

FEATURE

Does your ideal mate have strong spiritual values?

By Rob Cullivan
Staff writer

Patrick D. Ulrich, 29, a parishioner at St. Mary's Parish in downtown Rochester, is seeing a woman he loves as much for her soul as for any other feature.

The two pray together often, attend Mass together regularly, and even read some of the same spiritual and religious books so that they can share their insights with each other, Ulrich said.

In fact, both he and his girlfriend went through times in their lives when they considered other commitments — he, to the priesthood and she, to the vowed religious life, he said.

"We want for us to grow according to our beliefs and spirituality," Ulrich said. "As it is now, we see it as an important part of our relationship."

Ulrich's comments highlighted two questions our Young Adults page would like to raise with its readers.

First off, how important is spirituality to you when you're seeking a potential mate, or with the mate you already have? Is spirituality a preeminent value you want in someone, or simply one of many values you seek to share?

Secondly, how important is it to you that you find love with someone of the same faith? Many Catholics have married non-Catholics, and, for that matter, non-Christians, in recent decades. Is this something you would consider, or have done? If not, why is it important to you to be with someone who shares the same religious outlook?

Write your comments down and send them with your name and your home parish to: Young Adults Page, *Catholic Courier*, P.O. Box 24379, Rochester, NY 14624-0379.

Please send them by July 11, and we may print an excerpt from your letter on the next Young Adults Page, scheduled for the July 18 *Courier*.

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Father Lee P. Chase, 32, is the latest in a series of speakers slated to address The Catholic Leadership Forum during its Last Friday Series at the University Club, 26 Broadway, in Rochester on June 28. He'll give his speech during the series' luncheon scheduled from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Young Adult

MONTHLY FEATURE



Father Chase is leaving his position as parochial vicar at St. Mary's Parish in Auburn, and will become parochial vicar at St. Joseph's Parish in Penfield. At the luncheon, Father Chase will speak on his decision to become a priest and on what it's like to be a young priest today.

Even at his relatively young age, Father Chase has personally experienced the effects of the tumultuous changes that have rocked the church and society in recent decades.

In an interview with the *Catholic Courier*, he pointed out, for example, that when he was considering his vocation, some of his friends objected to his becoming a priest in a church that did not ordain married males and women.

"At the time it hurt quite a bit to be so ostracized," he said.



Father Lee P. Chase will speak June 28 at the University Club in Rochester.

One lay ministerial colleague even shunned him after he was ordained because she believed so strongly in women's ordination.

The young priest acknowledged the pain felt by those emotionally torn by the church's stand on priestly ordination. Still, he pointed out that he believed that no one — including celibate males — has a "right" to be ordained.

"I may have a right to vote," Father Chase said, "but I

have my priesthood as a gift." Furthermore, he could not deny the calling he felt from God even if he knew that not everyone would agree with his answering it, Father Chase said.

"How could my denying my vocation ... be helpful to anyone?" he asked rhetorically.

Father Chase stressed that such controversy does not preoccupy the major

part of his priestly life. In fact, his first three years of priestly life, made up mostly of ministering to parishioners, has only made him surer that he chose the right career, he said.

"I can't think of one day I haven't woken up and thanked God for this gift of priesthood," he said.

He added that he believed that the crop of men being ordained to the priesthood in the 1990s are better educated, more sophisticated and more well-rounded than any previous generation of priests, in part because so many have entered seminary in their late 20s, 30s and 40s.

"They're not men who entered right after high school," Father Chase said. "Thirty years ago, we would've been considered late vocations. Most of us are second career vocations."

Prior to becoming a priest, Father Chase himself worked for a health maintenance organization and for a bookstore before he became director of religious education at St. Anne's Parish in Rochester. He also lived in his own apartment and has a number of both single and married friends, he said, noting that maintaining friendships with a diverse group of people can only help his priesthood.

"I think God speaks through our relationships with others," he said.

And, contrary to popular perceptions about the declining state of the priesthood, Father Chase believes today's young priests are nonetheless more committed to their vocation than ever. That's because they take a long time to choose their state and they receive more individual attention during their formation than previous generations of priests did, he said.

"I really see a group of young priests coming in really aware of who they are," Father Chase said.

He added that the priesthood can be quite fulfilling for the young man who believes he is called to it.

"I really love being a priest," he said. "I wonder why more men aren't..."

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EDITORS' NOTE: The Catholic Leadership Forum gears its speakers and events to Catholic adults between the ages of 25 and 45. For more information, call Nancy Nash or Mary Conslar at 716/328-3210.

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