



Recently, one of our readers suggested us to explore the theme of **"sites to meet young Catholics,"** designed for those young people who want to find someone with whom to share their faith within a marriage.

In his opinion, for young people wishing to form a Christian family it is not very easy, in a secularized society, to find someone with whom to make this dream a reality; therefore, he believes that this tool could be a helpful support.

If it is true that there are tons of ways to meet new people and therefore **to meet the man or woman "for life," we cannot ignore the fact that today, in the digital age, there is also a new way (or maybe it would be better to say a new "world") to make acquaintances, and it is the web.**

What can be said, however, about "dating sites"? Are they helpful or obstacles for carrying out life goals?

Below we propose an analysis of the phenomenon, showing what are, in my opinion, the positives and negatives of this trend.

From marriage agencies to meeting sites: tools change, but not the substance

The platforms that allow people to look for a man or woman to date are not entirely "modern phenomena": they replace the old "marriage agencies," "physical" places, where people could request - for a fee - to fix an appointment with someone enrolled in the same agency, which had characteristics (character, social, etc.) compatible with their own way of life and corresponding to their expectations.

Today these meeting places have become virtual, but not unrealistic for this reason. The Internet is in effect a "square", which allows us to be in contact with others, easily and with limited costs.

Looking for the right person or becoming the right person?

In regards to both the old marriage agencies and the dating sites, you can avoid ruinous illusions if you recognize that the soul mate – meaning, "a person made just for me, that

satisfies, in every respect, my needs, without me having to change anything" – does not exist. If we look for this, we are not looking for love, but rather a machine programmed to satisfy our selfish desires. An **authentic relationship, instead, implies that two imperfect people try to come together, to improve together, to become a new subject, different from the sum of the two.**

As the protagonist of the Italian series Don Matteo said in an episode (a successful fiction show on state run Italian television Rai 1, which has had eleven seasons): "The right person does not exist: we become the right person, for someone we love."

Forming a couple requires effort from both parties and living out a relationship is actually much more than making a selection of personnel.

The danger of choosing someone as if we were products at a supermarket

It is not healthy, therefore, to approach a dating site with the idea of "ordering a product made to measure for itself," ticking the boxes to define their tastes, to almost certainly have the guarantee of finding the product that we like most amongst other similar products.

People cannot be treated as products at a supermarket.

Simply drawing up a detailed list of requirements ("tall," "sports fan," "Catholic") does not help us in finding the person best suited for us, as we might believe: "labelling ourselves" we lose the wonderful opportunity to create a "true relationship," with all its complexities.

It is much more worth it to leave some room for amazement, creativity, and the naturalness typical of a "real" love.

Love is something great and mysterious, which transcends us and at the same time shows us who we are and why we are in the world.

A reality so inscrutable and immense, which speaks of eternity and infinity, cannot be contained in our fragile mental plans.

The danger of searching for someone without a face

Those who join dating sites to make new acquaintances should keep in mind that a person is much more than just the description he gives of himself and that it isn't enough to find someone that might meet all our "requests" because it is a relationship – because we create a "we." We love each other because we recognize each other as unique, and we recognize the unique bond that is established, not because we possess all the qualities present in the respective "lists of requirements."

Dating sites, if not used with balance, are likely to make us fall in love with the idea of a man or woman "without a face": if what matters most is only "how the person is" I have in front of me and not "who he or she is," then "one is worthy of the other."

The importance of not making a principle absolute at the expense of the person

In regards to Catholic dating sites in particular, there is one added risk and danger: that of labeling people and making faith the only element of discrimination for dating someone.

There are young people who are Catholics only on paper and others who are (or are close to being) practicing, although they do not yet recognize themselves as such.

People have real depth, qualities, and virtues that can further grow within a relationship.

Faith can also blossom within a relationship, so to exclude someone just because they are not Catholic "by name," may not be very wise...

Given all this, it would be unjust to demonize the Internet, without taking into account all the possibilities it offers...

The Internet can help, if we remember that we really know people outside of the web

Subscribing to a site or having a social profile allows us to "be" with others and maybe even to "know" people who share similar interests, tastes, and values.

As for Catholic dating sites, if it makes sense to use the Internet as a means of sharing about sports, hobbies, cooking, etc., why can one not share their faith on the Internet and find others who have the same religious beliefs?

What counts is remembering that true knowledge can only be realized off the web, because the web does not replace the face-to-face relationship.

As in many aspects of life, maturity, balance, and the approach to technology make a difference.

Pros and cons of dating sites: a possible balance

In conclusion, **if there are platforms that help young people with a similar vision of the world and life to come together, why not hold onto the positive aspects of these realities?**

There are solid couples that had their first meeting on the web, and then developed outside of the virtual world. Moreover, there is no one place better than another to meet one's life partner.

If we are aware of the risks listed above and are willing to really seek love and nothing short, we will be surprised by what we had not foreseen and to learn to accept imperfection. Yes, a beautiful, unique, and precious relationship may "take off" from a simple online chat.