

You're Invited to a
Family Brunch

after the 10 am Mass

Sunday, April 26

SS Peter & Paul Room at the Basilica

After the meal there will be a discussion about

Fighting in Marriage

There will be activities for children during the discussion.

RSVP Please let us know how many will attend. Basilica_family_life@yahoo.com

Dear Families

Family Life at the Basilica seeks to reach out to younger families with infants and school age children. Our monthly gatherings are generally for prayer, service, community building, and learning. A group of volunteers meets monthly to plan these events. The newsletter and discussion on a certain topic seems to have become our favorite format. While “experts” may be helpful to us, it is the on-the-ground experience that we share with one another that not only informs us but brings us together; we are building our Catholic marriages and families together. This month’s topic, “Fighting in Marriage”, should make for some interesting discussion.

Each month as I prepare to assemble the “words of wisdom” from our various contributors, I am humbled by the work they do. For the most part our writers struggle with the day to day hurdles of parenting babies and toddlers, (and having new babies!), dealing with major moves and job changes, new and developing marriages, and in the midst of all that they somehow manage to put down their thoughts to share with one another on the topics that we have chosen. And they put up with my nagging. They deserve our thanks!

Last month we had a brunch gathering followed by praying the Angelus and mid-day prayer in the Dominican choir. Next month we are planning an informative session with a presenter couple on the topic of intimacy in marriage. We will also continue to have men’s movie night.

⌘ You may have seen our “Welcome Life” poster last year; it featured photos of new babies in our parish. Our attempt is to express a respect for life that isn’t simply anti-abortion, but goes a step farther than that to celebrate the new life in our community. We’ll be putting together a new poster this year and would like to include photos (head shots) of new babies again. If you have or know others who have welcomed new infants into their families since last June and would like to be included in this poster, please send a digital photo, name and birth date to me at: basilica_family_life@yahoo.com.

⌘ Some of your children are involved in the Prince of Peace Children’s Choir, of which I am the director. These kids will be singing for the special celebration of Confirmation and First Eucharist for the vigil Mass of Pentecost, May 30. We are still open to having other children join us!

See you on Sunday!

Pauline Sabo

Fighting in Marriage

Several years ago, I was invited by the Catholic Chaplain at the former U.S. Naval Station in Winter Harbor to assist him on a retreat directed toward married enlisted personnel. We worked together on several occasions and became good friends. I was impressed by the priority that both the Pentagon and the Archdiocese of Military Services placed on these programs of marriage renewal. (Keeping married couples happy was a major factor toward re-enlistment and retention of uniformed personnel!) The program selected by the military archdiocese was entitled PREP with the interesting subtitle: *“Fighting for your marriage.”*

If couples are fighting, perhaps we should ask not what are we fighting about, but, what are we fighting for? Perhaps then we gain insight into the acceptable place for anger within the marriage bond and the limits of its expression.

Couples can and do experience periodic conflict. Is there ever a place for anger to be expressed within the marriage bond – for baptized spouses a sacrament that is to be a communion of the whole of their lives? It would seem that the expression or harboring of anger has no place in a relationship and a vocation that calls spouses to unified and committed love.

Our Catholic Moral Tradition has this to say about anger and the limits of its expression. Saint Thomas Aquinas, among others, identifies anger as one of the irascible passions. Another way of describing an irascible passion is to call it a spirited emotion. The spirited emotions help us to continue to pursue what is good when we feel discouraged or when we find it difficult to attain. Experienced couples know that maintaining true, committed love comes at a cost; there are obstructions to be navigated around; and, much that can be a distraction – perhaps attractive in itself but of lesser ultimate value. Some of the irascible passions are hope and courage. These push us through moments of despair and fear. We have probably known such moments in our lives.

And then there is the passion of anger. The limited context in which we can call the passion of anger a moral good is when it reveals it is time to protect and defend someone or something that we love; that is vital to us; that which is truly important. We might have to resort to fighting to properly protect or defend someone or something so precious.

As for fighting in marriage, you as a spouse have likely looked back in retrospect and asked: what were we fighting about? But did you ever ask the key question: *what were we fighting for? Was it anything really important?*

Couples can and do on occasion fight. But be sure the matter is of real urgency and for your marriage – not about it. An example might be to urge a negligent partner to take better care of their health or to confront an addiction – in short, anything that is a severe and dire threat to the marriage bond.

Or, dedicate your fights for great causes outside of yourselves: the protection of human life, quality teaching of children, world peace, responsive, responsible, and just government – especially when and where these are lacking. There is a limited place for the passionate expression of anger. Our Catholic Moral Tradition helps to show precisely where; when; why; and to whom?

*Father Joe Daniels
Parochial Vicar – Prince of Peace Parish*

Love at the Heart of Disagreement

People have always remarked how my husband and I are so perfect for each other because we are so similar. We both love to converse, are quiet at first but open up as you get to know us, and even have similarities in our looks – dark brown hair and eyes (I am sometimes thought to be his sister.) And neither of us like to disagree. This is where our similarities are NOT helpful. We don't want to offend one another, and in general dislike the awkward and uncomfortable feelings that come with being at odds. We'd rather try to ignore it and get by.

For those of you who have tried this method, it ultimately causes bigger problems. You can ignore for only so long before it builds up inside and you can explode or dump on your (sometimes unsuspecting) spouse. This really can set an argument up for failure – one person feels attacked and the other has days or months of pent-up frustration to release. Christian and I have been trying to become better at disagreeing. We've tried to realize that it is better to be up front and speak of our difficulties even when it means a confrontation, because we are doing it out of love and out of a desire to keep our marriage healthy.

My greatest challenge is taking things my husband says just for what they mean and not viewing them as an overall statement on our marriage or on myself. If he says "I've noticed we've been letting the kids do xyz and I think that's not a good idea," I need to reel myself in and realize he is ONLY talking about xyz and not about my mothering ability or our lack of communication on parenting. It is the wrong answer (and one I have made) to let myself feel judged and then become distant because I am afraid of being criticized. As difficult as it is, I tell myself mentally (even though I might not be feeling it emotionally!) that every argument can be a chance to learn more about my husband and have him learn more about me.

But this is the rub: this "chance to learn" might be learning about *failings*: him learning of mine and me learning of his. And this can be scary. It is vulnerable. Deep down inside I can be worried about this vulnerability because I don't want to show that less glamorous, more needy and faulty self to anyone who might point it out to me, and challenge me to do something about it. But Christ loved us in spite of this, and as our marriage is a sacrament of His love; and as he is a member of our union; I need to remember to cast aside my fear and trust that my husband will love me with all of my vices. "Husbands, love your wives as Christ loves the Church and gave himself up for her." (Ephesians 5:25)

That is not to say it will be easy for him to love me like the Church. That is a lifelong challenge. And wives don't get off easy either, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22) As a wife, "submitting." To my husband is a task I need to take up anew every day. Keeping these words in mind helps us to focus, though. It can keep us from picking on the petty issues. I think we should try to focus our disagreements about things that really trouble us; things that are coming between us in our marriage; things that are putting up walls. There will still be loud words, and hurts, and tears. But deep down inside that argument, something is being constructed. We are helping each other. We are even bothering to have the argument because we love each other and don't want to "just ignore" what is separating us.

Kate Madore

Learning to Fight

Most couples have fights. Fights are a fact of life, and sometimes they are needed to get to the bottom of something. Kate and I fight too, but neither of us is good at confronting issues head-on, so conflicts usually run like this:

Step 1: Something Kate has said or done has bothered me, but I am not completely sure that it is her fault.

Step 2: I ignore it because – after all – it’s probably just one of my hang-ups, and, even if it isn’t, it’s probably not a big deal anyway.

Step 3: I am still bothered, but I pretend nothing is wrong. Kate sees through this. Always.

Step 4: The disturbance either goes away because it was – after all – not a big deal, or it comes back again and again until I face the issue squarely and tell Kate what is on my mind.

Voices are occasionally raised. Tears are often shed. The problem is worked through, and we move ahead glad that we hashed it out. But we never, ever have a classic knock-down-drag-out.

For my part, I think that my avoidance of those knock-down-drag-outs began when I was a kid. One day when I was maybe 6 years old, my Mom asked me – after I had thrown some kind of a fit – where her “nice, kind young man had gone.”

I had no answer for her. I felt horrible.

Ever since then I have tried to keep my temper buried deep down inside. When it does get loose it isn’t pretty: one fight I had with my brother in college was so loud and raucous that the whole dorm heard it. People came from different floors to see what was going on. Josh and I were so deeply engaged in this fight that we scarcely saw the faces of the onlookers. We were blind with rage.

That kind of rage is destructive, and I thank God that He’s helped me keep it mostly in control, especially in my marriage. Kate and I can honestly say that we’ve rarely hurled hateful words at each other, or carelessly let our emotions run amok.

Another reason I tend to avoid those tough arguments is that – and I think I speak for many men here – I don’t do well with tears. Contrary to the cliché, Kate does not use tears to manipulate the conversation, but they are just her way of processing a change in direction or understanding between us. But my natural reaction to tears is to behave like she is grieved by, or at least disagrees strongly with, something I have said. All the physical evidence says “stop!” and I often do just that. It is not easy to forge ahead when your senses tell you to stop. But sometimes I have to ignore my senses and trudge on, if I think the cause is worth fighting for.

As Kate and I go through our marriage we continue to work together to be more honest and open with each other. It’s not always easy! It’s odd when I think about it: many couples have to try hard NOT to have arguments, while we are learning how TO have them! But such is marriage.

Christian Madore

Three Fight Principals for our Happily Ever After

I still remember my first fight with Jeremy. It was about directions- of *course*. We were not married at the time and rarely even disagreed about anything, so fights were not in our relational vocabulary but- bad directions can pull it out of even the most amiable couple and bad directions, or a bad sense of direction, we had (he had). We were on our way to visit Jeremy’s dad in New Hampshire and had taken some kind of wrong turn and ended up lost. One thing led to another and when I suggested we stop for directions or at least look at the map we had in the car he snapped at me, “I’ve got it under control, OK?” Not exactly “you’re ugly” but it was the sort of comment that cut me to the quick as I was very unaccustomed to being treated that way by him. My reaction was quite different than it would be now. I just sat quietly and let him feel awful for being mean to me and waited until he apologized and got directions from the gas attendant. Of course, now I would sit far less quietly and save him the pain of feeling bad about being mean. Well- it’s almost five years later, two kids later, and (I know it’s hard to believe) several arguments later. Jeremy and I are both rather stubborn people with intense personalities and opinions so naturally we knew when we got married that our arguments were not going to be quietly settled by sitting down on the couch, holding each others hands, looking into one another’s eyes, and delicately talking the issues out. What has surprised me, however, is how three principals that we committed to early in our marriage have saved us from really causing some serious long-term pain when we start seeing red.

Our first principal is this: what you say will be remembered later and will be held against you. Keep to the issue at hand and lay off personal attacks. We all know that there are moments when we are having an unpleasant argument with our loved one when we'd love to just send an emotional sucker-punch their way just to make them really reel with anger. Unfortunately I have seen that cause enough pain and long-term resentment that Jeremy and I have both stayed as far away from personal attacks as possible. Of course, once in a while we do screw up - we are human after all. On occasion there have been known to be "you're just like your MOM" and "you can't seem to remember that you're not the only one in this HOUSE" comments flying back and forth for dramatic effect, but, in general, we have managed (by the grace of God) to stick to our first rule of thumb.

Our second principal is this: "Remember we are on the same team". When we are getting really intense in an argument sometimes we have to remind each other to step back, or forward, and realize that if Jeremy wins or I win then we both have lost because we are viewing the issue as individuals instead of a couple. We have to remind ourselves that it's not about power or control in our relationship but it's about finding the solution to our problem together, regardless of who is more at fault than the other, or who did what, or who's more right or more wrong. Again, we aren't perfect in our implementation of this rule at all. I like to think that I'm always right and Jeremy likes to point out that I'm really *not* as right as I think I am. However, there have been multiple times when a fight has threatened to get so out of hand one of us might end up sleeping on the couch and this principal has saved us from making such an uncomfortable mistake.

And this leads to the last principal: "never go to bed angry". Now really, this one seems pretty impractical and has led to some really late nights. We have been up until three or four before figuring something out together and might as well have been sleeping on the couch, that way we may have at least slept some! However, when I look back on the last five years I'm very glad for Jeremy's patience and willing heart when it comes to working things out when it is late. Somehow our discussions never seem to start until we are putting the girls to bed and have a few moments of kid-free talking to really unearth an issue. Sometimes an issue *is* too big to settle just in one discussion, however, and sometimes it does need to be slept on and figured out in dreamland and this has taken me some time to come to terms with. Using the above principals we have managed to agree to disagree until later and gotten some very restful and amiable sleep even amidst a serious argument. Okay well, once I did elbow Jeremy when he had fallen asleep mid-fight. Sure it was two in the morning, but I wasn't about to let him go to sleep when I was angry! I think I slept on the couch that night.

Maggie Barnard

Questions for our Discussion:

1. Is there a difference between fighting and arguing?
2. Is it healthy to have fighting in a marriage?
3. What should a husband and wife do if they come to an impasse?
4. How can a problem be resolved if only one partner thinks that there is a problem?
5. Should current arguments in the marriage be kept only between husband and wife, or is it permissible to seek advice from others?
6. What type of reactions are most helpful during a disagreement? Which are most unhelpful?
7. If one person says that they agree with the other just to end the fight, is that a real resolution?
8. What does it mean when a couple has the same fights over and over again? What should be done if a husband or wife agrees to make a change each time there is a fight, and then returns to their old behavior after a period of time?
9. How can the couple be held accountable for any changes that they agreed to make?

Amy Brents

Matthias Benedict Fecteau born March 12 to parents Louise and Blake

Peter James Faucher born April 10
to parents Nathan and Danielle

Congratulations!

Paul's Movies – Men's Movie Night

Last month's movie, "*The Passion of the Christ*" needs no review. It is a difficult film to watch. For me, the most memorable scene is when Jesus, having been brutally beaten, scourged and exhausted, meets his mother on the way to Calvary and says, "see mother how I make all things new".

This month our movie is about a politician who fought for the release and rehabilitation of a serial killer. This is nothing short of controversial - and certainly a personality worth exploring on film.

Are some crimes so heinous that their perpetrators are beyond redemption? While most of us might acknowledge the importance of putting violent criminals behind bars, the late British Lord Frank Aungier Pakenham, 7th Earl of Longford, thought otherwise. The outspoken politician strongly believed that forgiveness was the cornerstone of faith and no one was beyond redemption. His firm stance is the subject of this month's movie, "*Longford*", which chronicles the life of the gentleman who staked his name and career to campaign for notorious serial killer, Myra Hindley. The unconventional politician was known for his liberal views which often courted controversy in the cabinet and the national press. He was a devout Catholic and he believed that he would like his epitaph to be "the outcast's outcast".

We will gather at the Saints Peter and Paul room at the Basilica at 7 pm on Wednesday, April 29. Bring munchies and drinks.

I hope you can make it.

Paul Griesbach