

Dating is No Monkey Business

By Father Robert J. Fox

Many young people today have been so engrossed in the secularism of the world that they have no idea how to relate to the opposite sex.

"Dating?" What is that? Most young men have no sound idea how to court a young lady. Many young people do not understand the purpose of dating.

You see, until the invention of the automobile and its common use, the word *courtship* was commonly used. So let's try the word "courting". Webster's Dictionary defines it this way: 1. To seek to gain or achieve. 2. To seek the affections of; especially: to seek to win a pledge of marriage from.

Courtship before the automobile, as understood by good Christian families, did not allow the boy and girl to go off by themselves even with the horse and buggy. If a young man wanted to court a young lady, he would engage in social activities with her within her family circle. There would always be others around when they met. He would ask the parents, in particular the father, if he might come over to visit the young lady. After sizing up the young man, the father would give his consent, if he was of worthy character.

If things went well, and the parents continue to approve, the young man would be allowed more frequent visits. Never would the two be left alone. At most, they might be allowed to sit on the front porch and visit separately from the rest who were well aware they were there. On occasion the young man might accompany the family to some special event or go with the family to worship at Church.

Such was courtship. Perhaps young couples today will laugh or make fun of it. But it worked. It led to good marriages that lasted, and out of wedlock pregnancies were few.

No, the purpose of this pamphlet on "dating" is not to require young people in any or all circumstances to return to the *courtship* customs of yesteryear. There are, however, families here and there who admirably hold to traditional standards of courtship. The goal here is to invite young readers to ask themselves some serious questions about protecting their future happiness.

"Have I bought into the modern mentality that separates God from everyday life? Has my mind been secularized so that I accept the attitudes, the way of thinking and acting that is destroying families, driving many young people to despair, unhappy marriages, single parent homes, divorces, etc.????

What is the purpose of dating?

It is good and wholesome to have friendships with both sexes. The dating of one person, or courtship, under all circumstances, should be directed toward developing a deeper friendship with one special person to determine whether they are compatible to an eventual life-long marriage together. Dating in no way gives a person the right to any sexual activity before marriage. While the couple is to help one another retain purity, the young man is to be the protector of the young lady, and that including, from himself.

Dating or courtship is a discernment period to discover compatibility between two persons who may one day be one's wife or husband for life.

In discerning the right helpmate for life, you must look for much more than a beautiful or handsome face. You must look for one with Christian virtue and morals. Good character is far more essential for a happy marriage than a beautiful face. As a good Christian, you are conscious more of his/her soul qualities than the physical aspects. You must discover one who understands with a sense of responsibility the duties of the married state.

Young ladies should look for a man who is a decisive leader, who is earnest and practical about working to make a living for the family. Young men should seek a woman who considers motherhood a

most beautiful gift from God and the home a place in which she wants to spend her life bringing happiness and joy to. Something her good mother will have prepared her for.

To put it even more clearly: a young man should look for a young woman who has the highest regard for motherhood and will consider her first duty to be a homemaker and to nurture children. The young lady should look for a young man who is responsible, who can hold down a job and support a family, who is wise in the use of finances, (Lack of financial responsibility ruins many marriages.) and who will be a gentle man and yet a good disciplinarian of his children.

For those who are not religiously motivated and have little regard for the Church's teachings on dating and marriage, I would like to share the views of a young man who uses a purely logical and practical prospective for dating.

The young man made this simple statement. "I love love." I never heard it put that way, but I think every young person can relate to that statement. To be in love is a most wonderful thing.

He stated that all young people will say, "I don't want to contract a sexually transmitted disease. I don't want to have an out of wedlock pregnancy, then turn around and live the same lifestyle that those who get the diseases and the pregnancies." He could not see their logic. He felt that if a person was not ready to settle down and get married, they should not date. Now that is pretty strong stuff coming from a young man who is still in his teens.

He also felt that girls who were supposed to be Christian should dress in a manner that would not promote lustful thoughts in the mind of the young men they associate with. Often girls flaunt their sexuality and then are flabbergasted when some guy makes an unwanted pass. That is like a person fishing with a colorful lure and getting mad when a fish makes a strike at it. Emotions must be tempered by good judgment if young couples are to maintain a moral relationship.

Who will be the head of our home?

Both the young man and the young woman must hold that the father is the head of the family. He will be the head in disciplining, forming family members spiritually, and teaching both by his example and words. He will not relinquish his role to his wife. The mother is the helpmate of her husband. Therefore the young lady should understand, even before marriage, that she will give any children God wills for them to have, the example of respect and obedience to their father. She will dedicate her life to the wonderful task of homemaking and mothering. This should have been instilled in her through Scripture reading and the example of her own mother. The father as head has been determined by God from the time of the creation of the human race. It is biblical, both in the Old and New Testaments.

The time of courtship before marriage, when a friendship between the young man and young woman is developing into a strong relationship, is the time for repeated discussions and understandings between the two on the duties of husband and father/ wife and mother. There must be a firm and proper understanding between them on these matters before any engagement takes place. If they cannot agree, they should not consider engagement for marriage. They should look elsewhere for a helpmate in marriage.

I write as a priest who prepared couples for marriage for nearly fifty years. When most first came to me after engagement, unfortunately, the points made in this pamphlet had not been discussed between them. Nor had the more extensive qualities I incorporated into the book: *Masculinity: The Gentle Man* been considered. I urge both young men and young women to read that book. The roles of man (husband and father) and woman (wife and mother) are explained in detail so that there is no blurring of roles.

It was parents with children who urged me to write that book. When the woman acts as head of the family, does all the disciplining, decision making, and even has a career to make more money, there is a blurring of roles. It is contrary to family life as intended by God who made us in His own image and likeness. When the man steps back and permits his wife to take the lead, he is acting like a wimp. The radical feminist movement has unfortunately encouraged many women to take on masculine characteristics, causing much confusion and unhappiness in the family.

Where has radical feminism led society?

The radical feminist movement denies the inherent differences between men and women. Women have been discouraged from child rearing. They have distorted education by ridiculing anyone who proposes differences between the sexes in learning skills, and weakened the military by lowering size and strength standards so that women can serve in combat roles along with men.

Great damage has been inflicted on males who are portrayed as predators. In educational settings radical feminists have designated male characteristics such as aggressiveness as anti-social. This attitude has so alienated men that the number of males in higher education is now below 45 percent. Since this radical feminist initiative began in the late 1960s, the role of males has come to be deemed nonessential in society and males have practically been written out of the family. It has caused single parent households led by women to multiply, wreaking havoc on family income and stability. It has left young males in general without role models and girls without a clue to what a good husband and father should be. The false belief that male and female differences are due to nurturing and not to nature, make this concern irrelevant in the minds of the movement's leadership.

Even more sad, the feminist movement holds that women should forgo ever having children or turning over their children to day care centers in order to achieve their career goals. God is not considered in their goal planning.

Men and women are wired differently

Mother Nature will not be denied. Numerous psychological studies are finally recognizing that men and women are wired differently. The studies show: "men are, on average more aggressive, and enjoy superior math skills, and women are, on average, more nurturing, with better verbal skills."

Don't think that these common sense conclusions of studies are accepted by the leaders of radical feminism. The young man and young woman looking for a mate still have to deal with a society permeated with radical feminist attitudes which have afflicted the social strata. The evils of its thinking will be with us for decades.

The young Catholic couple, if they take time to study official Catholic teachings, will be edified to see that the Church's teachings on marriage are a beautiful guide to a happy and loving family.

God-intended male characteristics

The true nature of the man is to be strong, firm, steadfast, and decisive. He is to be the head, the leader, the provider, the protector. A woman by nature is soft and yielding, warm and nurturing. She is to be the heart of the home, one who nurtures, the center of love in the home. If her mentality and attitude have not been corrupted and hardened by the radical feminist movement, she has a maternal instinct. She longs to bring forth human life and nurture children as a homemaker.

Your dating or courtship is a time to discern if the rightful qualities to make a good husband and father exist in the man — or whether the qualities to make a good wife and mother exist in the woman.

If, on the contrary, this most important time is used simply for fun and/or sinful pleasure, purity will be lost and the result is unwanted pregnancies and disease.

If a young person discovers during the discernment time that the other person has serious moral, physiological, or behavioral problems, now is the time to end the relationship. You can't be happy in a Godless relationship; the soaring divorce rate is evidence to this. At least one out of every four teenage boys and men is addicted to pornography. I don't mean that on rare occasions they have looked at immodest pictures. I mean they are *addicted*. It controls their lives. Their mentality toward human sexuality is seriously impaired and corrupted. It might take years being entirely away from such to prove

they've been freed from addiction. Those addicted cannot have a wholesome and happy marriage. Human sexuality is seen by one addicted, not as a beautiful gift from God for marriage, but nothing more than an entertainment that can be shared with whomever they please. Proper dating reveals all these imperfections prior to marriage and eliminates divorces, and its consequences.

True love is self-giving

Friendship between husband and wife is the greatest expression of human love. Sexual attraction is powerful, but is different and separate from true friendship. True friendship means mutual or reciprocal love. True friendship is based on mutual love, and involves a oneness of mind on major issues, affections and interests.

True love is concerned with the welfare of the other person. A husband and wife must be each other's best friend if the marriage is to succeed. Dating or courtship time is to determine whether there can develop a best friendship status that will endure and with the grace of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony continue "until death do us part." Such is the concept that should exist in seeking a girl friend or a boy friend. It must be a pure relationship if it is to lead to a holy and successful marriage.

The essence of love is self-giving. In an enduring good marriage *love-giving and life-giving are not separated*. The secular world's way of thinking is: "I'll get what I can for my selfish pleasure." *True fulfillment is found in giving, not in taking*. Every young person longs to be a hero. So tell me, what are the conditions for living true love with bold and challenging directness? Please ponder the answer below:

Conditions for living true love

"A good marriage is the best place on earth to learn how to sacrifice for the sake of the other while often denying your desires for the greater good of the marriage and the family." At the core of this training is learning to *die to your self* for the love of others. It is in this offering, in the death of your own desires, that true love will come into your life.

The opposite of love isn't really hate. It is, in fact, *utilitarianism* — that means *using* the other person for oneself. It means treating him or her as an instrument for selfish, sensual gratification. It is lacking self-esteem and respect for the other person.

Here is how the great Pope John Paul II put it: "Deep within yourself, listen to your conscience that calls you to be pure . . . A home is not warmed by the fire of pleasure that burns quickly like a pile of withered grass. Passing encounters are only an imitation of love; they injure hearts and mock God's plan."

What was the essence of Adam and Eve's original sin of disobedience? It was a lack of trust in God. They began to question the gift of God's love for them, manifested in all of creation and inscribed upon their very being. God created man and woman in his own image in order to give themselves to one another in love.

This is how Pope John Paul II explained it. "Satan wanted them to believe that God was holding out on them, and he really didn't want them to be happy. In other words, Adam and Eve thought if God had things *His* way, they would live miserable lives following His silly laws. This was the essence of the sin of Adam and Eve, that they didn't trust God."

Pope John Paul II the Great did not speak the language of young people. He spoke truth, and truth is the language good youth want to speak and hear. Jesus spoke the truth and even said: "I am the Truth." I think most young people who take the time to read this pamphlet will get it because they want the truth. *Those who don't trust what is said here will make the same mistake of Adam and Eve*. The answer for adults to help youth today is not for physically mature adults to act like youth but for adults to guide by example and word, presenting the truth without compromise.

In many respects the young generation today is a parentless generation. Many have not had a deep, affirming relationship with parents. But that is not their fault. Adults can support young people by

developing relationships with them and being supportive of their efforts to grow in the faith and win others to Jesus Christ.

Root cause of family problems

Fathers too often have relinquished their role as head of the home. Radical feminists, blurring the roles of father and mother, are the root cause of family problems today. God no longer reigns in our homes or society. That is why violence exists today even in our schools.

It is why I wrote the book, *Masculinity: The Gentle Man*. Both men and women, young adults, need the truths of this book garnered from Church teachings and many practical sources. We must all work to restore the traditional Christian and true Catholic culture. In a pamphlet I can only direct you to sources of deeper depth.

In the book, now into its fourth edition, *Charity, Morality, Sex and Young People* and the book, *Until Death Do Us Part* as well as *Masculinity: The Gentle Man* I treat of many associated subjects to "Dating." [Contact Fatima Family Apostolate, Box 515, Waite Park, Mn 56386; phone 1-800-213-5541; website www.fatimafamily.org).

Receiving Jesus worthily in State of Grace

Since youth want to know the truth let me share with you here what the Catholic bishops of the USA gathered in Baltimore for an annual meeting, Nov. 13-16, 2006 said. They issued a document on the conditions necessary to receive Jesus Christ worthily in Holy Communion.

Holy Communion in the Catholic Church is only for Catholics who went to Confession in the past year, or more often if they committed a serious sin which required Confession with sorrow before receiving our Lord's Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in Holy Communion. Catholics must fast for an hour first, refraining from food and drink (except for water and needed medicines).

Only those wearing "modest and tasteful dress — clothes that reflect our reverence for God and that manifest our respect for dignity of the liturgy and for one another" are to receive Holy Communion. Those receiving are to be in a recollected and prayerful state of mind.

The Bishops' statement spelled out some common serious sins. There are sins that constitute grave matter. When done deliberately and with knowledge of their sinfulness, they put one in a state of mortal sin and there must be sorrowful repentance and Confession before receiving our divine Lord in Holy Communion. Otherwise, it would be a sacrilegious Communion.

"Because of both original sin and personal sin, moral disorder is all too common in our world. There are a variety of acts, such as adultery, fornication, masturbation, and contraception that violate the proper ends of human sexuality. Homosexual acts also violate the true purpose of sexuality. They are sexual acts that cannot be open to life. Nor do they reflect the complementarity of man and woman that is an integral part of God's design for human sexuality.

"Consequently, the Catholic Church has consistently taught that homosexual acts are contrary to the natural law. ... Under no circumstances can they be approved" ...

"St Paul [in the Bible] listed homosexual practices among those things that are incompatible with the Christian life.

"While the Church teaches that homosexual acts are immoral, she does not say being homosexual is. With the grace of God, homosexuals as well as heterosexuals can live a moral life, if they choose to. Many youth today have been so brainwashed by our western pagan society that they even consider fornication acceptable. It is in fact; serious sin and the Bible tell us that fornicators shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven. (Ephesians 5:5). Read the total Ephesians 5 chapter and you will see that the Apostle ends by writing of the holiness of marriage. "*For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh.*"

One's religious faith must play an essential part while dating. One does not wait until a time of engagement to discuss religion. A first duty of a Catholic should be to find a committed Catholic mate if one believes marriage is his/her vocation in life. If the laws of God and His holy Church means little to your future wife/husband, then neither will your desires and needs mean much when they are not convenient.

The pure in heart are blessed

Traditionally young Catholics have been devoted to and have called upon the Blessed Virgin Mary for the gift of purity. Couples who are dating should pray to maintain their purity. They should explicitly agree to help one another to be pure. If it proves God is calling them to marriage, on their wedding day they can both give themselves to each other totally with clear and clean consciences. This will do much to assure a happy and fruitful marriage. They should not hesitate to pray together before marriage.

Faithfulness to Jesus Christ brings freedom into our lives, a freedom that comes from a pure heart. Mary was the first disciple of Jesus Christ, the perfect Model of being a Christian. She is the Mother of Vocations. Her intercession should be invoked to live a life of purity, a life of marriage, to be a successful spouse and parent.

The man should ask himself these questions:

1. Will she make a good virtuous mother?
2. Will she be a good homemaker?
3. Will she recognize that the man is the head of the home and will she teach children to respect this role by her word and example?
4. Does she recognize that marriage is for life in Christ, unto death?

The woman should ask herself these questions:

1. Will he make a good virtuous father?
2. Will he be a steadfast good leader, protector, and provider?
3. Will he, as head of the home, be a good disciplinarian with the gentleness of a good father who is strong and who will teach his children by both word and example? Will he teach children to respect their mother?
4. Does he recognize that marriage is for life in Jesus Christ, unto death?