



Know each other in order to love: dating is the time in which two persons discover each other. The Church invites to live with intensity that phase of the relationship with love and respect.

Get to know

For those who have been called by God to the married life, human happiness depends, largely, on the choice of the partner with whom we will share the rest of our lives through marriage. Such is the importance of discerning the appropriate: "the Church wishes that, between a man and a woman, there is dating first, for them to know each other and therefore love each other, so they can be better prepared for the sacrament of marriage".

Thus, this decision is related with two parameters: *knowledge and risk*; to better knowing less risk. In dating, knowledge is the information from the other person. In this article some elements will be addressed that will help the knowledge and mutual respect between the couple.

Currently, in some environments, the concept "love" can be given an erroneous meaning, which is a dangerous in a relationship where the key is the commitment and donation *until death separates them*: "*Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let not man separate.*" For example, if you wanted to do business with a partner who does not know what an enterprise is, the two would be doomed to failure. With dating something similar happens: it's fundamental that they both have the same idea of love, and that concept to stick to the truth, i.e., to what *love* really is.

Nowadays, many couples base dating and marriage in *sentimentality*. Sometimes, there are attitudes of convenience and lack of transparency, i.e. "self-deceptions" which eventually end up appearing in the facts. With time, this can become cause of many marital breakdowns. The couple has to build their relationship on the rocks of true love, and not on the sand of the feelings that come and go.

Self-knowledge is essential for the person to distinguish when an emotional demonstration passed the border of a neat feeling, and enters the sphere of sentimentalism, maybe selfish. In this process it is essential the virtue of temperance which helps the person to be mistress of herself, because "it tends to permeate with rationality the passions and appetites of sensitivity".

We can think of love as a tripod, which has feelings, intelligence and will as supports. Love accompanies a kind of deep feeling. If we believe that the affection is not yet sufficiently intense or deep, and that it is worthwhile to maintain the relationship, you will have to wonder what you have to do to keep loving (intelligence), and undertake what I decided (will). Logically, intelligence must be fed with good formation and doctrine, because otherwise, it will support arguments that lead to sentimentalism.

Treat

True knowledge of others is achieved through mutual treatment. This must happen when dating someone, which requires a treatment that reaches deep topics, related to the other person's character: what are their beliefs and convictions, what are their hopes, what values he/she has, what is their opinion on children's education, etc.

The difficulties of character are the result of the damage caused by the original sin in human nature; so we have to count on that we all have moments of bad character. This can be diminished, counting with God's grace, helping to make life more enjoyable for others. Nevertheless, we must ensure the ability to coexist with the way of being of the other.

Same thing happens with the convictions and beliefs. They look like a traditional consequence, of the education received or in a rational way. However, it is not common that the importance they have is put aside. They can become a big difficulty and, in many cases, reasons for marital problems. It is essential to understand clearly that marriage is "one with one; (...) the medal has heads and tails; and on the reverse side there is pain, abstentions, sacrifices, abnegation".

It could be naive to think that the other will change his convictions and beliefs or that the spouse will be the medium for it to change. This does not mean that people cannot rectify and improve with time and the personal conviction. However, a criterion that can be used is the following: if deep convictions, are not according to what I think about how father or the mother of my children has to be the, it may be prudent to break up a relationship, since not doing in time is a mistake that can often lead to a future broken marriage.

It is necessary to differentiate what in the other is an opinion and what is a belief or a conviction. We could say that an *opinion* is what holds, without reaching the category of a conviction although we usually express it using the word "I believe". For example, if someone says "I believe that marriage is forever", it is good to know whether it is an opinion or belief. The opinion implies exceptions, a belief does not; *belief* is a rooted value, a conviction, on which a marriage can be held.

Frequently, being already husband and wife, it happens that one of the spouses realizes that, vital issues such as agreeing on the number of children, or their Christian education, or the way of living sexuality have not been treated seriously during the dating process.

Christian dating is a time to get to know each other and to confirm that the other person agrees on what is fundamental, so that it will not be strange that during this stage one person of the couple decides that the other is not the right person to undertake the adventure of marriage.

The personality is formed with time, so you have to ask the other a maturity level according to his age. However, there are some parameters that can help to distinguish a person with possible traces of immaturity: they usually make decisions depending on

their mood, they find it difficult to go against the current, their humor is unstable, they are very susceptible, they tend to be slave of other's opinion, they tolerate frustrations badly and tend to blame others for their failures, they have capricious reactions that do not correspond their age, they are impatient, they can't set goals nor crush the reward, they find it difficult to give up their immediate desires, tend to be the center of attention, etc.

Respect

As pope Francis says: "family is born from this project of love that wants to grow as a house is built: to be place of affection, of support, of hope". The relationship grows as an aspiration for total love from mutual respect, which basically is the same than to treat the other as it is: a person.

"The period of dating, fundamental to form a couple is a time of waiting and preparation, which has to be lived in chastity of gestures and words. This allows love to mature, in the care and attention of another; helps to exercise self-control, to develop the respect for the other, characteristics of true love that does not look first the self-satisfaction nor the own welfare ".

This fact entails different consequences, whose principle is human dignity: you cannot ask the boyfriend or girlfriend what cannot or should not give, falling in sentimental blackmail, for example, aspects relating to affective manifestations or sexual nature, reserved to the married life.

The mutual treatment between the Christian couple must be the one of two people who love each other, but that still have not decided to surrender completely to each other in marriage. That is why they will have to be delicate, elegant and respectful, being conscious of their condition of male and female, by turning off the first sparks of passion that may occur, avoiding putting the other in circumstances to the limit.

As a conclusion, we can assure that a well lived dating relationship, in which they know each other thoroughly and respect the other person, will be the most appropriate way to

have a good marriage, following the advice of pope Francis: "coexistence is an art, a patient, beautiful and fascinating path that has rules which can be summarized in three words: May I? Thanks, sorry ".