

19 Promises for a Single Christian

Commitment Must Start Long Before You Meet Your Spouse

By Stephen Gabriel

Some Catholics have a vocation to the single life, but most are called to marriage. So the single life might be regarded as “boot camp” for married life. Indeed, a single Catholic devoted to growing in virtue and self-mastery will substantially increase the likelihood of a successful marriage.

A marriage will succeed only if the husband and wife are willing to sacrifice for the good of the family. Pope John Paul II says in his “Letter to Families” that “every man and every woman fully realizes himself or herself through the sincere gift of self.” What one learns soon after marriage is that this gift of self doesn’t come easily. It’s difficult, because we lack virtue. We’re selfish. We’re proud. But our love spurs us on, and we struggle to improve. And with God’s grace we are able to build a strong marriage and raise a happy family.

What does this have to do with the single life? Plenty. If a single man or woman has learned to give of self prior to marriage, it will be so much easier after marriage. If before marriage one struggles to be chaste, one will be better prepared to live chastity within marriage.

Marriage is not only an exciting human endeavor; it’s a spiritual journey. Marriage forces us to expose our heart to each member of the family. We experience joy and heartache. We share successes and failures. Without a deep faith in God and access to the grace made available to us in the sacraments, a family can easily become a sterile group of individuals living together instead of the “intimate community of life and love” that we have been called to be (see Pope John Paul’s *Familiaris Consortio*).

Clearly, the closer one is to God before marriage, the easier it will be to access those supernatural provisions, otherwise known as grace, for the spiritual journey of marriage.

Any serious Christian, married or unmarried, by virtue of the Christian vocation, has made commitments. The overriding commitment is to follow the life and teaching of Jesus. But many other commitments flow from this fundamental one. These range from the mundane to the sublime, but they are all important and all means to reaching our goal of holiness.

Here are some commitments or promises that a single Catholic might make with an eye toward marriage, a marriage that will ultimately provide him or her with a unique path to holiness.

My Personal Growth and Development

1. I will try to develop the habit of saving at least a little every month.
2. I will take the time to read and develop hobbies that will enrich my life and the life of my future family.
3. Workaholism is an unseemly habit for the married and unmarried alike. I will try to remember that my Christian vocation demands a life of service and friendship as well as work.
4. When I am dating someone, I look for those qualities that I'd like to see in my spouse. The acid test should be – would I like this person to be the father (mother) of my children? What are his or her virtues? What kind of character does he or she possess?

My Family, Friends and Community

5. I will call or visit my mother and father on a regular basis.
6. I will try to keep in touch with my brothers and sisters, visiting with the ones who live close by and writing or calling those who are out of town.
7. While I may not have been called to the religious life, I have been called to a life of service. Performing the corporal works of mercy is not an option for a Christian.
8. I will treat others as persons, not things that can be used to suit my own purposes and then discarded.
9. I will try to remember that true friendship is manifest by a concern for the supernatural welfare of my friends. The “tactful” avoidance of that troublesome issue that is keeping my friend from God is no way to show my friendship. It is simply cowardice!
10. I will try to be generous with my money, keeping in mind that I am just a steward of the gifts and talents that the Lord has given me.

My Relationship with God

11. I will continue to study my faith, recognizing that a deeper knowledge of the faith will help me to know God better and to grow closer to Him.
12. I will remember that my social life is also meant to be sanctified. I can have plenty of fun without offending God.
13. As I try to discover my true vocation in life, I will pray to God for light, reminding myself that it is His will that I seek, not my own.
14. I will read the life of Christ in the Gospels every day and try to remember that Jesus speaks to me personally when He calls His disciples to bear the cross daily.

15. I will keep in mind that my Catholic faith is not just a feature of the culture in which I was raised, leading me to participate in certain pious practices. Rather, it is a divine vocation, a way of life that should permeate all of my thoughts and actions.

16. I will try to foster a deep devotion to the Blessed Mother through prayer and study of the doctrine related to her. The daily Rosary and other Marian devotions are excellent means of growing closer to Jesus through Mary.

17. I will consult a trusted friend who can advise me on such matters as how I balance my life among work, social life, service and prayer. A good priest who is experienced at giving spiritual direction could help me reach such a balance.

18. I will look for friends who will reinforce the values that I am trying to live. I remember that people can be an occasion of sin. By ignoring this I threaten my faith, my virtue and the success of my future marriage.

19. I am who I am because of the prayers and efforts of many others – my parents, relatives, teachers and friends. And by the grace of God, I have managed to keep up the struggle to be faithful. I remind myself of these facts frequently with a spirit of gratitude and humility. Truly, without You, Lord, I can do nothing!

Originally published in New Covenant, November 1997, pp. 25-26.

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