

ABSTRACT

This diploma thesis deals with the relationship commitment in the context of engagement and the period until marriage of Roman Catholics, who celebrated the Catholic engagement ritual. It aims to describe the process of engagement of Catholic couples and the way in which they understand the engagement commitment. The theoretical part is divided into three chapters. The first chapter describes the personal, societal and ritual aspects of engagement. The second chapter explores the psychological notion of commitment and selected psychological theories of commitment. The third chapter captures the emphasis of the Roman Catholic Church on strengthening the couples' commitment in the period from engagement to the wedding ceremony. The time of engagement is a transitional period, during which a person needs to prepare to abandon their existing social position and accept a new one (from single life to the life of a husband/wife). The social environment, which the individual is a part of, comes into forefront during that time. The Catholics put stress on using this time to dutifully consider whether the engaged couple wants to accept the sacrament of marriage. It is important to note that there are attractive and repellent forces at work in each romantic relationship, which determine its quality and stability. It can be that a stable relationship is of low quality and vice versa.

The aim of the research part of this thesis is to describe the psychological notion of commitment during the period of engagement using qualitative methodology. The research questions are: How do (former) engaged couples describe the process of engagement? How do (former) engaged couples describe their commitment experience during the engagement period? Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine respondents, and were then analysed using interpretative phenomenological analysis. The resulting seventeen categories capture not only the current forms of marriage proposals ('just like a movie') and engagement rituals, but also the importance of Catholic elements in the romantic relationship, described as 'marriage is on the table from the very beginning' and 'marriage is for life, so that we must make a good decision now'. There are also pleas for God's blessings and the presence of God in the romantic relationship, moreover, the engaged couples undergo marriage preparation, leading them to talk about new topics. Sexual abstinence makes spiritual sense.

The respondents were remembering their engagement period from the point of view of married men and women. That is why there is a category called 'Freedom at last!', describing prevailing feelings after entering marriage.

The results of the research are described in detail and discussed using academic literature.

KEYWORDS

Engagement, commitment, engagement ritual, Catholic Church, romantic relationships