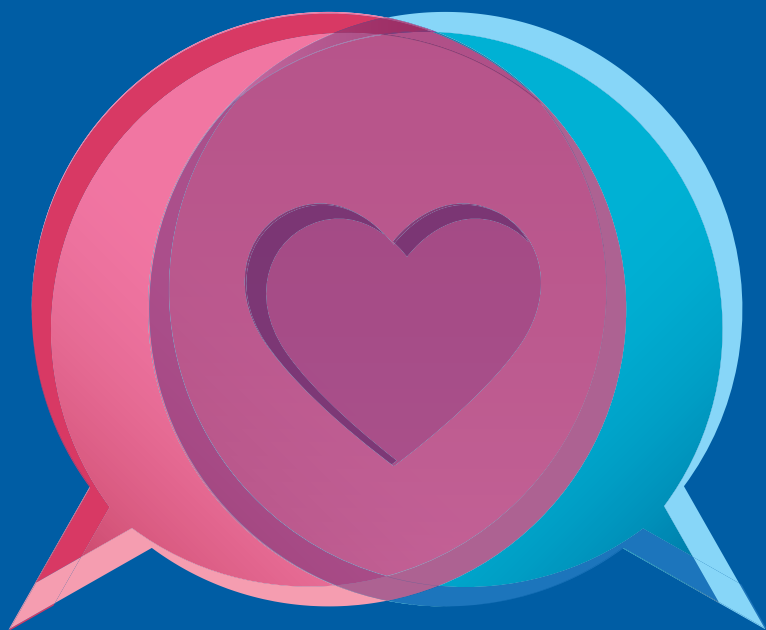


Catholics Are Meeting Their Spouses Online

What About You?



An Easy Guide to Online Dating

Looking for Love in All the Right Places

I have a lot of single friends. Sometimes, I play the “matchmaker” game in my head, shifting their Facebook photos mentally into lines and then pairing them with other, seemingly compatible friends. Since I’m a wimp, I hesitate to go the extra step of actually introducing them to one another.

While playing matchmaker is difficult, I am sure it is not as difficult as meeting other single Catholics for the purposes of marriage and community. While online dating has become mainstream, some singles are still hesitant to “put themselves out there” online. Others can find the process frustrating at times. Fortunately this new booklet from CatholicMatch helps with both of those issues.



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 will appeal to both senior and younger Catholics, as well as first time or experienced online dating members.

As someone who has been married for almost 27 years, I can attest to the importance of finding a spouse who is not only a soulmate, but who also shares your soul’s ultimate goal.

With so many of our activities happening online, it is wonderful that there are services like CatholicMath.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.
Find more of Lisa’s writings at LisaHendey.com and A Good Measure at Patheos.com

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Online Dating: An Introduction

Looking across the dating landscape of today, it's not unusual for singles to feel frustrated, discouraged, and intimidated about finding that special someone in typical social venues — bars, clubs, parties, or at church and community events. The opportunities to meet people are simply not what they used to be. But where do you turn?

It's clear that the Internet and social media have, almost overnight, become an integral part of our everyday lives, helping us connect easily — and often instantaneously — with friends, family, and business contacts, both near and far away. Extending the reach of online technology into the dating sphere seems to be a logical next step. Yet, for many years, there was — and for some people there still is — a stigma about online dating.

Do you fall into the ranks of the “skeptical”? Are you curious about the people you might meet online, but are reluctant to take that first step? Have you already tried online dating, but are convinced it isn't for you?

Well, it may surprise you to hear that most people know a couple who met online or have friends who have created an online profile. According to Jupiter Research, 40 million people visited or used an online dating site during 2012. In fact, according to a survey done by research team M. J. Rosenfeld and R. J. Thomas, online dating has become the second most common way for

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“40 million people visited or used an online dating site during 2012.”

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couples to meet, runner-up to meeting through friends.

Contrary to the stigma, many singles who use an online dating service are determined — not desperate — individuals who are looking for meaningful relationships and who have found that using social media as a supplement to the more typical dating venues has opened so many more opportunities. According to a study done by a market research firm, Chadwick Martin Bailey, one out of five singles went out on a date with someone they met on an online dating site.

- Sounds pretty mainstream, doesn't it? Just browse the profiles and photos of people on singles websites and you'll see they look like people who you meet every day, in every walk of life.

- With the noisiness and busyness of both our society and our individual lives in the 21st century, using an online dating service merely supplements meeting people in the "real world" and provides single people with tools unavailable to them in "traditional" dating settings.

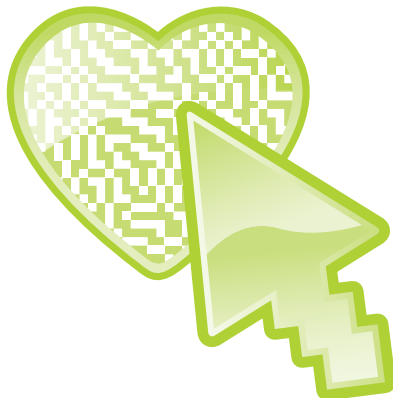


According to a study published in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, “Online dating has important advantages over conventional offline dating. For example, it offers unprecedented (and remarkably convenient) levels of access to potential partners, which is especially helpful for singles who might otherwise lack such access.”

“Online dating has important advantages over conventional offline dating.”

Being able to search for people who have similar interests and values often 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 might be. And for Catholics in search of a mate who shares the faith, that focus can be clear 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.



Tips To Improve Your Online Profile



How do I write about myself?

Not everyone is a gifted writer, so having to provide a description of yourself 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.

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. 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 bites 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.

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.

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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 for some singles.

Be clear about who you are 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 or sound like you are looking for a perfect person — just the perfect person *for you*. Some examples could include: easy going,



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humorous, active, patient, encouraging, 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.

5

Make your pictures count. Some online daters have a phobia about posting their picture for the world to see — yet, profile pictures are the first thing fellow online users will see. It is highly utilized on most dating sites and actually the most important part of your profile. In a recent study, an online dating service analyzed more than 7,000 photographs from users on their site to discover the most effective profile pictures.



Tips you need for a better profile picture:

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 may only cause disappointment when you meet someone in person.

“ Photos of the person doing something interesting led to legitimate conversations. ”

Quality. Photos from your cell phone or webcam are convenient, but make sure they are not blurry or dark. Take the time to choose clear, colorful photos with good resolution.

Tell Your Story. If the dating site has a photo album area, fill it up! The photo analysis study also reported that interest photos — “photos of the person doing something interesting, with an animal, or a travel photo” — led to “legitimate conversations” with other members. Remember that your photo album should tell the story of who you are: places that you love and things that you like to do. Photos allow you to tell a vibrant story without giving out too much personal information.



Fresh Faces. Update your profile and album photos at least every couple of months, as it makes your profile look current and active. Additionally, if you upload photos regularly on Facebook, most of the more active dating sites — including CatholicMatch — provide the ability to easily import your photos from Facebook to your dating site album.

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.

Best Practices For Communication

How do I communicate with other members?

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 dos and don'ts for using these tools to communicate with fellow online members.

Sending a Message

You can send a message that is just 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.



Do 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 three sentences to a short paragraph.



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.



Instant Messaging

The instant message (IM) or chat tool on online dating sites is just like Skype or Facebook 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 snoop 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

SINGLE
LIVING

Many dating sites have online forums where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages. CatholicMatch has a strong forums presence with many dynamic conversations on 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.

COMMUNITY
HELP

Do engage in forum conversations that interest you. Communicating in the forums allows you to broaden your circle of online friends, which naturally increases your chances of meeting your match.

SPORTS &
GAMES

PRAYER &
SUPPORT

Don't make the forums your personal soapbox and 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 with charity, and move on. You want to draw like-minded people to you — not come off looking like a loose cannon.

REGIONAL
INTEREST

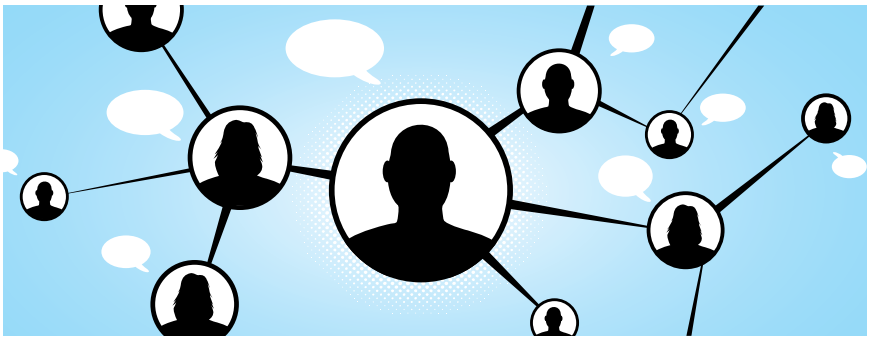
ENTERTAINMENT
& HUMOR

Advice For Who To Contact And How

DO be realistic. When considering who you message, review personality types, the interests, and the age difference. Ask yourself if you would initiate conversation with this person in real life. If the answer is no, then seek out other opportunities for a successful match.

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

DO conduct 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 profile and think of a couple of questions to ask him or her. A little effort can go a long way on this first contact.



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.

Commonly Asked Questions From Singles

Why are online dating sites so expensive?

Online dating membership costs vary, depending on the service and how long you subscribe. If you spent an entire year on CatholicMatch, for example, you would spend a little more than \$10 per month for two six-month subscriptions. Additionally, many sites offer promotional rates for new members and discounts for renewals. Where could you spend so little money and have the opportunity to “meet” 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, but the benefits and opportunities far outweigh the monthly costs.

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Creating an online profile makes me feel vulnerable. What advice do you have for a reluctant online dater?

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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.

Why don't I get a response to messages?

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According to a study in *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, "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:

26%

of men
reply

16%

of women
reply

Not the one. They could simply not be interested in you. 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.

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.

“ Check out the profiles of those who have viewed yours, and contact any member that interests you. ”

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.

Right priority. Not all of the members are paid subscribers, and people who don't subscribe cannot send or respond to messages. If someone isn't willing to invest in a subscription for the chance to connect with you, how serious are they about meeting, let alone dating you?

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Why do I have 100 profile views, but only a handful of messages? Are they not interested or just too shy?

There are a whole range of possibilities. Perhaps after reading your profile, another member decided you're not their type. Maybe they do like you, but simply haven't had time to craft a message. It is also possible that some female members who may view a profile and be interested 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. And try to remember, if you were to go to 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.



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.

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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 them well in their search, and leave it there. It might sting to be on the receiving end of that correspondence, but it is much better than being strung along.

“ If they are truly the person from the profile, it will show over time. ”

Is online dating safe?

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Safety precautions need to be taken in any dating situation, whether you were introduced by a friend, met at a church function, or met online. First, don't move too quickly. Take your time, be cautious with all personal information, and enjoy the process. If they are truly the person from the profile, it will show over time. Respect should permeate the communication and conversation early and throughout any relationship. Solicitations for money or personal information before ever meeting should never happen. Even after meeting, a courtship period should ensue as you get to know each other better. If anything seems peculiar at any time, ask a friend for guidance or advice before responding.

Always protect your personal email and phone numbers. Utilizing your profile's email messaging system and exclusive 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.

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 their 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.

For more information go to:

<http://www.catholicmatch.com/safety/>

Do I need to respond to EVERY message or wink?

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 the reality of online dating sites. 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 communication.



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 them 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 them know that you are looking to meet.

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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 sepa-

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“ Always have your first meeting in a public place, and drive yourself to the location. ”

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rately, you will thank yourself if you have a less than compatible first meeting. Simply tell the person that you are not interested and wish them 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 potential future together.

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.

Resources

"Jupiter Research Sees Steady Growth for Online Personals, Despite Explosion of Social Networking," Press Release, 2008

"Online Dating: A Critical Analysis From the Perspective of *Psychological Science*," February 2012

Chadwick Martin Bailey Study - April 2010

"Online Dating Profile Pictures: 6 Surprising Tips For Better Pics" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/02/17/online-dating-profile-pic_n_465227.html

"Online Dating Statistics 2012 Infographic" published by MBAPrograms.org

"Putting Your Best Face Forward: The Accuracy of Online Dating Photographs," *Journal of Communication*

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High Fives for Our Guide


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



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*



As a married man who met his Catholic spouse the old-fashioned way, I heartily endorse “Catholics Are Meeting Their Spouses Online” dating guide. Catholic singles today need to utilize all of the resources available to them to enlist the power of the Holy Spirit to help them find their beloved. This booklet is concise, easy-to-read, and offers very practical, helpful tips to anyone wondering about whether it's possible to meet someone via the Internet and enter into a sacramental marriage. The answer: Yes, it is!

~ **Tim Drake,**
Director of News Operations, Cardinal Newman Society

About This Online Dating Guide & CatholicMatch.com

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.

With building marriages and family life at the core of our service, CatholicMatch.com is the largest and most active website exclusively for single Catholics. CatholicMatch strives to be a companion for single Catholics as they grow in their faith and discern God's will.

In addition to providing the most robust online meeting experience for singles, it is also our mission to provide resources to parishes and marriage and family life groups to help them understand the issues that a single person faces. We do this through our daily blog posts on CatholicMatch.com/blog, as well as other printed and online resources, such as this booklet.

We invite you to commit to the experience of being a single Catholic in search of God's plan. All you have to do is be open to meeting other sincere people who love the Catholic faith. God will do the rest.

If your organization, church, or group would like permission to reprint this booklet or to order printed copies, please call 888-267-8885.