

Comments from Team at the Completion of the Virtual Experience

- **Couples voiced** that they were more comfortable in their own home -- more private; we weren't dealing with hard and under padded old conference room chairs
- They thanked us for welcoming them into our own home at the end of the Experience
- Their home is now 'sacred ground' -- not that it wasn't before, but the Virtual Experience has in many ways blessed it (this was a Team comment)

- **Children** -- we lost 2 couples prior to the start of the Experience, primarily because of little ones (6 and younger); Middle school and HS age kids on this Experience were in the home and not an issue and in the case of one couple with HS age kids, they 'escaped' to their motor home parked on the driveway. We all clearly had to be creative to enable the space we needed to make it work.
- It is a value for children to see parents take an entire weekend to focus on their marriage.
- We invited the attendee's children to join us for the closing liturgy -- a really nice touch.

- **Missing** -- Sacrament of Reconciliation and reception of the Eucharist, the hugs at the end of the Experience, and being able to give each Sacrament a prayer candle. There was not as much couple-to-couple interaction. However, one couple mentioned that this was a positive benefit of being in their own home without the expectation of small talk at meals and prior to the start of each presentation.
- With Zoom, you cannot sing and pray together because there is too much lag. We did introduce and play There's A New World Somewhere, but we did not sing it.
- We also chose not to use the slides on Zoom. They are meant to be seen from a distance. We suspect the attendees kept the screen set to "Presenter View" and if using the power point, you can see either the slide or the presenter, but not both. (As Team we set the view to "Galley View" so we could see all of the attendees.)

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- ***Meals*** -- We judged a need to be flexible. Couples with kids may need to take this time to be with them, so they can focus on their relationship when they return to the Experience. The vast majority of attendees left to do quick prep and then returned and we ate our meals together.
- In doing it again, we would probably have more focused sharing during mealtime. It is also possible to divide the Sacraments into break out rooms if the weekend was larger and create separate "meal tables".
- It is important to have some conversation with the Sacraments at mealtime so as to give them an opportunity to share their experience of dialogue as well as to get to know them.
- ***It is absolutely critical that you have a tech-savvy team*** and the priest reasonably tech-savvy. We were blessed with both.
- You have to be ***crystal clear about your instructions to the couples at the end of each presentation*** -- especially if you send both off to write separately. We gave the couples our cell phone numbers at the beginning of the Experience.
- ***Screen Fatigue*** -- We did not have one spouse stay at the screen at the end of each presentation to write except during the Extended dialogue because we were concerned about screen fatigue. You could certainly have a spouse stay at the computer and write as we do on the in person Experience. Their focus should be on their writing.
- ***Security issues are ever evolving with Zoom*** -- We fortunately did not have any. We did let everyone back into the z-room individually and not as a group. Julie did it and while it is a little more work, it is probably worth it. Hackers can always find a way to hack -- no one or no computer program is immune. No hotel or Retreat conference center is immune from hacking.
- It might be simpler for everyone if one spouse stays at the computer and writes, then closes or turns off the video and microphone to the laptop, I-pad, to dialogue. It would be easier to come back rather than finding the link in their email and logging in and needing to be granted admittance repeatedly. Some found it annoying to have to relocate the link and be let back into Zoom. Whichever technique provides the greatest security is probably the best option.

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- In retrospect one could certainly post the Dialogue/Reflection Question(s) along with the return time on a power point slide that is kept up while the one spouse was still at the computer writing.
- We judged the Sacraments were *even more focused* using this format. It was inspiring to see them share with each other during the sharing at the beginning of LOS. With Galley view -- there is nowhere to hide -- the couples are all in the front row. This would be incredibly helpful on a Deeper.
- **Cost** is so much cheaper -- only supplies, postage to mail them (which was expensive, due to last minute time frame of this Experience) and \$500 to NAS (and the \$60/Sacrament Assessment to R9). Included in the mailing were the WB, WEDS Manual, Take Home handouts, Envelope with Extended Dialogue Q (couples might not have a printer and be able to access 2 copies in their home) and an envelope with a self-addressed, stamped envelope to return their Dream Donation and an Invitation to the Renewal.
- Hotels have become so expensive; with rising meal costs and most conference rooms are no longer complimentary. In Region 9, the average cost of an Experience is \$500-\$600.