

The Corporal Works of Mercy



Shelter the homeless



Feed the hungry



Visit the sick

In this Jubilee Year, may the Church echo the word of God that resounds strong & clear as a message and a sign of pardon, strength, aid, & love.

May she never tire of extending mercy, & be ever patient in offering compassion & comfort.

May the Church become the voice of every man & woman, and repeat confidently without end:

"Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old"
(Ps 25:6).

Pope Francis' proclamation of the Jubilee Year of Mercy
Divine Mercy Sunday, 2015

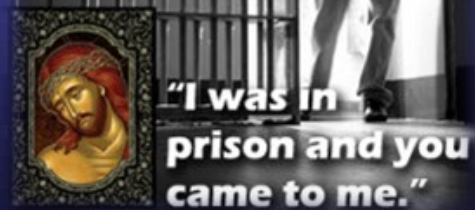


Clothe the naked



Bury the dead

Visit those in prison



Give drink to the thirsty

"Use your marriage as a place to extend the same grace and mercy that you have received from God."

Grace and Mercy in Marriage

Arrogance and a sense of entitlement fuel his behaviour. Eager to prove himself, he casts aside everything that he's been taught about right and wrong. He doesn't care who he hurts. No one's feelings matter but his.

Tired of the constraints of his life, he cuts the rope and sails away from home. His appetites drive him headlong toward women who have open arms, but no soul; desperate women who know how to take advantage of those who have no anchor.

He isn't alone in his journey. Numerous companions surround him in his revelry. They encourage him to forget about the people he's deserted back home. "Eat, drink, and be merry," is the clarion call that brings them together. Raucous laughter punctuates the night as fleshly appetites are fed.

The home he left behind is now filled with broken hearts, shattered spirits, and sleepless nights. As days turn into weeks and weeks into months, the candle of hope grows dimmer and dimmer until only a flicker remains.

Now stones with names like hurt, sadness, anger, resentment, and bitterness are being laid one at a time by the survivors, creating a wall of safety they can hide behind.

All the while the grains of sand in the man's hourglass of life drain away. And time, the force that often strips the veneer from life, finds this arrogant man living a hollow life. Layer by layer his life disappears – the fun, the laughter, the women, the friends, the sleek-polished look, the pride, even the appetites that had fueled his journey. Until there is nothing left but a hand-to-mouth existence.

Looking around, he finds his companions have four legs instead of two. Their pleasure and excitement is to wallow in filth. On his all fours, he lines up cheek to cheek with these swine and eats from their trough.

What hope is there for such a man?

What will be his end?

Can his life be salvaged?

Can he regain his family?

From behind their wall of safety, the family he has deserted yells in anger, "But what does he *deserve*?"

That question is easy to answer. He deserves exactly what he has reaped, and more. He deserves to be miserable, to hurt, to feel the



pressure of guilt on his chest like the foot of an elephant, to have regret haunt his sleepless nights, to be mocked and made fun of, to have the candle of hope blown out – all this and more.

What he does *not* deserve is a second chance. He

made his choice and he should suffer for it for the rest of his life.

In the dark of a moonless night, the smell of freshly baked bread unexpectedly drifts by him. The door of his emotional memory bank is flung open. He is flooded with feelings of peace, happiness, and contentment. His thoughts turn to home. But in two heartbeats those feelings evaporate and he realizes they were only a distant memory.

In the most desperate hour of his life, there is only thing that can rescue this man – the gift of grace and mercy.

Those fleeting feelings of home awaken something in him. He makes a decision. He will return to home and use those nine life changing words: *I was wrong; I am sorry; I love you*; hoping against hope that he will be received.

We are at a crossroads in this story.

If you were his family, and he came home to you, what would you do?

After erecting the protective stone wall between you and the offender, would you take it down? Could you take it down?

This may be the most difficult of all passages that marriages go through. The stakes are the highest and the consequences long lasting.

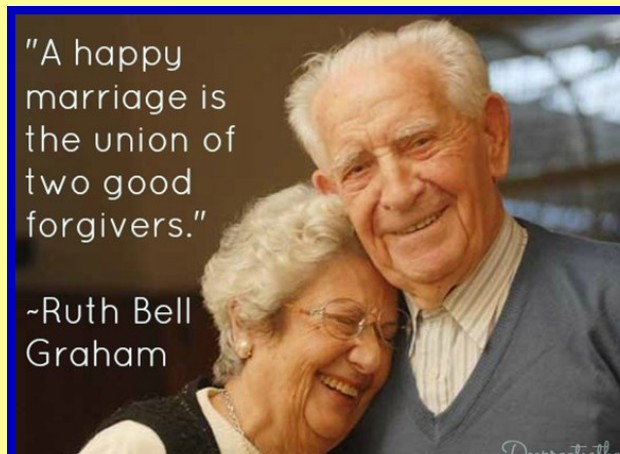
The story that I've shared is a retelling of a famous one. In most Bibles it is referred to as "**The Parable of the Prodigal Son.**" Luke 15.

In that story, the father chooses to give the lost son grace and mercy. The older brother refuses to.

So what would motivate someone to respond with the grace and mercy that this father gave his wayward son? Is it possible that the father's past life had taken him in directions and places he should not have gone? He knew what it was like to make a mistake. He may have experienced

"A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."

~Ruth Bell Graham



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eating with pigs, too. Maybe he had served time in a prison whose four walls are regret, guilt, grief, and despair.

Perhaps he had experienced the joy that comes from having his shackles removed by the keys of grace and mercy. And ever since then, he looked for opportunities to pay forward the gifts he had received.

With an eager heart, he obeyed the commandment, *"Forgive as the Lord forgave you."* Colossians 3:13

The times we most intensely feel the need for grace and mercy are at the most desperate times of our lives – when we have turned our backs on God. That's why we are so eager to receive those gifts.

But it is this very same reason that makes it so hard for us to extend grace and mercy. In desperate times we sometimes shut the door of our heart. The walls of protection that we erect in response to being wounded seem impenetrable – from both sides.

Only the fragrance of grace and mercy can penetrate

such a wall.

If there is one place on earth that we humans have ample opportunity to give and receive grace and mercy, it is in a marriage. Why? Because it has two people in it like you and me!

We fall. We stumble. We mess up. We make mistakes. It is part of being a human.

Each of us has been on the receiving end of God's grace and mercy, and it has changed us.

How beautiful it is to have the opportunity to demonstrate that same grace and mercy to another person, especially our spouse, and witness the change it can make in their life, too.

If we can learn to extend grace and mercy during crises, it will make all our marital passages easier to navigate.

May God bless you in your voyage!

<https://thefrontwindow.wordpress.com/2012/04/13/grace-and-mercy-in-marriage/>

Admonish the sinner	Proverbs 28:23
Instruct the ignorant	1 Ezra 7:25
Counsel the doubtful	Daniel 4:1-24
Comfort the sorrowful	John 21: 19-38
Bear wrongs patiently	Hebrews 12:1-4
Forgive all injuries	Matthew 6:12; 28:21-22
Pray for the living	James 5:16
and the dead	2 Maccabees 12:38-46

SEVEN SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY



"My God, I know this place. I am home."

A Reflection for All Souls Day

Why do Catholic Christians commemorate the dead during the month of November? The feast of All Souls and the month of November is a source of consolation for each of us. If our hearts are broken and suffering about the loss of loved ones, or if we are dealing with unresolved issues about good-byes that were not said, peace that was not made, gratitude that was not expressed, let us ask the faithful departed to intercede for us, and for our own peace. The consoling doctrine of the Communion of Saints allows us to feel ever close to those who have died and gives us much hope in moments of despair and sadness.

I share with you two texts that have remained with me throughout my priestly life. In his little book *Encounters with Silence*, the great Jesuit theologian Fr. Karl Rahner, SJ, wrote about those who have died:

"That's why our heart is with them now, our loved ones who have taken leave of us. There is no substitute for them; there are no others who can fill the vacancy when one of those whom we really love suddenly and unexpectedly departs, and is with us no longer. In true love no one can replace another, for true love loves the other person in that depth where he is uniquely and irreplaceably himself. And thus, as death has trodden roughly through our lives, every



one of the departed has taken a piece of our hearts with them—and often enough—our whole heart”.

As he was dying in the fall of 1996, the late Cardinal Joseph Bernardin of Chicago wrote a moving, personal testament, *The Gift of Peace*, that speaks powerfully about death and life:



"Many people have asked me to tell them about heaven and the afterlife. I sometimes smile at the request because I do not know any more than they do. Yet, when one young man asked if I looked forward to being united with God and all those who have gone before me, I made a connection to something I said earlier in this book. The first time I travelled with my mother

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and sister to my parents' homeland of Tonadico di Primiero, in northern Italy, I felt as if I had been there before. After years of looking through my mother's photo albums, I knew the mountains, the land, the houses, the people. As soon as we entered the valley, I said, "My God, I know this place. I am home." Somehow I think crossing from this life into eternal life will be similar. I will be home".

May I suggest that each of you do the following during November months. Spend some time reflecting on those who have been close to you, who have died, and are now with the Lord.

Slowly read this scripture passage — Wisdom 3:1-3:

But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have



died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster, and their going from us to be their destruction; but they are at peace.

Remember one person close to you who has died. Bring this person's image into your mind's eye. As you remember his or her life, imagine the Lord Jesus escorting the person into heaven at the time of death. Finally, imagine this loved one waiting for you. Know that when your time of passing comes, the Lord and your loved ones who have gone before you will escort you into the kingdom of heaven.

End your short remembering with this prayer:

Lord, you are the resurrection and the life. You promised that whoever believes in you will never die. Lord, through the power of your rising, help me believe in my own resurrection. Amen.

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May we spend our earthly pilgrimage filling our minds with the thoughts of heaven, so that when we finally cross over into eternal life, the images we see may not be foreign, startling or strange. Let us pray that we, too, may be able to say: "My God, I know this place. I am home."

Fr. Thomas Rosica, CSB
CEO Salt and Light Catholic Media Foundation

<http://saltandlighttv.org/blog/fr-thomas-rosica/my-god-i-know-this-place-i-am-home>



But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream Amos 5:24



For all the Saints

*For all the saints, who from their labours rest,
all who by faith before the world confessed,
your name, O Jesus, be forever blest.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*You were their rock, their fortress, and their might;
you were their captain in the well-fought fight;
you, in the darkness drear, the one true light.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*O blest communion, fellowship divine!
We feebly struggle, they in glory shine;
yet all are one within your great design.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*The golden evening brightens in the west,
soon, soon to faithful warriors comes their rest;
sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day
the saints triumphant rise in bright array:
as God to glory calls them all away.
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*

*From earth's wide bounds, from ocean's farthest coast,
through gates of pearl streams in the countless host,
singing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost:
Hallelujah, hallelujah!*
William How



The Unengaged Marriage

We all journey into marriage with our hearts brimming over with hopes and dreams. But all the aspirations in the world don't stop life from jumping in and trying to spoil the joy of being married. A lot can happen between the "I do" at the altar and the years that follow. We can end up married to someone yet emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically disengaged.

I have come to believe that one primary problem (beside unresolved hurts in your marriage) seems to sit at the root of most couples who feel disconnected.

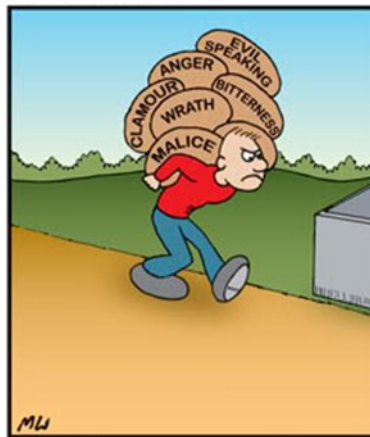
I call it the "full plate" phenomenon. When your spouse (or you) has something that puts them emotionally, mentally, physically or spiritually on overload something else has to be shut off in life -- and that something else often becomes your marriage.

See if any of these scenarios sound familiar:

Job Stress Your spouse gets a new job (great, right?) but is entirely consumed with work. Even at home, the calls and emails never stop. You hear your spouse act jovial and upbeat with colleagues for phone conversations, but when you try to talk to him or her, all you get is a short answer. They seem unappreciative of the ways you help, and you feel ignored and out of the loop.



DUMPSTER



A Joyful'toon by Mike Waters



Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Eph. 4: 31,32 KJV

Maybe your spouse doesn't have the stress of a new job but instead, like many in today's economy, lost his or her job -- and isn't doing much to get a new one. Or perhaps she just quit housekeeping, or maybe he completely stopped coming to church and praying with you.

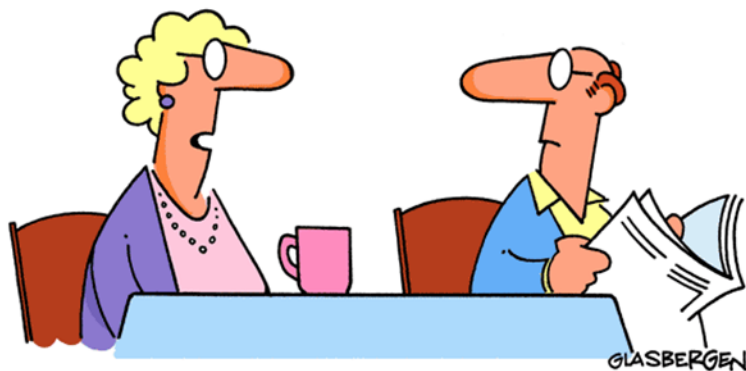
Baby Blues You just had a baby, and one of the happiest moments of your life seems to be pulling you apart. Your wife is constantly exhausted, concerned more about the baby than you, and seems to have lost the "fun" side of her personality. Your husband seems to have found 101 ways to be unavailable to help. You both feel alone, overwhelmed and maybe a bit resentful of the other person. You wonder why this bundle of joy is zapping yours

The list of examples could go on for miles, but in each of these situations, the disengaged spouses have full plates. That individual is emotionally, physically, mentally or spiritually on overload, and when it comes to their marriage, well, there just isn't much left over!

Regardless of the specifics of your situation, "full plate" scenarios can be boiled down to four basic types you need to be aware of:

Emotional Overload Emotional wounds sap a ton of energy as we either ignore them, push through them or sit down and cry about them. Unresolved pain in

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**"When you say I mean the world to you,
which part of the world are you talking about?"**

your life takes up heart space that could otherwise be given to the Lord, your spouse, your family, etc.

If you have an emotional wound, God wants to heal you! He is in the business of repairing the broken! I minister to women, and I hear their stories of hurt. I see their bewildered husbands who don't understand why their wives seem to suddenly lose interest in sex, keeping up the house, and even talking to them (you know there is something seriously wrong when a woman doesn't want to talk!).

In each of the cases I have seen, the wife has had a full plate of hurt and has shut down under the weight of it. Sometimes the hurt can be old, and she is just now coming to the place where she is starting to emotionally process it. Or, sometimes she has gotten stuck in the healing process somewhere along the way.

As I mentioned earlier, you or your spouse could also be emotionally on overload because of a life transition, like a new job or baby. Life is fast paced, change is constant, and sometimes our emotions get tangled along the way. Some changes can be good, like having a new baby or buying a home. Yet they still wear you out emotionally. From losing a job to losing a loved one, crisis situations can put a big strain on you individually or as a couple. New babies and seeing those babies leave the nest are some of the hardest emotional transitions in the phases of marriage.

Physical Overload Life is full of work -- hard work. And some phases and stages seem to require more physical labour than others. Babies and toddlers require a ton of energy. Many jobs leave us with aching backs and sore muscles. Pain also drains us. So if your spouse has

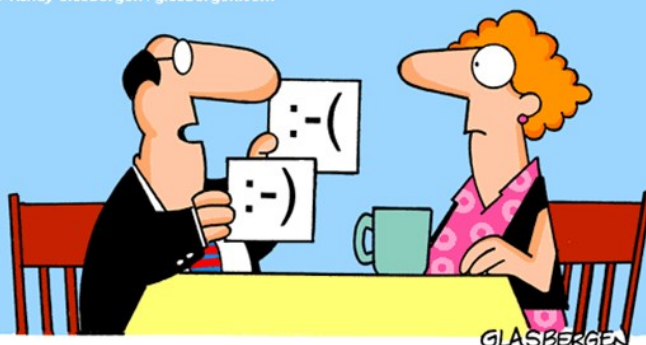
chronic pain or has been through some kind of illness, their physical issues just might be so exhausting and distracting that they can't see past them to connect with you the way you'd like.

Mental Overload For those couples who are balancing lots of responsibilities like work, school and kids, mental overload can really take its toll. Juggling lots of responsibilities uses up brain-space. Learning how to manage a new responsibility also uses up mental energy. You or your spouse might have so many things to mentally process, you don't have much left over with which to engage each other. Excess TV watching is a symptom of mental overload in our house. One or both of us is just too mentally worn out to be creative enough to do things together...or sometimes even find coherent words to string together!

Spiritual Overload Usually, being spiritually overloaded is more akin to being spiritually "under"-loaded. I see this with husbands more than wives, and it usually starts somewhere else first. For example, a really good-hearted man who was out of work for a time got into some debt. He began working very hard to get out of debt. He took every side job possible and worked long hours. His growing family motivated him want to work hard to provide for them.

This husband's efforts and motivations were essentially good. But in the process of taking on all this new responsibility, he stopped being the spiritual leader of their marriage. He stopped reading his Bible and attending a small group. Time and time again he came up spiritually empty when his family needed him, so now he avoids those situations and thrusts himself into the area of life he knows he can be successful--work.

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**"You always complain that I don't know how
to show my emotions, so I made these signs."**

Spiritual overload might also take place when a spouse is spiritually detached or is walking in disobedience. Any disruption to your spouse's connection with God will in some way affect their connection with you and your family.

How Do We Reconnect?

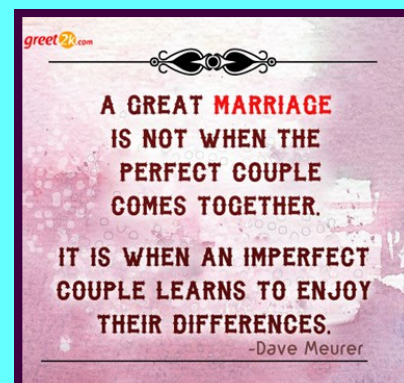
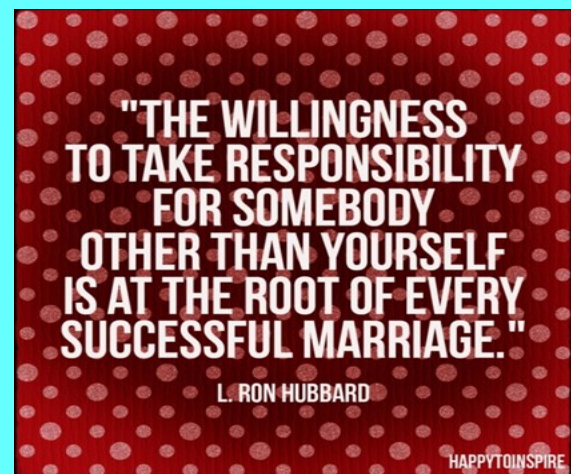
During transitional phases, Eric and I usually experience disconnection in our marriage because of physical and emotional exhaustion. Eric needs space



If you feel that your spouse has disconnected from you, pray about the source of the disconnect and see how you can help your spouse with their "full plate" issue. Again, seek the source of the disconnection and sit down together to solve the problem as a team.

Life is always going to be full; full of joys, hardships, changes and new things. Learning to manage the fullness of life together will enable you both to experience life at its best with a marriage that is wholly and happily engaged!

Adapted from Crosswalk.com/blogs/april-motl/the-unengaged-marriage.html



to process and get used to the new norm of life. I, on the other hand, need him even more during those times to listen to me verbally process life. I need him to pray with me more as I share my concerns.

The first few times this transition scenario presented itself in our marriage, I emotionally chased after him, and he kept pushing me away trying to find the space he needed. Now, I have learned to spot the signals of this situation and give him the space he needs. And guess what? We engage faster when I allow him time and space! He's also learned how to help me and together we've found a better balance for processing life's transitions.

Identifying the reasons behind feeling disengaged from your spouse can help you navigate the situation successfully. Instead of soaking up hurt feelings or blaming your spouse, you can work together on the heart of the issue.

If you are the one who has pulled away from your spouse, consider the reasons, ask your spouse to forgive you and begin to make the changes necessary to reconnect. Perhaps you need to sit down together and plan out a balanced schedule. The solution may include finding ways to more efficiently use your time so you have more time with the Lord, your spouse, or even more alone time to recharge your batteries, so you have quality attention and energy to give to your family.