

A person is seen from behind, sitting on the edge of a boat on a calm lake. The sun is setting between two mountain ranges, and its light reflects on the water. The sky is a soft blue. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

DAILY
INSPIRATIONS
for
DIVORCED
CATHOLICS

TOP 30
Reader
Favorites

VINCE FRESE

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DAILY INSPIRATIONS FOR DIVORCED CATHOLICS

Top 30 Reader Favorites

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The Holy Spirit for His inspiration.

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*My mom for her hard work in editing, compiling and scheduling
the Daily Inspirations.*

*To the many divorced Catholics that I have been privileged to
encourage and guide over the years. You all are an endless source of
inspiration and hope.*

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INTRODUCTION

I never expected to be writing this — or anything else for that matter. You see, I have always considered myself a “math person.” In school, you either were good in math or good in English, but rarely both. I was the guy that was good in math, and anything to do with writing or grammar was like having a root canal. The many positive responses I have received over the years to the *Daily Inspirations* is proof positive that God really does equip the called.

My response to the compliments I receive for the *Inspirations* is to give credit to the Holy Spirit. And that is not just lip service; He truly is the one that inspires me. He takes my life experience, combines it with the truth and wisdom of our Catholic faith, and—presto!—*Daily Inspirations* pour forth. There is no other way I can explain it.

I have been encouraged by many of the *Inspiration* readers to put them into book form. Well, here is my first attempt to compile them into something other than individual emails you find in your Inbox each morning. These were (somewhat) scientifically selected based on the open rates for each *Inspiration*. I am sure there is a more statistically accurate way of selecting them, but this will have to do for now. Maybe one day I will forget statistics and simply select all of them and put them in book form. Who knows...

My prayer for you is that each of these *Inspirations* is a steppingstone down your path to recovering from divorce and claiming the abundant life you were created to live. May each one give you a spark of hope that lights the path ahead of you. And most importantly, may these *Inspirations* help you to more fully learn—and live—your Catholic faith. It is in doing so that you are brought into direct contact with the Divine Physician, Jesus Christ, the source of all healing and renewal. As I often say, “If you have to go through a divorce, thank God you are Catholic!”

Vince Frese
March 19, 2015
Feast of St. Joseph

Day 1

BE NOT AFRAID

ONE OF THE MOST COMMON REACTIONS to divorce is fear. That is very understandable. Who wouldn't be scared if their entire life came crashing in around them? The problem with fear is not being scared, that's normal. The problem is acting on fear. That's when fear becomes a lousy strategy.

Here is a better strategy: hope. Hope is not about ignoring the reality of being afraid. It is not some mind-psych game you play to pretend you are not afraid. Hope is acknowledging your fear and then making a decision to totally trust God. It is putting the fear into God's hands and allowing Him to carry it for you, relieving you of the burden. The fundamental ingredient of hope is trust. It is about trusting that God has not, and never will, abandon you. It is trusting that He is walking with you through this extremely painful, lonely, and discouraging time in your life. It is trusting that He really does want you to have an abundance of peace and joy, and that He has a great plan for you to get it—even though you have no idea what that plan is. Focusing on that really does help to move past the fear of the present and look forward to a very positive, hopeful, future.

We rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us.

—Romans 5: 3-5



Day 2

TAKE HEART!

IN ANCIENT TIMES, lepers were considered “unclean” and were the outcasts of society. They were socially ostracized and forced to live separated from the community. Sadly, it is not uncommon to feel the same way after going through a divorce as a Catholic. You may feel “unclean” and unworthy to participate in your faith. This is made worse by the condescending stares as you walk into Mass alone, or by people who you thought were friends now ignoring you. Being divorced and Catholic can make you feel like a modern day leper.

Take heart! Jesus reaches out to you just like he did the lepers of old, full of mercy and compassion. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus, filled with compassion, hears the leper’s plea and immediately heals him (Mark 1:40-42). Jesus offers the same compassion and healing for you. When you are feeling isolated and stained by divorce, cry out to Jesus. Ask him to show mercy and compassion to you and expect him to work miracles in your life. He will! He knows your pain and your shame. He also knows that you were made in the image of His father and that you are wonderful and good, no matter what this world does to you. Reach out to Jesus. He will touch you, heal you, and restore you to the fullness of life.

Moved with compassion, Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, “I do choose. Be made clean!” —Mark 1:41

RECOVERY



Day 3

ANGELS

IF GOD REALLY LOVES ME, WHERE IS HE now when I need him the most?” That was the thought that ran through my mind often during those first weeks and months when my divorce hit. Sure, I read over and over in the Gospels how God will never abandon me. How even the hairs on my head are numbered. How he feeds the birds and I am so much more important to him than birds. And how he will give me rest. I so wanted to believe all that, but my reality frankly was very different. I often felt very alone—even abandoned.

As I look back on those dark days, I now realize that God did not abandon me, far from it. While he didn't show up physically at my door step offering to take care of me, what he did do was send his angels. People started appearing in my life that I either did not know, or had not seen in a long time, ready to help. I had a woman from my kids' school suddenly start to drop dinner by once a week. An old friend called out-of-the-blue and offered to help me with the kids. People at work started to pick up my slack when I had to be out for all the court proceedings. A dear friend made it a point to stop by once a week and take me out to lunch and patiently listen to my endless ranting. Then the emails and letters of encouragement started to pour in. No, God did not abandon me. He revealed his incredible mercy by sending his legions of angels to me in the form of all these people to look after me and walk with me in my darkest days. In all my pain, I just didn't recognize it. Keep trusting in God, he is sure to send angels your way. My bet is that he already has.

For he commands his angels with regard to you, to guard you wherever you go.
—Psalm 91:11

FAITH



Day 4

LIES, LIES AND MORE LIES!

I DROPPED THE LETTER IN DISBELIEF onto the kitchen counter. It was a copy of an affidavit that had just been filed with the court by my former spouse's attorney. It was full of out-and-out lies about me. I had come to expect the torrent of falsehoods coming from my former spouse, so that was not what shocked me. What shocked me was that it was from one of my former in-laws! I hung my head in disbelief as I tried to gather my bearings. It was not going to be a good day.

Be ready for the ugliness of legal maneuvering and one-up-man-ship that divorce proceedings invariably become. It is a fight to the finish, often using any means just to "win." You will be attacked, rest assured. When it happens, draw courage and strength to withstand the assaults by standing firmly on the rock of God's promise to protect you from slander and falsehood. He knows the truth and He will use it as a shield of protection that no mortal man can penetrate. Remind yourself that each time one of the arrows of deceit come flying your way.

You have preserved me from the scourge of the slanderous tongue, and from the lips of those who went over to falsehood. You were with me against those who rise up against me; You have rescued me according to your abundant mercy from the snare of those who look for my downfall, and from the power of those who seek my life. —Sirach 51:2-3

FAITH



Day 5

KISS OF JESUS

“**I CAN’T TAKE IT ANYMORE!**” were the words that tumbled out of my mouth as I sat defeated in front of a very young-looking priest. I had really been suffering from the new reality of my divorce. Well, what I heard next shocked me. He said, “Your suffering is actually helping you heal from your divorce. When you suffer, you become more like Christ.” I just looked him with a mixture of relief and surprise. Suddenly my suffering had a purpose.

Turns out, he was so right. From that day forward, while my suffering did not immediately decrease, the weight of it did. Years later, when I ran across the following quote from Mother Teresa, I realized that I had experienced the “kiss of Jesus.” May your suffering bring you close enough to Jesus that he can kiss you, too!

Suffering will never be completely absent from our lives. So don't be afraid of suffering. Your suffering is a great means of love, if you make use of it, especially if you offer it for peace in the world. Suffering in and of itself is useless, but suffering that is shared with the passion of Christ is a wonderful gift and a sign of love. Christ's suffering proved to be a gift, the greatest gift of love, because through the suffering our sins were atoned for. Suffering, pain, sorrow, humiliation, feelings of loneliness, are nothing but the kiss of Jesus, a sign that you have come so close that he can kiss you (No Greater Love).

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RECOVERY



Day 6

SET FREE

I HAVE A FACEBOOK FRIEND who went through a divorce several years ago. I finally had to block her posts because every comment was tinged with anger and bitterness. Sadly, she is a prisoner to pain of the past she has bundled up and drags around with her everyday. It has become a heavy burden that weighs her down and robs her (and everyone around her) of peace and joy. The lines on her face speak to the lines of hate etched on her heart.

In her mind she is justified because of the injustice done to her by her former spouse. The reality is she will be trapped in the past, and all its pain, until she lets go of it. The only way to do that is to forgive. Forgiveness, at its core, is the letting go of the claim you have on your right to be angry and bitter toward the person who hurt you. It is not about what they do or don't deserve; it's about you. It is the only way you will ever heal from the wounds of your past. Write it down, underscore it, and highlight it. Begin today to pray for the grace you need to forgive those who hurt you and reap the peace and joy tomorrow of a prisoner who has been set free.

The song, *Forgiveness*, by Matthew West captures this truth quite well. If you are struggling with forgiveness, its worth reading these lyrics closely:

Forgiveness

It's the hardest thing to give away

And the last thing on your mind today

It always goes to those who don't deserve



*It's the opposite of how you feel
When the pain they caused is just too real
Takes everything you have to say the word*

Forgiveness

*It's always angers own worst enemy
Even when the jury and the judge
Say you've got a right to hold a grudge
It's the whisper in your ear saying, "set it free"*

Forgiveness

*Lord, show me how to love the unlovable
Teach me how to reach the unreachable
Help me now to do the impossible*

Forgiveness

*It can clear the bitterness away
It can even set a prisoner free
There is no end to what its power can do*

*So, let it go and be amazed
By what you see through eyes of Grace
The prisoner that it really frees is you*

Forgiveness

(c) Matthew West See more at: <http://matthewwest.com/the-stories/the-story-forgiveness/>

Then Peter approaching asked him, "Lord, if my brother sins against me, how often must I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus answered, "I say to you, not seven times but seventy-seven times." —Matthew 18:21-22

RECOVERY



Day 7

NO PLAN B

THE YEAR OR TWO AFTER MY DIVORCE was final was a very confusing time. I sure did my share of fumbling around as I tried, often in vain, to figure out this new life I had been thrust into. I would like to say I learned quickly, and I was able to promptly bring order and clarity into my life. But, that would be a lie. Usually, I would act like a spoiled brat with God, demanding that He take away my every pain and grant me my every desire. I often felt like I was in a tug-o-war with God. Pulling hard to get my way, and fighting just as hard against what was clearly His way.

If this sounds like you, remember this: God only has one plan for us—Plan A. He created us to fulfill that plan. He has no Plan B. When things are difficult, or we would rather just set our own course, we want there to be a Plan B. This plan is easier, more comfortable, and if the truth be known, serves primarily to make us happy. And there's the rub. When we run our plan instead of God's, while it might make us happy, and reduce the pain in our lives, it is only temporary. Lasting peace and joy only comes from surrendering our life to live God's plan for us. Anything else is just Plan B.

“My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.”

—Matthew 26:42

RECOVERY



Day 8

WHEN NOT TO COMPROMISE

IN AN EFFORT TO APPEASE my not-so-religious spouse, I had to temper my enthusiasm for my Catholic Faith. One compromise I made was to delegate Mary to the back yard during the years of my marriage. She had been placed in a beautiful garden, but I always felt sorry that I had felt compelled to keep her hidden from the public eye. After my divorce, moving Our Lady to the front yard symbolized a promise that I made myself about my treasured Catholic Faith. I will never again compromise my faith.

So many of us have had to compromise in so many ways regarding the practice of our Catholic Faith. Perhaps our husband or wife was not Catholic and did not understand or appreciate the beautiful traditions and commitments that we adhere to. Perhaps our husband or wife was Catholic, but insisted on picking and choosing the areas of our faith that they desired to comply with, forcing us to try to keep the peace rather than insist on the truth. Well, if you can relate to this, now's your chance to join me in my resolution to never compromise your faith again!

There is a certain sense of relief and joy when we are able to bring Christ and His Mother to the front door of our hearts. There is freedom and joy when we can feel unencumbered by negativity when we teach our children the beautiful traditions of our faith. It is exciting to be able to reclaim what was always rightfully yours - the GIFT of your Catholic Faith. It is a very comforting truth that we belong to something bigger - even bigger than all of the problems that we



are facing in our day-to-day lives. We, and our children, belong to the Universal Catholic Church that does not compromise and will never waver in its love for you and your children. So be proud to be Catholic and dust off your statues, rosaries, and treasured traditions. Bring it on!

“Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.”—Matthew 10: 32-33

FAITH



Day 9

JUST NOT MY TIME

“**O**F COURSE I WANT INTIMACY. Every man and every woman does...I look in the mirror each morning and I tell myself, it’s just not my time. God’s got someone out there for me, it’s just not my time.” says Kerri, a 40-ish, divorced, single parent appearing in the Voices of Hope DVD. When sharing her attitude toward dating and intimacy, Kerri, whether she realized it or not, presented a very hopeful attitude. Kerri is not denying her desire for meeting someone and being married. She says she wants that. What is refreshing about her attitude is her placing complete trust in God for the person He chooses for her, and His timeline. That is hope in action: acknowledging her own desires and then placing the matter completely in God’s hands with a willingness to wait patiently and joyfully for whatever outcome God wants.

For many of us, myself included, this is difficult to do. We want to fix our lives NOW. We are impatient. We think we know best. Unfortunately, many times we are wrong. We need to step back and remind ourselves that God is God, and we are not. He knows the deepest desires of our hearts, and He knows exactly what is best for us. If we are able to believe that, then hope flows naturally. We let go of our fears, our insecurities, and our self-created image of what our lives should be like. We entrust our lives to God. We relax. What follows is a deep peace and an abiding contentment. We are no longer consumed with our future and are free to live joyfully in the present.

But I trust in you, Lord; I say, “You are my God.” My destiny is in your hands.

—Psalm 31:15-16

DATING AND INTIMACY



Day 10

NORMAL AGAIN?

THE STRESS AND STRAIN OF DIVORCE is so intense. The emotional pain is overwhelming. It is a battle just to get through the day. You can't think straight. You walk around with a pit in your stomach. Often you are afraid of what the future will hold. You can't imagine a day when things will be "normal" again.

Here is a way to begin to offset the pain and regain some peace in your life. Think back to those times in your life when you were more carefree, when life was simple. What types of things did you really enjoy doing? How did you really enjoy spending your time? What hobbies did you have? What activities did you do? What music did you listen to? Pick one of these things and do it. Even if it brings you just one minute of peace in the midst of your turmoil, it is productive. The idea is to find that one thing that brings you peace and make that part of your daily routine. Not only will you find your anger will diminish, but those moments of peace will grow in duration and frequency.

Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it. The eyes of the Lord are directed toward the righteous and his ears toward their cry. —Psalm 34:15-16

RECOVERY



Day 11

PERFECT PRAYER

WHEN MY DIVORCE HIT, it was as if I was run over by a freight train. I hardly knew what hit me. I was confused, disoriented, and could barely think long enough to decide what color socks to wear. It was that bad.

My instinctual reaction was to turn to God. That was good. However, most of time I was so emotionally and physical exhausted, I could not put the words together to actually pray. It was just too hard. When I was able to muster the strength, I tended to be more consumed with saying the right words, than just letting God's presence comfort me.

If you can relate, here's a suggestion: pray the most simple, powerful, and perfect prayer there is by saying "Jesus." That's it. Say it fast, say it slow. Say it loud, say it soft. Say it once, say it over and over. It doesn't matter. Just saying the name of Jesus ushers in the full power of the Creator and all the angels and saints in Heaven to your aid. Try it the next time life overwhelms you and you find yourself at a loss for words.

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. —Philippians 2:9-11

FAITH



Day 12

RETRACE YOUR STEPS

ONLY BY LOOKING BACK can we see how far we have come. Of course, it takes a grand soul to be thankful for the struggle, itself, but it may be easier to be thankful for the positive things that have resulted from the struggle. Divorce is a detour from our plan for life. Yet, like any detour, we will experience things we might not have otherwise. Some of these things will be positive.

While it is true that divorce results in many negative experiences and painful changes, it is also true that in that rubble some gems can be found. Think and pray about it. Did you go back to school as a result of your divorce? Did you learn a new skill? Did you make a new friend that has helped you or added to your life in some positive way? Did you draw closer to your faith? Did you renew/repair an important family relationship? Are you seeing your family more often? Are you able to help other divorced people because of your experience? Looking back helps you gain perspective that there is always some good that comes out of something bad.

We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. —Romans 8:28

RECOVERY



Day 13

SILVER LINING

AS THE FOG OF EMOTIONAL PAIN was starting to lift from my divorce, I made an unexpected discovery: quiet time. Every other weekend the kids went off to their other parent. Initially, the house seemed eerily quiet after the kids left. But over time I came to really appreciate, even look forward to, having this time all to myself. I slept in, caught up on all the chores I did not have time to do while taking care of the kids, and I even spent time just on me.

It was during these weekends that I was really able to dig into my faith. I had the luxury of time and could spend hours reading scripture, going to Mass or adoration, praying, or singing my favorite Christian songs at the top of my lungs. I also had time to go and visit different churches and shrines, meet up with other Catholic friends for bible study and other church activities, and routinely go to reconciliation. As I reflect back, those weekends became my “mini-retreats” with Jesus. Being able to immerse myself in my faith really helped me draw close to Christ. In doing so, He was able to heal me. I look back on those times with great fondness. This one-on-one time with Christ, and the resulting deepening of my Catholic faith, was the silver lining that came out of the hurricane of my divorce. Take advantage of the extra time a divorce drops into your life and pursue Christ. He offers you a tranquil port in the midst of your storm.

By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and in trust shall be your strength. —Isaiah 30:15

RECOVERY



Day 14

MIRACLE IN DISGUISE

IBET THE GUY (Mr. Murphy?) who came up with Murphy's Law went through a divorce. How else could he have known how to so perfectly describe what going through a divorce is like? Ol' Murphy said: "Everything that can go wrong will go wrong at the absolute worst possible time." Yup, that sounds like divorce.

Well, guess who else can totally relate to us? The Blessed Mother. The Church celebrates with high esteem the Solemnity of the Annunciation of the Lord each year. This is to recognize the miracle of Mary becoming pregnant with Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit. Something tells me that while Mary was obedient to God's plan, I'm not sure she was dancing a jig for joy right after Gabriel departed. She was not officially married to Joseph, and now she was pregnant—and Joseph was not even the father. I wouldn't be surprised if she was saying to herself, "Why this?! Why now?! This is not at all what I expected!" And, yet, we know that from that singular event, the greatest good ever known to mankind resulted: Jesus.

The next time something happens that you were not expecting, and it seems like it is happening at the worst possible time, think of Mary and find comfort. God's plans, and his timing, are often very different from ours. What can seem like a catastrophe in the making can actually be a miracle in disguise.

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." —Luke 1:38

FAITH



Day 15

FOLLOW THE PEACE

THE MORE YOU OPEN YOURSELF UP TO GOD, the more He, through the Holy Spirit, will guide your heart. The Holy Spirit is your advocate, your guide, in daily living.

The more you work to center your life on Christ and doing God's will, the more sensitized to a feeling of peace you will become. Let that feeling of peace, or the lack of it, be your guide. As a general rule, when you are doing God's will you will find peace. If you are not, peace will be fleeting or non-existent. While it is true that God leads you through difficult times to form you and strengthen your faith, through prayer and reflection you will come to know if the struggle is leading you closer or further away from God. Follow the peace.

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid." — John 14:27

RECOVERY



Day 16

YOU ARE SO WORTH IT!

LIKE CLOCKWORK, my mom would change the sheets every Thursday. I remember how good it felt crawling into bed on Thursday evenings. Looking back, I am sure I did not appreciate that as much as I should have, or realize the level of effort it took to make that happen every week. I do now. It is one of the ways that I know I was unconditionally loved. Isn't it funny, it is not the vacations, or cars we drove, or material things we owned that affirm that I was loved. It is the simple, consistent acts of love like clean sheets every week and home cooked meals every night.

To this day, I draw my security in life from the fact that my childhood was filled with those simple acts of love. My parents' consistent love for me reaffirmed to me everyday that I was worth it. I was worth the sacrifice it took to have clean sheets, hot meals, and the many other things my parents did for me every single day. Without using words, they shouted everyday "YOU ARE WORTH IT!" Nothing, and nobody, can ever take away the deep sense of security and self-worth that my parents gave me by their acts of selfless love. I carry it with me everyday and it is the foundation of my life.

One of the great tragedies of divorce is that it robs children of their sense of security. What was once routine and commonplace is often completely disrupted in the blur of two different households, two different routines, and two different sets of values--not to mention the intense emotional trauma. It's no wonder that kids are often left questioning their importance and self-worth. The best thing you can



do for your children (no matter what their age) is to “shout” by your actions every day that they are so worth your time, attention, and sacrifice. While you can’t change the fact that your children have suffered through a divorce, you can insure that the message ringing in their mind, heart, and soul for the rest of their lives is “YOU ARE SO WORTH IT!”

I urge you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your spiritual worship. —Romans 12:1

RECOVERY



Day 17

WANT TO BE HAPPY?

“I’M MISERABLE” WAS THE REASON I got from my former spouse when it was clear there were some serious problems in our marriage. It seems to be the all too common reason why people end their marriage. They are not “happy.” It has become so common that many people accept it as a legitimate reason to file for divorce. It’s not. The general thinking is that one’s spouse is responsible for providing happiness, and if they don’t deliver, toss them out, and go find someone who does. Unfortunately, that very thinking will pretty much insure that you won’t be happy.

Happiness is one of those things that the harder you try to find it, the less likely you ever will. You see, happiness can’t be delivered to you from someone else. Happiness comes from the inside; it starts with you. It is what you experience when you love others. Not romantic love, per se, but the giving of yourself for the benefit of someone else. Want to be happy? Make other people happy first. This is a guaranteed recipe for personal happiness.

*Happy are those who love you,
and happy are those who rejoice in your peace.
Happy too are all who grieve
over all your afflictions,
For they will rejoice over you
and behold all your joy forever.*

—Tobit 13:14

RECOVERY



Day 18

TRAINING YOUR EX

I COULD SEE THE FRUSTRATION and apprehension on Chloe's face as she was telling me about her latest travail with her former spouse. Chloe was a participant in our Journey of Hope Program and had just gone through a divorce during the past year. She was really struggling with creating a cooperative, working relationship with her ex. It seemed that no matter what she did, her ex would undermine her efforts. The tension between them was just too high to allow any trust to develop. The result was a very rigid working relationship, with both parties staking out their territory and not giving an inch. This made it very difficult for them to co-parent their three small children.

My advice to her was to put her ex into training. She looked at me with a rather puzzled expression. I went on to explain that rarely does matching fire with fire work. It just makes a bigger fire. Instead, she should throw water on the fire by taking the lead in the relationship by treating her former spouse how she wants to be treated. She grimaced. Yes, I know, much easier said than done. Being kind and considerate toward your ex is often the last thing you want to do. But so worth it. This means taking the lead in being flexible and cooperative. If you know your ex has a conflict and can't have the kids on their weekend, offer to swap weekends. Offer to meet halfway to pickup/drop off the kids. If your ex owes you money, offer to work out a payment plan. If your kids or friends start trash-talking your ex, stand up for him/



her. The more you are able to show your ex the cooperation, flexibility and respect you desire, the more likely you are to get it from them. Pray for the strength and courage you need to live the Golden Rule.

Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. —Matthew 7:12

RECOVERY



Day 19

DON'T SETTLE

I KNOW A WONDERFUL, GODLY WOMAN who was married for over 30 years to a great man who loved her very much and treated her like a queen. One day, her husband died suddenly. As you would expect, she struggled greatly with the loss. Eventually, driven by loneliness, she started dating again. She met a man that was nothing like her former husband. He treated her very poorly. He disrespected her, spoke down to her, and berated her for being disorganized. She justified staying in the relationship because being with him was “better than being alone”. They dated for a couple of years and one day he came in and tossed an engagement ring at her, saying, “Here, this is what you want, isn’t it?” Even though she was very hurt, she accepted the heartless proposal.

How can this happen? How can a woman who has everything going for her end up with such a dud? Because she settled. She settled for a heartless warm body just so she would not have to be alone the rest of her life. Her fear overtook her good judgment, and the result is a lifetime of emptiness and regret. The sad truth is that this scenario is all too common. Many people as they get older, feel like they have little or no options. They (wrongly) feel that they are too old, physically unattractive, or simply undesirable. They tell themselves, “Who would want me?”, and this causes them to make rash decisions with their life.

If they only knew that Christ wants them. He wants to spend time with them and take away their loneliness. He is pursuing their heart. He yearns for them to know how perfect and desirable they are to him. He wants them to know that



he uses the alone times in their life to heal them, teach them, and prepare them for the great things he has planned. When people settle, they short circuit this great plan. Don't settle. Put your trust in the Lord and let this trust give you the hope you need to endure the difficult and lonely times. Through this trust, He will reveal his amazing plan for you. And if that plan includes another person to share your life with, you can bet they are going to someone as perfect as you!

For I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans of welfare and not for evil, to you a future and a hope. — Jeremiah 29:11

DATING AND INTIMACY



Day 20

WHATEVER IT TAKES

IVIVIDLY REMEMBER TELLING MY BROTHER, who was accompanying me to an important custody hearing, that I was willing to do “whatever it takes” to maintain contact with my children should the judge not rule in my favor. And I meant it. I was even willing to quit my very well-paying job and take a teaching position at their school if that meant I could maintain routine contact with them. My heart was already breaking from the ordeal that they were going through, and I knew further disruptions would only bring more heartache into their young, tender lives.

Divorce often puts us in very difficult situations, situations that we never dreamed we would have to deal with or confront. The difficulty is magnified one hundred-fold if it involves our children. Christ has a very special place in His heart for children. He expects us to do whatever it takes to protect them. Every sacrifice you make for your children is an act of love that breathes life into them and leads to holiness. When grappling with issues regarding your children, look to Christ as your model for sacrificial love. He did whatever it took. Pray for the graces you need to do the same.

Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened round his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea. —Matthew 18:5-6

SINGLE PARENTING



Day 21

FAUX TRUST

OFTEN, I FIND MYSELF ASKING OUR LORD to help me with a problem, or to grant a certain outcome. I put all my trust in Him that He will grant my request. After all, I know that He loves me and wants what is best for me. Who better to know what is best for me, than me, right? Wrong. Putting my trust in God that He will do what I want, is not real trust. It is what I call “faux trust.” It is easy to twist in our minds our understanding of God’s omnipotent love into thinking that we can bank on Him to come through in our every request.

Real trust is putting our difficulties, problems, and circumstances into God’s hands and trusting Him with the outcome--whatever that might be. It is the not knowing, yet being ready to accept whatever God wants, that is the real deal when it comes to trust. Often, it is much more difficult, and much less natural, for us to really trust. We much prefer God to be our genie who can grant our wishes. However, when we trust God with HIS outcome, our life begins to take on God’s design, instead of our own. And, that, is always going to lead to abundant peace and joy.

Then all who trust in you will be glad and forever shout for joy. —Psalm 5:12

FAITH



Day 22

EVEN JESUS NEEDED HELP

I HAVE A FIERCELY INDEPENDENT STREAK IN ME. I have come to understand that this is more often a weakness than a strength because it is motivated by my pride. When I was facing a difficult challenge due to my divorce, I tended to focus only on what I could do to overcome it. I often struggled mightily. If only I would have reached out for help more often.

Even Jesus needed help carrying his cross. Remember that. When you are facing difficult challenges, reach out for help. First to Jesus with prayers of strength and courage, and then to those God has surrounded you with. Our communities are one way that God loves us. Allow Him to love you through others and you are sure to catch a glimpse of His loving face in the eyes and smiles of those He sent to help you.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and God of all encouragement, who encourages us in our every affliction, so that we may be able to encourage those who are in any affliction with the encouragement with which we ourselves are encouraged by God. —2 Corinthians 1:3-4

RECOVERY



Day 23

KEY INGREDIENT

WHEN PRESENTED WITH SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS, many of us tend to consider only what we can do on our own to solve the problem. That is a very narrow perspective that has a very limiting result. This is what happened with the apostles. Jesus told them to “give them something to eat” and they freaked out. They were only thinking of what they could do, totally ignoring Jesus being God and His infinite power. The proper solution to the problem was to feed everyone. The only way to get from problem to a real, lasting, resolution was to turn to Christ and depend on him to make up for what they lacked. They were thinking small and it very significantly limited their power. Once they bring Christ into the situation, the impossible became possible.

Christ is the key ingredient to making big things happen. Remember that. Otherwise, you will tend to think small and your problems/challenges are never properly resolved. Instead, think big and turn to Christ to make up the difference for what you lack. Expect him to show up. He so wants to!

Jesus said to them, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.” They replied, “We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.” And he said, “Bring them here to me.”—Matthew 14:16-18

FAITH



Day 24

HIGH ALERT

I REMEMBER WHEN I WENT THROUGH MY DIVORCE I was on “high alert” all the time. There were so many things happening all at once, not the least of which was a spouse that mounted a rather nasty legal battle. It seemed the more I did, the more I had to do. Compound that with being thrust into life as a single parent, and to say I was busy, was a gross understatement. It was all I could do to keep my nose above water. I was constantly doing, doing, doing. I felt like if I stopped to take a break, the many plates I was spinning would all come crashing down. I was stressed to the max.

I was like Martha in Luke’s Gospel (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was so burdened doing the many tasks that needed to be done that she failed to take time out for Jesus--the God of the Universe--when He was right there in her midst. Mary, her sister, on the other hand, recognized Christ and rested at his feet taking in all that he was saying. As a result, Mary was much more relaxed and at peace. We can all learn something from Mary. When life is hectic and starting to feel out of control, nestle up next to Jesus by reading Scripture, going to Eucharistic Adoration, or attending Mass. He is guaranteed to relieve your anxiety and stress.

“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her.” —Luke 10:41-42

SINGLE PARENTING



Day 25

BE HEALED

ONE DAY, I WAS AT A WATER PARK and the woman walking in front of me had a slight limp. I noticed a pretty significant scar running from her mid-calf down to her foot. While it was an obvious reminder of some past injury, it did not hold her back. She was enjoying herself completely, taking advantage of the daring slides and tumultuous wave pools.

I think this is a good analogy for what it is like to recover from divorce. The woman at the water park had been seriously injured. She sought out a doctor to help heal her because she could not heal herself. In doing so, she was able to overcome her injury and resume a full, normal life. The same is true for divorce. A serious emotional injury has occurred, and you should not try and heal yourself. Instead, you should seek help. If you don't, more than likely you won't heal properly leaving you with a lifelong burden of emotional pain.

Who is the person that can help you heal from the trauma of divorce? Jesus. The Gospels are full of stories of Jesus going from town to town healing countless people of their infirmities. It was one of his most visible expressions of love, and it never failed to radically change those He healed (and just as often, those who witnessed it, too.)

So, how do you get this Great Healer to heal you from the emotional wounds of divorce? Simple. Get more Jesus into your life. And how do you do that? Well, as



Catholics it's actually more straightforward than you might think: the Eucharist. Christ is physically present in the Eucharist. By receiving the Eucharist, either in communion or by adoration, you are bringing the Great Healer into your life. The more you receive Him, the more His healing power can work. The power of the Eucharist should not be underestimated. Allow Jesus to heal you through this most visible expression of His love. Receive Him and adore Him as often as you can.

Everyone in the crowd sought to touch him because power came forth from him and healed them all. —Luke 6:19

RECOVERY



Day 26

STUCK

I HOPE HE ROTTS IN HELL!” the woman (let’s call her Marge) sitting in front of me said, her voice filled with bitterness. I sat and listened attentively for the next fifteen minutes as she described in vivid detail all the nasty things her ex did and all the pain he brought into her life. Listening to her, I thought that she just went through a divorce. I was wrong. She went on to tell me that she was divorced over twenty years prior. The lines and wrinkles etched on her face spoke of the many years of anger and resentment she was still carrying around.

Marge was stuck. Her failing to let go and to forgive was causing her to relive the painful events of twenty years ago—everyday. She was stuck in the past, and it was robbing her of peace, joy, and even her physical health.

Our Lord gave us a roadmap to follow when we are wronged or persecuted. He taught us to pray for those who persecute us and to forgive them. While this can be very difficult, it is essential to freeing ourselves of our painful past and claiming the great life God created us for. Start by praying everyday for the grace you need to let go of the resentment and to forgive. Forgiveness is a process that takes time. Rely on the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Reconciliation to give you strength. Don’t give up! It is the key to your emotional, spiritual, and physical well-being.

“You have heard this it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you.”

—Matthew 5:43-44

RECOVERY



Day 27

HITTING THE WALL

I OFTEN EQUATE GOING THROUGH A DIVORCE to being in a severe car accident. In both cases you emerge very badly battered and wounded, one emotionally and the other physically. Just as it takes a significant amount of time to heal from the physical injuries of a car accident, it also takes significant time to heal emotionally from a divorce. I did not realize this when I jumped quickly into a relationship within weeks of my divorce being final. About six months into this relationship, I hit the wall. I simply could not give the amount of energy, sacrifice, and love that the relationship required. After much internal struggle, I realized the right thing to do was to end the relationship.

Why did this happen? By all accounts, the person I was in the relationship with was a good person and a solid Catholic. This happened because I was not emotionally healed enough to love again. When we love, we give of ourselves. This means we have to have something to actually give. Going through a divorce drains us of our capacity to love. All the energy we typically would expend to love someone else, must be turned inward to help in our own healing process. Until we are healed, we have nothing left to give to someone else. This is why it is so important to not enter into a relationship until receiving an annulment. The time and effort it takes to go through the annulment process is the key to healing from divorce. Think of it as physical therapy for the soul. Christ walks with us when we become vulnerable and bring all the details of our life and our marriage to His Church. In the end, He will heal us and we emerge renewed, stronger, and with a



clearer perspective on ourselves and relationships. All of these are key ingredients to being a loving person to ourselves, to our family, and to others.

Though my flesh and my heart fail, God is the rock of my heart, my portion forever. —Psalm 73:26

DATING AND INTIMACY



Day 28

GOD'S FAVORITES

WHEN MY DIVORCE WAS FINAL, my kids were all under the age of ten, with my youngest going into kindergarten. I was now a single parent responsible for raising these little kids, while trying to piece my life back together, and running a demanding business. Life was stressful, to say the least.

Since my kids had already been through so much turmoil, I really wanted their lives to be as stress-free and peaceful as possible. One way I wanted to do that was to put them on the school bus in the morning and be waiting for them at the bus stop in the afternoon. I believed that my being there for them each day would make them feel more secure during this difficult time. I remember that first year begging God for “just one year” of being there for them. Yes, I had to make sacrifices, but with God’s grace and help, I was able to keep my commitment. Seeing them waving goodbye through the bus window in the morning, and their smiling faces coming down the bus steps in the afternoon, made all the sacrifices worth it.

The following school year, I thanked God for allowing me the bus stop privilege, and once again begged Him for “just one more year.” He lovingly granted my request. Each year I would repeat my prayer, and each year God would fulfill it. As I reflect back on this, it is one of the things I am most grateful for as it helped smooth the transition back to normalcy for the kids.

What I realize now is how totally dependent on God I was. The odds were so



stacked against me to make this happen. The only way was for God to have intervened. I can now see how He moved in my life every day to help me and the kids when we needed it most. It was almost as if he singled me out to love and help in His special way. I felt like His favorite. Truth be known, we are all His favorites, and He anxiously wants to bless each of us in abundance. No matter how difficult, or overwhelming, your circumstances, know with all your heart that you have a God who loves without limits and who yearns to help you. All you need to do is ask and trust in His abundant love.

And I tell you, ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. —Luke 11:9

Day 29

COWORKER

IVIVIDLY REMEMBER GETTING THE CALL from my divorce attorney telling me that my spouse was seeking full custody of our children. That shook me to my core and threw me into full-on crisis mode. I did not want to lose my children! Like any good Catholic I began to storm heaven with my many prayers begging God to help me. And pray I did. I prayed rosaries, novenas, devotionals--everything I could think of. In my mind the more I prayed the better. Surely, I thought, praying all four mysteries of the rosary was better than just the daily mystery. And, a Divine Mercy chaplet morning, noon, and night was better than just one. And so this went on for several weeks. Then, one day my attorney called. He asked me if I had put together the affidavits from my witnesses testifying to my ability to parent my children. I was now even more panicked. While I had been praying like crazy, I had failed to do much else.

When we are in crisis it is typical for us to fall on our knees and beg for God's help. Most of us, me included, are not bashful to ask God for help. We are filled with hope that God will miraculously come to our rescue and put an end to our misery. But prayer is only half of the equation. God wants us to put our faith into action. We must pray and act. Certainly, prayer is an essential ingredient to living our life of faith, yet, God gave us free will and many talents to use in conjunction with our prayers. We are coworkers with Christ working together to fulfill His plan. So, if you are feeling overwhelmed, in crisis, or downright



frustrated, keep praying, but be sure you are getting busy working on your problems, too. Jesus is a faithful partner who will magnify all your efforts and make them bear fruit.

You see that faith was active along with his works, and faith was completed by the works. —James 2:22

FAITH



Day 30

REENTRY

IT WAS A SUNDAY EVENING, and the scene at my dinner table was anything but pleasant. The kids were all snapping at each other, had a hard time sitting still, and were picking at the dinner I had spent the better part of the afternoon preparing. The kids just got back from a weekend with my ex and I was really looking forward to seeing them and spending some quality time together before the bath-books-bed routine started. That was not to be. Unfortunately, this seemed to be the way it was whenever they came back from their weekend visits.

I came to realize that the kids' behavior was driven by how they were feeling. Each time they would come back home from a visitation weekend would be a reminder to them of the reality that their parents were divorced. While they could not express their feelings, they were grieving the loss of the intact family they once had. Now, their reality was one of separateness, distance, and disruption. Every time they came home forced them to confront this reality, grieve over it, and adjust to it all in a span of one or two hours before bedtime. This reentry into a situation that they didn't choose, or want, was so difficult for them. They were too young to put those feelings into words, so they would act them out in their agitated, unsettled behavior.

I learned to help them adjust with a few simple strategies. I would meet my ex at a neutral spot, usually a shopping center parking lot, to pick them up. The drive time home helped them begin to adjust. Since I picked them up on Sunday, we



would typically go to evening mass before heading home. This, too, would give them time to ease back into their normal routine. (And, hey, having received the Blessed Sacrament always helps a grieving heart!) Before they left for the weekend, and again on the way to pick them up, I would offer them up in prayer to the Blessed Mother. Place your kids under her loving care, and rest in knowing that their innocent hearts are protected from pain, and they will be given the graces they need to adjust and accept whatever life brings their way.

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary, that never was it known that anyone who fled to your protection, implored your help, or sought your intercession was left unaided. Inspired by this confidence, I fly unto you, O Virgin of virgins, my mother; to you do I come, before you I stand, sinful and sorrowful. O Mother of the Word Incarnate, despise not my petitions, but in your mercy hear and answer me. Amen. —Memorare

