

SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:

- Ministry to the Separated & Divorced
- A Ministry of Fidelity & Hope
- Personal Healing for Women after Divorce

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VOLUME 2, ISSUE 1

SPRING 2008

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

Ministry to the Separated & Divorced

From *Follow the Way of Love: a Pastoral Message to Families - USCCB 1994, 2002*

Spouses who are separated: the road to healing, reconciliation, and rebuilding of your relationship can be a slow, painful one. If you are willing to begin that journey, the Church has many resources like pastoral counseling, Retrouvaille, and the Third Option program which can assist you.

Divorced Persons: Relationships and circumstances within your fam-

ily 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 communities of faith.

- ◆ Divorced Catholics are not excommunicated.
- ◆ Divorced Catholics are encouraged to receive the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation.
- ◆ Divorced Catholics are full members

of the Catholic Church and can participate fully in the life of the church.

- ◆ Divorced Catholics seeking to marry again should first request a study of their previous marriage by their diocesan Tribunal. A declaration of invalidity of their previous marriage is necessary before being free to marry again in the church.
- ◆ The children will not be illegitimate if a divorced Catholic is granted a declaration of invalidity of their previous marriage.

A Ministry of Fidelity & Hope

by Bill Boomer, M.A. - Director, Department for Marriage & Family Ministry

Ministry to the separated and divorced is rooted in fidelity. Fidelity of God to His covenant people; fidelity of Christ to His Bride the Church; fidelity of believers to God who loves them; fidelity of the Church to promote both the permanence of marriage and an inclusive compassion for those who suffer because of marital difficulties or divorce.

In fact, it is the failure of fidelity that threatens marriages and leads to divorce. Those who have been betrayed by a spouse need the

reassurance of God's fidelity and the grace to be open to the difficult process of addressing the betrayal, and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation if possible.

We are a church that offers hope and support to those who have been betrayed.

Those who have betrayed a spouse must be accountable, repent, show remorse and make amends if possible. God's grace and forgiveness is available to those who ask.

We are a church of accountability that offers truth, hope, forgiveness and help to those who have betrayed a spouse.

Infidelity itself is not grounds for annulment, though many Catholics think it is. While it is often the “deal breaker” that leads couples to divorce, it is often a cry for help in marriage. Marriage vows will be tested in our permissive culture. Some of the strongest marriages have survived severe temptations or marital infidelity. We don't hear these stories. We do hear about the marriages which have not survived infidelity.

**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.”**

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



Personal Healing for Women after Divorce

by Patricia Bertschler, PCC

Gail Sheehy calls them *passages*. Erik Erikson labels them *crises*. Whatever label we attach to these life-altering experiences, certain tasks need to be accomplished as women transition from one phase of life to the next.

For divorcing women, changes can involve feeling like a single parent, financial struggles, awkwardness with those who were friends with both you and your ex, feeling like you're in a "good-cop/bad-cop" movie playing the role of the enforcer with the children, and perhaps the new reality of having to make decisions that were once shared with a partner.

Women are notorious caregivers! We care for kids, aging parents, colleagues, and pets.

We help at school, and at church; we chauffeur. We dispense food, meds, advice, money, clean clothes. And of course, we care for our friends.

In fact, take a moment to make a list of 3-5 close friends. (Pause to think!)

Did you put yourself on the list? Experts on caregiving for everyone else on earth, many of us fail to apply similar caregiving behaviors to ourselves that we lavish on others.

I'd be remiss not mentioning healthy eating, exercise, relaxation, and adequate sleep about which we've heard *ad nauseam*. If you aren't doing all that, start now. (Sorry if you're at Starbucks slurping a latte and munching on a blueberry muffin.)

Let's "check up" at a deeper

level.

The Art of Saying No. Ronna Lichtenberg, CEO of Clear Peak Communication, discusses "good no's" and "bad no's." A "bad no" is delivered without care for another's feelings and without diplomacy. It has an attitude. "Will you please help me carry this heavy box?" "Heck no. That's the janitor's job. Ask him."

The "good no" is delivered with minimal damage or hurt. "Thanks for asking me to chair the fundraiser. I'm so flattered you asked. This year I need to decline due to other commitments."

The Joy of Saying Yes. If I say *no* with regularity, I might consider the flip side of the coin. Saying *yes* means opening myself to others—events, contacts, experiences, memories, life moments that enrich me. We multi-taskers are all swamped! But this life is not dress rehearsal. Take time for opportunities to help another, to enjoy time with friends, to volunteer for a charity. Sometimes, we need to get out of ourselves and our routines and say *yes* to life's optional invitations. As a divorced woman, you will know when it's time to break out of the shell you may be in.

The Gift of Forgiveness. Why do women hang onto grudges longer than men? Largely because of our conditioning from childhood according to psychologist, Patricia Heim. Boys play sports with someone in charge who calls the shots. One team wins; the other loses. Then they play again tomorrow. Girls, on the other hand, play games that never end: house, school, hospital. We take turns being in charge, because we like to keep things even-steven. Girls play process-oriented games; boys

play goal-oriented games.

Growing into adulthood, this imprinting (part of it societal, part of it hard-wired by virtue of being male or female) carries itself into our personal and professional lives. Men can argue at work and afterwards go for a drink together. Women have an argument at work, and not only do we not go for a drink, but we don't speak to each other for months, we talk about the other to as many as will listen, and God forbid we should forgive each other.

I write in generalities and know that many women practice forgiveness. In my counseling practice, however, I've worked with hundreds of women who suffer from inability to forgive others for past hurts. They cling to unmet expectations of what should have happened but did not. In our mediation practice, we often quote R.L. Bollings, "Abandon all hope of a better past." Easier said than done, but not impossible.

Psychologist, Robert Karen, writes in *O Magazine* (May, 2003) that "...A grudge is a kind of clinging, and when we hold a grudge against a parent" (or ex-husband, for example), "we are clinging not simply to the parent but to the bad part of the parent.... Even if the grievousness of the wrong is never...atoned for, we may want to feel our way back to a caring place. It's the place we'd rather live." Give and receive the gift of forgiveness.

Practice the 5 P's.

Pray. In whatever form, make it part of the rhythm of the day—5-15 minutes in contemplation, a quiet cup of tea with God, or thank you's through the day. A few years ago, radio deejay, Larry Morrow, said on-air that when he drives home, he doesn't turn on the radio. The stillness is

Did you put yourself on that list?

Experts on caregiving for everyone else on earth, many of us fail to apply similar caregiving behaviors to ourselves that we lavish on others.



The Gift of Forgiveness

his time to pray during drive time. Since then, every time I turn off my radio, my thoughts immediately turn to God. Thanks, Larry.

In **Psalm 22**, David writes, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?” Some days we wake up feeling just as David did! Other days, we can turn to David’s **Psalm 23** and be comforted knowing “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want... He leads me beside the still waters; he restores my soul.” No matter what your mood, pray.

Play. Sometimes I say “Relaxing makes me nervous!” It’s because I need more play time. Work will remain, and as I am oft reminded, “Who ever lay on her deathbed saying, ‘I wish I’d spent more time at the office?’ ” Even Jesus came apart and rested a while (Mark 6: 31).

Practice the Platinum Rule. “Do unto others as THEY would have it done unto them.” The Golden Rule is still wonderful—Do unto others as you would have it done unto you. But what I need may not meet the needs of those I’m helping. Learn what the other wants/needs first, and then offer help. This applies especially when interacting with people from different cultures, races, religions... or those who have hurt me—even a former spouse!

Peacemaker: Be One. It has been said, “Peace is not a season; it is a way of life.” It may take a lifetime of practice, but it is worth the effort especially in light of the world in which we live.

You may still feel angry, hurt, resentful, and even vengeful toward your ex. Children are masters at sensing our feelings, even though we think we hide them well. Being a peacemaker is not for the namby-pamby.

know. Mom and Dad need to ask. For example, mom might say, “If I were in your shoes, Tommy, I might be feeling sad that Daddy isn’t with us for supper and bedtime any more. Is that how you feel? Tell me about it.”

Avoiding parental conflict includes not only blatant arguments and name-calling, but rolling your eyes when the other speaks, sarcastic tone of voice, lack of kindness, and even keeping silent (even if your intention is to avoid saying anything negative in front of your children). Silence is just as chilling, sometimes more so, than actual arguments.

Children sense all of this, and when they leave to spend time with the other parent, they walk out feeling sad, angry, hurt or lonely, anything but peaceful.

Once the marriage ends, there is little to do to correct past history. Yet, **parents have tremendous influence on how their children will get through this painful adjustment** of moving from a nuclear to a binuclear family in two households. As President Kennedy once said, ‘Our task now is not to fix the blame for the past, but to fix the course for the future.’”

About eight days after Jesus’ Resurrection, he popped in on the Apostles still cowering in the upper room and said, “Peace be with you” (**John 20: 21**). Of all the greetings Jesus could have said, this is the one he chose. We can choose it, too. Remember, Jesus died first; **then** he rose. Then he offered peace. It will take some grit, but it is possible to be a peacemaker in the family during and after the divorce.

Plan for Outside Assistance. St. Paul writes in **Romans 5: 3-4**, “We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.” It almost makes suffering sound wonderful! Anything that produces character can’t be easy. Before we get to the *hope* stage, we’ll have our share of blood, sweat and tears. So...put your name on your list of closest friends. Take care of yourself and ask help through this life transition the same way you would spring to the aid of your best friend.

“Do unto others as THEY would have it unto them.”

Excerpts from this article are reprinted with permission of The Cleveland Women’s Journal and The Cleveland/Akron Parent.

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Practice the 5 P’s
Pray
Play
Practice the Platinum Rule
Peacemaker: Be One
Plan for Outside Assistance



A Ministry of Fidelity & Hope

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This ministry approach follows the 1997 pastoral recommendations in *Care of the Divorced and Remarried* from the Pontifical Council on the Family which recommends: a) fidelity to the sacrament of marriage, b) being compassionate and suffering with those who experience marital failure, especially the consequences for their children, c) encouraging and helping the divorced and d) pastoral inclusion and care for the remarried. (in *Origins* Feb 20, 1997)

For those who have divorced – you are not alone. God and the Church love you and are near you. You can heal. You are still called to fidelity to God and to your parenting responsibilities if you have children. You have much life to live.

If you find yourself in a hopeless situation, hear this: “There is hope!” Twelve step programs (AA, Al-Anon) for addictions; *Retrouvaille* for troubled marriages; PREP for learning marriage skills; trained marriage counselors; dedicated priests & deacons, the Sacraments and most of all--God’s grace--are all available to those who ask. Seek

God, ask for help...you are not alone.

Families, friends and those in ministry – you are ambassadors of truth, hope, fidelity and healing. Be part of a culture that supports marriage and, especially, couples in distress. Do not join the chorus of blame and despair that is too quick to “call it quits.” Let us all be people who live in courageous fidelity and humble hope.

Recommended reading:
Healing from Infidelity by Michele Wiener-Davis

Featured Divorce Ministry Support Group:

HOPE WORKSHOP for Divorced and Separated Persons by Maria Maldonado, St. Joseph Church, Amherst.

The HOPE Workshop for divorced and separated persons began in 1990 as a response to a need that surfaced from the first A Welcome Home@ session held at the parish. About 60 persons turned out for that session, a number of whom were divorced and separated Catholics who had experienced the difficulties and range of emotions that follow the loss of a relationship through separation and divorce.

Two of the women, in particular, became the catalyst for this workshop as they shared

with the pastoral minister the emotions and pain experienced and the quest for understanding and healing that followed their own divorce. With the help of the pastoral minister and assistance from the pastor, plans began to unfold that led to HOPE, a workshop for divorced and separated persons.

The first workshop held in October of 1990 was quite successful and was based on the Twelve Step Program as developed by the founders of Alcoholics Anonymous. Participants met to learn to apply the Twelve Step process to their daily lives and thus work through their pain and grief toward wholeness. Based on the

evaluations and inquiries, additional workshops were scheduled, and many have attended since its inception. Seventeen years later, those experiencing the pain and grief of separation and divorce still come seeking hope, support, healing and peace.

The HOPE workshop is offered at St. Joseph Church in Amherst in the month of February. For further information in regards to divorce ministry in Lorain County, please contact Maria Maldonado at the parish The number to call is 440.988.2848 ext 205.

HOW I BECAME A CANON LAWYER by Rev. William M. Jerse, J.C.L.

Shortly after I was ordained in 1980, one of my former professors, the late Justin Hennessey, O.P., came to talk with me. He asked me what areas of theology I might be interested in studying on a graduate level. I told him that I really had not thought about this. He then asked me if there was anything I did not want to study, and I replied rather emphatically, "canon law!"

I saw the law of the Church from a new perspective and became interested in studying it.

tribunal staff, I have come to appreciate how very complex one human being is and how very challenging it is for two people to live together, day to day, in the intimate communion of marriage. When I discovered that canon law and psychology are not in opposed to one another, I saw the law of the Church from a new perspective and became interested in studying it.

In June 1983 I and several other priests were invited to work one day a week at the marriage tribunal. I accepted primarily because I have always enjoyed psychology and was interested in why marriages sometimes do not last "until death do us part." In my nearly twenty five years on the

I am grateful to Bishop Anthony Pilla for allowing me to study canon law for two years (1993-1995) at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. I discovered in the law of the Church what elements need to be in a true marital relationship, and the different

I welcome the opportunity to make a positive and healing difference in the lives of people who have suffered the heartache of divorce.

factors that can be present in a marriage that was never valid from the day of the wedding. Most of a canon lawyer's time is spent behind a desk. However, I welcome the opportunity to make a positive and healing difference in the lives of people who have suffered the heartache of divorce. It has truly been a blessing in my priesthood to be a part of the staff of the Tribunal of the Diocese of Cleveland. They are a group of dedicated professionals who are committed to responding compassionately and pastorally to those who come to us seeking healing, justice, and peace in their lives.



Reflection/Prayer

written by - Benedict XVI

O God, who in the Holy Family left us a perfect model of family life lived in faith and obedience to your will. Help us to be examples of faith and love for your commandments. Help us in our mission of transmitting the faith that we received from our parents. Open the hearts of our children so that the seed of faith, which they received in Baptism, will grow in them. Strengthen the faith of our young people, that they may grow in knowledge of Jesus. Increase love and faithfulness in all marriages, especially those going through times of suffering or difficulty. United to Joseph and Mary, we ask this through Jesus Christ your Son, our Lord. Amen.



- Benedict XVI

Department for Marriage & Family Ministry

7911 Detroit Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44102

Phone: 216-334-2978

Fax: 216-334-2976

Website: 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.

Separated/Divorce Ministry Programs and Resources:

Hope Support Group/Lorain County
St. Joseph Church, Amherst, OH
Contact Maria Maldonado – 440-988-2848 ext. 205

Lake/Geauga County
www.divorced-separated.net

St. Noel, Willoughby
6/10/2008-8/5/2008
Call for registration: 440-352-8282

Divorce Care for Adults
& Divorce Care for Kids:
Holy Angels Parish, Bainbridge
Mondays, 5/12 & 5/19, 6/2/& 6/9
6:00-8:30 p.m., 5:30 Pizza
Call: Sr. Susan at 440-708-0000

Forgiving, Healing, & Moving On
Thursday, 7:00-9:00 p.m. May 29, 2008
St. Mary, Chardon - 440-352-8282

Workshops:

Cuyahoga County:
St. Monica Church
Garfield Heights, OH
Separated & Divorced Ministry Spiritual
Support Group

Meeting on 4th Thursday of every month
Call 216-662-8685

Single Parent Groups:

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

DivorceCare for Adults & Kids

St. Basil the Great, Brecksville, OH
Wednesdays, 6:30 - 8:00 p.m. 440-526-1666

Summit County

Jacob's Well
St. Sebastian Church
Sunday, 6:30-9:00 p.m.
11/2/08-12/28/08
Call Carolyn Humston

For other groups, please go to website:

www.clevelandcatholiccharities.org/mfm - click
on **Divorce Ministry** for support groups that
are posted online.

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

Recommended Readings:

Healing from Infidelity by Michele
Weiner-Davis

*A Women's Guide: Healing the
Heartbreak of Divorce* by Rose Sweet

Website that can be helpful: <http://nacsdc.org>

Available from the
Department for Marriage and Family
Ministry:

Prayer Cards available:

Divorced Parents Prayer

Heal Me Prayer

Call Carol Petro at 216-334-2975 or email
her at
clpetro@clevelandcatholiccharities.org