

INTERCHANGE



Proclaiming Hope: Forgiveness and Healing

To be credible, forgiveness and healing need to be **enfleshed**. As Catholic evangelizers, we witness to the power and possibility of forgiveness and healing by “being” forgivers and healers. That is the heart of the mystery of our salvation. That is the hope that the Incarnation proclaimed. Most often, the situations which challenge us to forgive, seek reconciliation and experience healing are our intimate relationships. Some live the challenges of forgiveness as a married couple. However, the process of forgiving and being forgiven is critical not for spouses but for parents and children, parishioners and church leaders, citizens and nations. The Commission on Evangelization (CoE) wanted to explore what couples in the Retrouvaille process learn about forgiveness as they work to heal their marriages. The goal of the session was to investigate the content of the process and how couples could be encouraged to reach out to other couples in troubled marriages. Rick and Julie Fagan, who work with Father Bob Poandl in the Retrouvaille Program, shared their journey as a couple. They witnessed to the brokenness in their marriage and the long process of recovery with the help of Retrouvaille. They reflected on how both positive and negative influences learned when they were young shaped their relationship. Over time these preconceived ideas and other hurts became almost insurmountable obstacles in loving one another as Christ commanded his disciples to love. The hurt and pain they experienced in the break down of their marriage happens in other relationships. Likewise, the lessons they learned about forgiveness and healing can assist us with other relationships.

🔒 🔒 Sayings about Forgiveness 🔒 🔒

Throughout our lives, we acquire a catalog of “sayings” which underlie a belief system about forgiveness. Unless we examine this catalog as adults, these beliefs continue to keep us “locked up” about how we respond to situations which require forgiveness. We express many of these common beliefs to children: forgive and forget; say “I’m sorry”; turn the other cheek. But some beliefs are not so obvious. For instance, “To err is human; to forgive is divine.” The belief implied here is that forgiveness is impossible since we are not divine. “I don’t feel like forgiving.” This

belief misses the point that forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling. “I won’t forgive until he/she says _____.” Quite often, one person desires to work through the conflict, but neither wants to take the first step. Consequently, both become locked in a system of hurt and resentment.

Consider:

What is in your catalog of “sayings” that shape your beliefs about forgiveness?

Which beliefs free you to be a forgiving person? Which ones hinder your ability to forgive and accept forgiveness? What sayings or beliefs do you detect that are not helpful to parishioners’ growth as forgiving evangelizers?



The Spiral of Hurt

Rick and Julie spoke of how a “system of hurt” develops in a relationship. Like a hurricane, hurt intensifies over warm waters. Over cooler waters, both lose energy and force. They outlined how a system of hurt gathers strength. First, there is

- 🔒 the hurt or a series of hurts
- 🔒 the product of hurt is pain which is a healthy sign of a problem but...
- 🔒 pain can also make us self centered
- 🔒 which leads to self pity
- 🔒 hardening into resentment and often
- 🔒 resulting in vengeance.

Forgiveness is a Verb

Forgiveness is critical to every relationship because hurt is a part of every relationship. The decision to forgive is the key that unlocks the willingness to look for ways to reconcile and rebuild trust in a marriage or any relationship. The decision to forgive involves giving up one's perceived right to get even with or hold in debt someone who has wronged us. Forgiveness is a decision to let go of the hurt caused by someone else's or our own behavior. When we can forgive ourselves and those closest to us, we experience the forgiveness, healing and peace of the Lord. Having experienced Jesus' peace and forgiveness, we then become those who can help others unlock situations that need forgiveness and healing. We become proclaimers of hope. The following steps are part of the teaching that is given to couples in the Retrouvaille process.

Steps to Forgiveness... *(It is helpful to recall an incident)*

	WHEN I AM HURT	WHEN YOU ARE HURT
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	The hurt I feel is...	Can I listen while you tell me about your hurt?
ACCEPTANCE	Can I accept that I am hurt or do I want to tell myself that it doesn't matter?	Can I accept that you are hurt or do I want to tell you that you don't hurt?
MAKING THE DECISION TO FORGIVE	Sharing my hurt with you, can I forgive you and let go?	Acknowledging and accepting your hurt, can you forgive me for my behavior and can I forgive myself?
HEALING AND RENEWING OUR RELATIONSHIP	Now that I have entered into the process of forgiveness, I am no longer nursing my hurt feeling. I am letting go of being a victim of resentments and mistrust.	Healing means I act forgiven, let go of my guilt, change my behavior and focus on our relationship.

What is Retrouvaille?

Retrouvaille is a Christian peer ministry that is a lifeline for troubled marriages. Retrouvaille helps couples put the pieces of their relationship back together. Retrouvaille, pronounced "re-tr^o-v^o♣", is a French word for "rediscovery".

Who Comes: Couples attend who are struggling, separated or divorced.

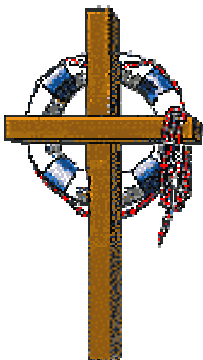
The only requirement is a sincere desire to build a stable, loving marriage.

Time Commitment: There is a weekend experience and a three month follow up process consisting of twelve sessions.

Content: The weekend process helps couples re-establish communication and gain insights into themselves. The follow up sessions help participants apply their insights and skills in their marriage relationship.

Format: The program is facilitated by a priest and three married couples. These couples offer hope as they talk about what they have experienced and learned in their marriage journey. Participant couples only share between themselves.

Follow Up: The twelve presentations provide the time, framework and place to continue applying the skills and insights learned during the weekend.



RESOURCES FOR YOU

More Information about Retrouvaille:

Brochures are available at the Nashville office:

lvancamp@glenmary.org or
(615)256-1900x108 or

www.helpourmarriage.com or

call Retrouvaille of Louisville:
800.470.2230

Finding Your Way to Forgiveness

A time of prayer and reflection allowing parishioners to examine their beliefs and practices as forgiving people. How can we better proclaim the Good News of God's forgiving love?

Contact: ldudas@glenmary.org
or (615) 256-1900x111