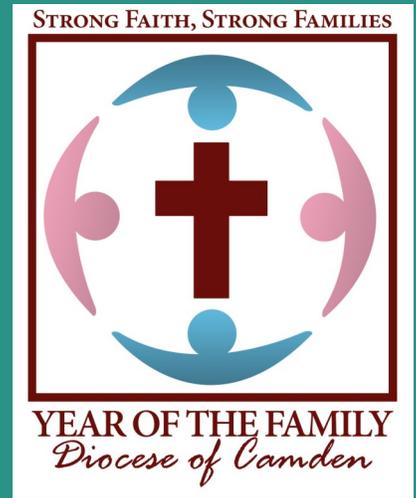




Monthly Theme:
Dating & Marriage



May 2015

A monthly newsletter from Catholic Charities for families.

How Healthy is My Relationship?

Questions to ask yourself and your partner

By Sylvia Loumeau, LCSW, director of Behavioral Health and Counseling Services

In high school or college, we learn history, economics, and math; the sort of things that help us to get a good job. But there is rarely a class on how to recognize and create a good relationship. From parents and other caring adults, we're likely to hear "that guy/girl isn't right for you." But how do we learn what *is* right?

To go even further, if we've experienced a bad relationship or relationships, we may know concretely what the wrong elements are in a relationship. But how do you look for the good when you don't know what you're looking for?

Relationships usually start with a physical attraction to the other person and whether or not we like that person's personality. Looks and personality are a great place to start, but a healthy relationship is built on many other things too. Some of the most important are trust, respect, and a shared vision.

Use this checklist to determine how healthy your relationship is. If you can

answer yes to all of these questions, you know you are in a healthy relationship.

Do I like how my partner treats me?

Do I like how I treat my partner?

Do I like how I treat myself in this relationship?

Do I like how my partner treats him/herself?

Can we both share our thoughts and feelings without being ridiculed, threatened or harmed in any way?

Is it okay for my partner to think differently than I do?

Does my partner listen to me when I speak?

Do we keep the promises (even the small ones) we make to each other?

Do I believe my partner always tells me the truth?

Am I able to negotiate with my partner?

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Are our resolutions to problems fair?

Do we make decisions together?

Do we share responsibilities equally?

When I need support, do I turn to my partner?

Do I tell my partner what I am thinking and what my needs are?

Is it okay for my partner to spend time away from me?

Do we share common goals for the future? Do we talk about them? Do we take steps to bring them about?

Do we have fun together?

COUNSELING SERVICES

Catholic Charities offers counseling for couples, individuals and families. Visit us online for more information.

CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/Counseling-Services

Marriage

An Inter-Generational Q & A



Amanda Salgado

Volunteer, Catholic Charities
Notre Dame Echo Apprentice

Unmarried

Why might someone choose to get married today?

At the root of it, I think people get married today because they crave intimacy and stability. Though this plays itself out in healthy and unhealthy ways, we all really do desire the same things.

What do you consider to be the purpose or value of marriage?

The purpose of marriage is to sanctify a relationship set out for vulnerability, creativity, challenge, and self-giving love. It is a way to know and be known, and to heal and be healed.

How is marriage perceived by your age group?

My generation is generally caricatured as an individualistic group wholly afraid to commit to marriage. But that hasn't been my entire experience. We fall along a wide spectrum: I have friends who were married shortly after (and even during) college, and others who are saying, "Not yet," and even "What for?"

I think there was a more linear, structured timeline for life that my parents followed. My age group isn't afraid to walk a different path, so while there are still those who get married young, there are others who will wait. We think of marriage as a personal good before we think of it as a social one, so we are willing to make up our own minds about it.

Randall Clark

Senior Case Manager, Catholic Charities
Veteran Services

Married: Five years

What's the hardest part of being married?

I think one aspect which may be difficult to conceptualize is that marriage means having to find compromise in everything. The mind wanders to the big things – where to live, when to have kids – but you soon realize even small matters take cooperation, down to whether you sleep with the window open or closed.

What's the most rewarding part of being married?

There is a level of intimacy, understanding and teamwork that I never thought possible with another human being. I think in a culture that constantly reinforces narcissism and the uniqueness of the self through over-parenting and social media, such change in personal identity can be off-putting. But it is in that fusing of two people into one that makes marriage so special.

“ We were created to love, as a reflection of God and his love. Marriage is the icon of God's love for us.”
~ Pope Francis

Martin Idler

Executive Director, Diocese of Camden
Division of Health Services

Married: 50 years

Why did you choose to marry?

It never occurred to our minds that there was another path. That's the way families worked: man and woman raising children together. We saw it as God's plan.

What's the best and the hardest part of marriage?

The most difficult thing is you have to remember every single day that it's two of you and you have to evaluate everything you do in relationship to each other.

We've had our arguments over the years. We argued over the same things my parents did: the children and money; but never about each other. Neither of us in all these years has said out loud, 'I'm sorry I married you,' or 'I wish I wasn't married,' because it would have been a lie. But you have to work at it.

The reward is over the years she's become my best friend in the world. We can finish each other's sentences. That doesn't mean we think alike, that just means we know how the other one thinks. I can't picture myself with anybody else.

What would you say to people considering marriage today?

Be sure that you want to be with this person forever. Be sure that you try every day to learn more about them so that you can respond to them in a loving way.



As I reflect on Mother's Day, I'm reminded of a moment many years ago when one of

my daughters was only 3 years old. She and I were driving on our way to drop her off at school. I was worrying about bills, deadlines, and all those things we seem to worry about on a daily basis. I remember I was feeling especially low and fearful.

All of the sudden out of the back seat I heard a little voice say, "Mommy? Do you like green eggs and ham?" I began to laugh so hard at this sudden interruption of thought that I began to cry. Not because I was sad, but because this small voice and the simplicity of her question brought me back to reality; back to the here and now and the realization that in the midst of all the everyday sadness and worrying I had the most wonderful blessing right with me in the car. And even

MOTHER'S DAY READINGS

First Reading

Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48

Second Reading

1 John 4:7-10

Gospel

John 15:9-17

if it was for just that one moment of my day, her innocence and unconditional love brought me peace.

In my daughter I see a reflection of

On Mother's Day

Reflection by Tricia Reeves
Counselor, School-Based Family Support Program

God's unconditional love for us, expressed so beautifully in the second reading for Mother's Day from 1 John chapter 4:

"Beloved, let us love one another, because



love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God.

Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love."

She reminds me of how God's unconditional love should be a source of peace in my life that I am then able to extend to others. As Peter says in our first reading, "God shows no partiality," (Acts 10:25-26, 34-35, 44-48). The peace found in his love is given to all, and should be extended through me to all.

Mother's Day is the day I remember that just as my own mother wrapped me in a blanket and loved me, I too am wrapped in

the arms of God. His light must shine through me so I can wrap others in love. As Jesus tells us in the Mother's Day Gospel, "love one another as I love you." Because of the love God has shown me I am ready and, more importantly, able to give of myself to others.

Thinking about the many opportunities God has given me to be a mother, not just to my children but to others around me, I am in awe of all of God's gifts in my life; the chances he has given me to be a light in places of darkness and a hope in times of despair. I realize that I have been a mother even before the time the Lord gave me children of my own to care for.

It is this kind of love that is at the heart of our work at Catholic Charities. There is no more fitting mission statement for us than the simplicity of those words from John's letter: "Beloved, let us love one another." Let us remind ourselves with each opportunity that arises in our work and in our lives to love as God does, drawing on our knowledge of God's unconditional love for us.

When Mother's Day is Difficult

Mother's Day is intended to be a joyful time to celebrate our mothers and motherhood, but for some women Mother's Day can be a difficult or sad day. There are many women who connect motherhood with the loss of a child either through death, abortion, adoption, miscarriage, infertility, or some other traumatic experience. If you are one of these women, you know that Mother's Day can be a difficult day, but it is also a day that you can begin to transform your grief and begin a healing process. Consider reaching out for professional counseling that will help you spend time with the difficult emotions, work through them and talk about them. At right are a few resources you might begin to consider, available to you through Catholic Charities and the Diocese of Camden .

RESOURCES FOR MOTHERS EXPERIENCING LOSS

- ◆ Catholic Charities Counseling Services—General counseling as well as grief and adoptions counseling. 866-682-2166
CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/Counseling-Services
- ◆ Catholic Charities Adoptions Research and Reunion—If your child was placed for adoption through Catholic Charities, we can help find information and in some cases arrange reunions. 856-342-4162
CatholicCharitiesCamden.org/Adoption-Services
- ◆ Rachel's Vineyard—Offers spiritual retreats to help women heal from abortion.
www.RachelsVineyard.org



LOVE IS
OUR
MISSION
The Family Fully Alive

What is the World Meeting of Families?

The World Meeting of Families is a week-long international event of prayer, catechesis, and celebration that draws participants from around the globe. It seeks to strengthen the bonds between families and to witness to the crucial importance of marriage and the family to all of society. The World Meeting of Families consists of a Theological Adult Congress, and a concurrent Youth Congress (ages 6-17), followed by The Festival of Families and the Papal Mass. Pope Francis will not be attending the Congress.

Where can I see Pope Francis?

On Saturday night, Sept. 26, the Festival of Families will take place. This is a celebratory event for families that will include different types of cultural and musical performances. The Festival of Families will be attended by the Holy Father.

On Sunday, Pope Francis will celebrate Mass on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway in Philadelphia. The time for the Mass has not yet been determined. The Mass will be open to the public.

Is there a cost?

The World Meeting of Families Congress event does require purchased tickets. Pricing and packages are available on the World Meeting of Families website.

All Papal events—the Festival of Families and Mass—are free of charge and open to the public.

Where can I learn more?

Everything you want to know about the World Meeting of Families and the Papal visit, registration, and volunteer opportunities is available at:

www.WorldMeeting2015.org

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.

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.

Called to Serve

Opportunities for family service in and around the Diocese of Camden

Volunteer opportunities are now open for the September World Meeting of Families in Philadelphia. The meeting needs particular help in several key areas:

- ◆ Greeting and directing visitors
- ◆ Team leadership and management
- ◆ Foreign language and translation services
- ◆ Housing for visitors

For more information and to register, visit the World Meeting of Families website volunteer page: www.WorldMeeting2015.org/Get-Involved/Volunteer

Connect to World Meeting Volunteer Opportunities

-  [World Meeting 2015 Volunteers](https://www.facebook.com/WorldMeeting2015Volunteers)
-  [@WMF2015vol](https://twitter.com/WMF2015vol)
-  [World Meeting of Families – Philadelphia 2015](https://www.linkedin.com/company/world-meeting-of-families-philadelphia-2015)