Discussing marriage, Vince Lombardi-style

By Chaplain Cory Thornton

When he accepted the position as head coach of the Green Bay Packers, Vince Lombardi took on a team with a 1-10-1 loosing season and turned them into a football dynasty, winning three consecutive NFL championships, to include the first two Super Bowls.

There is a famous story about Lombardi in his first season at Green Bay. During a practice he grew so frustrated at the players' performance that he sat them down.

"Let's start at the beginning." he told them. "This is a football. These are the yard markers. I'm the coach. You are the players."

As this speech progressed, he caused the players to focus on the foundations of football, the basics. I am reminded of this story often when approaching subjects that seem difficult or complex and have found it helpful to return to the basic foundations on which these subjects rest.

This is true for marriage. As our society's cultural milieu becomes increasingly diverse, the understanding of the institution of marriage for many is evolving.

The two most prominent topics on marriage seem to be same-sex marriage and our society's high divorce rate.

While these are topics worthy of our consideration, I would like to approach marriage from a different vantage point.

Just as Coach Lombardi brought his Packers back to the basics of football, I would ask us to consider our basic understanding of marriage.

I have found that a good way to do this is to ask the question, "What is marriage to you?"

Another way to state the same question is, "How would you define marriage?"

I have posed this question to countless couples in pre-marriage counseling and have received a surprisingly wide variety of answers. The majority of the time each member of the couple will produce a different answer, revealing that what they thought it meant to become married was not the same as what their fiancé had in mind.

It's interesting to consider how people could enter into such a binding commitment with one another without first arriving at an agreement on what that commitment is.

They believe they are discussing the same thing because they both use the term "marriage" but are actually disagreeing over different concepts of the same term; like comparing apples to oranges.

The way in which we define marriage reveals how we are likely to approach marriage for ourselves and/or how we will conceptualize marriage as a society.

Western society has traditionally defined marriage as a couple who come together in the eyes of God to make a lifelong commitment to one another.

This commitment includes living together and forsaking all others.

It also means to love, comfort, honor, and keep the other, in sickness and in health.

Once the couple have declared this commitment in the marriage ceremony, the clergyperson asks God's blessing on them, that they might become one. The union of the two becoming one is seen as a spiritual union (some might describe the union as ontological).

The married couple have entered into a covenant with God and one another.

Should they fail to meet the commitments of this covenant, they not only fail their spouse, but they also fail their commitment to God.

This approach to marriage as a covenant comes from our collective Judeo-Christian heritage but is also held in a similar fashion by many of the world's religions and cultures.

From this perspective, a concern for our high divorce rate is reasonable. It helps to explain why for so many divorce is not isolated to legal and domestic issues, but cuts to the very deepest part of their being.

I have met many who were relieved to be divorced but were also hurting because of it.

Regardless of how you define marriage for yourself, I think it is safe to say that everyone who sincerely enters into marriage does so with the hopes of being happy.

We see marriage as the means to a long-term life of companionship. It is a beautiful thing when this hope is fulfilled in a loving and caring marriage. Conversely, I feel a grave sense of disappointment for those couples whose hopes of a loving and caring marriage have been dashed.

At times there are difficulties that life has brought their way, difficulties that would challenge us all. In other instances, the marriage struggles due to a lack of shared vision and understanding of the bases for marriage.

Just as Coach Lombardi turned around the Packers by beginning with the basics, I believe that exploring the foundations of marriage can begin to help couples develop a healthier and more resilient relationship.

It is with the desire to help all of our marriages thrive that we at the CFAY Religious Ministry Team offer marriage enrichment seminars.

Generally they are held on the second Thursday of the month from 8:30 a.m.- 4 p.m. at the Chapel of Hope.

We encourage all who wish to increase their knowledge and develop their understanding of marriage to attend. We all have a lot to learn about marriage. Come and learn with us.

CNIC helps Feds Feed Families

The Feds Feed Families Food Drive Campaign encourages federal employees to bring nonperishable food items to their offices for distribution to local food banks. The campaign will run June 1 through Aug. 30, with boxes being picked up June 29, July 27 and Aug. 31.

By MC1(SW/AW) Monique K. Hilley, CNIC Public Affairs

WASHINGTON (NNS) - Commander, Navy Installations Command (CNIC), in partnership with the Department of Defense, has joined the nationwide effort known as "Feds Feed Families," June 23.

"We are moving forward as a team doing what we can to help others," said Capt. James Fisher, CNIC Chaplain Corps, director, Strategic Plans and Programming.

The Feds Feed Families Food Drive Campaign encourages federal employees to bring nonperishable food items to their offices for distribution to local food banks.

CNIC Force Chaplain, Capt. Jack Lea, serves as the national chaplain, while the chaplains at the region and installation levels will serve as coordinators with local organizational representatives and lead the call for donations.

"Members of the U.S. Navy have always responded in a time of need or crisis. Chaplains and religious program specialists, by their very profession and calling, are individuals who have great sensitivity for the needs of other people in times of need or crisis," said Fisher.

The federal goal is to collect two million pounds of food, with Department of Defense setting a collection goal of 733,800 pounds of food distributed to local food banks worldwide.

Food banks are most in need of donations during the summer months, when other donations are traditionally lower. Last year, Feds Feed Families raised 1.7 million pounds of food during the summer months, far exceeding its goal of 1.2 million pounds.

In the National Capital Region, food will be donated to the Capital Area Food Bank, which serves more than 700 food pantries, soup kitchens and other service organizations in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland. Chaplains at the region and installation levels will coordinate with food banks in their areas to ensure delivery of all donated nonperishable items.

The campaign will run June 1 through Aug. 30, with boxes being picked up June 29, July 27 and Aug. 31.

"In this era of fiscal austerity, it is no secret that members of our national community have need of our support regarding basic nutritional requirements. Chaplains and religious program specialists, working in conjunction with their command shipmates, are determined to make a difference in meeting the needs of others this summer," said Fisher.

Feds Feed Families is an Office of Personnel Management (OPM) initiative which has requested DoD support during its third annual campaign due to the impact of a series of natural disasters on our nation which have depleted charitable resources in response to significant demand signals. This is the first year DoD is participating in the campaign.

"American families should never have to go hungry," said OPM Director John Berry. "Federal workers are big-hearted people who are eager to help those in their communities who need it most. Together, we hope to collect two million pounds of food nationwide this summer."

This year's theme is "Feeding Families one Fed at a Time."

This initiative is a response to the "United We Serve Act," signed by President Barack Obama in April 2009, calling for all Americans to contribute to the nation's economic recovery by serving their communities.

The Editor Asks:

Did you know, on this day, July 22, in naval history

- In 1802, the frigate Constellation defeated nine Corsair gunboats off Tripoli.
- n 1905, the body of John Paul Jones was moved to Annapolis, MD for reburial.
- In 1953, U.S. ships laid down heavy barrage to support UN troops in Korea
- In 1964, four Navy divers (Lt. Cmdr. Robert Thompson, Gunners Mate First Class Lester Anderson, Chief Quartermaster Robert A. Barth, and Chief Hospital Corpsman Sanders Manning) submerged in Sealab I for 10 days at a depth of 192 feet, 39 miles off Hamilton, Bermuda. They surfaced on July 31. In 1974, evacuees from the coup on Cyprus arrived on board Navy vessels in the Mediterranean. Operation ended on July 24.