

## Let Us Pod

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### Relationship breakdowns with Cath McCarthy

#### Cath McCarthy

Cath McCarthy is a parishioner at Clifton Cathedral in Bristol. She is Chair of the Parish Pastoral Council. Cath works as a practice manager of a busy doctors surgery in Bristol.

#### Full text of podcast

When an important relationship breaks down there are so many bad feelings to deal with. I know that when it happened to me I felt hurt, rejected, angry and afraid, and the pain and confusion seemed completely overwhelming. I remember clearly how physically ill I felt for a long time, and how easily I could collapse into tears. I was overwhelmed by a sense of failure and loss. I had thought that my marriage would last forever, and then suddenly I found myself alone. I was so afraid; I couldn't imagine that I would ever feel whole or happy again.

I can't remember exactly how things changed but gradually I realised that I wasn't quite so sad, quite so much of the time. Eventually I began to realise that sometimes I could actually feel happy again. They say time is a great healer and I'm sure it is true.

Sometimes when relationships go through a bad patch they can be repaired. If you think it might be possible to mend your relationship then it is certainly worth making every effort to try to make things better. Talk together if you can, and try to get help from agencies like Marriage Care or Relate, or talk to your priest or supportive friends or family. Sometimes it can even be worth getting help to separate.

However, you do also need to be realistic and if your relationship is truly not fixable then one of the most important things to do is to begin to acknowledge it. That is painful, but then you can at least start the journey of repairing and redefining your life. The first thing that most of us feel when we realise the relationship is really over, is a sense of deep shock. This is the starting point to begin to come to terms with your situation. You will need to grieve and this will take time. Often when we grieve we want to blame someone for what has happened, this could be someone else and it could be ourselves. Blaming is not helpful or constructive, what we really need to do is forgive. It can be so difficult, but I believe that forgiveness is the key to moving on and building a new life. You need to forgive the other person and most importantly you need to forgive yourself as well.

There will be lots of sadness and many tears to shed over a long period of time, and you need to make sure you give yourself the time that you need to mourn. After all you have lost something very precious, you have lost the life you thought you would have and now you will have to discover your new life. It's very different being single, and friends, family, the people you know at work all need to adjust to your new situation.

There was a time when the Church could be very unhelpful to Catholics whose marriage broke down but things have changed. The Church now is much more compassionate and seeks to find ways to support people through their difficult times. The Bishops of England and Wales plan of action for 2006 recognised this problem and specifically focussed on encouraging welcoming,

family-friendly parishes that would: offer understanding, friendship and support to all; be a source of help in times of need; help everyone in the parish feel that they belong there; encourage and celebrate all family life whether married, widowed, single, divorced, separated, with children or without.

So there is no need to feel alone. You are part of the parish community, you can ask for help and support and prayer. Remember too that there are many other people who are in the same situation ó you really are not alone.

Jesus too knows your pain and he is there for you. "Come to me," said Jesus, "All you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest." It is a personal invitation. Jesus seems to say, "I know you're tired from life in this world. I understand that you're burdened. Perhaps you think you are alone, cut off from God and abandoned to carry on as best you can on your own. I know. Come to me and I will give you rest. You will see that you are never alone. Learn from me, for I am gentle and you will find rest for your soul."

Try not to despair, talk to God, share your sorrow and ask Jesus to be with you.

Lord Jesus, you invite all who are burdened to come to you. I reach out to you in my need and I ask you to comfort me and to heal me. Touch my soul with your compassion; touch my heart with your love and touch my mind with your wisdom.

Most loving Jesus, bring me health in body and spirit that I may serve you. Gently touch my life which you have created, and keep me close to you, now and forever.

Amen.

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