



Ten ways to Acknowledge the gift of Single People in Parish Life

Small gestures of acknowledgement and inclusion can go a long way towards developing a community which values the gift of its single people. Here are ten ideas as starters.

1. Affirm their baptismal commitment

On the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, make special mention of the baptismal commitment of the single people in the parish. There is something unique about their baptismal witness in that it is lived without the filters of marriage priesthood or religious vows. They are in good company: Jesus was a single man!

2. Praise their maternal and paternal qualities

On Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, as well as celebrating biological parenthood, acknowledge spiritual parenthood. This will include the committed single men and women of the parish. Give thanks for the way that they channel their motherly and fatherly energies in bearing God's life and love to the world.

3. Thank them for their support

On those parish occasions when the gift of marriage is esteemed (e.g., a wedding), it may also be appropriate to thank those single people who uphold the value of the marital sacrament and support the couples who live it.

4. Acknowledge them as family

When celebrating family life, think beyond the *parent / grandparent / young child* scenario to the single people who, at all ages, are aunts and uncles, sisters and brothers, godparents and cousins in family life.

5. Praise their courage

During the Easter triduum, as an example of the death and resurrection in everyday life, it may be appropriate to mention those single people whose dreams of marriage are unfulfilled yet who embrace God's plan for their lives with energy, self-sacrifice and generous love and service.

6. Ask for their forgiveness

At a parish celebration of Reconciliation, include in the examination of conscience an item such as: In what ways, through omission or insensitivity, have we treated single people as second class members of our parish community?

7. Affirm their mission

When referring to mission and ministry experiences in parish, look for opportunities to highlight not just

what people 'do' but the vocation which grounds their actions. Include in this approach the baptismal commitment of those who live the single life.

8. Pray for them

Pray for the single men and women of the parish, for the fulfilment of their vocational aspirations in whatever way the Holy Spirit leads. Include them in the Prayers of the Faithful. Ask a parish prayer group to pray for specific individuals.

9. Take an interest

It may be appropriate to offer assistance to single parishioners in the ongoing discernment of their vocation and life's direction. E.g., engage them in a discussion about their options. Suggest a retreat or a good book as spiritual reading. Introduce them to others who share their values.

10. No joke!

Finally, adopt a parish policy of zero toleration of negative jokes and subtle put-downs that perpetuate the stereotype of the single adult as an incomplete person.

Helpful Hint

'Single life' can be a confusing category because there are so many varied reasons as to why people remain unmarried. Also, rarely do single people consciously choose to be single, therefore there is often an element of pain mixed in with all the wonderful gifts and opportunities of the single life. One of the best things we can do in affirming the single life is to look behind the 'single' tag and to acknowledge the unique journey of *this* man, *this* woman.

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