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single  
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**Deacidified**

# THE SINGLE WOMAN

by Dorothy N. Kelly



*Of all sad words of tongue or pen,  
The saddest are these, "It might  
have been!"*

(John Greenleaf Whittier)

The fact is, it has not been. You didn't marry, and that's it!

Why you didn't marry is beside the point. If you don't know why and want to know, any number of sociologists, writers, would-be friends and assorted busybodies will be happy to tell you. They will present you with the whole gamut of reasons, from fairly sound ones to pure drivel, and you can take your choice. Or you can skip it and go your merry way. In which case you waste no time or energy on "It might have been."

The way can be merry. It is up to you.

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF ATTITUDE

There is no doubt that some single women consider their state in life a great cross. The trouble with this attitude is that a cross must be borne. If it's a manufactured one, it can become an unnecessary roadblock in paths and byways, delightful in themselves and leading to the main highways of life, but perhaps too narrow and winding to admit a great, lumbering cross.

This particular cross is an artificial graft on a natural but unrealized expectation. It is made of a greener pastures outlook, a rosy-hued view of marriage, and an unthinking acceptance of the idea that women can be fulfilled only by children. Burdened with these false ideas, the single woman is often unwilling to broaden her horizons, to consider even the possibility that God will provide compensation, here and now, and to make the most of what she has. Her burden feels like a cross on the shoulder, no doubt. What it looks like is a chip.

Given a little time, most single women discard this encumbrance. They realize, more or less hazily, that the single life seems to be God's will for them. Surely, He Who notes the sparrow's fall and

counts the hairs on their heads is aware of their situation. If His will does not coincide with their wishes, He must have other plans for them. They can hardly *believe* that their lot is outside His vision, so why should they continue to *act* and to *react* as though they have been forgotten?

One day they wake up and find that life is a lot more fun when they give up the chase. They truly become what they have always been but had not got around to accepting, individuals in their own right. The few who *will not* must be left to wallow in their own misery, a nuisance to their families and friends, very often a real cross to their parish priests, a curse to themselves.

### **She's Free to Be Herself**

It doesn't matter, really, whether the single woman has freely chosen her way of life, has settled into it with the passage of time, or backed into it by default. What does matter is her view of herself, her knowledge of her own worth as an individual, her willingness to live fully in the sphere she can mark out for herself. In a real sense she does indeed walk alone, *but she can walk where she will.*

This freedom to live her own life, on her own terms, today's single woman has. It is surely the greatest compensation for

the single life. But since all sorts of people consider the single woman in special need of advice, this boon has to be guarded against the onslaughts of friend and foe alike, against the sentimental and the sloppy thinking, against the envious and the pseudospiritual. Single women, including the squeamish who are likely to quail at being accused of selfishness, should take as their motto some paraphrase of St. Augustine: *Love God and do as you please*. Loving God, of course, entails a willing acceptance of all His precepts.

### **JUST A JOB? OR A CAREER?**

It would seem that the single woman, very early in her new life of freedom, should take a clear, hard look at how she earns her living. If she has already embarked on a career which she finds satisfying, well and good. If she has been marking time in a job that is little more than a paycheck and a time filler before the marriage that did not materialize, she had better find a career.

The difference between a career and a job is a matter of commitment. Since the single woman will spend a great part of her life in her work, whatever it is, it follows that the chosen field should be

satisfying, should require a sense of commitment, and should contribute to the general welfare.

It is probably true that many women still find more satisfaction in the fields traditionally open to women — nursing, teaching, social work and clerical positions. It does not necessarily follow that all women will do so or that they should try to do so. They should consult their own inclinations, assess their own talents, and prepare for the work to which they can truly give themselves. It may be helpful to seek guidance before making a choice, but it would be ill-advised to put too much faith in outmoded ideas of what constitutes womanly work.

Womanly work is work done by a woman in a womanly fashion. Short of the purely outlandish — say, heavy construction, wrestling and prize fighting — women should be able to contribute in any field for which they have the talent and the inclination.

Some fields may require great outlays of emotional stamina and forbearance before the woman is accorded anything approaching equal status, but she does not have to become hard in the process. Sometimes hardness in a woman is a figment of an unregenerated male's imagination. When a woman really becomes hard, one might better look for the cause in the

woman herself, rather than in her work. Nursing and teaching, traditionally the womanly professions, have produced their quota of hard characters, and henpecked husbands are fashioned only by women in the most womanly of all professions.

Not too many generations ago, all work done outside the home was considered unwomanly, while a woman could be completely feminine as she pitched hay on her husband's farm or as she did piecework far into the night for some industrial giant who probably never did change his ideas about "a woman's place." A single woman's place is where she makes it.

### **Education Never Hurts**

In the selection of a career, the single woman with talent and initiative may wish to further her education, perhaps in a new field, and she would be wise to do so. If she cannot afford the costs and cannot obtain a scholarship, she would in many instances be well-advised to borrow the money. She would be repaid many times over, not only in higher earnings but in the great satisfaction of using her mind and her capacities.

For those who have no such inclinations, a real commitment to whatever they do, a friendly spirit, and a pleasant outlook can be a tremendous help in this tired



world. The cheery voice of the telephone operator in an office building, a willing, agreeable clerk who knows her stock in a department store, a housekeeper who likes children (or one who likes parishioners) — think of the graceful chain reaction they can start!

Single women probably make their greatest contribution both to society and to their own salvation through their professions or their place in the business or service world. Viewed as a vocation, any work that contributes *in any way* to any part of the general welfare will give the single woman a sense of fulfillment, a feeling that she is playing her unique role in God's plan for the world.

### **Not All There Is to Living**

Single women do need to guard against making their work the be-all and the end-all of life. It is important, but it is not all there is to living. Because a commitment is made, single women are often quite likely to ignore all other facets of life — they may begrudge the time for family and friends; they may have no interest in travel, in books unrelated to their work, in the arts or in the community. Their lives are narrow and constricted today and they are building for themselves a tragedy for the future.

## GIVING THE MATERIAL ITS DUE

If money is the root of all evil, the lack of it is one part of that evil. The realistic recognition that she may well spend a lifetime having to meet all the costs of food, clothing, shelter, entertainment, cultural and educational requirements, Church support, health maintenance and retirement provisions, should convince the single woman that she must give *due* emphasis to the material side of life. A fleeting dream, now and then, of a rich widower who will relieve her of such mundane concerns may be harmless enough, but the statistics are not reassuring.

### About That Paycheck

Women, by and large, do not command the salaries that men do. They can accept this situation or they can work toward alleviating it. They can complain about it or they can decide that salaries are not very important in the scheme of things. All these attitudes have something to be said for them with one exception — mere complaint is useless, devastating to the personality and a nuisance to hear and to live with. Oddly enough, the complainers are quite likely to be the single

women who might better recognize what is happening around them.

### **The Changing Pattern**

They are now surrounded, in whatever their work, by married women and in increasing numbers, by men. Whether the single woman is moving into a traditionally male field or is being deluged, in one of the so-called womanly professions, by married women and by men, she has much to learn from both groups.

Married women in nursing, teaching and social work are being needled by their husbands to rate their contributions to their professions considerably higher than has been their wont. The relatively few men in these professions have always done so and have been treated accordingly — either they have received higher pay for the same work or, even more likely, they have taken the top jobs. Not all single women come equipped with the nervous systems required to carry on a continuous campaign for economic justice and equity for themselves and for others. Those who do need not apologize for refusing to remain low on the totem pole. It is useless to exhort single women to be independent, to broaden their horizons, to help their neighbors and to be active in the community if they lack the resources to do so.

## Home Is Where You Make It

Single women are found today in all sorts of abodes. Most of them have the living arrangements they prefer, and we cannot quarrel with the preferences. A few ideas on the subject, however, might be helpful to beginners in the single life or to those who are not quite content where they are.

Some few single women must of necessity stay in their parents' home. If, in conscience, this cannot be avoided, then it must be borne and with a good grace. Nonetheless, the single woman should make as much of an independent life as she can manage and she should not allow herself to become a drudge for her emancipated brothers and sisters.

Most single women today are free, once they are mature, to live their own lives in their own homes. They can live alone or with some other woman — this is a matter of choice. They can have an apartment or they can buy a house. Real estate agents were once loath to sell a house to a single woman, but they are used to it now. There is much to be said for owning a house. It is a good method of saving, it will be paid for long before retirement day, and it is an outlet for the creative arts and for puttering.

Owning a house is good also for your sense of humor and perhaps for your sense of humility. When you move into your suburb, you can easily gauge the reactions of the neighboring housewives; you can sit back in complacent good humor while they have their buzz sessions and take what time they need to decide you're really no threat to their happy homes. They've been reading too many magazine articles. If you're lucky, you'll find yourself next door to a real gem who is sure enough of herself not to worry about you. After this, you'll get all the help you need and perhaps more than you want.

Your first callers will probably be the local pre-schoolers and their very first question will be "Where's your Daddy?" It will take some doing but you will finally convince them that a house and a lady — no, nobody's Mommie! — can exist without a Daddy. Then you can reflect that you have furthered their education and perhaps their parents', too.

### **A Little Foresight Needed**

One word of caution about a house! Pairs of women, not related, can and do own houses to the complete satisfaction of both. Just make sure you can live with each other and make sure you have discussed all the arrangements in a busi-

nesslike fashion *before* you buy. Have in writing what each is expected to pay and protect yourselves and your investments with wills and mortgage insurance. Marriage, death and transfer can and do occur. Without foresight you may be forced to sell to liquidate your partner's share.

If none of this appeals to you, by all means take an apartment. Do not, unless you have very special reasons for doing so, rent a room. It can be stultifying. An apartment will give you more free time than you will have in a house; you will be rid of the plumber and the electrician, and you can move with considerably less upheaval. But wherever you live, realize the importance of creating a comfortable, pleasant home for yourself.

Most single women probably understand the need of eating a balanced diet and they know pretty well of what such a diet consists. If, though, they eat most of their meals alone, the incentive to prepare attractive, nutritious meals may well be lacking. The temptation to eat sandwiches, to heat a bowl of soup, or to fry an egg for dinner should be strongly resisted.

### **Being Attractive Takes Thought**

Most single women today, regardless of age, have a positive outlook toward an attractive appearance. They make an effort

to enhance the good points God gave them, to minimize the defects and to adopt a style that suits them. The availability of varieties of clothes at reasonable prices makes the development of taste easier, but it does not do the whole trick. The woman herself must be convinced — perhaps she needs consciously to remind herself occasionally — that feminine attractiveness is one of the gifts of God. As with most of His gifts, it requires co-operation.

The single woman must want to look her best and she must consider that her appearance is worthy of note even if there is no particular man to do the noting. Like any other woman, she can be a positive delight to the eye of all beholders. Such giving of pleasure should not be too lightly dismissed. Every morning of my working life, I stop in the next office to look at the secretary. She is always put together like a work of art and I start my day with a real lift to the spirit.

### **Fun There Must Be**

Just what constitutes entertainment will always be a matter of individual tastes. What is hardly debatable is that fun and relaxation there must be. For all work and no play makes the unmarried Jill not only dull as dishwater, but jittery, weepy, and self-pitying as well. Any such ten-



dencies should be squelched and replaced with healthy doses of fun.

Spectator entertainment is so easily attainable in our day that little needs to be said about how to find it. The single woman can avail herself of most of it without difficulty. She may need to push herself a bit, however, to maintain a large circle of friends, both male and female, so that she can occasionally give or attend a party, have company at the movies, a concert or a sports spectacle. If she consistently attends such events by herself, they will eventually lose their appeal as entertainment and she may end up glued to the television set.

Reading for enjoyment is so obvious a pleasure that it is startling to find so many women who confine themselves to women's magazines and an occasional best seller.

### **A Note About Health**

Information about the rules of hygiene are so generally available that, short of being totally blind and deaf, one can hardly avoid absorbing it. To the extent that the rules are ignored, good health will be lacking. On the other hand, a continuous anxiety over health may well be a symptom of a neurosis. Since a neurosis is a precise expression of unhappiness of one



kind or another, a mild one is susceptible to self-cure. Perhaps the use of this familiar prayer would help: *God give me the strength to bear what cannot be changed; the courage to change what can be; and the wisdom to know the difference.*

Exercise is often neglected, but it is a factor in health maintenance. Those who shudder at the idea might find strength in numbers by joining a golf club or a bowling team. Hardier souls can find hiking groups.

One aspect of health maintenance is strictly a matter of money. The single woman should carry hospital and medical insurance. She would be wise to have, in addition, some kind of sickness and accident coverage which would give her an income if she has no sick leave from her place of employment or if it would be inadequate for a long, serious illness. Such provision will prevent the nagging worry that, in itself, can cause illness.

### **Retirement Planning Needed**

There was a time, not so long ago, when one had to be nearing the 50's before one could or would accept the idea that a life of retirement was a possibility and needed special financial preparation. Today, so much has our society changed, the

youngest job applicant is interested in fringe benefits, social security and pension plans. Though this concern is deplored in some quarters as too much stress on material security, the plight of most of our present-day aged is sad enough to give pause even to the most improvident.

All single women had better give serious thought to what they are going to live on when they retire and the sooner they start the thinking process the better. They should consider where and how they will want to live; approximately how much they will need for food, clothing and recreation; and how they will meet medical and drug expenses (90-year-olds now have successful major operations and are maintained in fair health by pills that often cost \$1 each). When an estimate is reached, they should start saving in one way or another and preferably in several ways.

Social security and company pension plans are the basis for most retirement programs. They will probably need to be supplemented by private annuities, bank savings, stocks and bonds, real estate or some other income-producing system. Those who are not covered by social security or a pension plan should (unless they are independently wealthy) either steel themselves for consistent, heavy saving throughout their working life or ask God for the grace to live in poverty.

## THE SPIRITUAL SIDE

*Unless the Lord builds the house, he labors in vain who builds it.*

Grace, which is ours for the asking through prayer and the sacraments, works on our natural abilities to bring us closer and closer to God. It gives us the spiritual energy we need to use the material at hand to develop our natural talents. It gives us the spiritual insight to see that these talents ought to be employed for God's honor and glory. Where we use them and for what intermediate purposes depends on our state in life, the talents themselves, and our own inclinations. But the single woman will probably make her greatest contribution to the honor of God by bringing proficiency and a fully human personality to her career. And to do this she needs to develop her spiritual life.

### **Knowledge Is Primary**

The single woman shares life's greatest pursuit with all other human beings: the search for union with God. She has neither more nor less obligation here than others do and she probably arrives at adulthood with about the same amount of commitment to God and to the Church as other practicing Catholics at the same stage —

a fairly firm faith based on a childish knowledge of Church teaching, vague hope and very little charity. She may even have difficulty distinguishing between God and Emily Post. Her greatest need then is an adult knowledge of her religion, an adult knowledge of God.

The single woman does, for the most part, have abundant knowledge in the secular sphere. She is becoming more and more influential in that sphere and, day by day, she enlarges her store of secular information and wisdom. Unless she has at least an equal understanding and ability to express herself in matters of religion, she is cheating herself and she is of little spiritual help to her neighbor. She is neither so well educated nor so effective as she could be. She is wasting some of her talents and shrugging off some of her responsibilities. She is also missing a great portion of the joy of living.

### **A Good Way to Start**

So the single woman decides she had better develop fully rather than in so lopsided a fashion. What can she do about it? Reading is as fine a way as any to start. Praying may never make a reader, but spiritual reading cannot fail to make a pray-er. Many single women think — perhaps we should say feel — that spiritual

reading is not for them. Many are reading at a level they would not tolerate in the secular field. Some tried once and were appalled at the sugary, sticky mess. Many think the lives of the saints have no validity in today's world. They would all profit by taking another look.

As the level of education and culture of both readers and writers has risen, Catholic books have been changing, too. Pious incompetents are still with us and so are the otherworldly writers who are intent on ignoring this one. They have been joined, however, by a new breed, both clerical and lay, both here and abroad. Many of the saints have been rescued from the sentimental slush of an earlier age and new ones have been discovered by competent, realistic writers.

### **They Speak to Our Times**

Some saints have more to say to lay people than others do, and some have more to teach in perilous times. Try Saint Thomas More and Teresa of Avila and Saint Catherine of Siena. Their interweaving of the life of grace with activity in the world comes through to the dullest of us. None of these saints thought the world worth less than one's best efforts. None of them would have attained either sanctity or world renown with our dearth of

religious knowledge. None of them was bogged down by religious practices and ideas little short of superstition. All of them combined true religious fervor with a knowledge of the world and the needs of the world. They operated in both worlds and against great odds.

A study of Church history is a fascinating pursuit in itself, a joy to the mind and to the spirit. Single women in the world can certainly profit by learning for themselves the 2,000-year course of the Church as an institution. Such an adult's eye view is quite likely to take them off the defensive so far as the Church is concerned and to give them the sense of balance necessarily lacking in a child's education. It will buttress their faith in the divine guidance of the Church through, and in spite of, fallible human beings.

## **NO MAN IS AN ISLAND**

One of the boons in any life are the friends we acquire and the relatives who cherish us and are loved by us in return. Single women are no exception. There may be differences in a single woman's relationships, however.

She is likely to be more mobile than her married sister, necessitating an effort to keep in touch with old friends and the

exertion to make new ones. As time goes on, her friends will tend largely to be other single women. She can struggle against this trend — and she should — but it will happen to some extent, nonetheless. Her interests are not usually those of women with families, nor are wives and mothers available at the ring of the telephone. She meets fewer and fewer unattached males simply because they are so rare. Hers may not be the ideal situation, but it is not without its compensations while it lasts. Some of her married friends will, when the children are reared, be back in the land of the adults where a mutual meeting of minds can again take place.

New friends are made in many ways. All of them require some effort and a willingness to go at least half way toward others. The pursuit of culture, recreation and education, one's own place of business, professional and community organizations, and Church activities all involve other people. Friends can and should be made through these agencies. It helps to remember that others may be shy, too, and that concern for others helps you to forget about yourself.

The single woman who is alive to all the possibilities around her will be happy within herself and have neither the need to interfere in the lives of others nor the inclination to be overly dependent on those



close to her. She will be helpful and solicitous of others' welfare, but always on their terms. Single women are too often likely to be gossips, snoopers and guardians of other people's morals. They need to learn to mind their own business and to fill their own lives. They might recite to themselves once a day: "There, but for the grace of God, go I." They might remind themselves on occasion that doing as you please may well be less selfish than making others do what they do not please.

### **No Need for "Rich Aunt" Role**

Except in unusual circumstances, the single woman will feel no obligation to impoverish herself, either economically or culturally, in order to help nieces and nephews. She will love them and enjoy them and gladly add an extra dimension to their lives — perhaps take them to a fancy restaurant or the circus or a concert; perhaps pay for extras that only the children consider important.

The main job of raising them, however, she will leave to their parents, whose right and duty this clearly is. She will not proffer advice on the rearing of children, remembering that the parents, not she, receive the sacrament of Matrimony. Rather than tell her married sister who has had four children in five years that



what she needs is organization, she would do well to give a frequent demonstration with the iron, the washing machine and the vacuum cleaner — and do it quietly. Better yet, she might send the beleaguered parents off for the week end. If she has not acquired a somewhat more humble view of her own powers of organization by the time they return, she's hopeless.

### THAT OTHER SEX

There are some single women in the world who have taken vows of chastity. They are not the subject of this pamphlet. The happy single woman we have in mind is the one who, although she accepts the idea that the single life is probably God's will for her, keeps an open-ended attitude toward marriage. She usually accepts dates with eligible males who interest her and sometimes with those who don't. Her antenna is always up, though with the passage of time and the pursuit of a satisfying life, it gradually becomes less sensitive. It is the rare single woman who pulls it in completely.

Meanwhile, she learns to live in the world as she finds it — slightly less than half full of men, most of whom are either married, divorced or just beginning to shave. Generally, for most single women,

the contacts are friendly, sometimes rather impersonal, sometimes embracing the larger family relationship. In particular instances, however, life for even these women may be not quite so simple. For some, because of personality, the milieu in which they work or play, and either too much or too little worldly wisdom, life may be one complication after another.

Novels and the secular magazines notwithstanding, few single women set out deliberately to ensnare married men, to wreck existing marriages or to have fly-by-night adventures. Those who do are not likely to be reading these words. They can be left to God's mercy and understanding, always superior to ours. There remain the other categories—those who usually manage their relationships sensibly, but to whom a temptation pops up once in a while, and those who are constantly beset.

### **A "Spark" May Burn**

It is unrealistic to deny that, given any amount of contact with men, a single woman will not on occasion be aware of the existence of that mutual "spark" which in happy circumstances ends in marriage. If the man is not free to marry, she will be wise to treat the spark to the cold water of common sense and to liberal

doses of grace *before* it becomes a bonfire. She will be hard put to bring a bonfire under control without being burned. She, and perhaps others, may be almost destroyed by it.

Some single women skitter on the edge of disaster or in a state of emotional upheaval for years. Finally, either they wake up and learn to control their emotions or they decide that "happiness" in this world is worth the risk of misery in the next. Some of them are the victims of defective education and an invincible naïveté. They never learn to spot a married or a divorced man almost by osmosis, to deal forthrightly with philanderers and liars, or to recognize a confirmed bachelor beneath a gay, "maybe" exterior. Their married sisters could counsel them with profit, but they are not usually inclined to heed. A few learn the hard way. Those who do should add their own forgiveness to that received in the confessional.

## **YOU ARE GOD'S WITNESS**

The lay apostolate is to restore the temporal order to God, to work for the restoration of moral and spiritual values in social institutions and in public and private life. Every Catholic has an obligation to be, at the very least, a witness in

his own sphere to the existence of God and to the reality of His laws. One's state in life, whether it be consciously chosen, accepted or seemingly an accident, is the primary field for such witness. The married have their family life and their place in the community as starting points for the restoration of the moral in the temporal order. The single have their careers and the associations which are usually a part of them — professional associations, unions, political clubs or whatever.

The single woman has a positive obligation in her work sphere to be as competent as her position requires, adding to her education or training whenever and however necessary.

She must know and practice all the ramifications of the precept "Thou Shalt Not Steal." If she is an employee, the commandment covers time, materials, expense accounts, reputations, and her co-workers' good dispositions. If she is an employer, she may not licitly withhold from her employees or her customers their rights, adequate salaries or goods and the treatment owing to human beings. She must be guided by the Church's teaching on social justice and not by the norms of sharp business practice, however much she may feel pushed by competition or scoffed at as naïve.

If she is a professional person the com-

mandment entails keeping confidences, keeping abreast of new developments and helping to keep her profession turned toward the common good — all herculean tasks today and all badly in need of some womanly touches.

Her very independence, a boon and a blessing when properly used, may tempt her at some time in her life to forget the fourth commandment. Although she is entitled to a life of her own, she is not free of her obligation to honor her father and mother. She may be called on to help them or to care for them in their old age. How she does this will depend on circumstances, but she cannot either shed her responsibilities or neglect to show love for them, whatever the parents, whatever the way of today's world.

### **Society Needs Her Concern**

Beyond this personal, obligatory apostolate, there is the broad area of social and civic life where the single woman can contribute considerably more than she now does and in the process enhance her own cultural position. The much married may be startled to find her in community life, doing her bit for racial justice, care of the aged, better schools, better housing, urban development or rural equity, but they will soon accept her as a person and

be grateful for whatever talents she has to offer.

She need not be so sensitive about being childless that she cannot work and fight and pay for better schools, both public and parochial. No one in the schools will object to her furthering the parochial school system by generous contributions to her parish, or the public-school system by advocating the passage of a bond issue. The schools are educating for a future in which she has as much stake as any parent. If she is interested in the welfare of all children, she can without apology run for election on a school board. She can do some needling in her own parish without being reduced to silence by what her fourth grader thinks Sister will do to him the next day.

### **Talent and Time**

The single woman is quite free to contribute to any segment of society for which she has the talent and for which she can find the time. Being willing to give some of her leisure for the common welfare, she may well sharpen her own abilities and develop within herself talents that have lain dormant or been stifled for lack of an outlet.

Like all other giving, it is bread cast on the waters. Material progress for the good

of all men is a worthy goal in itself, one to which she can bring knowledge from both the spiritual and the secular spheres. If, in the process, she becomes a greater person, with a broader outlook, both she and the world will profit. Her life will be richer, her circle of friends and acquaintances larger, and her understanding deeper. She herself will be better understood and accepted as a person in her own right, never relegated to a sort of nether world, pitied, on the one hand, and half-envied for her independent lack of concern, on the other.

## ALONE BUT NOT LONELY

Loneliness as the *necessary* lot of the single woman has been too much stressed. Certainly in her younger and middle years she need not be lonely. The world is too fascinating a place to be ignored just because she must fathom it or visit it alone or with other women. There are too many facets of life to know and to learn, and today most single women have the opportunity and the freedom for really joyous living.

Though she may not be first with a family of her own, the single woman can indeed be important and a pleasure and a challenge to many families. To some



of them she will be a welcome, refreshing breeze from the wide, wide world. To all of them she can be a cherished friend, liked for herself and for her outlook, never just tolerated as a maiden aunt or as the object of the family's generosity of spirit.

It is incumbent upon the single woman herself to make such a life. For those odd moments of intangible loneliness that every woman experiences on occasion, she has the same kind of remedies. New hats, it would seem, have gone out of fashion as comforters. Try a new hostess gown, a pot of tulips in the dead of winter or a piece of jewelry. A good cry may help in some instances, but without a male audience it's not much of a panacea.

### **Old Age and Loneliness**

Loneliness in her later years is a real possibility for the single woman — as it is for most aged persons in today's society. How she weathers this period of her life will be a direct reflection of what she is as a younger woman. Age of itself does not really change a person; the oldster becomes more of what he was to begin with.

Retirement, foreseen and prepared for financially, culturally and spiritually, can be a pleasant, useful time. Many single women will find occupations and avoca-



tions for which they had only a minimum of time during their working years. Church and community organizations are usually in need of a variety of services which the retired person can perform without undue strain. The Peace Corps and Church mission societies use retired persons in good health for overseas service. Orphans and the aged ill and neglected can be visited and comforted.

The single woman who outlives her contemporaries and is too ill to stay in her own home may well end her days in a home for the aged. She will indeed be lonely many a day. She will, however, be spared the bitterness of the equally lonely married residents whose children did not turn out to be the gems they expected. Adjusting to certain types of loneliness for her will have been a gradual, lifetime process, not the sudden, shattering realization of the married person that she is a widow or that she has outlived her usefulness as a mother. Even under the very best of circumstances, the helpless aged are lonely — *all of them*. Pleasant memories and a conscience at ease are probably their mainstay.



## IT'S UP TO YOU

There is adequate compensation for every vocation in life but each person must grasp this idea and work at it. The single woman would seem to do so by taking herself in hand and fitting herself into a career and into a life of her own. She must develop her own natural talents to the highest degree possible by the use of all the material, cultural and spiritual means available to her. She must use whatever gifts she has for the betterment of God's world and God's people.

Within the Divine precepts, the single woman may choose any kind of life she finds pleasing and satisfying. Her life can be a joy to herself and to everybody she meets, if she thinks enough of herself to make it so. It will be truly successful in direct proportion to how well she keeps her mind on what she has and off what she thinks she missed.

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NIHIL OBSTAT—John L. Reedy, C.S.C.  
Censor Deputatus

IMPRIMATUR—✠ Most Rev. Leo A. Pursley, D.D.  
Bishop of Fort Wayne-South Bend

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