

September

Proposed Theme: Married people who are separated or divorced

The Joy of Love: Pope Francis

In some cases, respect for one's own dignity and the good of the children requires not giving in to excessive demands or preventing a grave injustice, violence or chronic ill-treatment. In such cases, separation becomes inevitable. At times, it even becomes morally necessary, precisely when it is a matter of removing the more vulnerable spouse or young children from serious injury due to abuse and, from humiliation and exploitation, and from disregard and indifference. (241)

Divorced people, who have not remarried, and often bear witness to marital fidelity, ought to be encouraged to find in the Eucharist the nourishment they need to sustain them in their present state of life. The local community and pastors should accompany them with solicitude, particularly when children are involved or when they are in serious financial difficulty. (242)

It is important that the divorced who have entered a new union should be made feel part of the Church. They are not excommunicated, and they should not be treated as such, since they remain part of the ecclesial community. (243)

Some Thoughts:

- In our Catholic tradition the Sacrament of Marriage is the marriage of a woman and man who pledge their love for each

other **exclusively** and **permanently** within the community of the Church.

- Just as the couple pledges their love for each other for the rest of their lives, so the Community of the Church at all levels promises to support them on their journey of love.
- Couples get married with high expectations of success. Thank God most couples achieve this to one degree or another. However, the active support of the parish community is often missing, a support that would mean even greater success for those who set out with such great ambitions.
- Unfortunately many couples do have to go through the trauma of separation and/or divorce in their lives.
- Two of the major causes of separation are: sexual infidelity on the part of one or other of the spouses; and violence from one or other of the spouses that becomes intolerable.
- When these happen decisions have to be made for the sake of the offended spouse and/or the children. These decisions to separate or divorce are never taken lightly but often with great pain. It is in these situations that the active support of the community of faith is also so necessary.
- The Catholic Church does not recognise divorce. This creates huge problems for many married people. Now the decision is often about whether to try and remain faithful to the vows that were made and face a life alone or whether to remarry.
- These are not easy decisions. Those involved in making these decisions need the support of their community. ***The Beginning Experience*** is a wonderful group within the Catholic Church to help at this point.

Questions:

1. What kind of support exists in your parish for couples preparing for marriage? How could this be improved?
2. What kind of support exists in your parish for couples after they get married? How could this be improved?
3. What kind of support exists in your parish for couples who are facing serious difficulties in their marriage? How could this be improved?
4. What kind of support exists in your parish for married people who are separated or divorced? How could this be improved?
5. What kind of support exists in your parish for people who are remarried? How could this be improved?

Suggested actions:

1. As a parish, actively encourage couples who are preparing for marriage to look for the best preparation possible. This will mean that someone needs to research what is available.
2. Draw up a list of all that is available for married couples to help them grow in their love and commitment. Make this list available to the people of the parish along with contact details.
3. Encourage couples who are experiencing serious difficulties in their marriage to seek help before it is too late. Groups like **ACCORD** and **Retrouvaille** can be of immense help to them.
4. When couples have separated encourage them to contact the **Beginning Experience** to help them find their way to a new hope.
5. Make available to the parish the procedures for and contact details of the annulment process.
6. Put everything into promoting the monthly day of prayer for Marriage & Family Life so that all of these concerns become

important to the whole parish community and not just to the people who are directly involved in them.

Parish Prayer Day for Marriage and Family Life

On the of each month, our parish of prays for the 24 hours for Marriage & Family Life. This is part of a Movement of Continuous Prayer for Marriage & Family Life as other parishes and groups take on the prayer for the other days of the month.

To make this prayer continuous, many people in our parish have committed themselves to a specific hour of prayer on in such a way that the whole day and night are covered.

Everyone is invited to join in this prayer, either by taking on an hour, or by including this intention in your own prayer during that day; by including it in the prayers of the Masses celebrated on that day; by inviting the schools of the parish to involve the children and young people in praying for it; by asking any prayer groups that are meeting on that day to also include a prayer for it.