

1st in a newly designed Seminar Series on  
"Marriage and Family: Resource for Peace in the World"  
*Understanding Ourselves and our "Better Selves" Together*

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WFWP Lausanne with WFWPI joined together to create a new grassroots Tr.M project that could appeal to young couples. During a brainstorming meeting to stimulate local outreach efforts for the Blessing, together with young wives in our Lausanne community, we discovered that young couples have friends in similar intercultural marriages. There are inevitable communication difficulties, not surprising considering the differences in their cultures, upbringing and worldview, and of course, their gender. Our young couples have a strong desire to explain more about their faith, and the value of God centered families to their friends, but hesitate to bring them to direct DP workshops because they aren't necessarily searching for religion. They need a lead-in or preamble. They could see that the most sought after goal among them was to make their marriages work and build happy families. They and often felt alone to cope, especially as their families were in other countries.

We invited one Swiss WFWP member who has been trained in marriage and family counseling for refugees by the Swiss government during her employment in the Department of Integration. The government had wisely realized that an intact family is much easier to integrate than a broken one. Three sessions were prepared for this first meeting, in a style very different than the usual "listening mode" of our DP seminars. We also decided that we would each bring our own husbands with us as experiment, hoping of course that our own relationships would be deepened. We also prepared lunch and babysitting so young couples could be free to participate fully.

Each short presentation gave a few psychotherapeutic principles (interpreted well by our Principled trainers, who are a Blessed couple) and some light anecdotes. This was followed by a longer interaction between the couples, who sat together face to face spread around the room. We were invited to reminisce about upbringing/ lineage and confide in one another about how our traditions, attitudes, expectations and behavior have affected us and influenced our family relationships. We were asked to think self critically what of that we should keep and what should be changed. Each couple had very important experiences. We all felt that it is difficult to create such a time for deep introspection in our busy daily lives.

The trainer told us afterward that she was so moved by our degree of attentive listening to each other, very different than her experience with the refugees. She mentioned that when she took the courses, she had always thought to offer it to our Blessed Couples.

At the close, we stayed together to evaluate the day and plan our future seminars. All felt that they could confidently bring their friends. We discussed how we could bring the DP content better -and lead from this stage to the Blessing itself as efficiently as possible. We would prepare Blessing ceremony dates, maybe twice a year for larger ceremonies at the national level and use each seminar to invite and prepare couples. Our next seminar is planned for one month from now.

Our young couples seemed genuinely encouraged to spread the idea around and continue to help with planning and preparations -and that is a most important result!