

American married couple appointed consultants for Pontifical Council for the Family



*Frank and Julie LaBoda meeting with
Pope Benedict XVI*

Cross Plains, Wis., Oct 13, 2009 (CNS). - A married couple recently appointed by Pope Benedict to be consultants for the Pontifical Council for the Family says they will bring their experience in a ministry dedicated to helping troubled spouses reconcile to the job.

Frank and Julie LaBoda, from Cross Plains, Wisconsin, are international coordinators for the Retrouvaille program that helps couples experiencing troubled times in their marriage.

CNA spoke about the appointment with Julie LaBoda, who said their nomination was “really humbling.” At the same time, she said, the position will draw on their ministry, which she described as “who we are; it’s what we do.”

For the past 11 years the two have been involved in Retrouvaille, which Julie described as a “peer ministry” for couples who have experienced pain and misery in marriage. Retrouvaille participants share the “gifts of hope and reconciliation” and show how it is possible to have unity again.

The ministry is available in 24 countries around the world.

The LaBodas said they were happy to represent Retrouvaille and especially marriage in the United States.

Julie LaBoda said she did not know exactly what they would be doing for the Pontifical Council on the Family, but reported that she and her husband had met with its president, Cardinal Ennio Antonelli.

She described the Council as the arm of the Church that is invested in what the Church has to say and do about marriage and the family throughout the world.

The Council will be meeting by e-mail and will include the LaBodas if they have any questions for them.

LaBoda said her and her husband's work with Retrouvaille and their own experiences would be "infinitely beneficial" in their consultations with the Council.

"We know firsthand from our own broken marriage and almost divorce that hope is possible and that the Church cares about marriage. God created marriage. It's fabulous that the Church is fighting for us," she told CNA.

"If we can be that voice for the committee, Amen."

Through Retrouvaille, the LaBodas have met "hundreds and hundreds" of couples who thought they had lost all hope but have now reconciled, Julie LaBoda said. She deemed this to be their "strongest message."

She said these couples are counting on the Catholic Church to extend that hope, "because we're not going to get it in the secular world."

"Having been involved in Retrouvaille, it's a lie for anyone to think that all priests don't know anything about marriage," she added.

Priests know "intimately" the struggles of married couples, LaBoda said, comparing such struggles to those found in priests' sacramental call to be married to the Church.

"They have same joy and misery we have."

"I do not take for granted the knowledge and wisdom that knowledge priests and religious have about the sacrament of marriage," she added.

More information on Retrouvaille can be found at <http://Retrouvaille.org>.