**FUNDRAISING SPEECH**

**FOR**

**GINA CLEMENTE**

**REVISED**

Hello everyone!!! Welcome to this year’s very special Valentine’s Gala!!! Knowing the wonderful work that 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. 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. We want to thank our spiritual director, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, who constantly guides us with his wisdom and love. Our ME weekend seminar would not be as meaningful and effective without his guidance and support. As always, we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to him for being our voice of reason. By supporting the development of the humanity and faith that exist within us, by nurturing and encouraging fulfilling, God centered marriages, he truly makes a profound difference. Nothing lasts without resting on strong foundations, and here at MESC, the encouragement we receive, along with the practical tools we learn, strengthens our hearts, souls, and faith, in one another and in 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 considering the value and insights we would continue to 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 placed before us, miracles **CAN** and **DO** occur. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I realized then, as we continue to realize now, that every opportunity provides the chance to learn and grow.... to get to know ourselves more completely and to really get to 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 realizations necessary to achieve true understanding and oneness.

Through our involvement and participation in MESC, we have noticed profound, dramatic shifts in our relationship to one another and to God. Every day we learn... at deeper levels... what it means to trust... 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 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 gives us the gift of **possibility**.

As the organization has matured and grown, new opportunities abound. We are deeply grateful to those that came before us, carved a path, and showed us the way. We know the future provides greater opportunities and even more sophisticated challenges. It is when we have **true** partners.... the husbands and wives committed to one another and this organization, that we can 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 commitment, here at MESC, that we 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. 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 wonderful missions of this organization is that it is available at no expense to anyone willing to experience marriage, faith and commitment more deeply than before. 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. I would like to acknowledge MEFP’s members and leadership couple, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for all of the collaborative efforts put forth to see to it that our organizations thrive and make a difference for all.

I want to acknowledge our three daughters, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for the wonderful encouragement and support \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I received from them. They are our true inspiration.

 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I are profoundly grateful to the executive officers and ministry leaders who have placed so much faith in us.... and our work. Our path has been divined by those that have preceded us... they made sure we were provided for when it was our turn to participate. They continue to inspire and motivate us so that those who follow may have even greater opportunities for enlightenment offered by MESC.

Of course, to my husband, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, you inspire me every day, in every way. Thank you for that. I love you. 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!!