

Getting ready for marriage

By KAREN SUE HERMES

Marriage in the 1980s will be challenging. Inflation and increasing unemployment will put added pressures on couples as they try to meet household expenses.

Yet, this decade's brides and bridegrooms will be better prepared than those of previous decades for that and other challenges of marriage, say people involved in pre-marriage counseling.

They'll also be more willing to work at improving their marriages, as they return to basic values such as intimacy and security, they add.

Today's couples are preparing for marriage, just as they prepare for their weddings. Along with hiring bands and securing halls, they're enrolling in marriage preparation seminars.

The Roman Catholic Church now requires engaged couples to take pre-marriage instruction before allowing the pair to be married in church.

"Marriage preparation is getting like every other wedding plan," says Mike Bellaire of Engaged Encounter, modeled after Marriage Encounter.

"Except it's based on the 60 or so years after the wedding."

Engaged Encounter, which will hold Christian-based marriage preparation seminars during 17 weekends this year, already is booked to July 11-12.

THE NON-DENOMINATIONAL organization holds seminars in four suburban Detroit locations, including St. John's Seminary in Plymouth and St. Basil's Center in Pontiac. It generally accommodates 30 couples a weekend.

Today's brides and bridegrooms are already settled in careers, making them better prepared for marriage and the financial obligations that come with running a household, said Mary Bennett. Ms. Bennett leads marriage preparation seminars for Convergence, a Catholic Archdiocese of Detroit program.

"A lot more of them are waiting until they get their individual selves settled," said the 23-year-old computer operator.

Both Engaged Encounter and Convergence, which holds weekend marriage preparation seminars four times a year at Mercy Center in Farmington Hills, stress communication.

"The basic goal is communication," Bellaire says. "It's what we stress from

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