

Blessed, broken and given



Katelyn Ross

waiting



Hi, my name is Katelyn,

I grew up in a family of four – my mum, dad, little sister and me. My father was an officer in the Army so we moved around a lot. My sister and I were used to making new friends and being the ‘new kids’. When I was 14 years old I went to a Summer Camp, where I learnt about God, I learnt about my dignity as a daughter of God and I learnt that I could save sex until I was married. I had never heard of this before, and it changed my life. From that day I promised I would respect myself and my future husband, and save something special – such as sex- for the one man who is going to love me for the rest of my life. I began to think about the vocation of marriage a lot after making this choice, and I felt called to be a wife and a mother one day. Whenever that day may be. When I was 16 years old, I met Matthew, a man who would change my life. We wanted to love and respect each other to the fullest, and so we decided to save sex until our wedding day.

But at the end of high school things went downhill for me. When I first heard the words ‘eating disorder’ my heart sank. I was so disappointed with myself. This wasn’t me. Often I get asked ‘When did it all start?’ and honestly I don’t know when it started. Looking back, it was always there in the little nasty comments from friends and classmates, such as, ‘Make room for fatty’, ‘Wow! You’re growing faster’. I never realised these comments weren’t normal. I would flick through women’s magazines promising to ‘Lose 10 pounds in 2 weeks’. I didn’t even know how much ten pounds was, all I knew was that I was supposed to lose it.

The stress of grade 12 took over my life. I began researching ways to lose weight so I could look stunning at my formal. I hardly ever saw my boyfriend, Matthew, or even took a moment to have fun with my family. I began exercising everyday before, during, and after school and started dropping weight. My friends noticed, but instead of being worried they encouraged me. I went deeper along this path of weight loss and quickly found myself in a place that I couldn’t come back from. I would follow diet plans, exercise in secret, and my life revolved around what my next meal would be. I developed anxiety over what I ate and soon I was suffering from anorexia. These voices in my head kept telling me that if I lost more weight I would be more beautiful.

What was so ironic was that I was chasing this idea of perfection with everything I had yet this ‘perfection’ was fake and I was becoming more and more lost. This was not how my body was supposed to function. Everything switched to survival mode. My interactions, thoughts, and emotions were all a response to what was happening around me. My sickness was dividing my family, my relationship with Matthew, and my relationship with God. I never lost my faith in God, but I was also doing a very good job of shutting Him out - because honestly, I didn’t want to be fixed.

FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

Blessed
+
Broken

I was unable to see past what I 'had' to look like. I had lost the light, the sparkle, and the joy in my life. When I started to see the serious effects that being such an unhealthy weight was having on my body, I decided then and there to get better.

I know my story may be very similar to other people you may know, or maybe even yourself. Young people, and particularly women, are constantly faced with the messages that they aren't good enough, they aren't beautiful enough, and that they just aren't enough the way they are. The way women are portrayed in movies, magazines and advertising by the beauty industry wants women to feel less of themselves. This just makes it easier for them to sell their products to you. But we, as daughters of God, are not called to idolise what the world idolises. We are called to love and honour God, above all else. This is such a hard thing to do, especially in our world. I began to get better because of two things. Firstly, I knew who I was; a strong, powerful, and beautiful daughter of God; and I knew I was worth more. Secondly, I knew I could not do this alone. I needed God. Every morning I read the scriptures, listening and attentive to God's word and I prayed with all my heart. This was my favourite time of the day. One morning, after about a month of praying, I found this in one of the readings in Matthew:

'Courage my daughter.... Your faith has made you well.' (Matthew 9:22)

This kept me going. I know now that I was never alone for a second of that journey. Jesus was walking beside me guiding the right people to help me through it. I still have days of vulnerability where I need to turn to God's truth, to protect me from the messages that I see around me. It is in His perfect love that I know that I am perfect.

Along this whole journey Matthew and my family stood by my side. Matt and I always knew we wanted to get married, and we still held the value of chastity for our future marriage. Our road to marriage was long, beautiful and sometimes challenging. But we would not be the best friends now if we had not have gone through those trials.

Before I met Matt, I had discerned consecrated life, and Matt, whilst away on a year of mission, discerned Priesthood. But we believe God has been calling us to marriage for a long time. On December 11, 2016 Matt and I became husband and wife. And we are so thankful we were able to stick to our values until our wedding day, and be united mind, body and soul with God's love.

Our journey does not end there, and it will always continue. And like any trauma, some days I find it harder to block out the messages of this world, telling me that I'm not good enough. But thankfully I have God and I have a loving husband who will be with me on the journey.

Ann Vaskomp, in her inspiring book, *The Broken Way* sums it up beautifully: *Time never heals wounds, like God does.*



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