

Choices...

Vocation to Single life?

A blessing for the church?

Whilst attending the International Eucharistic Congress in Dublin recently I was struck by the thousands of young people that attended and who enjoyed praying together at a Taize evening. Looking around I found myself thinking – what pressure there is on people, in general, to conform to a contemporary vision of an acceptable life style and measure of success. I reflected on vocation and call and how these have been reduced to thinking of consecrated religious life and priesthood only and yet remembering having been taught and learnt that there are three types of vocations Marriage and Single life being the other two.

As I gazed and prayed I felt that we offer young people too little real choice with our over emphasis of ‘call’ being that only to the overt nature of religious life. This has been especially, understandably so, because of the growing need in the West, for priests. Yet unless we cultivate vocation, as an answer to God first, a yes, a fiat the real choices cannot be made.

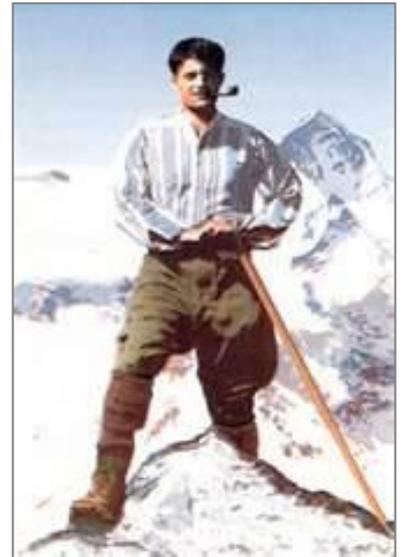
We all start life single and circumstances, culture and environment affect our lives as well as an encouragement to search for a way for us personally. The days of being thought of as being ‘left on the shelf’, a kind of demeaning of a person as unfit for marriage surely have gone.... Or have they?

Marriage is often deferred to after a period of cohabitation or ignored yet it is still seen as the correct way to be with whoever one pleases irrespective of its definitions as being between male and female. The notion of remaining single and being free to serve in whatever capacity, maybe in a job of choice or profession seems not to be offered as an option. Suitability for Marriage is hardly mentioned and the single are often looked upon with pity or as misfits.

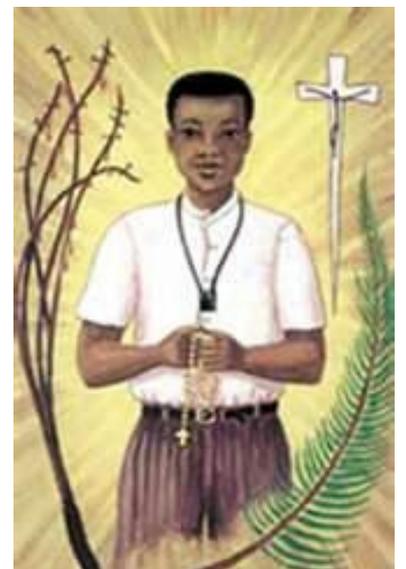
It is an important issue for it affects the way we think of people and undermines our concept of service. Most of us will end our days as single people whether we are priest, religious or widow/ers. Single people often fulfil important familial functions of availability to others as well as dedication to a cause or work.



Ven. Edel Quinn



Bl. Pier Giorgio Frassati



Saint Isadore

The last century has produced many wonderful examples of committed *single lay* life, sometimes chosen, sometimes imposed but always accepted and lived out as a fulfilment of God's plan for the person.

There are many such examples and the following are but a tiny cross section for the list would require a book or two. They show by their lives that it is possible to become holy in the everyday activities of their lives and become 'servant of God.' All without exception put God first in their lives and within that love found the love of neighbour. Some were practical some 'mystical' but all followed the Master's invitation.

There are those who found a way to God through a professional life like Doctor of the Poor Saint Joseph Moscati(D.1927) who dedicated his life to tending his poor patients with his own word, 'saving souls by caring for the body' he combined his knowledge of science with his commitment to faith as Pope Paul VI said of him. Then there is the Ven. Matt Talbot, an Irish labourer (1925), an alcoholic who through abstinence and perseverance saved many; there is Bl. Bartolomeo Longo,(1926) a lawyer, gifted with many talents, who turned Satanist, and finally found another way not through intellect and power but service and spent his life tending to the destitute poor. Some are martyred for their faith like Saint Isadore Bakanja (1909) a catechist in the Congo whose love of the Rosary and scapular cost him his life. A recent convert he helped the Trappist missionaries to evangelise his people, was tortured by the European rulers and finally died as a result of the injuries he sustained at 29 years of age.

Bl Pier Georgio Frasseti(1925), a student who served with the St Vincent de Paul Society, became involved in Social Justice, disguised his rich spiritual life in activities such as mountain climbing and sport and while tending the poor, contracted polio and died at 24. Luigi Rocci a

joy filled invalid, and Carlos Rodrigues, the joyful lay apostle are others.

We must turn now to the ladies, valiant warriors of the Lord. Again there are too many to count.

Venerable, Margaret Sinclair (1925) a saint of the factory floor and Edel Quinn Missionary of the Legion of Mary (1944) and Servant of God Teresa Higginson, a catechist and teacher(1905) are good examples. Dorothy Day (1980) who after unsuccessful relationships and becoming a catholic founded the Catholic Worker Movement and was at the forefront of Justice issues most of the century was an outstanding lay woman. There is Saint Louise de Aviat an Educator and Saint



Ven. Margaret Sinclair

Genoveva Morales who founded an institute for the Elderly. Not least we have Carla Ronci (1970) a lay worker and parish activist, and the two Invalids Martha Robin (1981) founder of the Foyers of Charity (silent retreats for lay people) and Blessed Alexandrina da Costa (1955) victim souls, both who lived solely on the Eucharist and in great pain yet remained cheerful and listened to many. Each came from a different Country, each had a different background but all remained single and became holy.



Saint Joseph Moscati

So let us consider all options for living out our Christian lives and encourage others to seek a way for their life in truth and fearlessly especially the young. Let us give

them good options for their lives. Together in all callings we can become God's Holy People.

Interested in these lives?... Consider reading 'Saintly Women of Modern Times and 'Saintly Men of Modern Times 'by Joan Carroll Cruz . Sunday Visitor 2004.

'Three things I cannot escape: the eye of God, the voice of conscience, the stroke of death. In company, guard your tongue. In the family guard your temper. When alone guard your thoughts!' Ven. Matt Talbot.

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