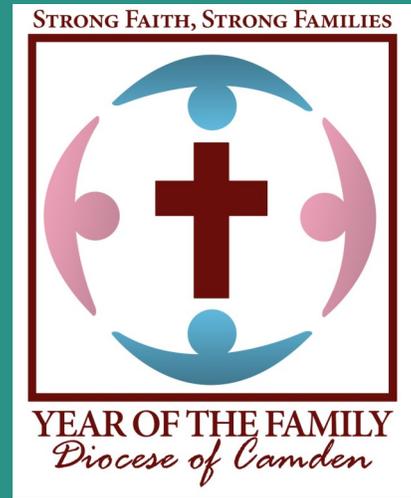




Monthly Theme:  
**Adulthood**



**June 2015**

A monthly newsletter from Catholic Charities for families.

## Keeping Your Eye on God

### Building Faith-Centered Families After Separation or Divorce

By Silvia Hirsch, Senior Case Manager, Welfare to Work

I want to believe most of us get married with the certainty that it is going to be forever. Unfortunately sometimes this is not the case. Many of us find ourselves in the painful situation of having to adjust family life to the changes that come with separation or divorce and shape a new type of family.

Separation means more than simply the loss of your spouse; there's concern for the children; the split on holidays, vacations and family events; financial insecurity; loss of friends and the family-in-law; the list goes on.

When I think about what to tell people going through the same situation I can sum it up with one piece of advice: Keep your eyes on God.

After separation or divorce I see two options. It's very easy to become bitter, angry or selfish; it's much more difficult to follow Jesus' example. But my experience has been that striving for this second option each day brings happiness, peace

and stability.

Keeping our eyes on God allows us to shape the new family into a family where, even though both parents are not together, there is a commitment to making things work out in a way that minimizes the damage caused by separation.

What does a faith-centered family after separation look like? Here are a few of the ways I have found to keep my eyes focused on God. And of course I don't do these things perfectly all the time, but I know that God does not expect me to be perfect. He is all about forgiveness.

#### Find time for Church

For me, making a commitment to attending Mass with my family every Sunday is the most important way of keeping God at the center of our lives.

At church, by listening to the homily and the stories from the Bible, the example and teachings of Jesus are reinforced

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every week. Through Jesus we learn how to forgive over and over; to be there for one another without expecting anything in return; to be strong, understanding, patient, and generous.

These are virtues that are important in any and every relationship, but they become even more important after separation or divorce when sometimes it's easier to become bitter or angry.

When difficult situations arise, we can look at Jesus' example and think, 'What would he do?' Instead of blaming or hating, we can respond with love and forgiveness. It's not easy but the more connected we are to his example, the easier it becomes.

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## Reflections on Father's Day

By Ron Pilla

Diocese of Camden Network Services Manager

**I**n our family it's a rule that every

night, no matter how busy we are, we sit down as a family and we eat together. And ever since the kids were small, we've always said grace together before dinner. We make sure we're all sitting down and we're all present in the moment, and we say prayers. For the kids sometimes it turns into a little competition to see who can pray the loudest.

Most meals we have at home, but once in a while we'll go out to eat. When my son was about six years old we were at a restaurant, about to eat, and suddenly he said, 'Why don't we pray when we're out?' My daughter, who is a year younger, said right away, 'Oh, we're not allowed to pray when we're out.'

My wife and I looked at each other. We said, 'Well, that's not true. Of course we're allowed to pray when we're out.' So we did. I noticed myself keeping my voice low, but the kids prayed just as loudly as they did at home.

Ever since then, we've always prayed before meals when we're out, and I've noticed that other families might see us do it and when their food arrives they'll

pray too. Maybe they had the same conversation we had all those years ago.

That's a very meaningful memory for me with my kids. I remember I felt overjoyed. They taught me that it's okay to pray outside of the home or church.

It's not the first time my kids have been teachers. Ever since becoming a father, I've learned from my children. Fatherhood has changed everything.

As a new father, the first way I noticed that life changed is that everything I did from that point on was for my children. Every decision I made became based not on how it affects me, but on how it will affect my family. They've taught me to put others before myself.

When my first daughter was born, there was a moment right after her birth when she was crying and I went over and I talked to her. She looked up at me and she stopped crying, and at that moment I instantly fell in love. It was amazing and it was surprising, because that's something that has never come so easily to me before. My kids have taught me about my own capacity for love.

Now I'm the father of two teenaged

daughters and two pre-teens. I've learned with teenagers that they feel like they're constantly being judged, at school, at their jobs, at home. I try to be non-judgmental when they're upset by just listening to them and not interrupting. My kids have taught me the value of listening and how important it is to feel listened to.

I've learned that kids love to be loved. They've taught me how to keep my cool, to be more patient, to be more caring.

As Father's Day gets closer, I'm thankful for all of the ways fatherhood has changed my life. For new fathers, my advice is to enjoy the moments while they're young; because it is absolutely true that they grow up fast and before you know it they're teenagers. Make a conscious effort to remember the little moments. Don't argue about the little things with your spouse; it adds unnecessary stress.

When I became a father, I was terrified, but to new fathers, I would say to remember that it's going to be the best experience of your life. It's been the best experience of mine.

# Building Faith-Centered Families After Separation or Divorce

*Continued from pg. 1.*

Even if just one member of the family makes the commitment to church at first, it will be an example to the rest of the family. Building this commitment into your family's weekend schedule and making it a priority helps the family know that this is important to you as a family.

Through my involvement in church I've also been able to have good conversations with multiple priests about my experiences that have helped me work through my struggles in family life and faith.

## Surround Yourself with People Doing Good

There are examples all around us of people who are doing good. The more you become embedded with these people, the more you will be filled with good things and with positive thoughts.

Again, a good place to start finding those people is at church. Try to get involved with the activities your church offers, like

classes or service, and look for a church that has many of these kinds of opportunities.

If you can't go to church, read books that help you feel connected to God or inspired by the example of others. We have a gift right now in Pope Francis. Reading about and watching what he says and does are a great inspiration to me.

These people and writings give me an example to follow when I'm faced with difficult situations. They reinforce the virtues of forgiveness, unselfishness, thinking of others, and being non-judgmental that I see in the example of Jesus each Sunday.

## Don't Be Too Hard on Yourself

Every family situation is different. In my family, we've been able to maintain our relationships with friends, my former spouse's family, even with my former spouse. But it's taken a lot of work, sacrifice and prayer. Making the hard situations work has helped us to minimize

the damage and it makes all of us happier.

My experience has shown that doing the right thing, the good thing, the forgiving thing – often for the sake of my children – ultimately brings me more peace and brings more stability to my family. Regardless of what the other side does, when I do the unselfish thing, I spread goodness around me.

But I remember that there is only so much I can do. Some days are easier than others. I have to let myself go day by day. I'm strong enough to do only what I can do. My strength comes from God at the center of my life, and when all else fails, there is always prayer.

I want to be clear that I don't practice all of these things perfectly or all the time. As I said at the start, I know that God doesn't expect that of me; that he is forgiving. All he asks is that I extend the same forgiveness to others.

Remember, everything is possible for God. He wants only what is good for us.

## DIOCESAN RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN & HEAL MARRIAGES AND COPE WITH SEPARATION

- ◆ **Living in Love** is a two-day mini-retreat and workshop to help married couples re-discover the romance, love and joy that attracted them to each other in the first place. The retreat is a series of presentations given by trained couples who share personally from their own lives. To register for a weekend, go to [www.livinginlove.org](http://www.livinginlove.org) and click on the Living in Love registration button. Then select the weekend you want to attend to fill out the registration form. For more information, call 877-201-2142 or email [PMRCusa@msn.com](mailto:PMRCusa@msn.com).
- ◆ **Worldwide Marriage Encounter** is designed to deepen and enrich a couple's marriage, whether they have been married for only a short time, or for many years. While the Worldwide Marriage Encounter weekend is Catholic in orientation, it is open to couples of all faith expressions. Visit [www.wwme.org](http://www.wwme.org) to find a weekend near you.
- ◆ **Retrouvaille** are retreats for couples experiencing a troubled marriage. The program is designed to help couples put the pieces back together and rebuild loving relationships. It is Catholic in origin and orientation, but is open to all married couples regardless of religious background. Visit [www.retrouvaille.org](http://www.retrouvaille.org) to find a weekend near you.
- ◆ **Catholic Charities Counseling Services** offers couples counseling as well as separation and grief counseling. Learn more at [CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/Counseling-Services](http://CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/Counseling-Services).
- ◆ **Catholic Divorce Ministry** offers support in coping with the grief that comes with separation, divorce and the issues of single parenthood. Spiritual and educational opportunities are available. Learn more at [www.nacsd.org](http://www.nacsd.org). Look for events happening in "Region 3," which covers New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Find a local events listing [here](#).
- ◆ Learn about **annulments** through the Diocese of Camden here: [www.camdendiocese.org/tribunal](http://www.camdendiocese.org/tribunal).

Visit our website for more information and to subscribe! [www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily](http://www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily)

## Applications Open for World Meeting of Families Tickets!

Catholic Charities is sponsoring six families to attend the World Meeting of Families Congress in Philadelphia! Families and individuals from throughout the Diocese of Camden are invited to apply. Recipients will be selected to receive sponsorship based on their written expression of how attendance could benefit their family, ability to attend the entirety of the theological Congress, and financial need.

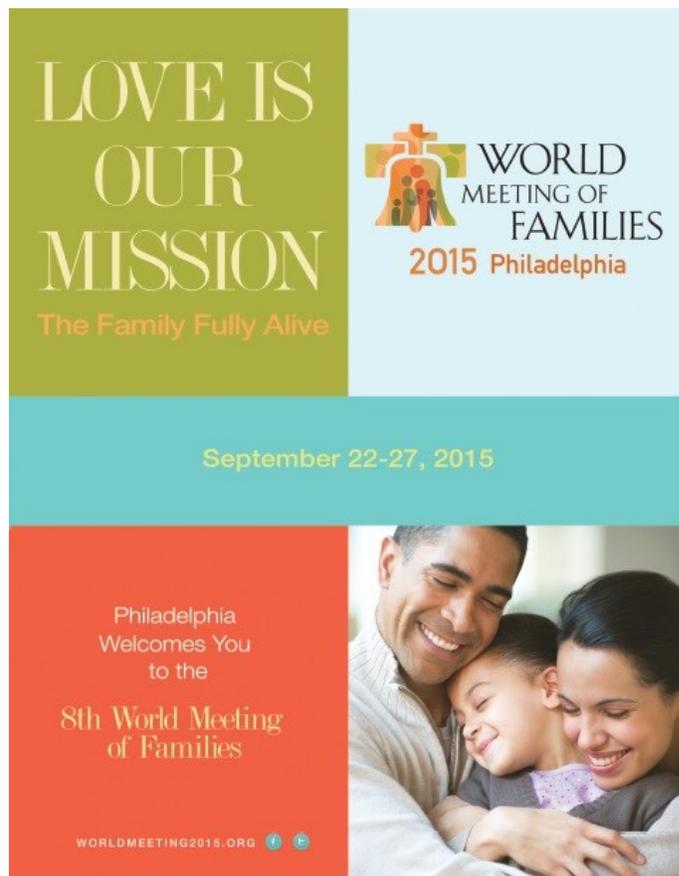
Access our online application form or download a hard copy at [CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearoftheFamily](http://CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearoftheFamily).

Deadline for submissions is **July 31, 2015**.

\*\*\* Please note: These are NOT tickets to see Pope Francis or attend papal events. The Pope will not be in attendance at the Theological Congress. \*\*\*

### What is the World Meeting of Families Congress?

Held every three years and sponsored by the Holy See's Pontifical Council for the Family, the World Meeting of Families is the world's largest Catholic gathering of families. The Adult Congress includes daily Mass, devotions, keynote addresses and multiple breakout sessions. Families will have the opportunity to interact with others about the joys and challenges in their lives, while learning new strategies for a richer life. The Youth Congress occurs simultaneously with the Adult Congress. Young people ages 6 to 17 who are registered with families attending the Adult Congress are admitted to the Youth Congress. More information about both events is available at [www.worldmeeting2015.org](http://www.worldmeeting2015.org).



### Key Dates and Locations

Tuesday, September 22—Friday, September 25: World Meeting of Families Theological and Youth Congress at the Philadelphia Convention Center

Saturday, September 26: Pope Francis arrives in Philadelphia; Festival of Families on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway

Sunday, September 27: Papal Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway

## About Catholic Charities and Year of the Family

Each month of the Camden Diocese's Year of the Family leading up to Pope Francis' September visit to Philadelphia and the World Meeting of Families, Catholic Charities is issuing a newsletter for families based on twelve monthly themes.

The themes follow the human life cycle, beginning in September 2014 with prenatal issues and ending in September 2015 (the month of the Philadelphia gathering) with end of life issues. They feature articles by staff in areas of their expertise and highlight the programs and services we offer.

Additionally, we've formed a bureau of staff speakers who are available to give presentations at parishes and events in the Diocese. More information on the ways we're celebrating the Diocesan Year of the Family is available at [www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily](http://www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily).

### Who We Are:

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden is a faith-based agency rooted in the Gospel and in the social teaching of the Catholic Church. We provide social services to, advocate for, and empower the poor, oppressed or vulnerable. We do this on a non-discriminatory, non-sectarian basis throughout the six southernmost New Jersey counties.

Visit our website for more information and to subscribe! [www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily](http://www.CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/YearOfTheFamily)