

Whether we are single for now or single forever, singleness is an invitation to discover who we are, to live our lives in the present, to not be trapped by our past or so consumed with the future that we fail to recognize the many gifts and opportunities that await us right now.

*(from Beth Knobbe: Party of One: Living Single with Faith, Purpose, and Passion)*

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Each of us is called to answer God's love with her or his life. How can I best respond to God's love? How can I best spread God's love in my life and in others' lives? How can I best lead a loving life? As Vatican II reminds each of us, how can I best live out my baptismal call to lead a life of holiness? These are key questions, and much more important and foundational to Christian living than whether one chooses to be single or married. (from Eileen E. O'Brien. "Single Vocations" in *Single Women: Affirming Our Spiritual Journeys*, Bergin & Garvey, 1993.)

### FALL IN LOVE

*Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.*

*What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything.*

*It will decide what will get you out of the bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, what amazes you with joy and gratitude.*

*Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.*

*- Pedro Arrupe, SJ*

### POPULAR MYTHS THAT SINGLES FACE

- Life begins at marriage
- Being single is a selfish way to live
- Singles have more time to devote to their work/career
- Is it socially acceptable to attend events alone?
- The more I date, I increase my chances of finding Mr./Mrs. Right
- Sex: Everyone is doing it
- If I don't get married soon, I will never have children
- Because you're not in a relationship you must have "issues"
- My faith community only cares about married people and kids
- If you're not married, then you should become a priest/nun

### SPIRITUAL TOOLS

Purpose  
Stewardship  
Simplicity  
Solitude  
Love  
Intimacy  
Generativity  
Forgiveness  
Community  
Discernment

*A like example, but one given in a different way, is that offered by widows and **single people**, who are able to make great contributions toward holiness and apostolic endeavor in the Church ... All Christ's faithful, whatever be the conditions, duties and circumstances of their lives—and indeed through all these, will daily increase in holiness, if they receive all things with faith from the hand of their heavenly Father and if they cooperate with the divine will.*  
(Lumen Gentium, 41)

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**VOCATION** is the term given to the call to each person from God; everyone has been called to holiness and eternal life, especially in Baptism. Each person can also be called more specifically to the priesthood or to religious life, to married life, and to single life, as well as to a particular profession or service.

Jesus calls us as his disciples to a new way of life—the Christian way of life—of which stewardship is a part. But Jesus does not call us as nameless people in a faceless crowd. He calls individually, by name. Each one of us—clergy, religious, layperson, married, **single**, adult, child—has a personal vocation. God intends each one of us to play a unique role in carrying out the divine plan.

The challenge, then, is to understand our role—our vocation—and to respond generously to this call from God. Christian vocation entails the practice of stewardship. In addition, Christ calls each of us to be stewards of our personal vocations, which we receive from God.

—from the *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults*

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**INTIMACY** is our ability to be “up close” with another person.

There are many ways we experience intimacy with another – physically, emotionally, spiritually. I think sometimes our sex-driven culture has programmed us to think that we want intercourse, when what we really long for is intimacy, a deep connection, and commitment with another.

- Sexual Intimacy – Sharing passion. Sexual intercourse and physical pleasuring.
- Physical Intimacy – Healthy touch within appropriate boundaries. A hug. Holding hands.
- Emotional Intimacy – Being tuned to each other’s wavelength. Communication. Vulnerability.
- Intellectual Intimacy – Closeness in the world of ideas. Conversation. Debate. Art. Music. Beauty.
- Recreational Intimacy – Relating in experiences of fun and play. Sharing laughter and humor.
- Spiritual Intimacy – Unity in shared religious expression. Prayer. Silence. Mass. Nature.

*There is only one vocation. Whether you teach or live in the cloister or nurse the sick, whether you are in religion or out of it, married or single, no matter who you are or what you are ... you are called to a deep interior life.*

Thomas Merton

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In relation to single persons, it would be beneficial if we started asking, in a non-exploitative way, not what ministry *to* singles is, but what the ministry *of* singles is. What gifts do they bring to the church? What specific services might some undertake ‘for the sake of the reign of God’? What kinds of work, what sorts of actions for justice, might be particularly appropriate to, or flow from, the single Christian life? (“Singleness and Spirituality,” by Francine Cardman)

**THE FOUR F’s of CATHOLIC MARRIAGE:  
Free, Faithful, Fruitful, Forever**

[www.ForYourMarriage.org](http://www.ForYourMarriage.org)

## SUGGESTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Here is a list of books and articles that I have found interesting, inspiring, and thought-provoking on my single journey. I've read most of these, but a few of them are recommendations from friends which I've not read. I am trying to create a collection of books, articles, and chapters about the Spirituality of the Single Life or the Single Vocation. There are many secular titles, as well as resources on dating/relationships in general, which I do not include. Feel free to email me your suggestions! ~Beth ([bethknobbe@aol.com](mailto:bethknobbe@aol.com))

### **ARTICLES:**

Francine Cardman, "Singleness and Spirituality," *Spirituality Today* 35/4 (1983), pp 304-318.

<http://www.spiritualitytoday.org/spir2day/833542cardman.html>

Jeff Guhin "Celibate at 23" on Busted Halo. This was my first inspiration to start thinking more seriously about what it means to be intentionally single. <http://bustedhalo.com/features/celibate-at-23>

Every Day Catholic "Unmarried and Unashamed", *American Catholic/ St. Anthony Messenger Press*

<http://www.americancatholic.org/Newsletters/EDC/preview.aspx?id=239>

Beth Knobbe, "Flying Solo: Life as a Single Catholic", *U.S. Catholic*, August 2014

<http://www.uscatholic.org/articles/201407/flying-solo-life-single-catholic-29188>

John Pavlovitz, "A Pastors Apology to the Single Community" May 14, 2015

<https://johnpavlovitz.com/2015/05/14/a-pastors-apology-to-the-single-community/>

Jessica Keating, "Single By Default", *America Magazine*, September 2016

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2016/09/08/celibacy-30-not-just-empty-holding-pattern>

"A Vibrant Vocation" by Karl A. Schultz – *America Magazine*, January 2016

<https://www.americamagazine.org/issue/vibrant-vocation>

Michael Altenburger, "Single Life Is More Fundamental for Christianity Than Both Married and Religious Life," *Church Life Journal*, November 29, 2017

<https://churchlifejournal.nd.edu/articles/single-life-is-more-fundamental-for-christianity-than-both-married-and-religious-life/>

Christena Cleveland, "A Liberation Theology for Single People" June 3, 2019

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/liberation-for-26613238>

Pieter Valk, "The Case for Vocational Singleness", *Christianity Today*, November 25, 2020

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/november-web-only/valk-case-for-vocational-singleness.html>

Jana M Bennett, "Single Catholic and Never Alone", *US Catholic*, January 2021

<https://uscatholic.org/articles/202012/single-catholic-and-never-alone/>

Estefania Garcia, "Calling All the Single 'Laities'", *Busted Halo*, February 10, 2021

<https://bustedhalo.com/features/calling-all-the-single-laities-how-my-vocation-lets-me-live-my-best-life>

James Martin, SJ, "What is Valentine's Day like when you're celibate?", *America Magazine*, February 12, 2021

<https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2021/02/12/valentines-day-celibate-jesuits-james-martin-love-239947>

### **POD CASTS / RECORDING:**

"Singleness: Theology, Spirituality, and Practice" with Christena Cleveland and Hunter Beaumont, August 2016.

Produced by Fuller Studio, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena CA

<https://soundcloud.com/fullerstudio/sets/singleness>

## **BOOKS:**

Lina AbuJamra, *Thrive: The Single Life as God Intends* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2013).

Gary Chapman, *The Five Love Languages for Singles* (Northfield Publishing, 2004)

Dorothy Cummings, *The Closet's All Mine!: From a Seraphic Single*. (Liguori Publications, 2010)

David Hoffeditz, *They Were Single Too: 8 Biblical Role Models*. (Kregel Publications, 2005)

Daniel Horan, OFM. *Dating God: Live and Love in the Way of St. Francis* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2012)

Albert Y. Hsu, *Singles at the Crossroads*. (Intervarsity Press, 1997)

Karol Jackowski, *10 Fun Things to do Before You Die* (New York: Hyperion, 2000)

Annemarie S. Kidder. *Women, celibacy, and the church: Toward a theology of the single life*. (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 2003)

Beth M. Knobbe, *Party of One: Living Single with Faith, Purpose, and Passion* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2011)

Beth M. Knobbe, *Finding My Voice: A Young Woman's Perspective* (Cincinnati, OH: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2009) – addresses the single life in Chapter 3: Vocation.

Renee M. LaReau. *Getting a Life: How to Find Your True Vocation* (Orbis Books, 2003)

James Martin, *My Life with the Saints* (Chicago: Loyola Press, 2006), p. 203.  
(Especially his section about celibacy in the chapter on Pope John XXIII)

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Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1958)

Thomas Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1972)  
Especially Ch. 11 “Learn to be Alone” (on solitude) and Ch. 12 “The Pure Heart” (on celibacy)

Susan Annette Muto, *Celebrating the Single Life: A Spirituality for Single Persons in Today's World*. (New York: Crossroads Publishing, 1989)

Kathleen Norris, *The Cloister Walk* (New York, NY: Riverhead Trade, 1997).  
(Especially her chapter entitled “Celibate Passion”)

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Mary O'Brien and Clare Christie (editors). *Single Women: Affirming Our Spiritual Journeys* (Bergin & Garvey, 1993)

Thomas Rausch, SJ and Catherine E. Clifford. *Catholicism in the Third Millennium* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2003). “Single Life”, pages 120-121

Ronald Rolheiser, *The Holy Longing: The Search for Christian Spirituality* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), p. 198. (Includes an excellent chapter on sexuality.)

Jean Sheridan, *The Unwilling Celibates: A Spirituality for Single Adults*. (Twenty-Third Publications, 2000)

Emily Stimpson, *The Catholic Girl's Survival Guide for the Single Years*. (Emmaus Road Publishing, 2012)

Luci Swindoll, *Wide My World, Narrow My Bed: Living and Loving the Single Life* (Multnomah Publishers, 1982)

Luci Swindoll has other titles as well that are very good.

Evelyn Eaton Whitehead and James D. Whitehead, *A Sense of Sexuality: Christian Love and Intimacy* (New York: Doubleday, 1989)

**For Your Marriage (USCCB):** <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/> - although a website for those who are married, it also includes some great articles for singles and dating. A great place for anyone who is seriously dating or hopes to be in a relationship someday.

**Single's Studies Bibliography:** This is a website filled with resources about the sociological study of singlehood. Not much by way of "spirituality" in here, and it's quite extensive, so I haven't picked through it in great detail. Very interesting none-the-less! <http://issc.berkeley.edu/singlesstudies/bibliography.html>