

## JESUS - the ultimate single



Many single people look to Jesus as a positive role model for their choice of single life, temporary or permanent. Jesus was not an official member of any recognized clerical or religious community. “Jesus gathered an inclusive community of friends and disciples around Him, and ministered to all He encountered with healing and reconciling love.”<sup>2</sup> The call to holiness for those in single life has its own challenges and opportunities. With no built-in support system, the single person knows the reality of being dependent on God in a distinctive way. Those who trust God in this way are “empowered to reach out to the world in openhearted service, to witness the Gospel by incarnating Christ’s love and forgiveness, and to invite others to wholeness in faith.”<sup>3</sup>

2,3 Conversion, Discernment, Mission: Fostering a Vocation Culture in North America, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 54

## NEED TO TALK?

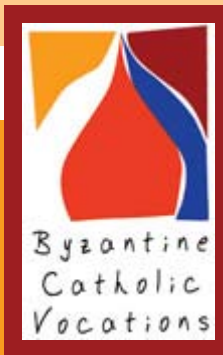
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Vocations Awareness Series No. 5

## BYZANTINE CATHOLIC

# SINGLE LIFE

Many paths, one purpose



ICON OF THE THEOPHANY

We Christians all share a common vocation in Christ through Baptism. This common vocation is the call to mission - to Christ’s own mission of furthering the Kingdom of God here and now. The setting in which each lives this vocation and the manner of service vary. Some may understand early in life a call to a particular lifestyle and fulfill this call. Some may need to walk in a spirit of searching discernment for a longer period of their lives. For a Christian, prayer to know and live a particular lifestyle that glorifies God is important. For some, one path will be lifelong, but for many, changes will occur – and perhaps more than once.

Singles can and do find significant fulfillment by living the mission integral to Baptism: sharing the love of Christ, spreading the great news of the Gospel – our salvation. Indeed, many began living the single life

because of a mission, perhaps a family need to which they responded with caring service, often for several of their prime years. Some young people devote themselves to a mission that aids the needy, furthers research that advances human life or the arts, or enhances life on our planet.

## Is single life really a vocation?

For many single people, this commitment takes the form of professional involvement in lay ministry in the Church. “For many others, it means sharing their artistic and creative gifts, making themselves available for spiritual friendship and mentoring, and a willingness to go beyond the call of duty in one’s professional, personal, and religious commitments.”<sup>1</sup> These are various ways that the single life is lived as a vocation, in a generous and self-giving way, for a part of one’s life or for the whole of it.

1 Conversion, Discernment, Mission: Fostering a Vocation Culture in North America, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, p. 54

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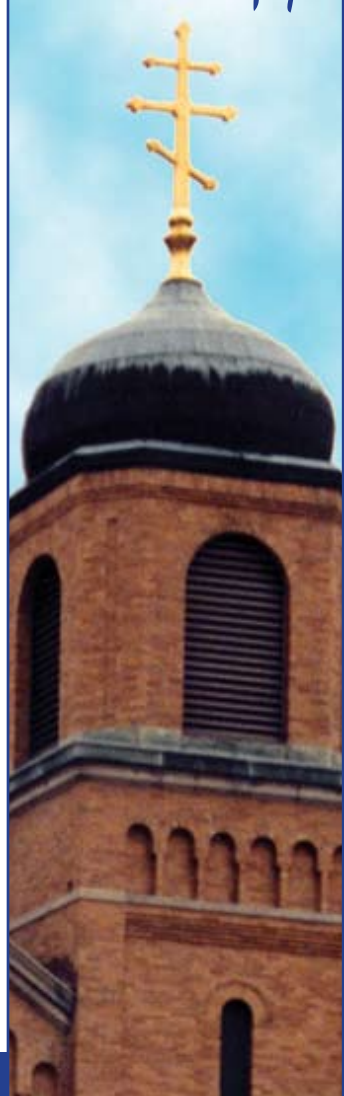
Interparochial Commission for Vocations  
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## Fulfilling a significant need

Many singles remain open to a change in their state in life through marriage or through a priestly or religious vocation. Ongoing prayer for God's guidance is important. This prayer implies openness to God's will and purpose for one's life. *What does "openness" mean in this regard?*

The answer is the practice of ongoing discernment, a significant need in the life of all faithful Christians. Doing God's will continuously will make one the best version of oneself: a person fully alive in God.

## The role of parish in single life



The parish church has a significant role to play in the lives of singles. Its duty is to provide spiritual encouragement and challenge, the possibility of intimate friendships with others who affirm them and their gifts, opportunities to experience a caring community where they are accepted as valued contributing adults. Many times the single members of a parish are the most faithful in giving back to the parish their time, talent and treasure. A healthy parish welcomes and fosters such members.

The single life requires spiritual, social and psychological support; the ideal Christian community realizes this and responds with open hospitality. This is indeed a worthy effort for a parish to make so that all members can know their equality and significance in the Body of Christ.

Over the span of the years of singleness, various periods of richness and dryness, longing and satisfaction will occur. A deep human need for quality of life is intimacy. A mature single person recognizes this need and seeks intimacy. There are many forms this intimacy can take: spiritual, emotional, intellectual, aesthetic, creative, for instance. There is also the possibility for intimacy in work, in recreation, in worship and shared mission, and in communication, the source of all types of intimacy.

## What is the Lord asking of me ?

So, you may ask, "*How does one get to know God's will for one's life amidst the numerous possibilities?*" To make important decisions requires time, prayer and discernment. In the discernment process, we consider the options prayerfully, balance the advantages with the disadvantages and carefully examine the consequences that we can foresee.

## FOUR SIGNS

Today, as in Jesus' own time, God continues to give signs to help us to decide, to discern and to know what the Lord is asking of us. In particular, there are four general signs which are often seen:

### Availability and openness



Am I open-hearted to whatever God is calling me to?

Am I disposed and free to respond to that call?

### Desire



Do I sense a degree of potential satisfaction, hope or joy when I consider this particular option?

If it is God's will, do I trust that it can be fulfilled?

### Proper motivation



Is my primary motivation of a spiritual nature, such as serving and loving God and God's people?

Would I experience adequate happiness and fulfillment, inner peace?

### General disposition



Do I have the God-given abilities needed to fulfill such a decision?

Often, the answers come in a time of prayer or quiet but they can also come through events or other persons. This is also true of the confirmation, the sense of "rightness" one recognizes through prayer, through Scripture, through others, or in the peace in one's heart. In time, God's will comes to light in those who seek, so the earnest desire and effort is truly important as it leads one to generous participation in the mission of Christ.

