



TORINO 2024

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TESTIMONY ABOUT FRAGILITY 12/7/2024

Kathy and Peter Leszczyński, Poland

God bless,

[Together] We are Kathy and Peter Leszczyński. We are 40 years old and have been married for 17 years. We have two children - Sophie, 14 years old, and Thomas, 12 years old. We have been in the Teams of Our Lady movement for 16 years. We come from Poland, specifically from Krakow.

[Kathy] An important introduction to our testimony is the fact that we have known each other since we were 6 years old. Before we became a couple, we were friends for many years when we were teenagers. When we decided to be together, after 2 weeks we knew that this was "IT". From the beginning, God was also present in our relationship through the Eucharist we attended together and through praying together, first in the engagement phase, and then as a married couple. At the same time, we had great mutual trust - we knew that we were confident in each other and relationships with other people, also very close ones, would not change anything in this matter. It seemed that we knew everything about each other, and marital crises were not a topic that would apply to us. And for many years it was like that.

[Peter] It was the year 2016. I participated in an in-depth mediation course in the spirit of Nonviolent Communication. The course lasted 1.5 years. The participants were an international and intercultural community. What is worth paying attention to is the fact that due to the nature of this course, the relationships that were established were deep by nature. There I met a woman. What was intended to be simply a deep friendship quickly turned into being attracted by each other. Fortunately, this woman was from Turkey and the only chance for a face-to-face meeting was during the course sessions, which took place every 2-3 months. Either way, the infatuation was also maintained remotely. And in front of Kathy, it was presented as a deep friendship. I think that's how I rationalized it to myself as well. At the end of one of the sessions, I had a breakthrough. I was internally devastated and torn - on the one hand, it was clear to me that I loved Kathy and I couldn't even imagine the thought of breaking up, and on the other hand, my body and my heart longed for a relationship and closeness with this other woman.

In Poland we have a saying - "when in fear, God is near". Feeling helpless, I decided to go to confession. And kneeling at the confessional bars, I was terrified. I started my confession with something like: "Father, how can I present to you in a few sentences what I am experiencing now, and what is moreless the story of my life?" Fortunately, the Lord was with me and the priest attended to me with great understanding and empathy. I have no idea what he told me, but I know that when I left the confessional I felt cared for by this priest and by the Lord. I also knew that I could receive the Eucharist in peace of mind and that the Lord would gradually heal what I had ruined.

I broke off the relationship with the other woman almost immediately, even though I knew we had a few more course sessions ahead of us. It hurt like hell. But I also knew that the relationship with Kathy was the most important one - the one I chose for my whole life. Although, to be honest with myself and with you, I think I was very close to making opposite decisions. Fortunately, the Lord supported our



marriage and watched over us. The grace of the Sacrament of Marriage was present.

What is also worth noting is that throughout this period we stayed in the Teams, prayed together and facilitated the sit-down. It was probably a bit empty, a bit artificial, and a bit forced. But at the same time, we stood by each other and by the Lord.

[Kathy] I had no idea anything was happening at all. I knew that the mediation course was very enriching for Peter and that he met valuable people there. He was happy to tell me about some of them. Also about what they learnt during the course. My husband also shared with me that he had met this woman, talked about her difficult situation related to the political situation in Turkey at that time, and told me that she was an interesting and warm person. However, nothing made me think that he might have affection towards her as well.

In our marriage, we may have had a much void time, perhaps there was less openness between us, but I put it down to the fact that sometimes it just happens and you have to wait it out. During this period, it was also more difficult for me to open up in front of Peter and I thought that the situation was simply a vicious circle.

[Peter] In 2018 we went to the International Gathering in Fatima and had the pleasure of singing in the choir. It was a time of grace for us. And then came the 2018/2019 year of formation in the Teams of Our Lady. A year with study materials about Fragility. I knew I was being led by the Lord. That we were being led by the Lord. Through subsequent topics, throughout this formative year, Lord was preparing us to finally talk honestly in April 2019. He opened me up to Himself and to my wife. Step by step. He was preparing me so that I could tell Kathy the whole truth about the situation from 3 years ago. I had a deep conviction, confirmed with my spiritual director, that bringing this topic up earlier in the spirit of radical honesty was likely to do more harm than good. So I waited for the right moment and I knew it had finally come. The openness, sensitivity and love with which I was welcomed was beyond my imagination. Kathy listened to me fully and wholeheartedly, with great attention and empathy.

[Kathy] When Peter said during the "Sit-Down" that he would like to bring up a difficult topic, literally everything came to my mind, but nothing of that sort. I remember being so surprised that I didn't even know how to react. I listened with great attention to the entire story my husband told me and I remember how he waited with fear in his eyes for my reaction. What I could do then was not to get carried away by emotions and to entrust everything to the Lord. We talked honestly and for a long time. It was a great relief to hear that the relationship was over. Paradoxically, at the same time, I felt peace somewhere deep in my heart, knowing that it was in the past, that the Lord had led us through it (even without my awareness), and now was the time to purify and heal our relationship.

What has guided me from the beginning of our relationship is the great trust I have in Peter, our bond and that the Lord who has blessed our relationship wants our good and guides us. I guess that was crucial for me at that time. And having faith in the fact that Peter was entrusted to me by the Lord meant that I could do nothing else but accept my husband: with all this history, with all his fear about what was next for us; with all his courage to tell me everything and stand together in truth. It was also faithfulness to the decision I made many years ago, when I decided that I wanted Peter to be my



husband. It was then that I "made an agreement" with the Lord that since He gave me such a Peter (with all his "flaws"), He would help me on our conjugal path. God kept his word and gave me strength - so I also keep mine :)

This conversation obviously caused a lot of emotions, but mutual honesty broke the "walls"

between us. We saw each other fully again, with what was strong and what was weak within ourselves and between us, and thanks to this we were able to rebuild unity in our marriage. It was a breakthrough.

[Peter] I know that the Lord gives us various experiences to show us Himself, to open us to something that may have been hidden from us before. Thanks to this experience, the Lord opened my mind and heart to 3 areas:

- Firstly, that He leads me. Even if I choose wrongly, He watches over me and gives me a chance to bring good out of it.
- Secondly, Kathy has great trust in me. This situation did not change anything in our relationship or in our mutual trust. No morbid jealousy was introduced on either side. We still have deep friendships with other people. This trust is the foundation of our relationship. And freedom makes our conjugal relationship truly a choice - every day.
- Thirdly - and from my perspective the most important thing, because I already knew about the first two areas - love is fragile; marriage is fragile. All these people around me, my friends, my brothers and sisters, who are laden with the burden of betrayal, divorce, remarriage, are no different from me. It may be a matter of one decision, and most often not a conscious one. The Lord really opened my eyes to this perspective then. It is now easier for me to look non-judgmentally at those whose choices were different. I am no different from them. I'm not any better. Our relationship is as fragile as theirs. I needed this experience. I now have a lot of tenderness towards them in my heart and willingness to find a place in the Church for people who at that particular moment in their lives chose differently and perhaps now find it difficult to feel at home in the Catholic Community. Thanks be to God for this experience and for His guidance and that it took place within our marriage, not outside it.

[Kathy] Finally, what we want to share with you is that fragility is inherent in the conjugal relationship, and it is also inherent in the relationship with God. Because we are human, because we are sinful, because we are not perfect. The Sacrament of Marriage is God's oath with us and it gives us strength and guidance in difficult times, and the Endeavours proposed by the Teams of Our Lady give us the tools to stay connected with the Lord and with each other, even when routine creeps in. God teaches us faithfulness, both in our relationship with Him (e.g. by continuing to pray every day, even when we don't feel like it), and in our relationship with our spouse (when we choose this person anew every day, even when he annoys us again and again). What we are sure of is that we need to take care of every relationship, both the one with the Lord (constantly nourishing ourselves in the Eucharist, the Word and prayer), and the one with our spouse (through deep conversations, conjugal prayer, mutual care and tenderness, or simply spending the time with each other).

The Lord gives us diverse experiences and gives us the opportunity to draw good from each of them.



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[Together] Praise the Lord!

