*“To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is well for them to remain unmarried as I am”*

*~1 Corinthians 7:8*

Singles and M2

Did you know that nearly half of all Catholic adults (46%) in the United States are single? This number, cited in Dr Jana Bennett’s 2020 *US Catholic* article “Single, Catholic, and Never Alone: Catholic Adult Singles Have an Important Place in the Church,” does not include clergy and religious. This diverse group can include those who have never been married, are divorced, or are widowed; it can include those who are mothers and fathers, and those who have never had children. Single people can be a great asset to a parish, as Pope Francis asserts in his 2016 *Amoris Lætitia* thatthey “often render great service in their group of friends, in the Church community and in their professional lives” (AL, 158). Dr Bennett adds to this opinion in her 2019 book, *Singleness and the Church*, declaring that people who are in the “states of singleness integrally relate to Christian life and witness as a whole” (Bennett, 58, 415). Nonetheless, as Pope Francis observed “sometimes [singles’] presence and contributions are overlooked, causing in them a sense of isolation” (AL, 158). How can we ensure this does not happen in our parish and diocese? How can we make a reality Pope Francis’ exhortation in his 2013 encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* that “all the members of the People of God have become missionary disciples” (EG, 120)? I propose that our burgeoning Martha and Mary (M2) ministry provides an opportunity for married and single alike to engage, providing a place of welcome, connection to other ministries, and in the end, integration within our parish liturgical and service ministries. M2 could also provide a space for developing innovative prayer circles, such as ones focused on those who are widowed, divorced, young (and not so young) adults, supporting ailing parents, or grieving. I welcome ideas parishioners might have to better welcome and integrate single people into our daily parish life!

Herewith proposed M2 prayer opportunities in Lent, which are inclusive of *all* women and teens of confirmation age (and up):

* Fridays after daily Mass in Lent, pray the outdoor Stations of the Cross.
* Wednesday, March 15, prayerfully walk the labyrinth at Benet Hill Monastery. Meet at the OLP parking lot shortly after daily Mass if you want to caravan.
* Tuesday, April 4, at the M2 monthly meeting, learn about and discuss the Theology of Holy Saturday, when suffering remains.

Want to learn more about the Martha and Mary ministry or have ideas to share? Contact Suzy Streeter at marthaandmary@ourladyofthepines.org. Our next monthly meeting will be on Tuesday, April 4, at 6 PM, in the Parish Hall Lodge.