But the one-day workshops at St. Theodore and other churches are a good second choice, she adds.

DURING THE SESSIONS, married couples discuss major areas where disagreement can occur. Then the couples are separated to fill out questionnaires.

They then are reunited to discuss their feelings and answers.

"We believe marriage is a permanent relationship and we have to stick with it," says Mrs. Ayotte. "People think divorce is quite simple (and) easier than making the marriage work."

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