



Christ the King Catholic Church

Some Initial Reflections on Teen Dating

The decision to date, or not, should always be made by discerning Jesus' will – not pursuing our own desires. These reflections are presented to help in aiding prayer and between parents and teens to help in the decision making process.

- A. The Church's understanding of dating is that it is a courtship relationship, i.e. an exclusive relationship between a man and a woman who have determined that marriage is their vocation and is appropriate for them at this time in their lives and they are exploring that possibility with each other.
- B. Marriage is a vocation, which means that it should be approached with the same level of discernment and prayer as any other vocation, e.g. priesthood or religious life. It is not the understanding of the Church that God gives some folk's religious vocations and everybody else just 'defaults' to marriage.
- C. The presumption of the Church is that before a person begins to seriously discern his or her vocation, the necessary components of a healthy Catholic spirituality are already in place and functioning well. In other words, the person's relationship with the Lord Jesus is healthy and growing.
- D. Dating should only be done after the person has some level of confidence that marriage is the vocation they are being called to and that they have reached the time in their life when it seems appropriate to begin approaching marriage.
- E. Because of all the moral implications involved, a person should consider dating only after they have achieved a healthy level of victory in the moral life, especially as regards being victorious over temptations against chastity.
- F. Recreational dating as currently practiced by the contemporary American teen culture is not a type of relationship envisioned by the Church.
- G. Dating relationships among high school students are the number one source of stress and anxiety among members of that age group.
- H. Dating relationships among high school students are among the top three common sources of sin and the near occasion of sin, especially in relation to chastity.
- I. Negative experiences during dating relationships among high school students is one of the most often cited reasons for low or negative self-image among teens.
- J. The consensus of many counselors who specialize in adolescent psychology is that the kind of exclusive, emotionally entangling relationship that usually is involved when teens date is not conducive to assisting their emotional development and maturation process, in fact runs counter to some of the psycho-emotive goals typical for this age group, e.g. the need to appropriately individuate, the need to come to terms with growing sexual maturity, etc.