



TEENAGERS WANT TO KNOW

By FATHER MARTIN

Dear Father,
I have a problem. I'm going steady for the past two years with a non-Catholic boy who is not interested in my religion.

My parents, brothers, sisters, relatives, friends, don't care for him. They say he's a know-it-all with no personality. We never visit anyone for that reason. For dates, we are always by ourselves. No one will go with us.

He has arguments with my family and I get real angry with him. I know it's not right. It happens quite often, yet he apologizes and I make up.

The situation hurts me deeply. I know it's killing my parents and family too.

He works off and on; nothing steady. I am working now and am thinking of moving out. Yet I know it's not going to solve the problem. I've never dated

anyone else. He is 21, I'm 18. My parents say if I move, he's got me where he wants me, because I'm too weak to stick up for myself. I'm allowed weekend dating only.

I never miss Mass on Sunday or receiving Communion. My parents help and are good to me in every way, otherwise. Yet I'm getting very bitter toward them. I can't talk to them about him nor to my relatives and friends. Yet I want to marry him—regardless.

KATHY

Dear Kathy,

If almost all your relatives and friends are opposed to your boy friend, so much so that they don't even want to go out with him, then I think you should take a long hard look at your dating and possible marriage situation. Could you really be happy with a man like this?

When you are married you

don't live in a social vacuum. If a marriage is going to cut you off from relatives and friends, you are going to feel a lot of pressure and experience a lot of loneliness. If this boy's relationship with your family and friends is bad now, it'll probably be a lot worse when you get married. Then you will feel more obliged to defend him and you'll be a lot more hurt when people spurn him.

I wish you would do at least one thing. Date somebody else, at least for a short time. This is the only boy you have dated. See how he measures up to other boys.

A person is not going to change much after he reaches 21. If your boy friend is so obnoxious now to your family and friends, he will probably be more so in the years to come. If he doesn't make a sincere effort now to get along better with people, he's not likely to do so later. I think you would be in for an unhappy and maybe a very bitter marriage. And what about his dependability as a job holder—seeing that he works only off and on?

Another thing you should consider seriously is the religious difference. Your marriage with him would have enough problems without the added disadvantages of different religions.

In conclusion, let me say so many people probably could not be wrong about your boy friend. Your family is certainly interested in your happiness. I would consider their opinion very carefully.

Dear Father,
At our church, I help clean the sacristy and the altar. The nun that shows us how to do the cleaning gave my friend and me a book to look at about the different religious orders.

As I was looking through the book, I noticed that some of the orders let girls enter at the age of 14. Another order said that there is no age limit or educational requirement. Could you please give me your opinion about this?

Also, do you think that a girl should enter the convent at 14?

KATHY

Dear Kathy,

When a convent advertises

girl some little idea of what convent life is like.

If a girl is really inclined toward the sisterhood at 14, it will not harm her in any way to enter one of these convent boarding schools, as she can leave any time if she finds she is not suited for this life. The atmosphere is much like that of any boarding school, with the exception that there is more stress on the spiritual.

A girl at 14 should consult her parents and a priest she knows well and a nun she knows well, and make her decision in accordance with their advice.

Dear Father,

Isn't it wrong for parents to open their children's mail, I get so disgusted when I get home from school and see that one of my letters is opened. How do I tell my mother that my mail is mine?

MARY

Dear Mary,

Ordinarily, parents should not open their children's mail. For one thing, it makes the children feel that they are not trusted by their parents and it is an intrusion into their privacy.

If a parent honestly has good reason to suspect that some of the mail their children are receiving may be harmful morally or spiritually, then they would have an obligation to check that mail.

However, if a parent is just opening mail out of curiosity, then I think the parent is doing wrong. This can cause unnecessary conflict in the home, and even lessen respect for the parents.



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