

Living in truth series.

Dating with Dignity by Fr Richard Aladics

Some basics.

Discovering that someone of the opposite sex is very special to me is a great experience in life. Dating, along with all my hopes for the future; my work, my studies and a new awareness of sexual feelings, presents me with a new life project. Sexual attraction is a natural and good response to another person of the opposite sex. But feelings cannot be my only guide. Throughout life everyone experiences a tension in their bodies - to use sex for pleasure or to guard sex for marriage. The call of love is greater than that of feelings. Love based on feelings and emotions is not love at all. Love is not self-seeking but quite the opposite - self-giving. More than exploring feelings, dating is a time of decision.

What is at the heart of dating?

The question of whether my relationship is leading to marriage or not is the hinge of all my encounters with another person. The way I discover this is by getting to know the other person. This task will demand a lot from both of us: friendship, goodwill, understanding, trust, patience, honesty, hope, time, prayer.

But be ready for a challenge, because a relationship also means seeing my true self. The other person will shine light on my true character, my gifts, my personality, my failings and, I will begin to express myself in a new way.

And when I start to fall in love?

Falling in love causes a revolution in my life: it happens without me even deciding upon it. My whole life will suddenly seem to be directed towards this person and I will sense that a life of communion (marriage) with this person may be a real possibility for me.

Now the call of love comes from God. I am made in God's image. It is Christ's Gospel which opens me to the full meaning of love - love leads to God.

So, when I fall in love, I need Christ more than ever. Only he can open me to real love and, if I continue to follow him, my new relationship *will* grow. Dating is a time for me to discover anew the riches of Life in Christ.

Since love comes from God, he will use my experience of love to form me, to help me grow into the person who I truly am. Love is a new way of living which places radical demands on me.

What is love?

Love is self-gift to another person not possession of another. Love is living the Gospel and following Christ. Love is a great gift from God.

Love affects me intimately - it allows me to express myself in a new way to another person. Testing out the relationship in a genital way and using condoms will stop love maturing and instead bring domination and self-seeking into the relationship. Sex is the full expression of the union of two people in marriage. Having sex before marriage will actually become an obstacle in our getting to know one-another fully and not just sexually.

When I fall in love with another person I am given a new responsibility; I must decide whether or not this relationship is from God: Is God entrusting me with this person? Is this relationship leading to marriage or not?

Some practical advice.

To discover the truth of a relationship I must be trying to live the truth. What does this mean?

1. Living God's law in the relationship and respecting the other person in every way.
2. Being honest about who I am, recognising both good and the bad in me. Don't ask myself so much, is this person the right one for me? but instead, can I give myself to this person?
3. Pray. On my own and together with the other person, asking God to shine light on my relationship.
4. Open myself to Christ present in the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist. God's grace can change me for the better
5. Be patient, time is on my side and God will lead me.

Prayer

Come Holy Spirit deep into my heart, mind and body; come deep into my bones, revealing the truth that it is for freedom that Jesus has set us free. As I prepare to go on this date, help both of us, and all who will be going out on dates tonight, not to be burdened by a yoke of slavery - slavery to the senses and a cultural standard that does not respect, accept or promote purity and self-mastery. May the natural downward desires and energies of the sinful nature which leads to sexual impurity and immorality be influenced and elevated by Your supernatural power. Help us set high standards - show us how to live them. Holy Spirit, may Your power be perfected in all our weaknesses, and may Your presence in our bodies - Your temple - help us practice self control and strive for true and pure love with respect and dignity. Amen ...

U got to believe by Fr Stan Fortuna CFR
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