



DIOCESE OF SCRANTON

ROOTED IN CHRIST

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We are Phil & Sue Milazzo and we'd like to share our story of "sticking with it" with you. We are the Community Coordinators for a

ministry called Retrouvaille, which is for couples experiencing difficulties in their marriage. This is an international program, connected to the Diocese of Scranton, which has helped thousands of couples over the last 40 years.

We wanted what everyone wants - a nice house, children, good jobs, enough money that we would be comfortable and enough security to last us into old age.

(Phil) I met Sue in high school and we, very quickly, became best friends and fell in love. When we married, we had many dreams for ourselves, as a couple and as individuals. First of all, we wanted to be together for the rest of our lives, best friends always. We wanted what everyone wants - a nice house, children, good jobs, enough money that we would be comfortable and enough security to last us into old age. In the beginning we seemed to be right on track. Things were going just as we had mapped them out. I was on my way to being successful, we had the home, two great kids, money and life was great.

Somewhere along the way, we began to get disillusioned about each other and about our marriage. I was working very hard to get all the things I believed I needed. Keeping my family comfortable was very important to me. Consequently, Sue and I began to spend less and less time together. As the quality time with each other diminished, we began to take each other for granted. Our communication diminished as well and we began to fight more frequently, as both of us tried desperately to find the happiness we once had.

During that time, I became very friendly with a woman client I knew. It began with just chatting, in person or on the phone, and us getting more friendly and before I knew what was happening, she was asking me out for a drink. When we parted that night, I held her and kissed her as much more than a friend.

This began a six-month affair during which time I became completely indifferent to Sue. I moved out of the house to live with this other woman and began divorce proceedings to leave my old life behind to start a new one. I can't even tell you what I was thinking during that time, or if I was thinking at all. I just kept making one bad choice after another. There came a point where I really hit bottom. It was the night I realized I had made a mistake, that I really still cared for Sue. It was as if God threw this really huge pail of water in my face and all of sudden I awoke from the sleepwalk I had been in for the previous months and years. I realized I had to try and undo everything I was doing and hope and pray that it wasn't too late.

Somehow, Sue took me back and we began this long journey to rebuild our marriage. It was very difficult at first. We both lived in fear that it wouldn't work after all that had happened. There was no trust between us and we were living a very shaky existence.

I never expected to hear those words that morning, "I don't love you anymore, there's someone else, I love her."

(Sue) I know for me, I never expected our marriage to get to this point. Sure, there had been bad times in the past when we didn't always agree, there were arguments that were loud and heated, and there were the days we would give each other the silent treatment. But we always seemed to be able to get past the anger and hurt we caused one another, and go on and love each other again. But this time was different, this time it had gone too far. I never expected to hear those words that morning, "I don't love you anymore, there's someone else, I love her." Those words seemed to bring our worlds to a crashing halt. The marriage I had known for all those years before didn't exist anymore. I know for me, I wondered if there was anything left, anything that could be salvaged from this mess we were in.

The pain from this betrayal was a pain like I had never known before. I remember the sinking feeling in my stomach along with the ache in my heart. I remembered back to our dating days, how we were always best friends. We had been through so much together, good and bad through the years. I couldn't understand what had happened. Now all I could think of were the arguments that didn't seem to end and how easy it seemed for us to say hurtful things to one another. We changed, our lives together changed. We didn't make up, we tried, but didn't know how. Our communication shut down. How could we talk when we couldn't even look at one another. The void between us, that began slowly through the years was now so obvious to us both. We grew apart. It seemed to be the justification we both used to explain to ourselves, and the world, why our marriage was failing.

We both saw ourselves as failures. For me, I saw myself no different than my parents who couldn't make a go of their marriage and I carried the guilt that my children would suffer through this struggling relationship, the same way I did growing up.

I was given tools to work with that would help me be a better person and a better father.

(Phil) Then came the discovery of the Retrouvaille program. This ministry showed me, and us, that no matter how bad life has been, that regardless of how long problems have existed, people can and do change. The program taught me that I could change, that I could make the choices necessary to rebuild our marriage if I really wanted to. I was given tools to work with that would help me be a better person and a better husband.

Through the Retrouvaille program I discovered that it is possible to start over, that forgiveness is possible.

(Sue) *I entered the Retrouvaille weekend with the pain, distrust, bitterness and anger from the affair, but also with the fear that the pieces of our shattered marriage couldn't be put back together. Through the*

Retrouvaille program I discovered that it is possible to start over, that forgiveness is possible. The word Retrouvaille means, "to rediscover", and we are living proof that we are all capable of working through our problems with hard work. With the grace of God, we can return to a relationship that is once again whole and life-giving.



It has been a long journey for us, but it has been fruitful. Today we are on the verge of celebrating our 57th wedding anniversary. Our two sons are happily married to two great women and we have five grandchildren. We have been involved in the Retrouvaille program for 37 years and have shared our story with thousands of couples. We are so thankful for not giving up on each other.

For reflection:

- Is there someone in your life who could benefit from learning about the Retrouvaille Ministry? If so, please consider sharing this story with them.

- "Amazing Grace" became our theme song during this time of struggle and redemption in our lives. Consider listening to or singing this hymn, and allow God to speak to you.

- The poem "Footprints in the Sand" became inspirational for Phil during this process of reconciliation. Consider praying with [this poem](#).

Help for Marriage with Retrouvaille

To learn more about the Retrouvaille Program, visit <https://www.helpourmarriage.org/>



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