



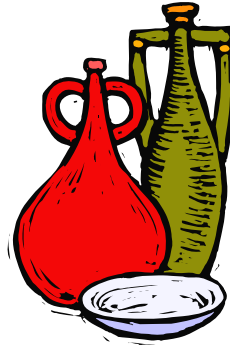
Catholic Diocese of
Cleveland
Catholic Charities
Parish &
Community
Ministries
Department for
Marriage &
Family Ministry



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Earthen Vessels



Newsletter for the Separated & Divorced-- Ministry of Compassion

But we hold this treasure in earthen
vessels, that the surpassing power may
be of God and not from us.

2 Cor. 4:7

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

SPRING 2010

Hope & Healing After Infidelity - Part II

By William H. Boomer, M.A., Director, Department for Marriage & Family Ministry

You can heal from the painful betrayal of infidelity—even if your marriage ended in divorce. We continue from our last issue:

Dr. Mike Pavlak helps individuals accurately name their experience, process their painful emotions and take steps to again be free to live and love.

Fr. Robert Wendelken urges victims of infidelity to let go of “what if” litanies, to firmly believe in God’s unconditional love, and to participate

in the Sacraments of the Church. This will lead to a new self-image, freedom from revengeful desires and actions, more effective parenting and wiser relationship choices.

The articles are addressed primarily to those who have been betrayed—the *victims*. We also invite those who have been unfaithful—the *betrayers*—to read for your benefit as well. Take responsibility for your actions by bringing them to God. Talk to a counselor or priest. Go to confession and admit your

fault. God will forgive you and help you be accountable. You can’t undo the past but you can be more generous and caring in the future to yourself, your former spouse and your children.

For friends and families, offer hope, prayer and encouragement. **We all would do well to remember the Easter hymn “I Know My Redeemer Lives” and live in that hopeful spirit.**

Moving On After a Marital Affair

By Michael F. Pavlak, Ph.D.

In the Fall 2009 issue of *Earthen Vessels* several articles focused on repairing a marriage after an affair occurred. This article looks at how individuals who divorce after an affair can identify and work-through the often painful emotions that remain from the affair and that may accompany the divorce.

Anger, revenge, betrayal, loss of self-esteem, rejection, sadness, and worry are emotions that can occur when an individual discovers that his/her spouse has had an

affair. These same emotions can linger on in a person even after the couple has divorced and can impact that individual’s physical and mental health, their family and social relationships, and even their performance at work.

There are some common issues that individuals face after an affair which are listed below along with some approaches to help work through those issues and accompanying feelings.

You Can’t Fire Me, I Quit

In the workplace there is a great difference between being fired and quitting. When a person quits they are making a decision to leave - it is their choice, they know the time when they will be leaving and can prepare for their departure. They can also plan for the transition to their next job and look forward to their next opportunity. When a person is fired it is often unexpected, it is not a

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Moving On

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choice, and most often there is very little time to prepare for a future job. Certainly, for the person who is fired the future can seem uncertain and there can be a sense that “I did something wrong” or “I failed in my duties.” Similarly, when a spouse leaves a marriage to be with the person they were having an affair with the spouse “left behind” can feel as if they were fired. As with a job the decision to divorce may be unexpected, it may not be a mutual decision, and there may be little time to prepare for the future. Emotionally, the person may feel that he or she has failed, was not “good enough,” or did something wrong to not be able to maintain the marriage.

I Can't Move on Until I'm Told I'm OK

We derive our self-worth or self-esteem from many sources – from our accomplishments, the roles we play in life, and being wanted or needed by others. When an affair is discovered, the offended person often feels invalidated as a spouse and as a person. In turn, there may be an internal need for that person to be validated by the offender; they need to be told that they are OK, that the affair wasn't about them, or that they still are a good and worthwhile person. It is not unusual for the offended person to be angry and to pursue the offender for that validation. In effect, they are saying “I can't feel good about myself and move on until you tell me that I'm OK.”

I've Been Replaced

It can be especially hurtful to the offended person, post-divorce, when the person who had the affair continues to see the “other” person or, in some cases, marries them. The sense of being rejected, replaced, and losing one's status as a married individual can lead to anger, resentment, and, at times, revenge. For some people their anger is like a simmering hot coal that only needs a faint breeze to make it white hot again.

For example, the offended person is thinking less and less about the affair and about their ex-spouse until they see him/her out with the “other” person. At that point they become flooded with anger and resentment and, like the coal their emotions are at a white-hot level and can remain so for many days thereafter. Thoughts of “what has he/she got that I don't have” or “I put so much time and effort into him/her and now someone else gets to reap the benefits of my hard work” or “what was wrong with me, why couldn't I hold on to him/her” are not uncommon and can actually lead to a negative self-worth and reinforce the anger.

I'll Never Date Again or I Need Somebody— Anybody

The pain of rejection and betrayal can lead some individuals in one of two extreme directions – either they are done with the opposite sex and vow never to date or even talk to someone from the opposite sex ever again, or they feel so alone that they believe that the pain can only be made better by being in another relationship, and the sooner the better. In either direction the person may be acting out of desperation – they want to feel better, and quickly, and believe that taking extreme measures is the best way to accomplish that healing.

Here are some suggestions that may help you work through these issues and regain peace of mind and emotion:

1. To help your self-worth and self-esteem, it is important to remember to “not put all of your eggs in one basket.” That is, you cannot define yourself with only one role. You were not only a wife or a husband, but have many other roles (parent, son/daughter, uncle/aunt, grandparent, worker, volunteer, and parishioner) that you may gain worth from.
2. Remind yourself, frequently, that you are a good, worthwhile, wonderful, accomplished, pretty/handsome, caring, person in your own right. If you compare yourself to the “other” person you can make him/her the ideal that you need to live up to, thereby negating your own wonderful qualities. Validate yourself and be generous in your self-validation.
3. I recently drove by a church that featured a weekly message on its marquee. The message simply stated “Hate is a relationship.” For some, the anger and resentment toward their ex-spouse is so intense that it becomes the emotion of hate. The church's message, however, reminds us that when we hate someone we remain in a strong relationship with them, as it takes a great deal of thought and emotional energy to maintain that hateful feeling. If your goal is to disengage yourself from your ex-spouse physically, emotionally and mentally, you will do well to end the hatred that you feel toward them.
4. Individuals who have very strong negative feelings toward others often find that their life is consumed by those thoughts and feelings and it affects their physical and mental health. I sometimes advise them to work on *indifference* toward the other person. That is, they can care about them as they would a stranger in that they would not do them any harm nor would they want any harm to befall them, but they do not have to love or even like the other person, nor do they have to hate or despise him or her.

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Moving On

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5. Rather than being consumed with negative thoughts that can occur randomly throughout the day, consider choosing a “worry time” at some point in the day. For example, tell yourself that you will worry/mull over/obsess about a topic for 15 minutes during a convenient time. If the negative thought occurs outside of that time, remind yourself that you have a designated time when you can intensely worry or obsess and delay that thought until then.

6. Work toward regaining balance in your life. If you believe that you need to have revenge, that you never want to date again, that you need someone in your life *now*, or that you need your ex to affirm and validate you *now*, then there is a good chance that your emotional mind is ruling your logical mind. While it may *feel* like the right thing to do, it is not necessarily the most *logical* thing to do. Having balance in your life means not acting out of desperation or being consumed with negative emotions and thoughts. Talking through your emotions with a counselor can help you regain the balance that you seek.

7. There is a quote attributed to the Rev. Martin Luther King: “The old law of ‘an eye for an eye’ leaves everybody blind.” What I take away from this quote is that revenge hurts all parties and it also “blinds” a person from what can actually make them feel better and help them to heal - and that is **forgiveness**. Many people believe that in order to forgive you must first forget. This is a myth – you may have the memory of the unfaithful act and the negative feelings that accompany it for a long time. That should not stop you from working toward forgiveness.

Here is one definition of forgiveness: forgiveness occurs when a person **releases** a just anger or a sense of revenge; **ceases** desiring to withdraw from or avoid a person who has offended them; and experiences a desire for conciliation if it is possible, prudent, and safe to do so.

Earlier in this article under the heading “I’ve Been Replaced” I noted that anger and resentment can be like a hot coal that burns in a person, and many people do not want to extinguish this hot coal. As noted, these negative emotions can harm a person physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and socially. When a person forgives, this coal can be extinguished and the person can regain their life. Consider then, for your peace of mind and your personal welfare, releasing the anger or negative emotions that you have through prayer, discussion with a friend or counselor, or personal decision as your first step toward forgiveness.

Michael F. Pavlak, Ph.D., is a licensed psychologist and licensed marriage and family therapist specializing in pre-marital, marital, and relationship counseling; separation and post-divorce counseling; and depression and anxiety disorders.

He is a clinical member and approved supervisor for the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy and is in private practice with North Coast Mental Health Associates, 3690 Orange Place, Suite 430, Beachwood, Ohio. Dr. Pavlak can be reached at 216-464-5330 for appointments.

Recommended Reading

Suggested by Michael F. Pavlak

- ◆ Glass, Shirley (2004). *Not “just friends:” Rebuilding trust and recovering your sanity after infidelity*. Free Press.
- ◆ Lusterman, Don-David (1998). *Infidelity: A survival guide*. Oakland, CA; New Harbinger Publications.
- ◆ Spring, Janis Abrahms & Spring, Michael (1997). *After the affair: healing the pain and rebuilding trust when a partner has been unfaithful*. New York: Harper Collins.
- ◆ Spring, Janis Abrahms (2004). *How can I forgive you?: The courage to forgive, the freedom not to*. New York: Harper Collins.
- ◆ Vaughn, Peggy (1998). *The monogamy myth: a personal handbook for recovering from affairs*. New York: Newmarket Press.
- ◆ Worthington, Everett (2001). *Five steps to forgiveness: The art and science of forgiving*. New York: Crown.



Recovering from Infidelity

*Rev. Robert M. Wendelken, Pastor Emeritus,
St. Rita, Solon; Judge, Office of the Tribunal*

Will Tiger Woods and Elin Nordegren stay together? At the time of this writing they are apart, living in separate homes in their gated community in Windermere, Florida. The separation resulted from the well-publicized infidelities of Tiger, with some seven different women. Elin may well divorce him because of the bitterness and pain of his betrayal. How will she recover?

It is essential for everyone, no matter what age, race, or national background, to interact with people who make them feel accepted and appreciated. Feeling wanted is not simply a sugary romantic desire. Feeling wanted affects the quality of our life and our self-esteem. We human beings are biologically programmed to bond with others in order to experience the basic human need for acceptance and recognition. When that bond is broken by the betrayal of divorce, how can one recover their sense of self worth?

I don't want to deal with the myriad reasons for infidelity. Those whose marriage failed because of infidelity do themselves no service by indulging in a litany of "what ifs." What if I had only done this, done that, or the other thing? Recovery of one's self-esteem and one's feeling of recognition and acceptance is essential. How does one do it?

I believe that a victim of infidelity must first firmly believe that God loves her/him unconditionally and totally. We are lovable and we are loved. Mother Teresa once said "The devil may try to use the hurts of life and sometime our own mistakes – to make you feel it is impossible that Jesus really loves you, is really cleaving to you. This is a danger for all of

us; and it is so sad, because it is completely the opposite of what Jesus is really wanting, waiting to tell you. Not only that he loves you, but even more – He longs for you. He misses you when you don't come close. He thirsts for you. He loves you always, even when you don't feel worthy. When not accepted by others, even by yourself sometimes – He is the one who always accepts you." A victim of infidelity must firmly believe God loves her/him totally. This is the first step to recovery.

If one firmly believes that God loves her/him, then she/he is less likely to indulge in efforts to get even with the offending spouse, or to pass on hatred of that person to their children. All who have suffered the pain of divorce, for whatever reason, but especially after the rejection of infidelity, must find a healthy new self-image. We are biologically programmed to bond with others as a means to find appreciation and recognition.

Believing that God loves you and that the Church cares about you can help you on the road to that new self-image. You can hold your head up high and walk with dignity. In this process of recovering your self-image, avoid becoming needy and overly dependent on others. That might lead to poorly choosing a new partner in order to simply have someone with whom to bond. Hobbies, friends, family, and your own interests will help you with personal growth and the development of a new self-image. You may eventually remarry, but with your new self-image, and the assurance that you are a good person, loved by God, you will be able to choose wisely.

Place all of your burdens, your fears

and your doubts before the eternal God. Ask him to calm and quiet you and give you peace of mind. He will give you new strength, new hope, new confidence and healing to go forward in His love.

Efforts to get even, to display anger only serve to delay the healing process. Passing on to the children hatred toward the unfaithful spouse only serves to teach them wrong lessons on how to deal with a parent that they feel loves them.

A victim of infidelity and a subsequent divorce must also understand that he/she is not rejected by the Church. No divorced person is excommunicated or prevented from receiving the Sacraments. The Church reaches out to such victims of rejection. Prayer and the Sacraments will help you restore your own self-esteem. One who is such a victim should continue to participate at Mass and receive the Sacraments. There are also Parish support groups for those who have felt the pain of infidelity.

A petition to the Tribunal asking for a decree of nullity of the former marriage can be very helpful. It is a necessity if one wishes to marry again in the Church. Those who have suffered through the pain of divorce often find deep healing in the annulment process. The process invites introspection, which can be painful, since old wounds are again recalled; but the process allows a petitioner to examine the total relationship that led to the marriage and ultimately to divorce. Such examination brings about understanding of why the marriage failed, and allows a person to avoid a wrong choice of a spouse in the future.

All who have suffered the pain of di-

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Recovering from Infidelity

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DIVORCE SUPPORT MINISTRY AT ST. ALBERT'S

By *Laura Kuhn, M.A.*

For more than ten years, we have been providing peer group recovery sessions, led by trained facilitators, for the newly divorced or currently divorcing individuals. The meetings are publicized in local parish bulletins and on the diocesan calendar. When people call to register they are assessed by the pastoral minister as to whether the group would be beneficial to them. Infrequently, someone who has been divorced for several years will still be helped by at-

tending this group; especially if they are "stuck" in an unhealthy place by anger, fear, guilt or insecurity. These issues are interrelated and they can inhibit spiritual growth and even sicken people.

Primarily, we try, by reaching people at the very beginning of their struggle, to prevent some of the sticking points and encourage recovery and hope. Our common faith has much to say to us about healing when we are well enough to listen.

Divorce recovery at St. Albert's consists in two series of closed session meeting groups each year. Usually one group starts in late fall and may straddle the Christmas season—a very tough time for the divorcing individuals. The other occurs in late spring, following Easter - time of hope for new life.

Holidays present specific and intense anxiety to divorcing couples because their experiences often seem to mock the cultural and religious expectations of family togetherness and joy. At these times, a small group of persons can be a haven and a source of compassionate understanding.

We have been using a book, *DIVORCE AND BEYOND*, by James Greteman and Leon Haverkamp, published originally in 1983 but improved and revised by Elsie P. Radke in 2004. It gives us discussion starters and structure as well as many helpful strategies for "getting through the nights". Each chapter is only a few pages long but well-written and packed with insightful statements. Questions for reflection and discussion that follow the chapters could stimulate conversation for hours.

Our group usually lasts from one and a half to two hours, depending on the number of participants. We try to limit the group to ten members. Sometimes there are only five or six. At best, we meet for ten weeks and ask that participants try us out for two weeks at least before deciding whether to commit to the whole program. Then we close the group. No new individuals may start

after the second week because we are about the business of establishing relationships and sharing stories. The dynamic would be disrupted with inconsistent attendance.

People that commit and follow through with some of the suggestions find help to heal and function. They look forward to our gatherings and feel sad when the time comes to end. They meet peers with whom to commiserate and they realize in themselves the resources to reach out to others. We emphasize confidentiality in our groups. *No one must ever discuss the experiences outside the safety of our meeting space.*

Divorce and Beyond is one method that has worked for us. We always recommend other groups and the Diocesan web site. We encourage prayer and spiritual reading as well as healthy eating and exercise. We offer assistance with annulments when that becomes appropriate. We promise to pray for our participants and ask them to pray for each other as they seek God's will for their lives and families. After all, we realize that these suffering participants are our family and with their healing we all heal.

Laura Kuhn, M.A., is a Certified Pastoral Ministry and Certified Spiritual Director at St. Albert the Great, 6667 Wallings Road, North Royalton, Ohio 44133.

A Divorced Person's Litany: Journey to a New Life

Written by Carol Petro, LSW

O Eternal God, I am reminded that we are an Easter people who should live out the joy of your Resurrection in our lives. My life is in shambles where I seem to be lost in the tomb of darkness where hatred and despair reign. This now leaves me unable to find the light of this joy that I so desire. Lord, you know how hard I have tried, but I am now divorced and so deeply wounded by my spouse's unfaithfulness. Be with me, Lord, with your presence. **Embrace me, heal me and bring me to new life with your everlasting love.**

Lord, the bond of my marriage was broken by this betrayal. I feel stripped of the love that I have known because another had snatched it from me. Now, there is no hope for a future that was to be "until death do we part." Be with me Lord, with your gift of hope. **Embrace me, heal me and bring me to new life with your everlasting love.**

Lord, I face the shattered dreams of what was once my life, shared with someone that I loved. Betrayed and forgotten, left on the path of ruin, now holding the pieces of my life that remain. Be with me, Lord, and place your healing hands on me and soothe me with your balm of peace. **Embrace me, heal me and bring me to new life with your everlasting love.**

Lord, I come before you and place all of my burdens, fears, doubts, my past marriage, the pieces of my life that I must put back together and place them in your loving hands for guidance and direction. Be with me, Lord, with your guidance and strength. **Embrace me, heal me and bring me to new life with your everlasting love.**

Lord, I ask you to be the light in my tomb and reach out to me in the darkness of my life so that I may accompany you on a new journey as you take the pieces of my life one by one and show me how to rebuild it. When I feel depressed, please remind me that you love me just as I am. Be with me, Lord, with your faithful love. **Embrace me, heal me and bring me to new life with your everlasting love.**

Lord, place your hands on my heart to heal it and calm the anxiety in my mind as well as the obsessive thoughts of anger, hatred and all the "what ifs" of my past marriage. Help me with your grace so that I may be an example to teach my children the lessons of your love despite life's hardships. Be with me, Lord, with your grace of forgiveness towards my ex-spouse so that I may find a new life. **Embrace me, heal me and bring me to new life with your everlasting love.**

Closing Prayer: Lord, I ask you to walk this road of healing and recovery with me. Grant me the gift of peace in my brokenness. Help me obtain a newfound strength that will give me a sense of hope and confidence in myself. Remind me, during times of struggle, that you always love me and that you long for me even when I do not feel worthy. Let my eyes see the beauty of your creation that serves as a reminder of the magnificence of this wonderful love that you hold for each of us. So that I may have a new heart full of love and joy, bring me out of the dark tomb of my life and journey with me until I experience the promises of Your Resurrection.

Save me, Lord;

Renew me, Lord

Love me, Lord;

Breathe into me the Spirit of Your Love

Create in me the promise of a new life.

Amen

Catholic Diocese of Cleveland
Catholic Charities Parish &
Community Ministries
**Department for Marriage &
Family Ministry**



William H. Boomer, Director
7911 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, Ohio 44102
Phone 216-334-2971

The Department for Marriage and Family Ministry's mission is to respond to the needs of families through development of pastoral programs that are administered through parishes and community leaders that focus on the teachings of the Catholic Church on marriage and family issues. In regards to the Separated and Divorced Ministry, the office has developed a collaborative ministry throughout the Diocese of Cleveland for parish districts to share resources and outreach to divorced Catholics. This would include educational programs, retreats, support groups, single parenting groups as well as provide referrals to counselors and other community resources. There are also brochures and materials published by the office to help families. For additional information, please contact Carol Petro, LSW, Marriage and Family Specialist for the Separated, Divorced and Remarriage Ministry at 216-334-2975 or e-mail at clpetro@clevelandcatholiccharities.org.

Programs and Resources

www.foryourmarriage.org

This website is an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). Search on "Second Marriages" for helpful information.

Lake/Geauga County

www.divorced-separated.net
Call Karen Jubeck at 440-352-8282

For more workshops and divorce recovery support groups and programs, please visit

www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mfm

Click on **Divorce Recovery**

For **referrals to counselors** in your area, please contact the Department for Marriage and Family Ministry at 216-334-2975 or clpetro@clevelandcatholiccharities.org

Catholic Divorce Ministry—www.nacsd.org

Divorce and Beyond Series

St. Albert the Great
6667 Wallings Road
North Royalton, OH 44133
April 30—June 25, 2010

Call Laura Kuhn at 440-237-6760 to Register

Quickstart Program

QuickStart is a simplified way to begin your petition for a Declaration of Invalidity (aka Annulment). The QuickStart program does not shorten the process of hearing a case, which is defined by Canon Law and remains the same in all cases.

Refer to the Earthen Vessels Fall 2009 newsletter for a more detailed explanation and 2010 Quick Start Dates.

You may also check www.dioceseofcleveland.org/tribunal, or call Lynette Tait at 216-696-6528; or 800-869-6525, ext. 4000.

Remarriage Preparation

Cana II & Active Parenting—a three-part series for couples in which one or both have been married before and /or will have stepchildren under age 18. The 2010 sessions are listed below.

Saturday, April 17, 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. at Holy Angels, 18205 Chillicothe Road, Chagrin Falls, Oh, 44023, with Active Parenting follow-up sessions on May 10 & 17, 6:30—9 p.m. at Holy Angels.

Saturday, September 11, 8:30 a.m.—5 p.m., St. Joseph, 12700 Pearl Road, Strongsville, Oh 44136, with Active Parenting follow-up sessions on Sept. 21 & 28, and October 5, 6:30—9 p.m. at St. Joseph.

Find the registration form at www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mfm/marrprep.htm#CANA II