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Denver, Colo., Sep 7, 2015 / 12:02 pm ([CNA/EWTN News](#)).- “I have a friend who has been divorced for 30 years. Her husband just left her one day, and she hasn't received communion in all this time,” author David Dziena recalled.

“She was only told by me when I was writing this book that she could receive communion – and she could not believe me, because she felt that because she was divorced, that meant she was separated from the Church.”

Stories like Dziena's are not uncommon. In fact, almost every Catholic can say that they have been affected – either directly or indirectly – by an irregular marriage over the course of their lifetime.

This is why Dziena teamed up with co-author Woodeene Koenig-Bricker to write a book called [“Catholic Prayer Book for the Separated and Divorced.”](#)

The book, published by Our Sunday Visitor, offers prayers and reflections for men and women who have been affected by the painful reality of divorce or separation.

Throughout the book, the authors begin to relieve some of the stigma revolving around divorce by pointing to saints such as St. Rita, St. Helena, and St. Eugene who have all dealt with difficult or divorced relationships. They hope the book will bring peace and healing, and offer some solidarity to those struggling with the loss of their marriage.

“There are many misconceptions of the status of divorced people within the Church,” Koenig-Bricker said, calling the confusion deeply unfortunate as it affects a widespread group of people.

“More than that, divorced people don't have a resource that allows them to pour out their hearts or pray about the situation they find themselves in because we have approached divorce from the status of a sin – which itself is not a sin – it is a tragedy,” she continued.

For Catholics who are divorced and struggling with the tenets of the faith, Koenig-Bricker suggests that they first learn what the Church actually teaches. Seeking out counseling from a good priest or spiritual director can also be a good option for recently divorced individuals, she said.

And, Koenig-Bricker would know. She has been divorced for several years, but is still living as a faithful Catholic.

“The fact that your marriage has ended does not remove you from the Church,” she said, adding that viewing divorce as “the unforgivable sin” is misleading and untrue.

However, remarriage outside of the Church without an annulment are the kinds of actions that would bar someone from receiving communion, Koenig-Bricker explained. Pope Francis himself has called this action a contradiction to the Christian sacrament.

The release of the book is timely, considering the upcoming Synod on the Family later this year. Divorce and remarriage will be one of the issues discussed during the meeting of bishops and has excited anticipation on what the clergy will hash out over the course of their discussions.

Koenig-Bricker is hopeful that the synod this fall will shed light on the growing number of people who are actually affected by the suffering of divorce and find ways to extend mercy to them.

“I am hoping it will be helpful to those involved in the synod to see the pain involved with this issue and the extent of the issue and to realize that there are probably millions of Catholics affected by irregular marriages,” she said.

Co-author Dzienna also believes the synod will be helpful, tackling a more directive approach for dioceses around the world on how to universally address divorce, separation, and remarriage.

“I think it will just change things to be more pastoral when it comes to divorce and remarriage,” he explained, saying that the synod will also give Pope Francis an opportunity to steer the Church in a unified direction.

Many people have concerns about the Church's stance on re-marriage, but Dzienna believes that the Church is acting out of charity. Dzienna is still coping with the fresh wound of his own divorce in 2009, but he found the Church's annulment process to ultimately be healing.

“It puts closure and it's a healing process on the other end, as you talk about things that happened in your marriage, you put to rest a lot of the discourse that led to the divorce,” he recalled.

“Anytime the Church makes a decision on doctrine, it's out of love for the person. Hopefully through dialogue, private reflection, and things like the Synod on the Family will take into account people's concerns,” Dzienna continued.

With the amount of people who are involved with and are affected by divorce today, the two authors hope that their book will be able to encourage peace and healing. They are also looking forward to a more directive response to divorced Catholics who are looking to remain faithful to the Church's teachings.

“There is no such thing as a parish or a family who is not affected by divorce,” Koenig-Bricker said.

“We can't afford as a Church to pretend it doesn't exist – because then we are failing to extend the mercy of Jesus to those in our communities who hurt daily.”