

New comedy podcast explores Catholic dating in the modern world

When Los Angeles-based Catholic screenwriter Erin R. Dooley conceived of a new sitcom about the joys, sufferings and foibles of life as a Catholic single, she had to face reality: Television production is expensive. Thankfully, the seasoned director chose to overcome budgetary challenges and take the story to an increasingly popular format: podcasting. Released Sept. 21, the seven-episode first season of “Confessions of a Catholic Single” introduces the trials and triumphs of Cecilia, a devout Catholic widow looking to dip her toe into the dating world in Las Vegas.

Dooley based much of the show’s dialogue on her personal dating experiences or those of friends. Each of the 10-minute episodes focuses on one of the seven deadly sins and finds Cecilia, portrayed by actress/screenwriter Katy Bodenhamer, seeking the Sacrament of Confession with her longtime friend Father Paul and sharing her attempts to understand today’s dating culture.

“This story idea definitely is rooted in personal experience,” Dooley said. “I, too, found myself single again after a long relationship ended, in a city not known to be a bastion of faith. A number of the dates Cecilia goes on are at least somewhat lifted from my own, or friends’, experiences. Names changed to protect people, of course. There is a lot of bad behavior that gets accepted in the dating culture, and, hopefully, people laughing at it will help them realize what they should not tolerate – or do, as the case may be. We as Catholics should see others as children of God and treat them as such. Our behavior while dating and in marriage ought to be modeled after how Jesus taught us to be.”

A fan of Dooley's work, Bodenhamer brought her own dating perspective into the role. "You sympathize with Cecilia's situation and want to protect her as she ventures out into the dating world," she said of her character. "But her naivety will never help her see what's coming, unfortunately. I just brought myself to the role. Maybe I upped the antics a bit, but I truly identify with her having been in a committed relationship, then life happens, and suddenly you find yourself back on the playing field not sure what sport this is anymore."

Actress Christin Jezak jumped at the chance to portray Agnes, who is both Father Paul's younger sister and the friend who introduces Cecilia to the world of dating apps. "I absolutely loved the character of Agnes! One of my dreams has always been to play the fun, goofy character on a sitcom like the Fonz, Kimmy Gibbler or Kramer," Jezak said.

Writer, musician and actor Charlemagne Rafols leaned heavily on prayer to prepare for his performance as Father Paul as he pondered the growth and trials of his own faith journey. "It was inspiring to discover that the character's name was that of one of my favorite priests, with whom I often talk for wisdom and direction in life," Rafols said.

"I have been braving the Catholic dating field for years. It can be so hard to find someone like-minded who will respect you," Jezak said when asked how her life as a single Catholic woman inspires her portrayal of the character she calls a loveable hot mess. "It was part of why being a part of this show was important to me. It was important to be able to laugh and learn from the messiness. I'm probably a little more like Cecilia's character in real life. However, there is definitely a moment in the series where Agnes is completely honest in her desire to find real love, and that was a moment where I knew that ache was cathartic for me."

In all, the cast for "Confessions of a Catholic Single" brings

together the talents of 23 diverse voice actors, including Catholics, agnostics, evangelicals and a Muslim. Dooley drew from connections in Los Angeles and beyond. Working with a small budget, she wrote, directed and edited the final episodes, learning new skills and even producing some of the foley sound effects herself.

While primarily seeking to entertain, Dooley did not miss opportunities to highlight Catholic themes. Along with the confessional scenes that open each episode, the characters are named for saints and gather regularly at their favorite watering hole, Augustine's. Dooley hopes the show will resonate beyond Catholic circles. "Even though it is definitely a Catholic show, I want it to be one that non-Catholics find just as entertaining," she said. "I have already started thinking of other themes – the beatitudes, commandments and works of mercy were three that popped into my head immediately as good options."

Several of the cast join Dooley in hoping that "Confessions of a Catholic Single" will not only go viral as a podcast but may someday see new life as a multi-camera episodic show on television or a streaming platform. But in the meantime, the team behind this playful look at a real-life challenge sees a mission for what they have created.

"God is good, confession heals, love is always worth it, and being single is beautiful and fulfilling until God calls you elsewhere," said Bodenhamer, offering some dating wisdom. "Go on dates and call them 'a date.' Don't make it an interview. Share joy. Enjoy the human experience. We're all brothers and sisters in Christ hopefully trying our best. Grace and charity are love. And listen to 'Confessions of A Catholic Single!'"

"Confessions of a Catholic Single" premiered Sept. 21 on [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com) and other podcast platforms. Visit dashentertainmentllc.com for more information.

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