



Raise your hand, those of you who've never fallen in love! I'm certain we can't hear a peep. We have all fallen in love. We know how beautiful it is and how nice it feels to experience love towards another person. Catholics and non-Catholics fall in love, do crazy things for love. Out of our hearts bursts a brave, almost imprudent hero, excited to take on any crazy adventure at the chance of winning the heart of the one we love.

I invite you to go back in time and search your heart for the saved files of those moments when you were dazed by someone who stole your heart without saying a word (even without even knowing you existed). But then – and this is the more serious part – **think of how a Catholic reacts while he falls in love. Could it be that our love for God brings up considerations that perhaps, without Him, wouldn't cross our mind?**

### **1. It's absolute happiness.**

**Have you seen anyone who's happier than a boy in love?** It's not even necessary for that love to be reciprocated. One, simply by the fact of loving, is already walking on the clouds. Although frequently tortured, suffering in secret, we are sure that every song on the radio talks about our feelings, every movie tells the story that we ourselves long to live with that person. Everything's inspiring and thrilling.

### **2. We question the call to vocation: "Could this be real?"**

Every Catholic who takes his faith seriously must have wondered what vocation God is calling him to. And this idea becomes concrete when he falls in love. Am I truly called to marriage? And more than once, when we're in love, we've asked God: please, don't call me to the Consecrated life! (hahahaha). Joking aside, this is all very normal and expected in the road of discernment we all walk, but when that special someone appears in your life, foundations and knees tend to shake. Don't worry about it. It's beautiful, the vocational impulse that love stirs, either towards the other person or towards God, but, in this case, **being close to the one who makes us sigh and swoon forces us into the vocational question for real.**

### 3. We tread carefully and don't rush in.

I've had the chance to share with young newlyweds and unmarried couples who speak of their hesitations (past and present), when feeling attracted to someone. They don't dare to take the first step if they are not sure whether it could be serious. **For Christians, starting a relationship is not a casual form of entertainment, but a way of vocational discovery and especially of respect and reverence towards the other.** This is why it's not about "trial and error" in relationships. **Opening the heart and daring to love is a practice of sincere giving and vulnerability, not a social experiment of testing the ground.**

You probably remember those first dates as "friends," where you both sensed there was "something more" but neither dared to take the next step for fear of being rejected. How helpful have been those conversations that lasted late into the night (maybe nowadays they're through whatsapp), when Dad would nag at us for using the phone for too long or taking more than a half-hour when saying goodbye to my "friend" at the door. All that time spent in getting to know each other helped us understand who that person is I am in love with, what does he or she like and do, does he or she have faith, and all those kinds of discoveries that are important in the building of a relationship.

Today I think of the dumb face I probably had **when I listened to her talk about things that for me were truly not that interesting, but for the sole fact of being her stories, they were the best stories I could be listening to.** It's wise to take the time and check that the pool is filled with water before jumping in head-first, but it's not about being timid either; if you've been in love with someone for a year, please get on with it and say so.

### 4. We pray for the one we love.

I've been a joyful witness of young people who've gone through real crusades of prayer and spiritual warfare for the benefit of their loved one. The beautiful part of it is that the beneficiary of this prayer doesn't usually have any idea of what's been done for them. A young man who's close to me, very much in love with a girl (who wasn't really interested in him), **didn't give up in the face of rejection and, after trying flowers, chocolates and teddy bears, he started praying for her,** but when I say praying it's very serious stuff. Passionate and convinced, he prayed daily for her saying: **"Since I can't love her in person, I will be sure God takes care of her like I can't."** Surely, if he told that to this girl, she would fall to his feet.

That's how many of us (I actually speak for myself, too, hahaha) have caught ourselves formulating prayers we don't even dare making for our own profit, but **it's love that moves us to ask God for that person's well-being.** We worry about the details of her day. Things like her sleeping well, her breakfast being good in the morning, her boss not being in a bad mood, and so on. We pray so that she or he is okay, not only as an

interested exercise but also because, loving, we look and wish for the best, which we know only God can give.

### 5. We don't stop at being "in love." We dive deeper into the discovery of the person.

Pope Francis in his apostolic exhortation "Amoris Laetitia" explains that **"in their initial enchantment with one another, couples can attempt to conceal or relativize certain things and to avoid disagreements; only later do problems surface."** (A.L., 209)

I love watching how girls, from one moment to the next, become football fans and are capable of spending all Sunday morning standing in the sun or the cold, at the edge of a football field while their sweethearts run after the ball. On the other hand, it's fascinating to see gentlemen charged with bags, exasperated by the wait and the remarkable lack of decision of their girl when choosing a piece of clothing or picking the type of diet jelly she'll eat at breakfast.

Not only finding out what's their favorite food and music, but also walking a previous road together so that the other's world can be my world too **(since we know that as beautiful as the girl may be, if we don't agree in the fundamental things of life, there's no relationship that will hold up)**. At the same time, we know how difficult it is for a relationship to stand when there are big differences in faith and lifestyle. And how Pope Francis says, "love is thus a kind of craftsmanship" (A.L., 221), therefore, building it together is much more than feeling attracted and mutually in love. And you? What have you started to do in order to accompany and get to know the world of your loved one?

### 6. We seek advice. We ask for help and opinions.

Love is a game for two but the life of faith is communitarian. That's why, when we fall in love with someone, we share it with our close brothers and sisters, our family, and with those who accompany us spiritually. Because love is a fundamental part of our life of faith. We wish for them to give us their blessing, to encourage us, to say it's a good idea and that there's no one better for us. Besides, we usually overthink our conquest strategies, we over-analyze them, we put them in prayer and revise them again. Having someone so close to share that with is a great relief.

But love makes us half-ask for advice, since we don't accept every kind of answer. I was in love with a girl that was clearly not convenient. I asked for advice and talked it through with some friends, they all said it was a mistake but I was so convinced and smitten that I followed my plan. Obviously, I was wrong. The thing about discernment is that it's a gift from God which can bring lots of headaches. I don't think that, in the medium term, God opens a facebook account or starts using e-mails to explain his will, which is why, to understand what it is God wants from us and what He has prepared, we have to build the

road steadily and in good faith.

## 7. We get discombobulated, we trip up, we do everything upside down.

By doing an extra round before throwing ourselves in the search of love with bravery, we end up with more time to make mistakes, get distracted and walk around in a daze. It's beautiful to love, it makes us happy, but at the same time the experience stuns us a little.

The well-known writer G. K. Chesterton, being engaged to the woman who would be his wife, wrote a letter to a friend, to tell her the joy of the event. What he relates, although it's from the beginning of the 20th Century, makes deep sense to this day. The person in love is clumsy and distracted. He has been historically and will always be.

*Dear Mildred:*

*On rising this morning, I carefully washed my boots in hot water and blacked my face. Then assuming my coat with graceful ease and with the tails in front, I descended to breakfast, where I gaily poured the coffee on the sardines and put my hat on the fire to boil. These activities will give you some idea of my frame of mind. My family, observing me leave the house by way of the chimney, and take the fender with me under one arm, thought I must have something on my mind. So I had.*

*My friend, I am engaged. I am only telling it at present to my real friends: but there is no doubt about it. The next question that arises is –whom am I engaged to? I have investigated this problem with some care, and, as far as I can make out, the best authorities point to Frances Blogg. There can I think be no reasonable doubt that she is the lady. It is as well to have these minor matters clear in one's mind.*

## 8. We start to get our act together, restoring order to our lives.

It's not about passing off a beautiful, spiritual and moral appearance, but rather for many **there's truly a natural impulse to set our lives in order so that, when the time of having a relationship with that one person comes, we won't have anything to be ashamed of or to be uncomfortable with.** Just as the well-known actor Eduardo Verástegui says, saving oneself in chastity for the person that you probably don't know yet, is a way of living fidelity. Therefore, although they don't say it, many fight the battle against pornography and masturbation; others try to quit smoking, start exercising, get their grades up in school, carry their hair neatly, and obviously Catholics tend to organize their life of faith, since we know that it's **not only the superficial that builds up our enchantment, but also what we have in our hearts.**

In conclusion, when a Catholic falls in love, life takes on a new color; love is lived from a deeper and more passionate sense; we shape our heart to love well, to do right by the

other by means of our love, even though the stumbling way we may do some crazy things lets our fragilities show.

**Extracted**

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