

Lent Devotional March 13, 2020

Scripture

1 Corinthians 7:1-9

1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is well for a man not to touch a woman." 2 But because of cases of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another except perhaps by agreement for a set time, to devote yourselves to prayer, and then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 This I say by way of concession, not of command. 7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind. 8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am. 9 But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.

Devotional

The Rev. Michael C. Gehrling '08, Creative Ministry (2018)

"I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind." These words from today's Scripture passage from 1 Corinthians have been words to which I've returned regularly over the past 15 years. I'm single. And the reminder that my single life is as much a gift from God as the lives of my married friends is an assurance. It's also a challenge.

The Greek word translated "gift" in this verse is χάρισμα ("charisma"). It's the same word Paul uses to describe spiritual gifts just a few chapters later in this epistle. What if we thought of our singleness or marriage less as gifts for ourselves to enjoy and more as spiritual gifts given by God through us to the Church?

As a single person, I've experienced the gift of married people in my community. They bring into my life a sense of stability and a rootedness in place. Sacramentally, their love and relationship point me to the love between Christ and the Church.

As a single person, I've also seen how my singleness makes me available to my community. That's not to say, as many think, that singleness means having more hours and energy to give. As a single person, I still need time for personal spiritual practices, for rest and recreation, and for the work of maintaining a home (work which I do without the help of a partner). But I do bring to my community a certain flexibility and availability. I can bring single-minded attentiveness to each person I encounter and to God. Sacramentally, I can point my community to the virgins with oil in their lamps waiting for the Bridegroom to come, or to the angels who with single-minded devotion never stop crying, "Holy."

How is your singleness, or your marriage, a gift to your community?

Prayer

God, you generously entrust each of us with the gift of singleness or the gift of marriage. Help us to steward these gifts faithfully, that whatever our station in life, it may be a blessing to the Church and to the world. We pray in the name of Christ, the Bridegroom who lived in single-minded devotion to you. Amen.