

New York Clergy Seminar CCL's biggest yet

CCL's annual Clergy Seminar was served up with a new twist last Fall – slimmed down, packed with information, and taken on the road – and received overwhelmingly positive reviews.

Seventy clergy, including a handful of deacons, accepted a joint invitation to the Clergy Seminar from CCL and the Family Life/Respect Life Office of the Archdiocese of New York. While the majority of attendees were from the New York area, there were also attendees from the dioceses of Lansing, Mich.; Galveston/Houston, Texas; Rockville Center, N.Y.; Bridgeport, Conn., and Great Falls-Billings, Mont.

Held Nov. 10-11 at St. Joseph's Seminary in Yonkers, N.Y., the program packed most of the talks into one day, which was a departure from past years when the seminar featured two full days of meetings. The shorter length, combined with a new location with strong support from the local diocese, combined to produce CCL's most highly attended Clergy Seminar ever.

"This was really just a great success," said CCL Executive Director Mike Manhart. "Add the enthusiastic responses of the clergy who attended, and we are really excited about the possibility of bringing our Clergy Seminars to other dioceses."

Attendees reported that they went home with plans to promote NFP more in their parishes, look for couples who could train to become Teaching Couples, have more information on NFP available in their churches, and incorporate NFP more into their marriage preparation programs.

"Having the support of the Archdiocese helped us get a strong turnout," commented Anne Tozzi, a New York CCL Teaching Couple with her husband Erik. "Having

70 attendees, in turn, appeared to create a tremendous solidarity among the clergy, which really reinforced that NFP is not an issue that can be sidelined, but is one of huge importance for their parishes and Catholic marriages."

Although the seminar was shortened, those attending were provided a well-rounded look at NFP and the issues surrounding it. CCL Teaching Couple Rich and Vicki Braun opened the morning with an explanation of NFP as CCL teaches it. Jack Burnham, M.D., compared NFP and the pill and their totally different approaches to women's health. The Tozzis brought their marriage preparation and NFP teaching experience together with proven advice on persuading couples to trust NFP and Church teachings.

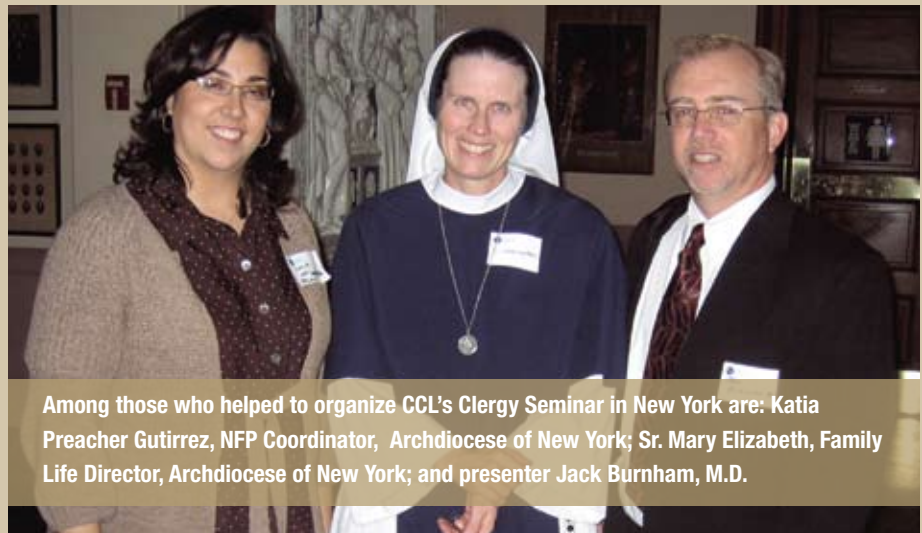
Building on the Tozzis' presentation, Vicki Braun debunked common objections and concerns couples have to practicing NFP. Clergy presenter Father John Higgins addressed how he has worked NFP successfully into marriage preparation, and later in a workshop spoke on how clergy and laity can better partner to bring NFP to more couples. Teaching Couple Andrew and Tracy Pappalardo offered their insight

during Father Higgins' workshop. Other presentations were made by physicians Kyle Beitner and Ann Mielnik on a new pro-life/pro-woman health center in New York, and by Dr. Burnham and Vicki Braun on facing infertility and reproductive technology questions from an NFP perspective.

The event opened with a well-attended dinner, featuring an address by Theresa Notare, Ph.D., assistant director of the Natural Family Planning Program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Washington, D.C.

"The one-day format used for the New York seminar is a way to motivate, inundate and captivate larger groups of clergy who can't spend extended periods of time away from their parish work," said presenter Vicki Braun. "It still allows priests to learn the basics of NFP as taught by CCL, to learn practical ways to respond to their parishioners' resistance to NFP, as well as get an update on hormonal birth control and why it is bad medicine." ■

For information or to explore bringing a CCL Clergy Seminar to your area, contact Rich Braun, rbraun@ccli.org or 1-800-745-8252, ext. 3105.



Among those who helped to organize CCL's Clergy Seminar in New York are: Katia Preacher Gutierrez, NFP Coordinator, Archdiocese of New York; Sr. Mary Elizabeth, Family Life Director, Archdiocese of New York; and presenter Jack Burnham, M.D.