

By
Joe Sixpack



The Every Catholic Guy

The Best Medicine

When I come to you each week I do so in the most serious terms, as well I should. After all, nothing is more important than our holy and ancient faith because of its eternal implications. I guess you could say I'm a Catholic warrior. At least that's how I see myself. My basic attitude is to brook no dissent, take no prisoners. That's why my motto is "Comfort and Conviction don't live on the same block". I'm always on the offensive when it comes to our Catholic faith. The offensive is necessary, because devout orthodox Catholics are the most persecuted minority in America. Nay, the world!

There's also a defensive position that needs to be taken from time to time. We have to defend ourselves from the world, the flesh and the devil. Nothing is more in need of defense for most of us Catholics than our role in the sacrament of Matrimony. The two-fold purpose of Matrimony is the giving of love and the giving of life. However, it seems the statistics show that at least 90% of us fail on the latter, and at least 51% fail on the former.

The divorce rate in America is at 50%, and it's held steady at that rate (which is appalling) for years. But the Catholic divorce rate is now at 51% when it shouldn't be more than 2-3%. I suppose the primary reason the Catholic divorce rate is so high is because young couples tell themselves, "Well, we'll give it a shot. If it doesn't work out, we can always get a divorce." Then when the first rough patch in a marriage comes along, they just pick up the phone and call a lawyer.

Every marriage has rough patches. In more instances than not, we cause our own problems in our marriages by making less than great choices—choices not in conformity with God's will and the purposes of Matrimony. That's because we're living with the effects of original sin in our lives. Believe me, the effects of original sin are quite alive and well!

But the rough patches in a marriage can be manageable. They don't have to result in divorce or a damaged relationship. I'm of the opinion that the rough patches can be more easily managed by not taking ourselves so seriously, and utilizing your sense of humor.

My wife and I have a wonderful marriage. That's not to say there haven't been conflicts. We're both type-A personalities, for one thing. (I'll bet you'd have never guessed that about me!) We've had a few fights along the way... no, lots of them. But fights aren't the rough patches that destroy marriages. Fighting is just a consequence of the sort of real life events that define a person when those events over.

My wife and I worked hard, lived frugally, and scrimped and saved for our golden years of retirement. We'd amassed enough in savings and investments to be able to live very comfortably in retirement; better than during our working years. Then tragedy struck.

There was a man who was our financial advisor, so he necessarily had to know a lot of things not ordinarily shared with others. He also spent a decade playing me; he made me believe he was my best friend. You know, someone so close that you share the most intimate details of your life. We were very happy with him.

Then the police called. This man had been arrested, and the police found our number in his cell phone. They told us he'd been arrested for using some sort of scheme to steal untold amounts of money from two banks, and for stealing the identities of at least four of his clients (one was his own mother!) and wiping them out. We defended our friend vigorously on the phone, but my gut told me we were in trouble.

As it turned out, he hit us just hours before he was arrested. He stole our identity and took all our savings and investments, emptied our bank accounts, and managed to create a six-figure debt for us. He chose to go to jail rather than give the money back, and he'd hidden it so well that the police couldn't find it. It's still missing.

Subsequent to this my wife had a heart attack and pulmonary embolism, and I had a debilitating stroke that put me in a wheelchair. Now we're forced to live on a meager fixed monthly income.

Most modern marriages would be destroyed by something of this magnitude, but not ours. Oh, we fought and irrationally blamed each other, but we were determined to fight back. After our initial anger and grieving over this most personal attack (he was our friend, we thought), we began getting our sea legs back. We affirmed our marriage the way we always had: with humor. Humor, especially the self-deprecating variety, is really the best medicine. Let me give you a couple of examples.

My wife might get a little frustrated with me. I don't really know why, because I'm an almost perfect husband; my only flaw being too humble. Rather than taking up a fight with me in her frustration, she'd make a threat. She said she was going to park me in front of Walmart in my wheelchair and hang a sign around my neck that said "Free To A Good Home". That sort of humor—at least for us—really defuses an otherwise potentially tense situation.

I do the grocery shopping while she runs other errands. I was waiting for her in front of the store (I can no longer drive). I was wearing my Army Veteran hat. A man walked up to me and thanked me for my service. Then he asked if I needed a ride. My wife walked up while I was replying. I said, "Oh, no sir, but thank you. I'm waiting for the most beautiful woman in the world to come pick me up." Then I nodded toward my wife and said, "But it appears my wife is picking me up instead!" We all had a laugh.

Difficulties in life can cause difficulties in a marriage, but only if you let them. You have a choice in this, just like you have a choice in everything. You can let life's difficulties cause you to play the blame-game in your marriage and become bitter, or you can offer those difficulties to God in reparation for your sins and the sins of the world, then see the humor in all things and share some very healing laughter with the one person you told God you wanted to spend the rest of your life with. It's your choice, but laughter really is the best medicine.

Be sure to visit JoeSixpackAnswers.com to get answers to your questions, get a free email course, and regular invitations to free webinars. Also, if you listen to podcasts, listen to *The Cantankerous Catholic* every week. Get access to it at CantankerousCatholic.com or wherever podcasts are available. And look for my books on Amazon the next time you're shopping there.