

# “I’m Divorced...

---

and it feels like I’m not welcome in Church”

If you are Catholic and divorced, you may feel lost at Church. Of course, you are not alone. The divorce rate is anywhere from 50 percent for first marriages to 80 percent for subsequent marriages. You will probably not be surprised to know that many of those divorced people are part of All Saints Church at Sunday Mass. What is disturbing is that many of them are **not** in our church at Sunday Mass.

Let me say at the start... if you are a divorced person who doesn’t go to Mass, you are welcome at All Saints! At our parish, we try to appreciate the pain suffered by people caught in this situation. And we understand that the difficulties resulting from divorce often continue for years. We know that, like Jesus, love and support must be our response to those whose marriages have not endured.

There is a lot of misunderstanding about divorce and the Catholic Church. It’s common for people to get bad information about Church teaching from those who don’t understand it themselves. Part of that has been the unintentional fault of the Church itself. Our efforts to support married life and to uphold the indissolubility of the Marriage Sacrament (which most people would appreciate to be a good thing), often gets interpreted as a harsh judgment against those whose marriages didn’t work out. The Church is forced to walk a very fine line.

I’ve had several people over the years tell me that they understood Catholics who get divorced are excommunicated. This is just not true. Divorced Catholics are full members of the Church and are encouraged to participate in its activities, including the reception of the Eucharist. Divorced Catholics in good standing with the Church, who have not remarried or who have remarried following an annulment, may receive the sacraments.

When a divorced person gets remarried outside the Church – that’s when things get more complicated. A marriage annulment is necessary for remarriage because the Catholic Church always gives an attempted

marriage bond the benefit of the law. The Church assumes that an indissoluble sacramental bond has formed until it is proven otherwise. For that reason, before a divorced person's new marriage can be recognized in the Catholic Church, he or she must obtain an annulment by a diocesan marriage tribunal, identifying the serious reason why the previous marriage's bond didn't form. Obtaining such a decree does not mean that the marriage never took place; it is a determination that a *sacramental* marriage did not take place. And this is important... an annulment does not mean that children of that marriage are illegitimate or that the couple was "living in sin." It means that, in that particular case, the marrying couple was not aware of the deep problems at the beginning of their marriage that would result in their break-up.

Taking all this into account, it is the practice of members of the Church who have remarried without an annulment of their first marriage to refrain from receiving Holy Communion. This teaching may be very difficult for some to appreciate and accept, but we are here to support and help you. If you have remarried civilly or in another church tradition, without an annulment of a previous marriage, please speak with one of the priests at All Saints about how to resolve your situation, so that you may receive Holy Communion. We'll help you.

No parish is perfect, but at All Saints we're doing our best to be faithful to Christ and our beautiful Catholic Tradition. If you're divorced, you may have a lot of hurt to get through in order to start coming to Mass. Just lean on the Lord, and know that you are in my prayers every day. No matter who you are or where you've been, there's a place for you in our parish family. It's a very good time to be part of All Saints. I hope you'll join us.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fr. Jamie Ziminski". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of "Fr.", "Jamie", and "Ziminski" being capitalized and prominent.

Fr. Jamie Ziminski  
Pastor of All Saints Church