

SPECIAL  
POINTS OF  
INTEREST:

- Some Catholics Facts on Divorce
- Good Grief and Anger
- Benefits of Mediation

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Newsletter for the  
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

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## Some Facts on Divorce for Catholics:

“The psychological pain of loss of a relationship is great and deep-seated. We as a Church want to reach out and support you in your healing. “Relationships and circumstances within your family may have changed, but God’s love for you is ever present and does not come to an end. Grasp the hands of those who reach out to you in loving concern. Extend your own hand to others whom you meet on the road to healing and reconciliation. There is a home for you within our parishes and community of faith.”

*“Follow the Way of Love,” a Pastoral Message of the U.S. Bishops to Families.*

- ✦ Divorced/Remarried Catholics are not excommunicated. The Church recognizes that the legal process of civil divorce is necessary to determine the civil, legal and financial matters resulting from terminating the marriage.
- ✦ Divorced Catholics may receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- ✦ Divorced Catholics are full members of the Church and are encouraged to participate in the life of the Church.
- ✦ Before a divorced Catholic remarries, a Declaration of Invalidity must be obtained on the previous marriage.
- ✦ If you obtain a Declaration of Invalidity, the children will not be illegitimate.
- ✦ The ex-spouse does not need to participate in the process of the Declaration of Invalidity
- ✦ To help those that are in abusive relationships, the Church law states that if either of the spouses causes "serious danger of spirit or body to the other spouse or the children, or otherwise renders common life too hard," the spouses may separate (c1153.1).

## Good Grief, Anger, and Forgiveness

By Carol Petro, LSW, Marriage & Family Specialist

The experience of divorce for families leaves its mark of brokenness, pain, sorrow and division. For families with children it never truly ends. Divorce is seen as a resolution to an existing problem in the marriage relationship and sometimes it is necessary to end the destruction. As the divorce process unfolds, to achieve forgiveness, family members will need to learn new ways of negotiation, relating to each other with different boundaries, as well as to try to create a new family identity.

Each person’s journey will be different as each divorce is differ-

ent. Couples will experience the emotions of love, anger, rejection, and sadness. It is very common for someone to get stuck in one of these emotions, especially, anger. The driving force behind anger is the pain from the loss of the marriage. When we become angry and persist in our anger, it is a way to protect ourselves from facing the hurt, fear, grief and rejection.

As couples persist in anger, their world becomes one of division and derision. Families and friends of the couple take sides in the marriage war. There is a

lack of reconciliation and negotiation of family relationships, emotions spiral out of control and the greatest victims become the children. Each side persists in “winning” the battle in the war of the divorce. If we allow ourselves to indulge in our anger during the divorce process, we are not able to think clearly and wisdom goes to the wind. It is important to try to get control of our emotions, because we are making decisions that will affect the rest of our lives as well as our children.

**Then the Master looked down and saw a vessel of clay.  
Empty and broken, it helplessly lay:  
No hope had the vessel that the Master might choose  
To cleanse and make whole, to fill and use.  
“Ah! This is the vessel I’ve been hoping to find,  
I will mend and use it and make it all mine.”**

Taken from *A Chosen Vessel*, Anonymous

*“Then the Master looked down and saw a vessel of clay, empty and broken”*



## Good Grief... (continued from Page 1)



How do you want  
to feel?

*"As couples  
persist in anger,  
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derision."*

Anger also serves as the umbilical cord in maintaining an intense emotional relationship between the couple after the divorce. Custody battles and children will become the rope that ties them together. This is motivated by the couple's inability to be able to grieve in a healthy way so they become stuck and place the children in the middle. Thus, their marriage problem never got resolved; it only took another dimension. A way to resolve this is for one to stop and try to understand what is driving their anger. Is it fear? Is it rejection? It is important to understand that those who experience divorce never really get over it. They learn to cope with all the pain and grief and

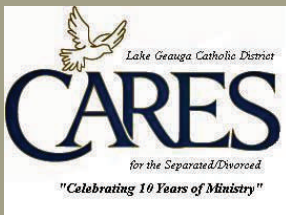
then they are able to move forward in their lives. Healing from the effects of divorce means that we must get in touch with the grief and then journey through it. The way the marriage ended will influence the way we grieve.

The Church has recognized the healing process after the divorce and the divorce ministry has focused on several support groups in the diocese to help people journey through the grief process with their faith. It is a way for those who have been through the pain of divorce and understand its ramifications to help those who are grieving. In addition to the support groups, going to a professional for counseling will help the healing and identify

reasons why the marriage failed. Another tool that is helpful in our process of grieving, is to keep a daily journal. This helps to identify and heal emotions such as anger, resentment and fear. Getting beyond the emotions will take work so that we can resolve our deep anguish and destructive behaviors that will only harm others and ourselves.

The Lord has called us to be people of love and peace regardless of our situation. If we look at the fact that we are only pilgrims in this life, divorce recovery can be looked at as an opportunity that provides time for reflection and change so that we can become the beautiful person that God has created us to be.

## Featured Divorce Ministry Support Group:



Last September, the ministry to the separated and divorced of Lake/Geauga counties marked its tenth anniversary in assisting those facing the emotional challenges of a turning point in their lives.

While it seems like just yesterday, it was a stormy September afternoon in 1996 when District members identified the need facing a significant number of members of our twenty parishes. Since that time, we have ministered to more than 1,000 men and women facing separation and divorce.

A board of ten members made up of clergy, pastoral ministers, and lay persons have met regularly. Most of these original board members remain on the Board.

Our first step was to establish a mission statement which states:

- ◆ To make the presence of the Catholic Church a part of the journey toward recovery
- ◆ To promote emotional and sacramental healing
- ◆ To foster support, independence and empower those we minister to

Through seed money from Catholic Charities and the help of Fr. Steve Dohner, then director of the Depart-

ment for Marriage and Family Office, we were able to launch this initiative. With these funds we were able to hire professional facilitators to lead support groups and present workshops on various topics of interest. As we went forward, we were gratified to receive generous financial support from each of the District parishes. This support has remained constant for all of our ten years and continues to the present.

Recently we registered with the State of Ohio a name we have been using for all of our programming. CARES which stands for Catholic Adjustment and Reconciliation Experiences. Among other highlights of the past ten years, we offer support groups, workshops, reconciliation and healing services and a new website: [www.divorced-separated.net](http://www.divorced-separated.net) which



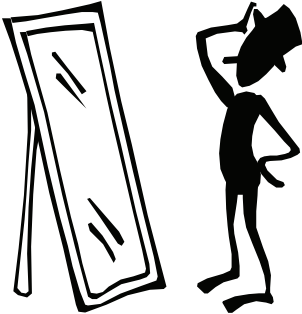
provides links to the Diocese, local court houses, and a listing of resources.

Members of our board include: Mr. Jim Clements, Catholic Charities Corporation; Ms. Mary Ann Dominick, St. Bede the Venerable Church; Judge Colleen Falkowski, Lake County Court House; Fr. Tom Gilles, St. Mary Chardon; Fr. Gary Malin, St. Gabriel Church; Mrs. Karen Roman, St. Bede the Venerable Church; Fr. George Smiga, St. Noel Church; Fr. Jack Valley; Mrs. Jean Fitzgerald, District Chairperson, St. Anselm Church; Rev. Mr. Willard Payne, St. Helen Church; Mrs. Karen Jubeck and Mrs. Carolyn Jablonski, Chair, St. Gabriel Church.

# Marriage Make-Over

## (The Catholic Church's Understanding of Marriage)

Reverend Gary D. Yanus, J.C.D., Judicial Vicar, Tribunal of the Diocese of Cleveland



### Take a LOOK...

A popular television show on Sunday night invites its viewers to observe the almost miraculous transformation of a family home by a team of architects, artisans, craftsmen, and designers. A complete make-over takes a seriously compromised structure and turns it into a showplace, barely recognizable by its excited and very appreciative owners. What was once a place that at best offered the most basic shelter and protection from the elements becomes a welcoming and beautiful home.

The Church in the last forty years has been in the process of assisting Christians and society as a whole in realizing that with God's grace marriage can be so much more than what many people are experiencing or have experienced in the past. The goal of a type of make-over that has taken place in the Catholic Church regarding the uniqueness of a marital relationship is to reconstruct the way in which married couples live out their relationship with one another, with the community, and with God.

A popular television show on Sunday night invites its viewers to observe the almost miraculous transformation of

Catholics believe that marriage is a commitment for life in which a man and a woman share themselves with one another in such a way that their love is expressed in profound concern for the welfare of the other. Sexual relations bring the intimacy of husband and wife to a level of sharing not possible in any other relationship in life because their love gives them life and is open to the gift of new life in children. The "contract" that was marriage becomes "covenant", an initiative of God working in the life of the couple calling from them love that is faithful, generous, and kind.

Parish ministers in helping couples plan the wedding ceremony frequently are asked why the Church has certain standards regarding music, readings, etc. that may be used in the nuptial liturgy. "Isn't it our wedding, and shouldn't we be able to have what is meaningful for us?" The celebration of a sacrament involves the whole people of God. It is a celebration for the whole Church even though primarily family and friends are present. The entire Christian community has a part in the celebration and a stake in its future. The covenant relationship of husband and wife is the backbone and basis of family, and family is the basic foundation for all other social relationships. The manner in which a husband and wife love and respect one another either promotes the welfare of

all the people of God or upsets it. There is no neutral ground, and thus the relationship of husband and wife involves many more than the spouses and the invited guests to the wedding.

A friend once related that she chose the man she married because she believed that he would help her get to heaven. Marriage is to help husband and wife realize in life the miracle of human love, but even more significantly, it is also to assist husband and wife in coming to a realization of the gift of their love as an expression of God's love. In Christian marriage, spouses encounter the Risen Lord in a unique way. The love that Jesus has for the Church is a model of that type of sacrificial, self-giving love that spouses are called to share. The holiness of that type of love leads couples to the ultimate goal of all-eternal life with God and all the angels and saints.

The make-over of a house involves an investment of time and money. The make-over of marriage costs nothing, but the investment in love and respect is ultimately an investment in eternity.

*Psalm 127:1 Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build.*

## Reflection/Prayer

Department for Marriage & Family Ministry

Lord, I realize that my life has become unmanageable and is a mess. I can no longer control what is happening in my life, my ex-spouse, my children, and the whole divorce process. I have entered the world of confusion, and sometimes my emotions rule me. I must face the

truth of my life that my marriage has come to an end and that I can only control my actions and reactions. Help me to see that the way out of confusion is to face the reality of what happened, to acknowledge that I am powerless, and to seek the truth of my role in

this. Since your ways are ways of peace, I am asking for your help to accomplish this and accompany me on this part of my life journey. Please help me to surrender everything so that I can begin to heal and grow. Amen.

## Department for Marriage & Family Ministry

7911 Detroit Avenue  
Cleveland, OH 44102

Phone: 216-334-2978 / Fax: 216-334-2976

Website: [www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org](http://www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org)

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](mailto:clpetro@clevelandcatholiccharities.org).

# THE BENEFITS OF MEDIATION TO RESOLVE DIVORCES

Huge cost savings, high rate of satisfaction with the results, improved parenting relationships. These are just some of the reasons why mediation is increasingly being utilized as an alternative over litigation to resolve divorces. That's right, you have an alternative to arguing in court and paying attorneys tens of thousands of dollars to resolve divorce and custody dispute. In divorce mediation, both parties sit down with a neutral mediator to resolve their own divorce. For most mediators, it actually works for over 80% of the people that give it a try, even in complex and nasty divorce and custody cases. Mediation is safe. It can be used to resolve divorce and custody disputes before or after attorneys are retained, although there is a greater cost savings when mediation is utilized before the start of mediation. Mediation has all the following benefits: (See [www.MaloneMediation.com](http://www.MaloneMediation.com) for more information on mediation.)

### Mediation Puts You in Control

In mediation you decide when to meet and what issues will be discussed at each mediation session. Most divorce mediators have flexible hours to meet your needs, so you do not have to take time off from work or take time away from matters that are important to you. The mediator guides you through the process of discussing all the issues; the issues the court requires, and the issues that are important to both of you. No agreements are reached unless you both agree to do so. In mediation, you are in control.

### Mediation is Safe

The mediator protects both parties to make sure all issues are addressed. Mediation works even if one of you is angry or unreasonable. The mediator guides you through the process, so even if one person is difficult or feels weaker than the other, both can still be heard and achieve satisfactory results. The mediator will require documentation and may ask hard questions to be certain all issues of the divorce are addressed. So mediation works even when trust is an issue. People are free to

consult with an attorney at any stage during the mediation process if they feel it is necessary to ensure their rights are protected. Written agreements are prepared to reflect all agreements reached in mediation. People have time to reflect on any agreements made in mediation, so there are no decisions that are made under pressure and then regretted afterwards.

### Mediation is Confidential

Everything said in mediation is confidential, except for agreements that are put in writing. So nothing can be used against you in court or elsewhere. All private matters stay private, whether they are personal issues or financial matters. Mediation agreements can be written to protect the privacy of everyone involved.

### Mediation Reduces Hostility and Tension

Mediation helps people to address the issues in a focused and constructive manner. People are empowered to communicate as they were never able to before, which results in a reduction of hostility and tension. Sometimes people feel as though they want completely opposite things, and agreement will be impossible. Yet even in those cases, a good mediator, will help you reduce hostility and tension so that you have improved communications, a better understanding of yourself and the other person. Many people have thought that agreement would be impossible going into mediation, and were amazed at the new understandings they had as a result of mediation. Those that were amicable at the start of mediation were pleased that their relationship stayed amicable during mediation.

### Improved Parenting Relationships

Studies have proven that couples that reach agreement in mediation have a stronger parenting relationship with their children, and with each other compared to those that settle their custody disputes in court. Some parents feel as though they do not care about their relationship with the other parent because they believe they will be getting rid of the other parent through divorce. Actually, the relationship just changes into a parenting only relationship. Many mediators can guide parents on how to set up business-like boundaries so that parents can parent their children effectively.

### More Satisfying Results

Studies have shown that people that reach agreement in mediation are more satisfied with the results than those that count on the court to resolve their divorce and custody disputes. That's because in mediation you are empowered to achieve the results you need. In the collaborative work of family mediation, you discuss your own needs, and then agreements are made to achieve the most beneficial results for each of you.

### Significant Cost Savings

The average litigated divorce in Cuyahoga County costs each party approximately \$10,000 to \$70,000 EACH, or \$20,000 to \$140,000 per family. The average divorce can be mediated for less than \$2,000 for BOTH parties. This includes a written agreement that documents all the agreements reached in mediation. An attorney mediator can be certain to cover all the issues the court determines to be relevant. Obviously mediation is significantly less than litigation. It only takes one to two sessions for a competent mediator to know if mediation is going to work for you. So it is well worth the gamble to give mediation a try. After all, whose college tuition do you want to fund, that of your child's, or your attorneys' child? Take care of your own child/children and contact the Lawyer's Guild of the Catholic Diocese at [www.cdccf.org/lawyers](http://www.cdccf.org/lawyers) to retain a mediator from their lawyer's directory.

*Laurie A. Malone is a divorce mediator with Northeast Ohio offices in Brecksville, Akron, Westlake, and Beachwood to serve greater Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, Summit County, Lake County, Lorain County, Stark County, and Geauga County.*

*Laurie is a parishioner of St. Basil's in Brecksville; president of St. Basil's SPARK (Single Parents and Raising Kids) program; and Board Member of the Lawyer's Guild of the Catholic Diocese and chair of the Membership Committee.*

## Separated/Divorce Ministry Programs and Resources:

### **Hope Workshop/Lorain County**

St. Joseph Church, Amherst, OH  
February 9, 12, 19 & March 5, 12  
Directed by Maria Maldonado  
440-988-2848 ext. 205

### **Summit County: Sharing & Caring**

Evening of Reflection - St. Matthew  
March 20, 2007 - 5:00-7:00 pm  
Carolyn Humston at 330-836-2233 ext. 129

### **Lake/Gauga County**

**Make Anger Work for You Not Against You**  
March 27, 2007 - 7:00-9:00pm  
St. Justin - Kathy Whan-Marko

For other groups please go to website:

[www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mfm](http://www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mfm) - click on Divorce Ministry for support groups that are posted online.

### **Single Parent Groups:**

#### **SPARK**

St. Basil the Great - Brecksville, OH - 440-526-1686

#### **Summit County:**

#### **SPARK**

Lisa Lesneski 330-819-4670

For resources of counselors in your area - the Department for Marriage and Family Ministry has list of referrals by calling 216-334-2975.

### **Recommended Readings:**

*Catholics Experiencing Divorce*

by Vicki Wells Bedard and William E. Rabior  
*The Anger Workbook*

By Les Carter, Ph.D. and Frank Minirth, M.D.

Websites that can be helpful:

<http://www.divorcerecovery.com/>

<http://naacsd.org/>

Available from the Marriage and Family Office: *"Don't Bury the Alleluia in Your Life"*

Lenten Reflections for the Divorced -

Call Terese Hardman at 216-334-2978 - 25¢ each