



## SEEKING GOD TOGETHER COMPANION RESOURCES SEASON 8 – EMPTY NESTERS & RETIREMENT YEARS

- Accompanying/supporting the family's relational life as a place where God dwells
- Parish and school welcoming, accompanying, serving, particularly those on the margins
- Building community as the Body of Christ

Across the dioceses of England & Wales the Catholic Church has a network of

### **Co-Ordinators for Marriage and Family Life Ministry**

<http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/diocesan-work/diocesan-family-ministry> And  
<http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/FAMILIAS-Membership-Leaflet-2017-1.pdf>

**Parish Family Groups** support and care for all families – including all generations is a priority. The Family Group Movement seeks to create a true sense of community in fulfilment of Jesus Christ's command for love, friendship, and companionship in the lives of his disciples, and as experienced by the early Christian communities. E.g. Create family groups, and signpost empty nesters and retired people to a family group <http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/related-work/parish-family-groups>  
<https://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Family-Group-Movement-Parish-Toolkit.pdf> (free toolkit for developing family groups in a parish)

### **DEVELOPING PASTORAL SKILLS OF ACCOMPANIMENT IN THE PARISH COMMUNITY**

- **Listening skills training** <https://www.acornchristian.org/> *DVD Just Listen* useful for all parish and school ministry with families, and for a couple or group of couples, **supporting each other in empty nest or retirement years.**

### **ENRICHMENT FOR EMPTY NEST AND RETIREMENT YEARS (some examples)**

- Diocesan activities in support of marriage include Annual Celebrations of Marriage (with the presiding Bishop in the Cathedral) and at local

parish/deanery level, e.g. anniversary Masses etc.

- <https://smartloving.org/marriage-kit> for marriage enrichment
- **The Marriage Course** <http://themarriagecourses.org/> popular marriage enrichment course, accessible for parish or couples gathering in homes, DVD
- Encouragement For your Marriage website (USCCB)  
<http://www.foryourmarriage.org/encouragement/>
- **Self-help Catholic 'couple check-up'**, a resource for use by couples without the need for a facilitator <https://www.catholiccouplecheckup.com>
- **BOOK: Partners on a Journey**, by John Gottman, combines Catholic Theology with findings from scientific research to inspire and support married couples  
<https://www.gottman.com/professionals/training/level-1/>
- **Sexuality and Conjugal love** <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/married-life/sexuality-conjugal-love/>
- **BOOK: The 5 love languages: The Secret to Love that Lasts**, Gary Chapman, helping meet each other's deep emotional need to feel loved. Northfield Publishing (2010) ISBN-13 978-0-8024-7315-8
- **BOOK: How to Survive Being Married to a Catholic** (booklet) by CSSR (October 31,2009)

## MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT AND SUPPORT

- **Cana Week** (organised by Chemin Neuf Community) to strengthen and encourage married relationships, e.g. <https://www.chemin-neuf.org.uk/en/home/our-programmes/cana-couple-and-families/58b1bbf024564011018b8277/cana-week-summer-2018>
- **World Wide Marriage Encounter, England & Wales**, <https://wwme.org.uk/> for marriage enrichment experiences
- **Teams of Our Lady** <http://www.teamsgb.org.uk/> for couple to couple groups in support of marriage, often parish based
- **Verbum Dei** organisation for consecrated married couples – formation and spirituality <http://uk.verbumdei.org/about-us/>
- **Focolare** open to all families, engaging in the mission of the Gospel; of particular interest to ecumenical and interfaith families. The Focolare Movement is an international movement, inspired by the gospel, working for unity in all spheres of life <http://www.focolare.org/gb/about-us/>
- **BOOK: Couple Alive** – Family Caring Trust book, enriching a couple relationship [www.familycaring.org.uk](http://www.familycaring.org.uk) Good for sharing together, or in a group of couples

## ROLE OF GRANDPARENTS

- [www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.com](http://www.catholicgrandparentsassociation.com) helps grandparents to meet, pray, share faith and organise pilgrimages with their grandchildren

## SUPPORT FOR MARRIAGES IN DIFFICULTY

- **Breakthrough programme** <https://smartloving.org/breakthrough/>
- <http://www.lauriepuhn.com/> Fight less, Love More
- **Fighting for your marriage** by Howard Markman, Scott Stanley, and Susan Blumberg (USA, Denver, 2010)
- **Marriage MOT:** <https://www.marriagecare.org.uk/how-we-help/relationship-education/marriage-week-2016/>
- <http://www.retrouville.org.uk/nextprog.html> retreats for couples in difficulty

## COUNSELLING

- <https://www.marriagecare.org.uk/how-we-help/relationship-counselling/>

## SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GONE THROUGH A CIVIL DIVORCE

Sadly divorce is not uncommon in the empty nest and retirement years. There is much a community, family and friends can do to support and enrich couples in their relationships in this Season. However if there is what one or both spouses experience as an irretrievable breakdown and the marriage ends in civil divorce, the whole community and families want to show compassion and offer healing support

- <http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/what-we-do/marriage/divorced-and-separated-catholics> for Revised Guide to the Annulment Process
- Book: **Growing through Divorce** Jim Smoke, Harvest House, ISBN 1-56507-322-3
- Book, DVD, website: **Restored Lives** helping recovery after relationship breakdown, DVD and workbook, & book, filled with compassion, empathy, wisdom <https://www.restoredlives.org/>
- **The Beginning Experience** following separation or divorce, example in Archdiocese of Westminster <https://rcdow.org.uk/diocese/marriage-and-family-life/news/the-beginning-experience/>

## **SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH A MEMBER WHO IDENTIFIES AS LGBT+**

- For sensitive support of families and young people who identify as LGBT+ please contact [lgbtcatholicswestminster@gmail.com](mailto:lgbtcatholicswestminster@gmail.com) or see <https://rcdow.org.uk/diocese/lgbt-chaplaincy/>
- **Building a Bridge** by James Martin SJ, on developing pastoral support for LGBT+ people and their parents <https://www.amazon.com/Building-Bridge-Relationship-Compassion-Sensitivity/dp/0062694316>

## **AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES**

- **Domestic Abuse:** <http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/related-work/cedar> for helpline, links and parish resources <http://www.cedar.uk.net/>
- Raising Awareness of Domestic Abuse Guide: <http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/NBCW-Raising-Awareness-of-Domestic-Abuse.pdf> Guide by National Board of Catholic Women currently being updated (2018) in collaboration with CBCEW/Catholic Social Action Network (CSAN)

## **FOR CONTINUING SUPPORT WITH PARENTS OR CHILDREN WITH INTELLECTUAL/LEARNING DISABILITIES**

Empty Nesters and Retired people are often still caring for their adult children with physical or cognitive disabilities.

- **St Joseph's Pastoral Centre** <http://www.stjoseph.org.uk/> resources supporting parents or children with intellectual disability
- **L'Arche** <https://www.larche.org.uk/> communities offering families support and love, and offering home to a family member with learning disabilities
- **Faith and Light:** Supporting all families with members with learning disabilities, offering friendship, worship and celebration <http://www.faithandlight.org.uk/>

## **SUPPORT FOR EMPTY NESTERS OR RETIRED PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY**

- **Society of St Vincent de Paul** – <http://svp.org.uk/>
- **Food bank** organisations information <https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/>
- **Age UK** <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/> advice for continuing independence, benefits, how to combat loneliness

## SUPPORT FOR EMPTY NESTERS AND RETIRED COUPLES WHO HAVE A FAMILY MEMBER IN PRISON, OR WHO IS AN EX-OFFENDER (some examples)

- <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/> an independent Catholic prison charity serving families of prisoners, ex-offenders and prisoners, across England & Wales .
- Bishops Conference Prison Chaplains' Adviser  
<http://www.cbcew.org.uk/CBCEW-Home/Departments/Christian-Responsibility-and-Citizenship/Prison-Ministry>
- <https://www.prisonadvice.org.uk/> for advocacy, support and advice for all families

## IN ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS DYING AND THE PROCESS OF GRIEF

- **Ministry of Consolation** in event of a death in the family (child, or adult) see examples in Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle, or Archdiocese of Liverpool for resources and support, contact via email:  
[spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk](mailto:spirituality@diocesehn.org.uk)
- **Art of Dying Well**, National Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales website <http://www.artofdyingwell.org/>
- **Grief Is a Journey Finding Your Path Through Loss** by Dr. Kenneth J. Doka 2017

## FOR EMPTY NESTERS AND RETIRED PEOPLE WHO HAVE A YOUNG ADULT CHILD AT RISK OF SUICIDE

- **Young Suicide:** Information and training, and support of young adults at risk of suicide, and their families <https://www.papyrus-uk.org/>

Accompanying a developing family spirituality, rituals and traditions at home, parish and school nurturing relationship with God in Christ through scripture, teaching, liturgy, sacraments

- **Moving home:** Empty Nesters and Retired couples (and spouses who are now alone) may be moving home to be closer to children/grandchildren. **Blessing of homes** <https://www.catholicireland.net/the-little-book-of-christian-rituals-in-the-home/>
- **Blessings for all occasions:** The Veritas Book of Blessings for All Occasions ISBN-13: 978-1847305176  
<https://www.veritasbooksonline.com/books/prayer-books/prayers-of-the->

[church/the-veritas-book-of-blessings-for-all-occasions.html](http://church/the-veritas-book-of-blessings-for-all-occasions.html)

## SUPPORT FOR SPIRITUALITY (some examples)

### ▪ **Retreats and Prayer Guides**

<http://www.retreats.org.uk/spiritualdirection.html>

- Opportunities for faith-life conversations with other engaged and married couples, and across generations about real life questions and connecting these with Scripture e.g. *'How did you know he or she was the one for you?'*

Resource: **Counting our Blessings** <http://www.catholicfamily.org.uk/related-work/counting-our-blessings>

- **I am with You**, Scripture Reflections for Couples, based on the Sunday readings for years A, B and C (3 volumes) by **Two in One Flesh** Marriage Team ISBN978-0-957 1919-1-2 <http://www.twoinoneflesh.org.uk/>

- **BOOK: Creating Rituals**, A new way of healing for everyday life, Rev Deacon Jim Clarke, Paulist Press, ISBN 978-0-8091-4716-8

<https://www.amazon.com/Creating-Rituals-Healing-Everyday-Life/dp/0809147165> Includes rituals to negotiate transitions, life stages, moving forward, and life losses

- **BOOK: Faithful Families** Traci Smith, ISBN 978-0-827211-22-3 with a **Guide for Grandparents** at the back, full of ideas for family every-day life, creating sacred moments at home. Useful gift for adult children and their families, encouraging ritual/prayer at home, or to use as a grandparent

- **Prayer Apps and resources for empty nest and retired couples or individual spouses**

- <http://www.pray-as-you-go.org/home/> daily prayer
- <http://www.sacredspace.ie/> daily prayer
- <http://www.theway.org.uk/> spirituality and life articles
- <http://www.universalis.com/> daily readings and divine office
- [https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/uploads/files/our\\_work/lectio\\_divina/year\\_a\\_nov\\_feb.pdf](https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/uploads/files/our_work/lectio_divina/year_a_nov_feb.pdf)
- <http://www.soulshpherd.org/2012/07/lectio-divina-guides/>
- <http://www.liturgyoffice.org.uk/Resources/Scripture/Lectio-Divina.pdf>
- <http://wccm.org/> for routes into Christian meditation and contemplative prayer
- <https://www.ocp.org/en-us/artists/1092> Bernadette Farrell music for spirituality
- <http://www.margaretrizza.com/> inspirational music for prayer/contemplation

- **CAFOD resources** <http://cafod.org.uk/Pray/Prayer-resources>

## **ACCOMPANYING FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS DYING, CHILD OR ADULT; PREPARING A FUNERAL (some examples)**

- **Into your Hands:** Planning a Catholic Funeral and Prayers 2006, Decani Books, ISBN 978-1-900314-04-6 (taken from the Order of Christian Funerals) to support families in planning funeral and prayers when someone has died.  
<http://www.decanimusic.co.uk/product/into-your-hands/>
- **In Sure and Certain Hope:** Rites and Prayers from the Order of Christian Funerals, for the Use of Lay Leaders, Geoffrey Chapman, ISBN 0-255-66870-X  
<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Roman-Catholic-Liturgy-Committee-Christian/dp/B00I63N0JQ>

**CSAS (Catholic Safeguarding Advisory Service)** are responsible for driving and supporting improvements in practice; primary role of co-ordination, advice and support in safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults  
<https://www.csas.uk.net/>

### **Caritas Social Action Network**

<http://www.caritascare.org.uk/> for the many organisations and networks supporting pastoral care and formation of families, offering friendship, worship and celebration  
<http://www.faithandlight.org.uk/>

## **COURSES PROMOTING CHURCH TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND FAMILY AND THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE FAMILY (some examples):**

- **Maryvale Institute course** – forming catechists to teach on marriage & family life  
<https://www.maryvale.ac.uk/catechesis-on-marriage-and-family.html>
- **Chaplaincy courses** for pastoral care of families, via schools, hospitals/healthcare, prisons and other specific groups, e.g. Travellers' community at St Mary's University <https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/home.aspx>
- **Catholic Certificate in Religious Studies**, with modules in Marriage & Family Life ministry <http://www.brs-ccrs.org.uk/>
- [www.luc.edu/ips/liverpool](http://www.luc.edu/ips/liverpool) for details of the **Pastoral Ministry Diploma and Certificate courses** available across the northern dioceses of England & Wales