



Ten months ago, this gorgeous Italian girl and I became nuptial newbies. We took the leap, tied the knot, and said the vows that Jesus says last a lifetime. The decision I made on August 2, 2014 has become the turning point commitment of my existence; a day that changed my life's entire trajectory.

Before my beautiful bride came around, I like to think that I was an eligible bachelor. Reaching beyond the common stereotypes of American bachelorhood, my life was designed in such a way that I chose everything: my schedule, my dinner, my Saturdays, my travels, my social interactions, my coffee, and my dreams. Literally, everything I did was the fruit of my own wants, needs, and desires; and frankly, I loved it.

Once we started dating more seriously and engagement was on the horizon, many married men and women told me how different married life would be compared to the "carefree" bachelorhood I had been living (which wasn't always so "carefree," by the way). I would quickly say, "Well of course it is," as I shrugged off their predictable marital preaching.

Married folks love to offer advice. I do have to admit though: They were right. My life has been drastically different since getting married. These past months I have been coming to grips with the notion that my life has been interrupted by an "other."

An honest look back has called me to question the choice to get married. Not because I don't love my wife (I do!), but because of what I "gave up" by saying the life-long vows of sacramental marriage. To have my life interrupted was an absolutely crazy decision. Why would a 21st century twenty-something male decide to surrender his bachelorhood/freedom to make space for an "other" in his life, and therefore, freely decide to make his everything, their everything, everyday for the rest of the only life he has? Marriage is an absolutely outrageous establishment. And to many of my fellow millennials, not something we're interested in . . .

However, a more honest look uncovers a profoundly stronger, deeper, and more

intimate experience. The truth is that the blood running through my veins has been relentlessly searching for something or someone to give myself to for years. Even now, I feel it; I know it intensely, and though at times in my life I tried to suppress it, I can't help but desire to completely give myself away to an "other." I have been searching for this "other" for as long as I can remember. The desire appears risky, vulnerable, and mysterious, though for some reason I have always sensed that giving myself away would actually bring about the freedom for which my heart longs.

I could have continued to thrive in my life of bachelorhood. I was very happy, content, and in many ways, fulfilled. However, this risky longing I felt in my heart to give myself away was so obvious, so ingrained, and so profound that once I found Emily (my wife) I could do nothing but humbly attempt to give everything to this "other" in a full, complete, lasting, and permanent way.

There is much to learn and embrace in our everyday interactions and shared life. However, it's as though my gift of self is what I was made for, designed for; and in the last ten months I can clearly see it is where I experience true freedom. I believe our lives are meant to be given to something or someone greater. Namely, sacramental marriage, priesthood, religious life, or a generous single life. Our self-giving is where true meaning, purpose, and authentic joy takes shape. It is when we are selfish and turn inward that we lose sight of the true gift that our existence is meant to be. No matter your current calling or your current search for one, my experience tells me true joy, happiness, and love only comes from the conscious choice to give selflessly every day. It is there, in the everyday gift of self, where freedom lies.

**"Man, who is the only creature on earth which God willed for itself, cannot fully find himself except through a sincere gift of himself."  
(Gaudium et Spes, 24)**