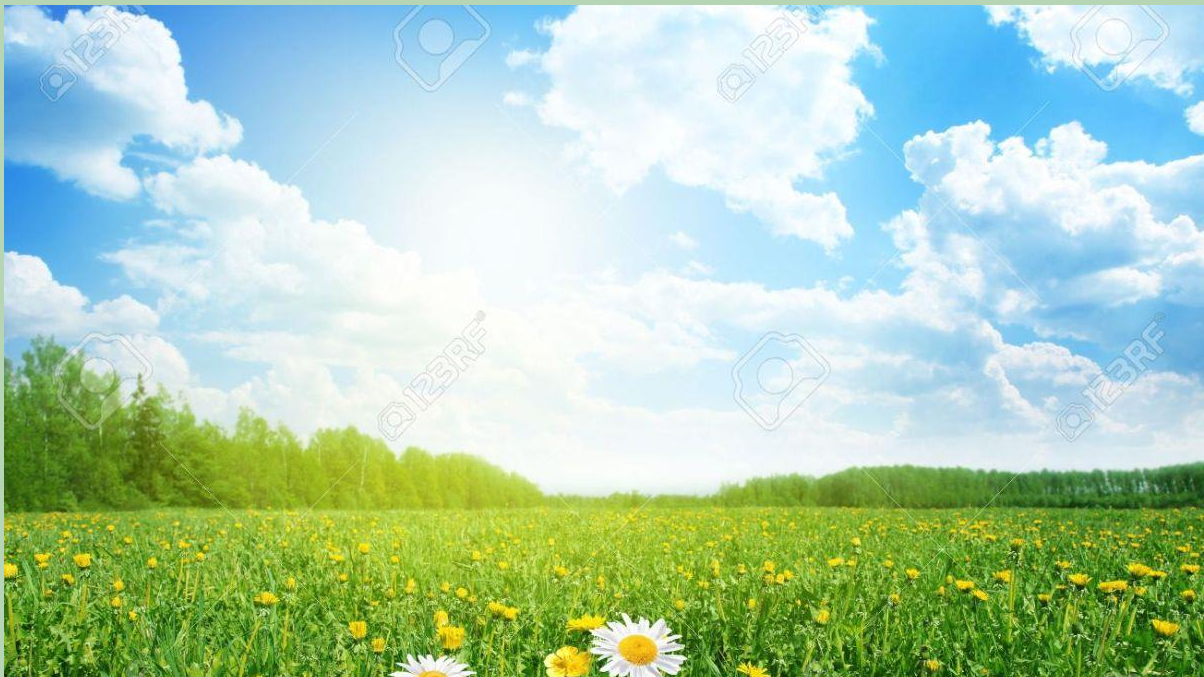


You are receiving this email because you attended a PreCana Day of Reflection and Bishop Bambera and the people of the Diocese of Scranton want to keep supporting your marriage. Please unsubscribe below if you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future.

[View this email in your browser](#)

# Good News for Newlyweds



**May 2019**

Office for Parish Life  
Diocese of Scranton

## [Overcoming the Negativity Bias](#)

by Harville Hendrix and Helen Hunt

Imagine scripting a perfect day with your partner. You set out on a hike on a beautiful Sunday morning, take a dip at a refreshing waterfall with no one around, snack on the fruit salad and sandwiches you prepared together, and – feeling connected and energized – you head back home. And then one of you says *something*. Maybe your husband says, “Why can’t we do this all the time?” While the words alone might seem innocent enough, you hear something else. You infer from the tone his “never-ending” complaint that you work too much. Suddenly, the adrenalin and cortisol pump through your veins and you react, “Maybe we could if I didn’t have to work so much to pick up *your* slack.” In a flash, THAT moment defines the day. And after a few more choice exchanges, that moment defines the next few days as you both retreat into bitter silence.

Humans have what is known as a “negativity bias.” In short, the bad stuff outweighs the good stuff. We gravitate towards and dwell on the one thing that did not go well rather than the five things that did go well. It’s all too common for this negativity to consume our relationships and distort our thinking. In committed relationships especially, compliments dwindle, and tones get harsher. We become less forgiving and loving and more critical and shaming. The charming blemishes we may have embraced early on transform into glaring character flaws.

We now know something about the origins of this sensitivity to the negative: Any negative message – words, tone, facial expression – triggers our survival drive and that triggers our anxiety. When we are scared, we automatically protect ourselves by withdrawing from the scene or countering with a putdown. And that makes everything worse. Because of this, when couples come to our workshops, they are unable to see beyond what their partner is doing wrong. They are stuck in this negativity bias (anxiety about what might happen to them) and have one goal for being there: to have their partner “see the light” (of all their wrongdoings) and “be fixed,” oblivious to their own contributions. It’s why we immediately move into one of our core teachings around intentionality. We need to strengthen the intentional muscle in order to override the reactive muscle. One way to do this is the appreciation process. Appreciations help us slow down the reactivity by engaging the prefrontal cortex, the part of our brain which regulates anxiety. Focusing on what your partner is doing right can be very powerful. The more you focus on the good, the more good there will be to focus on. Energy follows attention. Here are some tips:

1. **Be mindful on what’s going well in your relationship and on what your partner is doing right.** This not only includes *what* you say to your partner but how you *think* about your partner. Thoughts magnify the experience.
2. **Make a list of everything you appreciate, admire and love about your partner.** Include everything from physical attributes to personality traits to behaviors. Continue adding to the list regularly.
3. **Every day share at least three appreciations** from your list or something you noticed that day. Tell your partner what you love and appreciate about them.

Start by saying, “One thing I appreciate about you is....” And deepen the appreciation by sharing, “When you do that, I feel....” This ritual of appreciations can transform relationships. A hidden benefit of this rule is that we can discover many wonderful things about each other.

Most of us are guilty of falling into the trap of negativity. It can, at times, take an enormous effort to use the muscles we so seldom used. It’s much easier to be reactive and negative. It’s much harder to be intentional and positive. At least at first. Once we overcome the ingrained bias, like any atrophied muscle, intentionality becomes stronger and automatic. Appreciations flow. Relationships thrive and we begin to identify each other as a source of pleasure once again.

---

## Are you looking to connect with other young adults (ages 18-40) in the Diocese of Scranton?

Join our Young Adult Ministry for a Pilgrimage to Philadelphia on June 29! Contact [Shannon Kowalski](#) (570-207-2213 x 1155) for details and to learn more about young adult activities in our Diocese. You can also text "@dosyam1" to 81010 to get text message updates about other young adult opportunities in our Diocese.



## How Forgiveness Can Transform Your Marriage

By Terry Gaspard, MSW, LISW

---

Have you celebrated your first anniversary? **Do you think you may be called to minister to those preparing for marriage?** If you would like to begin the discernment process, to determine if you are called to PreCana ministry, please contact [Jen House](#), 570-207-2213 x 1104.

---



## Pray the Rosary

Some couples find great beauty and meaning in the ritual of praying the rosary. If this is a new mode of prayer for the two of you, [click here for guidelines.](#)

---





Copyright © 2019 Diocese of Scranton, All rights reserved.

**Our mailing address is:**

330 Wyoming Avenue  
Scranton, PA 18503

Want to change how you receive these emails?  
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#)

---

This email was sent to [Dan-Gallagher@dioceseofscranton.org](mailto:Dan-Gallagher@dioceseofscranton.org)  
[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)  
Diocese of Scranton, Office for Parish Life · 330 Wyoming Ave. · Scranton, Pa 18503 · USA

