

At a recent Sunday "Conversations…" at the Assumptionist Center in Brighton, the topic of life as a Catholic single person as experienced by many in today's world was addressed. The presenters were Elyse Raby, a doctoral student in Systematic Theology at Boston College, with an interest in theological anthropology and ecclesiology and Alfred Pang, a doctoral student in Theology and Education, also at Boston College and a resident at the Assumptionist Center.

In an issue of America Magazine (Jan. 2016), it was said that the "church is increasingly recognizing the vocational dimension of the single life, but that does not mean that today's single Catholics have it easy."

Both of our presenters presented some of the realities and challenges of this topic, as well as the gift of being a single person of faith. In addition they offered ways in which faith communities can nourish the possibilities offered by the single life in the church. It is a complex phenomenon.

Elise's observations began by challenging us to first look at our definitions of family and parish life especially at worship as experienced at the kiss of peace. Where the family unit is obvious, do we include the single person, the widowed, the divorced etc. or are they an 'afterthought?' We must be very careful not to regard these, our brothers and sisters, in a negative way, even unconsciously. As we can see, there are many reasons for this state in life: as a choice, as a temporary condition, as circumstantial etc. For whatever reason, the single life can be lived as fully as possible, as lovingly and generously as possible, as a member of the faith community, extended family and as friend to many.

Alfred spoke of the cultural images that affect our attitude toward the single life. We may see it

as primarily filled with loneliness, forgetting that loneliness is part of the human condition. This life, or any life as far as that goes, is about meaning in the light of faith. Here again, we must move away from the negative toward the fullness of life, open to God's life every day, reclaiming the gifts of baptism and the gift that each of is to the church.

The lively discussion which followed the presentations was carried into the dining room for the traditional delicious brunch.