

O N L I N E

D A T I N G

A Simple Guide For
— Catholics —

Start ➔

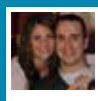
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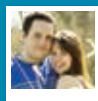
Lauren & Bruce



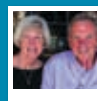
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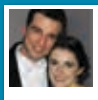
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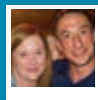
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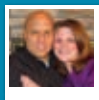
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Michael & Laura



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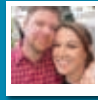
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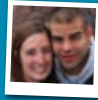
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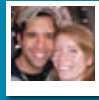
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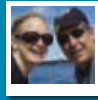
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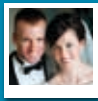
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Katie & Mike



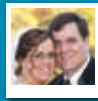
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Veronica & Jesus



Lisa & Jim



Henry & Kristin



Sean & Lisa



Teresa & Thomas



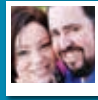
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Mara & Lisa



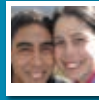
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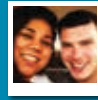
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Susan & Larry



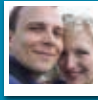
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Alicia & Roberto



Markos & Elise



Matt & Adrienne



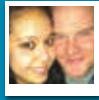
Raul & Kelly



Dan & Brittany



Gwan & Jerome



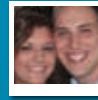
Angie & Joe



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Sean & Natalia



Heather & Corey

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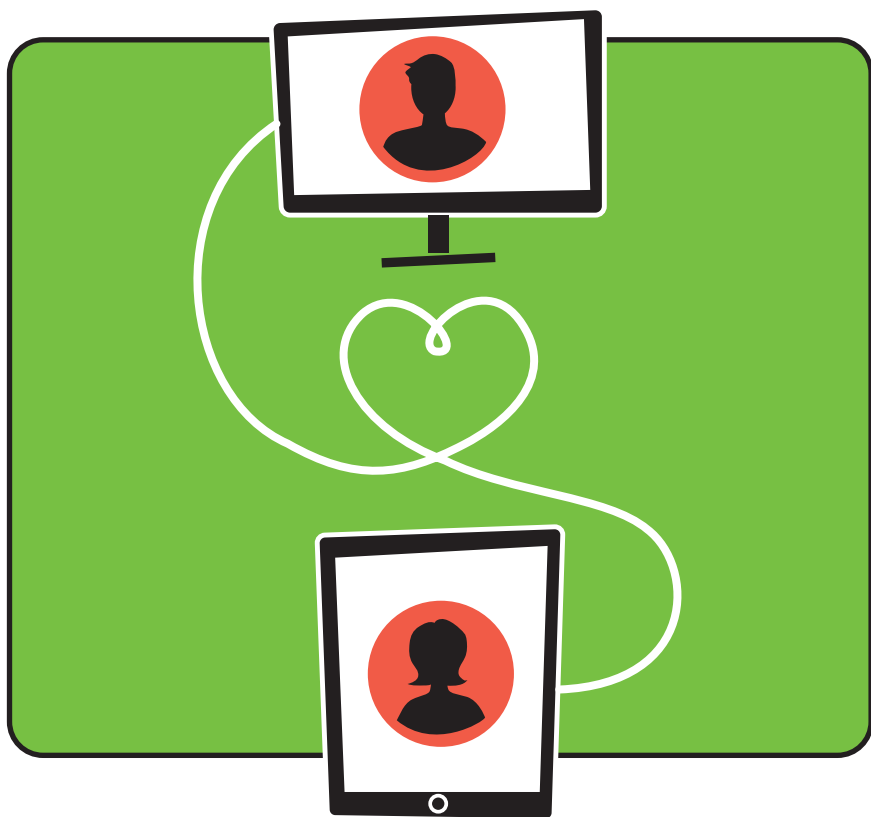


Online Dating: An Introduction

Singles who use an online dating service are looking for meaningful relationships. They have found that using online tools as a supplement to the more typical dating venues has opened up many more opportunities.

Being able to search for people who have similar interests and values eliminates those first date worries that arise when you know so little about the person sitting across from you at the dinner table. The snapshot of a profile and a few email exchanges or phone calls can be valuable early indicators of how successful and enjoyable a first date will be. And for Catholics in search of a mate who shares their faith, that focus can be clearer from the start.

Whether you have never tried an online dating site — or you are already using a service or have in the past — this guide will hopefully answer some of your most fundamental questions about online dating, address some of the more common objections, and encourage you to take a closer look at a tool that has benefited the lives of thousands of single Catholics.



What Can You Expect From Online Dating?

Some of your friends have met their spouses online and you are ready to give this online dating thing a shot. I bet you are wondering how it works, who else is online and what you can expect. One of the biggest mistakes people make when using an online dating site is having unrealistic expectations of what a dating site service actually provides. Some of these expectations may be the fault of the dating site, if they are advertising false promises or grandiose results. While others are due to the build up people create in their own minds. Regardless, many users have inflated expectations. Just like in traditional

dating, there is no silver bullet or magic dust with online dating. There is no perfect formula either. Because we are dealing with human behavior, there are many variables that make each experience unique. It's really important to understand exactly what to expect when you sign up for an online dating service.

Provides Opportunities To Meet People You Otherwise Would Not.

Online dating expands your reach beyond just local communities. You can meet people that share your values and interests from different communities across the country and beyond. Not only that, but you are exposed to people from all walks of life, different interests and backgrounds. The vast majority of people who do not meet their spouse online will do so either through friends, work or attending an event. That means they will be relatively close to home. Meeting people online breaks through many of those geographic and social circle boundaries that can inhibit singles from meeting people.

Better Concentration and Selection. One of the benefits of online dating is the concentration of people who are more likely to be compatible with you. This is especially true for niche websites that have a primary focus on a belief or faith like Catholicism. A common faith is extremely important for those looking to marry. A faith-based dating site provides the user with an opportunity to meet people who hold similar values in high regard, compared to a broad based dating site with less focus.

In the case of CatholicMatch, you receive both a Catholic experience and a Catholic community.

Allows More Consideration. You have the ability to go back to the profile and think and reconsider who you want to introduce yourself to. A friend can give you feedback on someone's profile. You can consider or reconsider early communication with someone. Unlike in a physical setting, where there may be regrets —“I should have asked for her number” or “I should have talked to that guy” — in online dating, you have the opportunity to reconnect. In online dating, some people are comfortable connecting with other members right away, others need more time, and for some, they may want to rethink a person they rejected in the past.

What NOT To Expect:

Solving Your Dating Problems. Online dating is not going to change the problems you may already be having making meaningful connections. It is important to always work on yourself through improvements to your attitudes, self-esteem or self-awareness.

Improving Your People Skills. While online dating gives you an opportunity to connect with someone in a comfortable environment where you can craft every message, eventually the next step will be meeting in person. It's important not to hide behind the computer. If you have some weak personal skills, real one-on-one connections will help you overcome these challenges, and help you realize what you need to work on.

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“ It is important to always work on yourself through improvements to your attitudes, self-esteem or self-awareness. ”

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Changing Your Appearance. While it's important to put your best foot forward, creating a false image of yourself will only lead to disappointment down the road. You want to make connections with a person truthfully. Embracing who you are is an important part of that. Don't fall into the trap of saying, "Well I am going to upload these photos because I was skinnier then and I am working on getting back to looking like that." Or "I look the same in these photos even if they are 10 years old." Very few people are happy with everything about their appearance and if you are working on changing those things, good for you! But you aren't ready to meet someone until you are sure of who you are today. Be confident, no matter how much or how little you desire to change about yourself. Confidence is attractive to men and women.



Creating A Great Profile

What Is the Purpose?

Many sites will ask you to fill out a personal questionnaire to help you build your online dating profile. Consider that this will be other members' first glimpse into your lifestyle and personality. Be thoughtful and thorough. Make sure you fill out everything, even if the section is optional. A full profile shows that you put effort into it, and it gives your potential mate more information about you.

Your profile is basically a personal resumé. Like a resumé, it takes time to unveil the best way to describe your qualities. Even if you aren't a prolific writer, you can still find a way to describe yourself in an interesting way and make your profile shine.

How Do I Write About Myself?

Not everyone is a gifted writer, and the "About Me" section on online dating sites can seem intimidating. Do I sound too confident? Are my descriptions too generic? Should I mention that I play the tuba? If you are having a hard time writing your online dating profile, you are not alone.

Here are a few quick tips to ensure that your profile shows off just how great you are:

1

Make the First Sentence Count.

In today's online world, tweets, texts, headlines, video clips, and sound bytes are all competing for our attention. You don't want your profile to sound like everyone else's — so be sure it doesn't. If the information you are including is obvious by your photo or general stats (age, race, location, or gender), eliminate it. If it isn't in descriptive and concrete language, revise it. There is something unique about all of us. Lead with that!



Be Yourself. When writing about yourself, be specific, honest, enticing, and optimistic. Tell the other singles who you are and what matters to you in life. If you're a huge baseball fan, mention that. If your faith is central to your life, say so. List a few specific details about yourself that you would really like your potential match to know about you. The more authentic you can be in your profile, the more likely you are to converse with other genuine members. While being positive is important, you shouldn't write about how wonderful everyone thinks you are. Don't say you are outgoing and kind, write your profile in a manner that reflects those attributes. Don't say you are a sincere and honest person, but write sincerely and honestly about yourself and what is important in your life.

2

3

Proofread, Proofread, Proofread. Ask a trusted friend to read through your profile to make sure there are no typos or grammatical errors. Several surveys have indicated that poor use of grammar and spelling can be a turnoff. While most of us are not prolific, Pulitzer Prize-winning writers, going the extra step to make sure your writing is solid can make the difference in getting a second look or a reply to a message.

4

Do Not Be Exclusive. One of the biggest mistakes online daters make when writing their profiles is to exclude people based on criteria that is not as critical as they think. We all have preferences that we are more or less attracted to: physical appearances, interests, activities, even education or job types. But preferences should rarely EXCLUDE someone. Time and time again, we hear from people who overlooked certain preferences and ended up falling madly in love. Let's be clear—preferences are not the same as critical relationship values like views on family or faith. But even in those cases, how much harm is there in simply being open to a few messages or even a date? Online dating allows you to meet people you otherwise would not, and get to know someone you might have otherwise overlooked. Oftentimes people will grow together as their relationship grows. Ignoring red flags or irreconcilable differences is not the same as giving someone a chance to grow with you.

5

Do Not Write a List of Musts or Must Nots. This does not help and could easily turn off some really fantastic people. You are looking to meet another human being to share your life with. You're not hunting for a new car or reading reviews on Amazon about the best features of a slick laptop. Talk about yourself and describe what makes you, you! Don't make a list like "I am looking for a person who loves cats and playing Gin Rummy." or "Who doesn't like the Dallas Cowboys or seafood." or "I am not interested in anyone who is not already a homeowner or a distinguished cook." We all have different experiences. Once you begin messaging with someone, it is fine if you want to inquire about certain concerns or any sensitivities, but there is no reason to list them all out in a profile. Listing everything you want in a future spouse can be equally intimidating and should be avoided. Nobody wants to be reduced to a list. If you have a list, keep it private. It may be something fun to pull out and share after you are married.



Your Photos

How Important Are Photos To the Online Dating Experience?

Let's look at it this way. Say you are going to a party or even a local parish event for single Catholics. As you walk in the door and look around, everyone has brown paper bags on their heads and large tunics that drape all the way to the floor. What would you think? Not only would this be strange and even kind of creepy, but it would significantly hinder the chances of two people making a friendly connection, let alone a romantic one. There might be some legitimate professional or personal reasons for not posting photos to your dating profile. But for the vast majority, it is an absolute must in order to find success in meeting people through online dating.

Profile Photo

Your profile photo is the most important aspect of your profile. It is not only the first thing fellow online users will see, but it is also used in various places on the website. Think about it this way: You are set up on a date by a friend. You get to the restaurant first and wait in anticipation at your table. A person walks towards you, sloppily dressed, with tangled hair, and food spilled on his shirt. Your initial reaction is to run. Instead, the person keeps walking by, and reveals behind him, a nicely dressed, well-groomed person with impeccable style. You give a sigh of relief and your date begins. In the same way, your profile photo is a potential match's first glance at you. Make a good first and lasting impression!



Here are some tips to consider for your profile picture:

Quality. Your profile picture should not be a quick selfie. Take the time to choose clear, colorful photos with good resolution.

Smile! Make eye contact with the camera and show your smiling face. Avoid sunglasses, hair in your face, and hats.

Look Like You. A study in the *Journal of Communication* found that independent judges rated a third of the photographs as inaccurate. Make sure your profile picture is an accurate depiction of how you look currently. A photo that doesn't represent how you truly look can cause disappointment when you meet someone in person. No one wants to be judged about their appearances, but by posting a truthful portrayal of who you really are, you guarantee that someone is interested in you, exactly as you are.

Refresh. Update your profile photo at least every couple of months. This will help your profile look current and active. It also gives people another chance of seeing you in a different light. Someone who passed up your profile initially may take another look when they see another side of you.

Center Stage. Zoom in or crop your profile picture so your face fills up most of the frame. This will ensure the best use of the small space available and gives you a better chance of catching the eye of your potential match.

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“ Someone who passed up your profile initially may take another look when they see another side of you. ”

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Photo Album Pictures

Tell Your Story. If the dating site has a photo album area, fill it up! Remember that your photo album should tell the story of who you are: places that you love and things that you like to do. This is your chance to show yourself in 3D. So rather than cropped, up-close head shots, you should have photos of you at your favorite baseball stadium, or standing in front of the Eiffel Tower. This is the place where you get to tell your story! Just make sure you take the leading role, and not your dog Fido, or your favorite football player.

Fresh Faces. Add new pictures to your album frequently, just like you might on Facebook or Instagram. Additionally, most of the more active dating sites — including CatholicMatch — provide the ability to easily import your photos from Facebook to your dating site album. Remember, every time you add a different photo, a potential match gets to see a new side of you. A picture of a hunting trip with a group of friends makes a potential match pause because it reminds them of their dad. Or a photo of you hiking Mt. Washington sparks interest from an avid outdoorsman. Every new photo gives you a chance to make a connection with a potential match.



How Should You Search?

One of the most common traps in internet dating is to envision your perfect match. Over time, as we become more intent on finding that special someone, a picture forms in our minds that few people, if any, can live up to.

The modern notion that we can somehow craft our perfect life if we just manage to assemble the right combination of pieces becomes problematic in online dating. Naturally people think they can find a “perfect” mate if they comb through enough prospects. Add to the mix the idea that the variety of available mates is endless, then you’re really in for trouble. Even if you find a close match, you will be haunted by the idea that there is someone better around the corner.

Start Big, Then Narrow It Down. When it comes right down to it, each one of us is really only concerned with a few traits. These are the big non-negotiable qualities that ensure harmony and the ability to weather any storm in marriage. When you search, don’t worry about distance or if she loves sports or if he loves movies as much as you do. What really matters is how you handle conflict, how you handle finances, how you want to raise children and whether you have similar faith and values.

Search Is About Discovery. Most sites give you the ability to save multiple searches. If you do an "ideal date" search, be sure to include another search with broad criteria that allows you to discover new and interesting people. It will expand your horizons and allow you to meet people that go beyond the imaginary "perfect match" you have created in your mind. Many times the right person may be just slightly outside of one's preferences.

Allow For the Unexpected. You will get discouraged if you think you can control everything by just searching for what you want. Seeking perfection in another person is guaranteed to cause disappointment and disillusionment, because none of us are perfect. It will be a great relief to your future spouse if you don't expect him or her to be the one who will "fulfill" you or who will make you completely happy. Make sure you embrace the whole experience of meeting online and not just what you want to accomplish. You don't have to meet lots of people, you just need to meet the right person.

Search Is Not Shopping. Searching for a product on Amazon or information on Google reinforces the idea that we can plug in certain criteria and get the exact results we want. While this approach works for electronics or vacations, it is rarely so simple when dealing with online dating. When searching online profiles, it is easy to scroll through the list of photos as one would look through a catalog. But it is important to remember that the online profile only gives you a glimpse of who that person truly is. There is a temptation with online communication to make our relationships less real and potentially dehumanize the people with whom we are conversing.

Remember This Is Online Dating, not Netflix, eBay, Amazon, or CarMax, and newest members are not like newest releases. Unlike the movies, which are designed to provide two hours of entertainment, meeting the right man or woman is a completely different type of search.

Technology Is a Wonderful Thing. Thousands of couples who found their spouses online are grateful that such services exist. However, it is important for all of us to realize that technology is just a tool. It is up to us to use it in beneficial and healthy ways.



Viewing Other Profiles

Just a Glance. Remember that profiles are just a glimpse into a real person. When you view other profiles, you should not be just checking off boxes. If you were to meet someone at a party, you encounter the whole person, including that twinkle in his eyes, her winning smile, and all of the non-verbal communication. The internet, for all its amazing technology, can't possibly transmit all of that. An online dating profile is only a screenshot of who that person truly is. So keep this in mind as you look through profiles. Remind yourself that each one represents a real person with much more depth than an online profile can represent. Viewing their profile is not getting to know them, it is just a way to determine who you might like to get to know.

Apply the Golden Rule. Treat other people's profiles as you would like yours to be treated. You may be used to judging a profile in 30-seconds or less, but is that how you would want to be judged? It is time to give that profile a second glance. There is a real person behind that profile and finding your spouse begins with looking beyond the "About Me" section or how much you like his or her profile photo. Really take some time to consider them. Even if you find just one interesting aspect, is it not worth a message or two to see if there might be more of a spark?



Do Not Seek Perfection. There is no perfect profile, just as there is no perfect person. Remember, you want to date and marry a person, not a profile. Reconsidering or downplaying a preference is not the same thing as settling. Too often single people confuse the two. Be grounded in your values, but be open to God's way of showing you what you need, even if it isn't what you think you want. Someone might not be the best at writing his profile or selecting the best photos, but guess what? That same person might be the perfect match for you. Many of the couples who met through CatholicMatch.com indicate that when they met their future spouse in person, they were much more attractive and interesting than any profile picture.



Describe Your Ideal Match

Who Are You Seeking? Some online sites include a section for you to describe what you are looking for in a potential mate. If you decide to include a seeking description, lay out a clear portrait of what you are looking for, but don't be too restrictive. Some examples could include: provider, spiritual leader, someone who wants to start a family, old-fashioned values, emotional availability, and commitment to the faith. Again, make sure it's not a checklist, but a summary of guiding principles — and maybe why particular character traits are important to you. You could also acknowledge your own strengths and weaknesses and say how they may factor into the pursuit of a complementary partner.

Faith Questions. The intent of the faith questions and favorites section is to open discussions and give the opportunity to reflect upon what you believe and why you believe it. These sections help people to learn about others and also learn about themselves by stopping to reflect on what they believe. Using these questions to judge or exclude people without getting to know them as a person will often lead to disappointment and even resentment. People want to feel as though you are interested in getting to know them, not simply wanting to argue over a theological view point or why you shouldn't watch this movie or follow this celebrity.



Matching Is Just Another Tool. After you complete your match questions, your responses will be compared to the responses of members who have also completed their match portraits. Each week, a few compatible members who meet your match filter preferences will be suggested within your match list.

Matching Is About Compatibility. The goal of the matching tool is to introduce you to people you may be compatible with, but didn't think of otherwise. Matching helps you to focus on things other than your preferences or what you made a priority. Maybe you are putting too much emphasis on height or hair color. What you think is a good match might be skewed. You may not be allowing openness to other people. Stop thinking of your perfect match and look at the bigger picture. It's not just about your preferences, but how you complement another person. There is a reason you were matched with someone. Look deeper; look beyond your narrow focus; go outside your boundaries and see if this person is a good fit.

Be Reflective. Are you the person you want to be? Could you be more easily matched if you focused on areas that you can improve about yourself? Many people believe that matching should be made-to-order. When we go to a deli and put in our sandwich order, we expect to get our perfect, ready-made sandwich. So with the matching tool, many believe that they should take the test and get back exactly what they want. Not seeing what they ordered, they send it back. This is not how matching works.

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“ It’s not just about your preferences, but how you complement another person. ”

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Matching Is Not a Glorified Search. It is important to keep in mind that your match list does not take into consideration any information from your own profile, the other member's profile, or your search criteria. Instead it focuses on the areas addressed in your match question domains—Interests, Disposition, Outlook, Background, Experience, Communication Style, Emotionality, Finances, Sexuality, Values, Vision, and Traits. The match portrait looks for someone who might be good for you. This might not be the perfect match in your mind, but think of the tool as something that helps you consider people you might have excluded due to preconceived notions or over-ambitious preferences.



Communication

Who Should You Contact?

DO Be Realistic. When considering who you message, consider the age difference, interests, and personality types. Seek out opportunities for a successful match. Ask yourself if you were at an event would you go up and talk with this person? If you can answer honestly that you would, then they are probably someone you should send a message to.

DO Forgive the Small Stuff. Online digital communication has a tendency to make our relationships less real and potentially dehumanize the people with whom we are conversing. Be careful not to read too much into a poorly crafted instant message or misspellings in an email. Don't let simple mistakes spoil a potential date — or a potential match.

DO Your Research. In your initial message, mention something that interested you from the other person's profile. It doesn't take much effort to view the other member's profile and think of a couple questions to ask him or her. A little effort can go a long way on this first contact. You don't have to be Shakespeare but you can certainly be more creative than writing. "Hi there, I liked your profile. Hope to hear back from you." or "You have a really great profile and I find you attractive. Would you be interested in talking?" Is that how you would introduce yourself to someone you met at a party?

DO Be Personal. When you contact someone, be sure that you mean it. Be deliberate and authentic. Don't just send generic messages to every new member. When you increase your emails, you do increase your potential reach, but you also decrease your amount of quality and most likely positive responses.

Don't Be Mechanical. Don't send a super-generic message like: "If you would like to correspond, please email me. Take care!" This can come across as laziness on your part and certainly does not spark any initial conversation. A generic message is more likely to get deleted without any response from the other member. On the other hand, don't write a 1,000-word essay sharing all your personal life stories either. Balance is key.

How Should You Contact?

Most Internet dating services offer a number of ways for you to communicate. These tools help singles interact with each other in new and interesting ways. Here are some things to consider when using these tools to communicate with fellow online members.

Sending a Message. A message can be a full communication like an email — or a quick note like an emotigram on CatholicMatch. Some sites have features like winks, flirts, likes, etc. While these are not messages in the traditional sense, they still "send a message" and should not be overused or abused. Be selective in how you use ALL communication features a website provides.

Craft a thoughtful introductory email that is positive and light. Read the recipient's profile first, and comment about any similar interests that you may have. Ask questions about interesting details in the profile, and include a little bit of information about you. Keep your email brief — about two or three short paragraphs.



Instant Message / Chat. The instant message or chat tool on online dating sites is just like Skype or Facebook chat. When you are signed into the dating site, your profile will list you as being online, and other members have an opportunity to ask you to start a chat. IMing is more casual, and the messages are less crafted than an email would be, but it does simulate a live conversation. It can allow you to get to know other members in an informal way — but some instant messaging etiquette definitely comes into play.

DO try a unique introductory line or question to get the other member's attention and inspire an easy response and good conversation. Your chat shouldn't be forced, but flow. If you have to leave for a moment, it is polite to let them know that you'll be right back (brb).

DON'T write anything inappropriate. Keep in mind that your message may be read by someone other than the person you are contacting (a snoopy co-worker or a curious friend). Also, don't start an instant message with a bland, "Hey, what's up?" And don't try to carry on five different conversations at once. Stay focused to show the person that you are really interested.

Questionnaire. Many online dating sites provide introductory questions that you can send to another member. This tool is helpful if you want to get to know the person a little better, but are unsure of how to craft a first message.

DO use this method to learn random, fun, and quirky details about your potential match.

DON'T send questions that can be answered by reading the person's profile.

Online Forums / Chat Groups. Services such as CatholicMatch provide discussion forums dedicated to specific topics, ranging from single living to current events to prayer requests. A message forum can seem intimidating, but is really just an online version of meeting people in a group setting. Communicating in the forums allows you to broaden your circle of online friends, which naturally increases your chances of meeting your match.

DO engage in forum conversations that interest you. You might be tempted to hang out in rooms where more members of the opposite sex are, even if the topic doesn't interest you. That's fine, but don't pretend to be something you are not.

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“ Communicating in the forums allows you to broaden your circle of online friends, which naturally increases your chances of meeting your match. ”

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DON'T take disagreements personally. Any number of forum topics can get heated, and the online venue makes it easy to angrily type a response to what you perceive as a personal attack. Step back, take a deep breath, express your opinion, and move on. You want to draw like-minded people to you — not come off looking like a loose cannon. Online forum discussions can easily degrade into personal insults and dehumanizing people. Avoid this at all costs! It doesn't make you a better person, it doesn't help you reflect Christian charity and it certainly DOES NOT make you more attractive to others on the site.



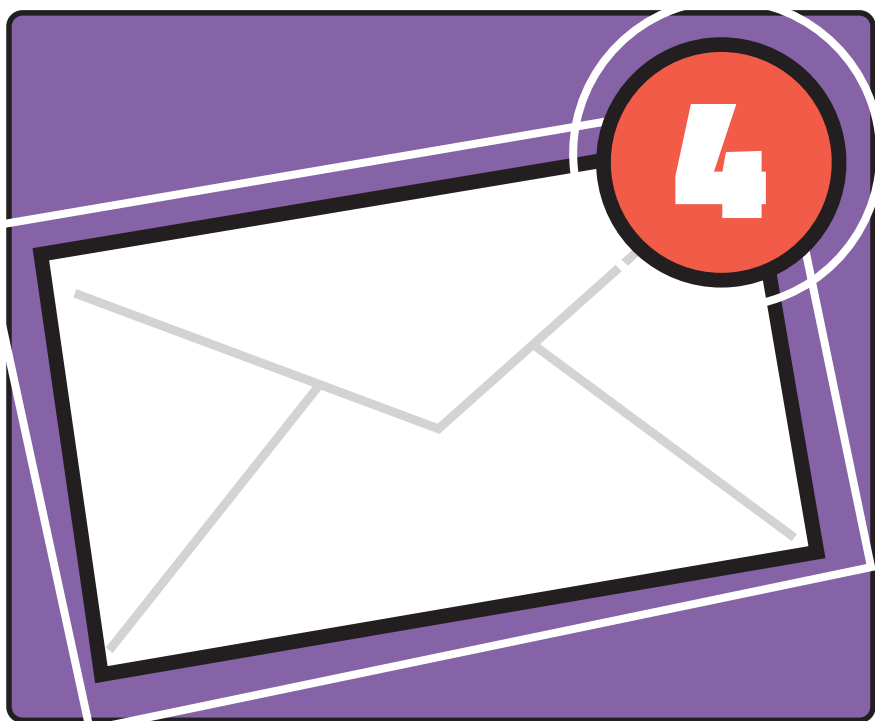
Why Don't People Respond?

According to a study in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* on dating sites, "Men replied to 26% of the messages they received through the site, and women replied to 16%. This study also found little evidence that eager responses were a turnoff; the faster the reply, the more likely that reciprocal communication would continue."

There are a few reasons why you might not be getting responses:

Not the One. They could simply not be interested in you. It happens in real life, it happens online. It doesn't feel good, but best to just move on to the people that are!

Busy. Singles are busy too, and while you might have time to spend an hour or so online on a given day, many days you might have just five or ten minutes. Some people check messages every day. Some can go a few weeks or even a few months. Many people do not view online dating messages the same way they view their email or texts. Online dating messages can and do vary in priority based on what else is going on in a person's life.



Pursuing Others. Members may be already on the road to exclusive relationships and consciously choose not to respond out of respect for their new interest. Others may want to limit the amount of conversations they are having at once.

Age. Is there a significant age difference? A member may simply choose not to respond if you are 10 years older or younger, for example. Everyone is different, but on average, if there is a significant age difference, you can usually expect less responses overall.

Right Priority. There are many types of online daters. There are people who invest in the process, subscribe right away and update their profiles regularly. Other members may take a more casual approach and wait for a potential match to message them first. And many people decide to try a free trial

before they commit to a membership. While you do not need to be a subscriber to be successful online, many members decide to subscribe so they can continue to communicate with a potential match or take advantage of premium online features. Regardless of whether someone is a subscriber or not, you should always message someone you are interested in.

Try, Try Try Again. If someone doesn't respond right away, don't be afraid to send a follow up message in a week or two. It's ok to show some persistence, but don't let that turn into annoyance.

Don't Be Discouraged. Online dating etiquette is different than the real world. Because you are exposed to more people all at once, it is impossible to respond to everyone that sends an emoticon/message. Rejection is simply not as personal when dating online. Shake it off and move on! Assume the best about people, not the worst, and you are likely to be surprised. Just when you are about to give up, something different happens — oftentimes in the form of an unexpected message.

How Do I Respond?

How Do I Respond to Someone I'm Not Interested In? Let a person know that you've enjoyed corresponding, but that you don't think you are a match. Courteously wish him well in his search, and leave it there. It might sting to be on the receiving end of that correspondence, but it is much better than stringing him or her along.

Do I Need to Respond to EVERY Message Or Emotigram? The short answer is, "No." While some people believe it is poor etiquette or even rude to not respond to someone who contacts you, that is simply not true. There are any number of reasons why it is not necessary to respond when you do not have interest in the other person. Although some singles claim they would rather know that someone is not interested, the opposite is more likely true. Whether you simply choose to remove the message or respond with a polite, "No, thank you," either way you will be within reasonable accepted practices of online dating.

Extra Credit: 3 Simple Tips

View a Handful of Profiles Every Day. Reach out to multiple people each week. If you were to attend a party with 100 single people, how many of them would you be interested in and vice versa? If you are looking for your future spouse, the quantity of people is not as important as is the right one contacting you.

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“ It’s ok to show some persistence, but don’t let that turn into annoyance. ”

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Update Your Profile Once a Month. Why? Because a full profile is a more attractive profile, and you are going to shoot to the top of member search results. Keeping yourself current and visible is half of the battle. Once every six months is probably good enough for updating profile photos, but as often as you like in your album! Adding photos regularly gets you more exposure.

Invest In the Process. Know upfront that finding someone won’t happen overnight; it takes time to develop relationships. Knowing this ahead of time will help you relax and have fun with the process! It is really important to keep in mind that this is a process, and not a sprint. Many singles make the mistake of going overboard in the first few weeks or months, and then burn themselves out quickly. Like anything else, overindulgence will lead to bad results. Take your time and let the process, and your life, play itself out.



Frequently Asked Questions

Can I look at other profiles without creating one myself? I don't like the idea of putting myself on the internet. You may feel intimidated to have perfect strangers view your photos and personal description, but think about what your interaction would be like at a party. You get dressed up and arrive at the party looking your best for the other guests. You have conversations with a variety of people about your favorite movies, food, sports, or even the faith. At the end of the night, you may share contact information with someone you are interested in, and hope that the relationship will blossom into something more.

A site like CatholicMatch offers the same experience. It's just a much bigger party, and everyone there is Catholic. Sure, creating an online profile can make you feel like you are on display, but think of an online dating site as a tool to help you meet more people than you could on your own. It's a way to be more proactive in your search — essential in today's dating world that offers fewer possibilities for meaningful personal contact. If you feel called to the vocation of marriage, be sure to use all the tools available to you to find your spouse. Just ask someone who has been successful with online dating: You truly can open the door more fully to discover the exciting plan God has for you and your future spouse.

How many marriages happen? According to a 2013 Pew Survey, 23% of online daters married or entered into a long term relationship with someone they met online.

Why are online dating sites so expensive? Depending on your subscription choice, you can spend as little as \$10 a month. Where could you spend so little money and have the opportunity to “meet” people in such a highly concentrated audience of single Catholics? Compare that with how much you spend every time you go to a local bar, coffee shop, or movie theater — and how many like-minded Catholics you meet at those places. An online dating service should not replace local social events. In fact, staying active in local events can enhance your online activities because you continue to get real human interaction, not just virtual interaction. Online dating simply complements your real world activities in order to improve your chances of meeting someone special. While online dating is not a guarantee to meet your future spouse, the opportunities far outweigh the monthly costs.

Why do I have lots of profile views, but only a handful of emotigrams and messages? Are they playing games? There are a whole range of possibilities. Perhaps after reading your profile, another member decided you’re not her type. Or maybe he does like you, but simply hasn’t had time to craft a message.

Is a wink/emotigram welcomed or just ignored?

The quick icon messages are useful icebreakers and sometimes are just a way of brightening someone’s day with a warm welcome or a birthday greeting. Like other features, however, they are just tools, so don’t become too focused on any one vehicle. People are diverse, and different forms of communication work for different people.



Should a man always initiate conversation? It is possible that some people — in many cases, female members — may view a profile and be interested, but feel that the first contact should be initiated by the man. The lesson here? Check out the profiles of those who have viewed yours, and contact any member that interests you.

Is online dating safe? Safety precautions need to be taken in any dating situation, whether you are introduced by a friend, meet at a church function, or meet online. Nothing is 100% safe and when bad things happen to people who meet online it makes for great headlines. But the reality is “dating,” in general, is more risky than it used to be unless you really know someone well. For most people, that is not how they enter into relationships. The best way to be safe is to use common sense, and always ask a trusted friend or family member if something doesn’t feel right.

Follow these FIVE tips:

1

First, don’t move too quickly. Take your time, be cautious with all personal information, and enjoy the process. If he is truly the person from the profile, it will show over time. Respect should permeate the communication and conversation early and throughout any relationship. Take your time as you get to know each other better. If anything seems peculiar at any point, ask a friend for guidance or advice before responding.

Solicitations for money or extremely personal information before establishing a personal relationship is NEVER acceptable and should ALWAYS be avoided.

2

3

Always protect your personal email and phone numbers.

Utilizing your profile’s email messaging system and website chat option allows two people to get to know each other in a safe, guarded manner. These options serve as a buffer, allowing time after the initial greeting, to determine compatibility without compromising security. If someone is pressuring you unnecessarily for your personal email or phone number, be wary. Report concerns about a user to the customer service staff. Once you do decide to exchange information, consider using a Google phone # or phone app. You should also consider creating an email just for your online dating correspondence. Use common sense and use internet tools to keep a level of privacy you are comfortable with.

4

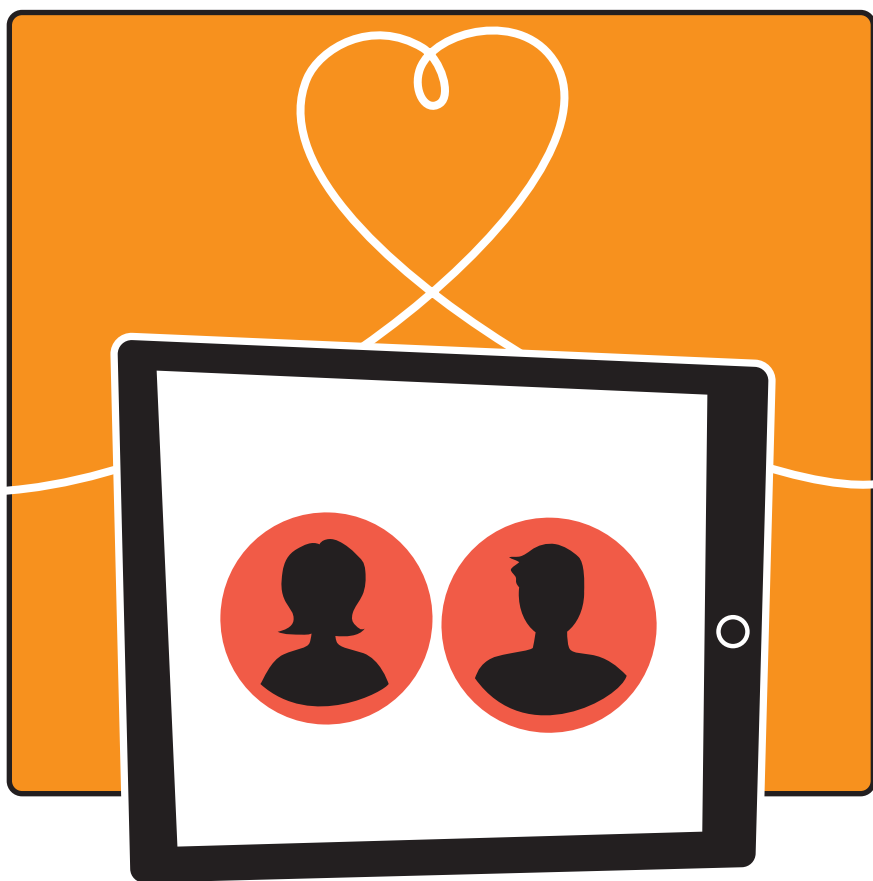
Do your own check-ups. The Internet is a wonderful tool. Not only can it connect two people, it can also be used to deliver information right to your fingertips. Many employers are now exploring social websites and searching a person's name to learn more of his or her background. There is probably more personal information online than we care to know about — but this dynamic can assist us in making informed decisions about people we meet online. If someone is so guarded with information that you really can't learn about them as a person, then you might consider it as a possible red flag.

5

Once you do decide to meet someone in person for the first time, make sure you tell a trusted friend where you are going. Then check in with him at a designated time.

When should we meet in person? If you've had regular communication with a person, and things seem to be headed on the right track, then you may want to take it to the next step. There are no hard rules that apply to all situations, but if you seem to be getting along via email, then you can invite her to continue the conversation with a phone call. Don't let the phone calls and emails go on too long before meeting, however. One can give away one's heart through all the phone calls and emails, but then end up disappointed if there is no attraction at the first face-to-face meeting. If the person isn't communicating an interest in meeting in person, let her know that you are looking to meet.

Always have your first meeting in a public place, and drive yourself to the location. There are many wonderful eateries that, while busy, still afford the space for two people to sit and get to know each other. Beyond the obvious safety reasons for driving separately, you will thank yourself if you have a less than compatible first meeting. Simply tell the person that you are not interested and wish her God's blessings in the future. If, on the other hand, you find that the great conversation continues, then pray for God's blessings in your future.



In Closing

Hopefully this guide will give you the tools to navigate online dating sites and help you meet a variety of people that you wouldn't meet under ordinary circumstances. We invite you to commit to the experience of being a single Catholic in search of God's plan. Join in on the adventure of building relationships with faith-filled people who, regardless of small differences, are all standing on common ground. All you have to do is be open to meeting other sincere people who love the Catholic faith. God will do the rest.

For more tips on online dating visit: catholicmatch.com/OnlineDatingTips



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Deanna and Michael experienced a mutual dream come true when they had the opportunity to meet Pope Francis!

A Story of Love, Hope and Meeting the

By Lori Hadacek Chaplin,
CatholicMatch Institute

Pope!

Deanna, 24, and Michael, 24, had never dated before they met each other on CatholicMatch. Michael had been discerning the priesthood for four years, and it seems God had placed a bubble around lovely Deanna—saving her just for Michael.

They were married on October 5, 2013, in her home parish in Memphis, TN. CatholicMatch talked with Deanna about her initial reservations about joining an online dating site, about her online dating experience, having her marriage blessed by Pope Francis, and more.

Why did you join CatholicMatch?

In 2010, I was 24 and had never dated. This was not by my own choice, and it was frustrating. Where were the good Catholic men? Was there something wrong with me? What I didn't realize at the time was that God was writing a better story than I ever could have imagined.

Online dating was something I said I would never do. I think I had my hopes set on running into "The One" at Mass, or maybe at my local Starbucks! My perception of online dating changed in part because a friend that I really admired met her spouse on a Catholic dating site. So maybe it wasn't that bad after all, but I still held out hope that I would meet my husband in a more "traditional" way.



My decision to join CatholicMatch was a slow one, but I think the ball really got rolling when I attended the 2010 National Catholic Singles Conference in San Antonio. Brian Barcaro gave a talk about online dating and why he started CatholicMatch. Alright, I thought, maybe this wasn't such a crazy idea, but I still needed more time.

A few weeks after the Singles Conference, I finally hit my frustration point. "OK, God, if you're not going to send me anyone, I'm going to take matters into my own hands!" (As if I was the one arranging all of this...) At the beginning of March, I created my account and paid for a two-month membership.

How long were you a member before you met Michael?

I had been a member for about five or six weeks when I first saw Michael's picture. Around the middle of April, I saw the "New Members" feature and there was a picture of a guy with a nice smile holding what looked like a baby leopard (extra points for a unique profile picture!). After glancing through Michael's profile, I decided I would send him a message with a nice smiley face at the end, but I didn't really expect a reply.

Never underestimate the power of a smile!

This would be the first of many messages we would exchange over the next few weeks. By the end of April, we were emailing one another once or twice a day with questions and answers on everything under the sun. By July 2, we officially started dating.

There's no doubt in my mind that God's hand was part of all of this. His timing is perfect, and Michael was definitely worth the wait!

“ I think it’s really interesting to see how God’s hand has been part of our entire relationship, and how everything happened in His perfect timing. ”

What drew you to Michael?

I think the first thing that caught my attention about Michael, even before we started emailing each other, was his sense of humor. His profile expressed his deep love for chocolate milk and Haribo gummy bears, and the quiz he wrote showed his creative and quirky imagination.

I could also tell that this man really loved Jesus and his Catholic faith. He had spent four years in seminary before discerning that the priesthood was not his vocation, and he was ready to discern the vocation to marriage. I appreciated the fact that he had never been in a relationship either, and that we were essentially stepping into the unknown world of dating and relationships together.

He wasn't just looking for a fling; we were really discerning marriage. Michael has always kept Christ at the center of our relationship, and that definitely made him a keeper!

Any interesting or funny stories about your online dating experience?

One of the memories that still makes me smile are those initial emails we exchanged. After sending a few back and forth, Michael thought he would answer my questions in an audio recording, and I recorded my answers. So we sent MP3s back and forth a few times before Michael finally just asked for my phone number.

Our first two-and-a-half years of dating were pretty much long distance, but I think this actually made our relationship stronger because we talked so often. Communication became a key part of our relationship. That's a benefit of online dating really, especially at the beginning of the relationship. You're forced to talk to each other and the physical doesn't get in the way of getting to know the other person.

I think it's really interesting to see how God's hand has been part of our entire relationship, and how everything happened in His perfect timing. A year after we started dating, we enrolled in a graduate theology program through Newman University in Wichita, which meant we got to see one another every few months or so for class.

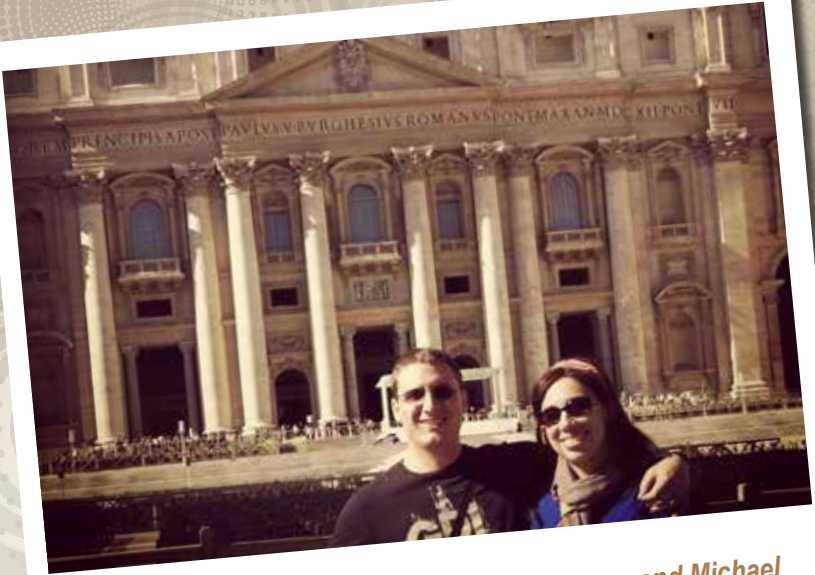
God really did make a way for us to continue this courtship despite the distance.

How did Michael propose?

Right after the Easter Vigil Mass on March 30, 2013, Michael and I were taking pictures with a friend of ours who had just joined the Church.

We posed for the picture, but right before the photo was taken Michael said, "Deanna?" I turned towards him and said, "Yes?" right as he was getting down on one knee. I was shocked and teary-eyed, but once Michael asked the question, I said, "Yes!" That's when I realized that the people standing around the altar were taking pictures and video taping of the proposal.

One of the things I love about the pictures from our engagement is that Michael proposed at the foot of the altar, and in the picture you can see the tabernacle right in between us. Our prayer is that the Eucharist always remains at the center of our family.



*When in Rome, do as the Romans do! Deanna and Michael
sightseeing on their honeymoon in Italy*

What was it like having your marriage blessed by Pope Francis?

On October 16, Michael and I attended the papal audience in St. Peter's Square. We were able to obtain Sposi Novelli (Newlywed) tickets, which meant that we were invited to wear our wedding attire to the audience and sit in a special section that was a little bit closer to the Holy Father.

After the Pope's address, the Vatican security guards instructed us to file out of the section. I assumed that meant everything was over now and it was time to go home. Then we realized they were taking us to Pope Francis! Before we knew it, we were standing at the center of the platform waiting for the Holy Father to come and greet us.

As Pope Francis shook Michael's hand, I said in Spanish, "Holy Father, we are from the United States. We are praying for you." Pope Francis shook my hand, and then Michael handed him a holy card that we had

given to our wedding guests, which has a picture of the Divine Mercy. I told the Holy Father, “This is a gift from our wedding. We were married on October 5, the feast of St. Faustina.” Pope Francis looked at both sides of the card, smiled, and then he made his way to the next couple in line. Michael and I stood there for a moment, a bit awestruck at what had just happened.

When I think about our wedding reception and the brief moments I was able to spend personally greeting our guests, I think about our moment with Pope Francis. The Pope had to have greeted hundreds of people before he came to us. He wasn’t just shaking hands and kissing babies because of some kind of obligatory papal duty. Rather, he greeted each person, and he looked at each one of us like a father lovingly looks at his children. Even though he didn’t say a word, he listened to us. He looked at us. He smiled at us. In that moment, he was present to each person, sharing the love and joy of Christ, even if it was only with a smile.

Looking back at the pictures that were taken of us with Pope Francis, I still find it hard to believe that we were able to experience something so special. The Holy Father gave us just a few seconds of his time, but he taught us that sharing the joy of our faith can be as simple as being joyful and fully present to each person we encounter. This is one of the best wedding presents we could have ever received.

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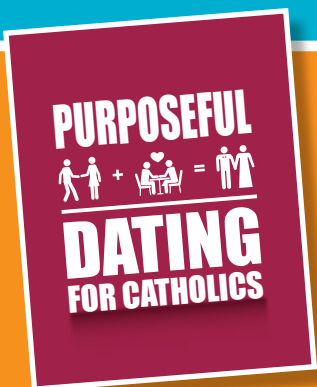


Top 10 Reasons You Should Get Married

Danielle Bean, Catholic Digest publisher and mother of eight, gives the top 10 reasons that every person not called to religious life should consider marriage a worthy goal.

7 Tips for Newly Married Couples

This guide is specifically geared toward couples in the first years of marriage. It asks some tough questions that will require honest answers of the couple.

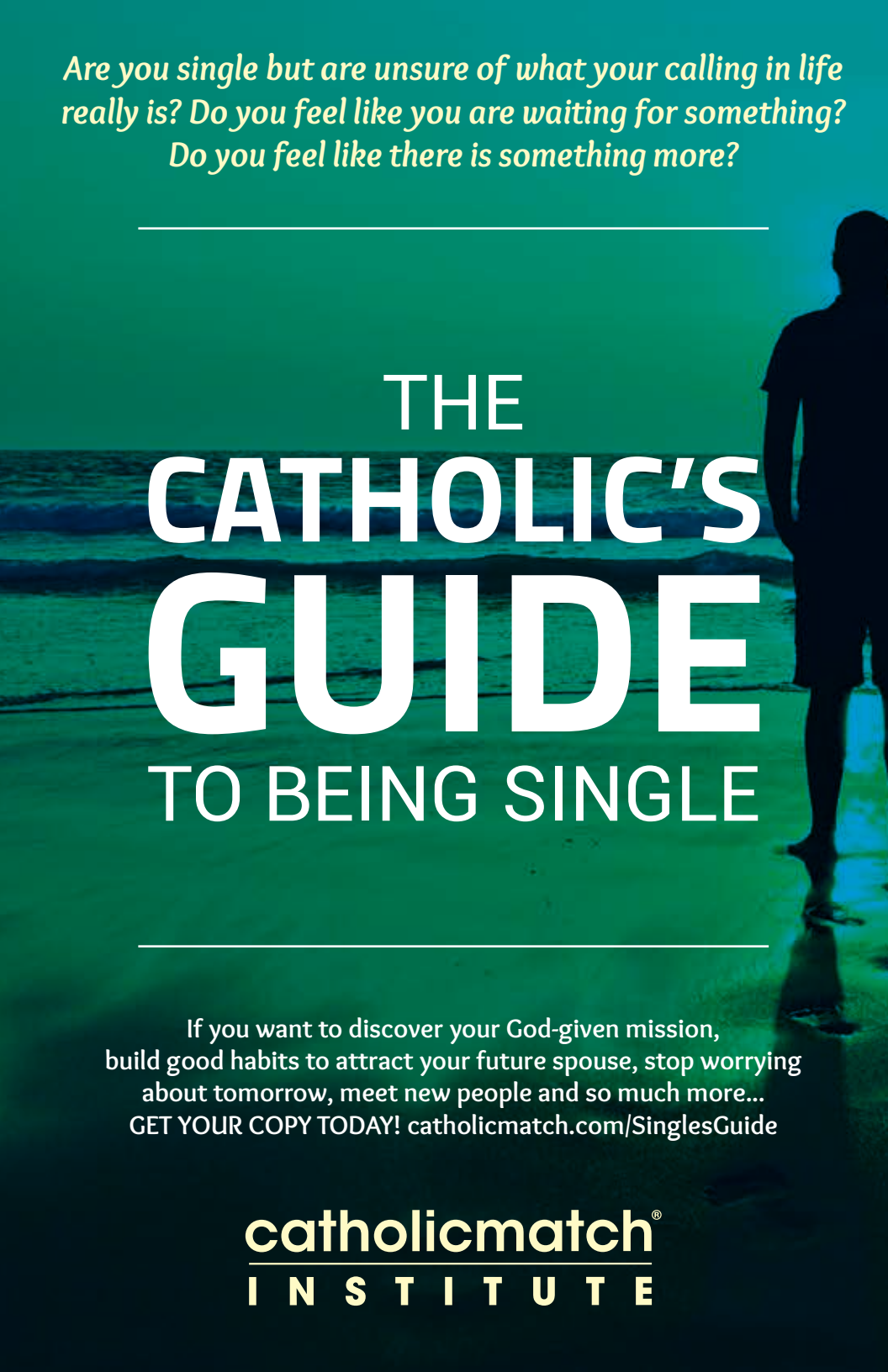


Purposeful Dating for Catholics

This practical resource helps single Catholics better discern dating and marriage as well as grow deeper in their faith.

To order copies individually or in bulk
visit CatholicMatchInstitute.com or call 888•267•8885 x 3

Are you single but are unsure of what your calling in life really is? Do you feel like you are waiting for something? Do you feel like there is something more?



THE CATHOLIC'S GUIDE TO BEING SINGLE

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I N S T I T U T E

Whether you have never tried an online dating site — or you are already using a service or have in the past — this guide will hopefully answer some of your most fundamental questions about online dating, address some of the more common objections, and encourage you to take a closer look at a tool that has benefited the lives of thousands of single Catholics. We also hope that the guide will educate and inspire married Catholics who either work in the Church or simply want to help a friend or family member by encouraging them to take this step.

“Even though college students are well versed in digital media, this online guide advises Catholics on the best practices for presenting themselves online and communicating via such a service. It also helps to allay some of the more common concerns and questions about using such a service.”

Reverend James Cheney,

Director of the North Dakota State University Newman Center, BisonCatholic.org

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“The internet is a wonderful resource for Catholic singles seeking spouses, but taking your first step into the unknown world of online dating can be intimidating. CatholicMatch understands this. Their helpful online dating guide walks beginners through the process of creating a profile and interacting with other singles online. With helpful do’s and don’ts, tips, and ideas, this booklet gives online newcomers and veterans the information, encouragement, and confidence they need to make the most of their online dating experience.”

Danielle Bean,

Author of *My Cup of Tea: Musings of a Catholic Mom* (Pauline)
and Publisher of *Catholic Digest*

.....

“For anyone using or interested in online dating, this easy guide gives helpful tips about profile writing, advice for better pictures, and best practices for communicating with other members. The guide is constructed in a way that it will appeal to both senior and younger Catholics, as well as first time or experienced online dating members.

With so many of our activities happening online, it is wonderful that there are services like CatholicMatch.com that attend to the specific needs of single Catholics. I’ve met a few members of their team personally, and have also heard tons of “success stories” about couples who met through their service.”

Lisa M. Hendey,

Author of *The Handbook for Catholic Moms* and *A Book of Saints for Catholic Moms* (Ave Maria Press)
and founder of CatholicMom.com.

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