**FUNDRAISING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**GINA CLEMENTE**

Hello everyone and welcome to this year’s very special Valentine’s Gala!!! Knowing the wonderful work that this organization, Marriage Encounter Southern California, offers for all of us, I cannot imagine a better place to be as we prepare to celebrate the traditions of love, marriage, and God centered commitment. (**If there are people you would like to thank that organized the event or support the leadership and functioning of the organization, do that here**) I would like to take a moment to express our gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for organizing this gala. Your hard work and coordination efforts go a long way in support of the great work that we do here at MESC. As always, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for guiding us, being our voice of reason, and for pointing out and supporting the development of the humanity and faith that exist within us.... working on nurturing and encouraging fulfilling, God centered marriages is what makes life worthwhile. Nothing lasts without resting on strong foundations, and here at MESC, the encouragement and framework we receive, along with the practical tools we learn, strengthens our hearts, souls, and faith in one another and our selves.

Ecclesiastes 4:9 teaches us, “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: if either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone??? My husband and I joined this organization in 2015, never even considering the value and insights we would constantly experience.... well after our initial weekend. When we graduated with our class in 2015A, we thought, “Oh well, that was interesting,” and figured we got what we got, and we were done. Clearly, that was not the case!! \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I were appointed as heads of the Service Ministry. After much resistance, concern, and consideration, we “succumbed” to our calling. What did we learn from that? If we are observant enough, willing enough, and open enough to follow the signs and walk the path placed before us, miracles **CAN** and **DO** occur. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I realized then, as we continue to realize now, that every opportunity placed before us provides the chance to learn and to grow.... to get to know ourselves more completely and to really get to know, appreciate, and respect our partners more profoundly. We have no idea of the depths of love and connection available to us. It is only through dedication and commitment to doing the work that we experience the realizations necessary to achieve true understanding and oneness.

Through our involvement and participation in MESC, we really have experienced profound, dramatic shifts in our relationship to one another and to God. Every day we learn... at increasingly deeper levels... what it means to trust... to have faith, in God and in our calling.... and to strive for greater understanding of one another and of life. Participation doesn’t look like what we expected... it’s **BEYOND** what we could have imagined... it is only when one... or two... are committed to doing the work needed to fully love and respect, that miracles occur. It’s so important to release ourselves from the limitations of the unknown. Allowing ourselves to be guided by faith and trust allows us the gift of **possibility**.

As the organization has matured and grown, new opportunities abound. While we are deeply grateful to those that came before us... those that carved a path and showed us the way, we know that the future provides greater opportunities and even more sophisticated challenges. It is only when we have partners.... the husbands and wives committed to one another and this organization, that we can truly grow and continue to expand our understanding of marriage and the depths of our faith.

The English poet, Alexander Pope, wrote, “They dream in courtship, but in wedlock wake.” It is through our commitment, here at MESC, that we all experience an **AWAKENING**... of the spirit, the soul, and our commitment to our life partners. It is through the depth of that awakening that we will find ourselves approaching unprecedented closeness to our Lord. It is only when we realize what it takes to put ourselves aside in order to fully serve our marriages that we begin to experience higher purpose.

One of the truly wonderful missions of this organization is that it is available at no expense to anyone willing to experience marriage, faith and commitment at greater depths than they could have ever imagined. It is through the generosity and enthusiasm of our partners, patrons, and donors, that we are able to share this course with **everyone**. It has been, and will continue to be, a tremendous honor and privilege to serve MESC and its sister organization, MEFP. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I are profoundly grateful to the executive officers and ministry leaders who have placed so much faith in us.... and our work, and our path, has been divined by those that have preceded us... those that made sure we were provided for when it was our turn to participate, continue to inspire and motivate us so that those that follow may have the same... and greater opportunities for the enlightenment offered by MESC.

I want to thank all of you for being here, for supporting our cause, and for continuing to express your commitment to God, your spouses, and your **SELVES**. Thank you all!!