

# Children of separated, divorced parents share experiences

**By Elizabeth Lowe**

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TOWSON – At age 11, Lynn Kapusinski received troubling news. Her parents had decided to separate after more than two decades of marriage.

“Growing up,” Kapusinski said, “I always had the church to go back to, the sacraments to ground me.”

Kapusinski, a guidance counselor at Immaculate Conception School and parishioner of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Ellicott City, wants to help children navigate the situation she faced years ago.

Since 2002, Kapusinski, 50, has authored three books. Written from a Catholic perspective, each book is for various age groups – youths, teens and young adults in various age groups between 9-30 – dealing with parents who have separated or divorced.

“It’s vitally important to give children assistance as soon as possible,” Kapusinski said, “so they do not begin to rely on adverse coping skills to deal with their feelings and problems, and do not become alienated from God and church teachings in the process. Even in the best of circumstances it’s a loss for children and it’s tricky to navigate.”

Her latest book, released in October, is “When Parents Divorce or Separate: I Can Get Through This (A Catholic Guide for Kids).” In conjunction with that book, Kapusinski is offering an after-school support group for children in grades 3-6.

The group, which began Oct. 22, meets weekly through Dec. 10 at Immaculate Conception. Five children, four of whom are students at the Towson school, participate.

During a Nov. 12 meeting, Kapusinski and the children discussed problems they're experiencing as a result of the divorce, possible solutions and how to communicate their feelings effectively with their parents.

Many of the children said one problem they face is feeling like a messenger for their mother or father.

"I want to stress (that) your parents want to hear your side," Kapusinski said. "If you haven't done it already, I want you to communicate about any problems you're having."

Kapusinski applauds how the children support one another.

"It's been amazing how they have not only bonded but how they help one another with their sharing," she said.

Lisa, a parishioner of St. Pius X in Rodgers Forge who separated from her husband this summer and requested her last name be omitted for her privacy, read about the group in her parish bulletin. She enrolled her daughter, Eva, a fourth-grader at a local elementary school.

"I want to make sure Eva understands that none of this she can control and none of this is her fault," Lisa said. "I worry about how she communicates."

Annmarie Chiarini, who has been divorced for about five years and whose son, Ethan, is a fourth-grader at Immaculate Conception, said he has expressed that the group is beneficial.

"It was so heartening for me to hear that my son was able to connect with other children," Chiarini said. "He knows this a safe place where he can talk about how he feels. I'm so, so, so thrilled that Immaculate Conception has this wonderful resource."

Kapusinski hopes to offer the support group again in the spring.

*For information about her book, visit [pauline.org/whenparentsdivorce](http://pauline.org/whenparentsdivorce).*

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