

# My son is pressed to his limits. Is it time for a divorce?

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September 7, 2017



**Q: My son and his wife have been married nine years and have four children. His wife homeschools their children and wants three more kids, but my son is exhausted when he gets home and his wife expects him to “take over” while she “takes a break”. She says that the Church demands that they have more children. I would support my son if this was all too much and he asked for a divorce.**

A: Thank you for reaching out and asking this question. There are many factors at play here and clearly there is a lot here that I am unaware of. Since I do not know your son or his wife, I am only able to make a couple of assumptions. What I will offer you is based off of these assumption, so please keep that in mind when you read these words.

First, and this is going to be very important, you need to stay out of this. I understand that you are still his mom and that you care about your son very much. If there was a helpful step you could take, it would be to direct your son and daughter-in-law to their local priest or to a trusted counselor who could help them resolve this issue between the two of them. If they

were both asking you for help, that could be an occasion where you might be able to help, but in your full letter (not printed here), it is clear that you are on your son's "side". But in this case, the only "side" you get to be on is on the side of their marriage.

Second, you mention that your son's wife is claiming that the Church demands that they have more children. This is incorrect. The Church does note that a couple must be open to life within their marriage. Further, the Church wisely teaches that every sexual act must be open to life. But the Church continues to teach that the husband and wife are called to be responsible parents. If they discern that they are not able to raise more children at this point, then they must come to that conclusion together. Please allow me to reiterate: they have demonstrated an openness to life in their marriage already. They are still absolutely forbidden from using contraception, but Natural Family Planning is incredibly effective at observing the Church's teaching while being responsible parents. It is vital to also note that couples who practice NFP have a dramatically lower divorce rate (reportedly less than 4% compared with the national average which hovers around 50%).

Third, your son is tired. Your daughter-in-law desires more children. They both have good points. You have to understand that no one is "wrong" here. If they (the couple, not his mom) decide that they want more children together, then that is a good decision. If they (the couple, not his mom) decide that for both of their sakes, they need to avoid pregnancy at the moment, then that can be their decision as well.

But this is between them. If they are at a stalemate, then they should speak with their parish priest or with a counselor or someone who could help them come to a mutual decision and agreement.

Hopefully your son is a man who does not need his mom to step in and solve things when he and his wife have an issue. That would mean that his parents failed to raise a man who knows how to be a good husband. For you to jump to the conclusion that you would support him if he decides to abandon his wife and children seems quite extreme.

Last thing. As you know, marriage and family is difficult. Raising children is difficult. When he comes home from work, he should be expected to get to work and care for the children. That is just normal. I believe it is called "being a dad". At the same time, if he does not believe that he can handle any more children, then he and his wife should be able to talk about this and come to a mutual decision. If his wife has found that, after a day of homeschooling (which is quite difficult) she has no energy left for anything, then they could consider a different option for their children's schooling. If their children went to a Catholic school, it might help with her own tiredness so that she and her husband can work together to take care of the kids when he comes home.

This is where their appealing to a counselor or a local priest could be very helpful. This issue is simply one more big question in life and marriage. If they are going to move forward with this, then they should really seek counseling before he just picks up and abandons his family.

Actual last thing. As I noted, I had to make some assumptions in this response. The take-away that I would like to emphasize has more to do with you than with your son's marriage. It is a good thing that you continue to love your son. But your role in his life is to help him remain faithful to his marriage vows and to his responsibility to his family...and nothing more. I know that I have said some hard words here. But it is very important that you remember that he "belongs" to her more than he "belongs" to you now. Cut the strings.