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Beginning Your Marriage

by JOHN L. THOMAS, S. J.

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Beginning Your Marriage

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A WORD TO THE READER

"Why do you want to get married?"

"Because we are in love, of course!"

"Of course! But just what are you looking forward to in marriage?"

"Happiness!"

"Yes, that makes sense. Now tell me, how would you define happiness? What does it mean to you?"

"Mm, that's not so easy to answer!"

"All right, let's take just your happiness in marriage. What do you expect? Have you thought very much about what it means to you?"

"Well, it means that somebody loves me more than anybody else in the world—and I feel the same about that person. It means we are going to form a special partnership, a 'twosome,' with a unity and 'oneness' in which there will be affection, companionship, security, mutual understanding and support. It means we feel a need for each other, a desire to give ourselves to each other as man and woman. It means we want to go through life together, sharing its joys and its hardships. It means we feel we're 'good' for each other in the sense that together we can better realize our purpose in life as we see it."

Most people about to get married have something like this in mind, although few could give such a clear answer. You want to get married because you are in love. You expect that life together will bring you happiness. You're in good company here. Listen to the words which the priest will read to you during your marriage service: "May then this love with which you

join your hands and hearts today, never fail, but grow deeper and stronger as the years go on. And if true love and the unselfish spirit of perfect sacrifice guide your every action, you can expect the *greatest measure of earthly happiness* that may be allotted to man in this vale of tears."

You are entering marriage, therefore, because you are in love and are seeking happiness together. But you have lived long enough to know that love and happiness in marriage do not result automatically from the marriage contract. Hundreds of thousands of Americans who felt they were in love and who sought happiness together in marriage have found only frustration and heartbreak in their union.

If you are as wise as you are willing, you will want to spend some time thinking about what makes marriage a success. When you seek love and happiness in marriage, you are seeking *married* love and happiness. This is not a mere play on words. The quality and degree of love and happiness you find in marriage will depend upon how successful you are as marriage partners.

There is truth in the old saying that "marriage is what you make it," but to "make" anything you must first understand what it is. Because getting married is so common and "natural," it is easy to assume that we know what marriage is and what married life implies. The crowds at the divorce courts suggest that this may not be the case. In the following pages, let us go over briefly but thoughtfully the meaning of marriage and what successful married life implies.

Chapter I

THE MEANING OF LIFE

MARRIAGE is a way of life. It is not your final purpose in life, nor the only way to achieve this final purpose. Although it is a way of life followed by most people, marriage is only one way. When you enter marriage, then, you freely choose the way of life you wish to follow in attaining your final purpose. Hence, to get the right view of marriage, to understand its place in your lives, you must first understand the purpose of life itself. A way of life has meaning only if it leads somewhere. Marriage is a good way to the extent that it helps you fulfill the purpose for which you were made.

It follows that to understand the meaning of marriage, we must first consider the meaning of life. Where do I come from? What am I? Where am I supposed to be going? The answers to these questions make up what we call a "philosophy of life." In childhood, we were given fairly clear ideas about the meaning of life. As mature adults, let us review briefly what the Church teaches on this point. Now that you are approaching marriage, you are in a better position to recognize the connection between the purpose of life and the purpose of marriage. To see the full picture, we must consider our origin, our nature, and our destiny. In the light of this knowledge, we will then be able to discuss the meaning of marriage as intelligent people.

We Come From God

Our Origin. We are not our own makers. We have not come into existence through some accident of evolution. In the beginning, God created man. Although we do not know how He did this, we are certain of the fact. We know also that at the time of conception in our mother's womb, God created our immortal souls. We come from God. Further, we depend on Him for our existence at every moment. Our dependence is so complete that if God did not constantly sustain us, we would simply cease to exist.

It is easy to forget our dependence on God in this modern, man-made world. Yet experience tells us that whenever we come face to face with the stark realities of suffering, sorrow, and death, we quickly realize our helplessness and our weakness. We are all in the hands of God. He has breathed an immortal soul into each of us. He has fashioned our human nature according to His divine plan. Even if we try, we cannot undo this basic dependence upon Him.

Further, the God who created us is infinitely wise and infinitely good. He must have made us for a purpose. This purpose is our happiness with Him. Because He has fashioned our hearts with a desire for infinite happiness, we can find fulfillment and peace only in Him. All other things which give us happiness are reflections of His goodness and beauty. They are meant to lead us to Him. Our human loves, wonderful as they may seem, are short-lived and shallow unless they are rooted in Him.

We Have A Body And Soul

Our Nature. We are composed of body and soul.

Our body is a marvelously durable, yet delicately constructed physical system capable of life and a definite cycle of growth. Our soul is immaterial or spiritual. This means that it is intrinsically independent of matter although it is united to the body to form a unity. Hence we possess both material and spiritual elements in our being. When we act, however, we act as a unity. This is to say, we never act as a mere animal or as a pure spirit. In our conscious activity, we always act as a human person, that is, as a being composed of body and soul. Thus, it is not our mind that thinks, it is we who think. It is not our body that feels, it is we who feel. This fact must be emphasized because there are many confused people who seem to believe that some human activities such as reproduction involve merely "animal" or "carnal" acts.

We have an intellect. This means we are conscious of our ability to understand, to form judgments, and to draw conclusions. As a unity of body and soul, we are in contact with the world about us through the sense organs of touch, sight, taste, smell, and hearing. At the same time, we can communicate with others through language. In short, we know from experience that we have the power to gain knowledge, to form ideas, to make judgments about reality, and to see the connection between cause and effect, and between means and goals.

We have free will. This means that we are conscious of our ability to make free choices in our acts. For example, we can choose to act or not to act. If we choose to act, we can select different purposes and different means to achieve them. Free will does not

imply that we act without motive. It does not imply that all our acts are free. Since we are creatures of habit and impulse, there may be few acts which are fully free in our routine, daily lives. Nevertheless, we have the ability to make free choices.

Because we have an intellect and free will, we differ essentially from the highest form of brute life in the animal world. We are animals, but we are rational animals. Mere animals cannot think or will.

We Are Responsible For Our Acts

Several important conclusions follow from the fact that we are composed of body and soul. First, we are affected by what takes place in our body as well as in our soul. Both body and soul have powerful impulses and drives which affect each other and constantly seek to be satisfied. We must learn to control and direct these forces so that they serve our best interests. In themselves, these impulses and drives are not evil. They become the occasion of evil when we fail to control and regulate them.

Second, we are capable of knowing what is right and wrong. Independent of all human law, certain human acts are of their very nature good and worthy of praise, others are bad and deserving of blame. By considering our purpose in life and our nature, we can know what these actions are. At the same time, God has given us an authoritative teaching Church which infallibly defines right and wrong in the moral order.

Third, we are responsible for our actions. Because we have an intellect by which we can know what is right and a free will by which we can choose, we are accountable for our actions. Although we cannot di-

rectly suppress our basic impulses and drives, we can learn to control and regulate them. For example, we cannot directly suppress the urge to eat steak on Friday, but we can refuse to act on this impulse. Furthermore, through experience we acquire a knowledge of what stimulates our various drives, and frequently we can avoid the stimulus. For instance, a couple may discover that some actions or displays of affection during courtship arouse feelings and desires which are difficult to control. They can do very little about these directly, but common sense tells them that they can avoid the actions which arouse them.

We Are Men And Women

The human nature which we have just described is manifested in two sexes—male and female. We differ as men and women because we possess different, though complementary, generative systems. It follows that each has a different function in regard to the conception, birth, and rearing of children. This is the real meaning of the much abused term sex. In other words, sex stands for the sum total of organic and functional differences which distinguish men from women. From the viewpoint of the individual, sex appears as a need for someone else, for someone else alike, that is, having the same nature, yet different, because endowed with this complementary property of the “opposite” sex. Further, since we are a composite of body and soul, this property of sex affects our entire physical, psychic, and spiritual make-up. In marriage, men and women are complementary, that is, they complete each other at all these levels of human activity.

For this reason, marriage is unlike all other partnerships. As men and women, you differ in many ways, but it is precisely because you are different that you will have so many opportunities to assist and complete each other. Since you are in love, you wish to be together and to offer gifts to each other. In the lifelong companionship of marriage, you will be daily giving of your manliness and your womanliness—gifts which only you can give and receive.

We Are Equal But Different

According to the divine plan, as men and women you are absolutely equal in your personal dignity as children of God. You are absolutely equal in relation to the final purpose of life, which is everlasting union with God in the happiness of heaven. However, you do differ in your relationship to reproduction and to all that is associated with this process. To be specific, how does this affect you as men and women?

Woman is made for motherhood. Her development is centered around this function from the moment of conception in her mother's womb. Every organ of her body bears the stamp of her distinctive reproductive purpose. She differs from the man in the tempo of her growth and the rhythm of her life cycle. Because she is composed of body and soul, her emotional, intellectual, and spiritual activities tend to be distinctive of her sex.

The man is made for fatherhood. He likewise develops according to his separate pattern on the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual levels. This development is related to the function he is to fulfill in the procreation and education of children. He de-

velops differently from the woman, therefore, because his reproductive role is different.

It follows that although you are equal as persons, you are not identical. Much of the modern confusion concerning the "equality" of the sexes could be avoided if this distinction were kept in mind. Further, the development of sex according to the distinctive pattern of maleness or femaleness goes on in the life cycle of each of us whether we choose to use our reproductive faculties or not. At the same time, the sex drive will manifest itself in some form in all normal individuals. Finally, all normal adults are capable of reacting to appropriate sexual stimulation in some degree.

We Attach Meanings To Things

Because we are rational beings, we interpret and read "meanings" into things. In a sense, nothing that intimately affects us is viewed "neutrally" or with cold objectivity. We attach meanings to things, and this changes the way we look at them. For example, male and female differences, together with the various expressions of the sexual drive, are never viewed indifferently by us as they apparently are among animals. Rather, we attach significance to them, and they will be regulated and controlled according to the meaning which they have for us.

Our ability to read meanings into things and thus to change our relationship to them merits attention because it shows how and to what extent we can regulate our sexual impulses. Many modern writers imply that sexual control is unnatural or unhealthy. This is utter nonsense. People have always exercised con-

trol over sex, but the nature and extent of this regulation and control has depended upon the meaning which they gave to the function of sex itself.

Since Catholics maintain that the primary purpose of the generative faculties is reproduction, they have always prohibited the deliberate exercise of this drive outside of marriage. Twenty centuries of experience demonstrate that this form of control is possible, "natural," and healthy. It is primarily because many moderns look upon man as merely a highly developed animal that they can consider this control to be impossible or "unnatural." In other words, they give a different meaning to sex than we do.

We Are Social Beings

Another characteristic of our nature is its social quality. We are social beings by nature. This means that our capacity for love, sympathy, understanding, the communication of ideas, and so on, can be developed and used in a satisfactory manner only through cooperation with others. In short, we are so constituted that we need society and association with others in order to lead a full life.

Further, as rational creatures, we are capable of love and of communicating goodness to others. It should be obvious how perfectly this social aspect of your nature will find expression in marriage. Here your capacity for love, sympathy, understanding, and communication, together with your mutual reproductive incompleteness, will find fulfillment in a unique union which makes you "two in one flesh."

We Are Elevated By Grace

Finally, our nature is capable of being elevated to

a supernatural state. When God created man, He endowed human nature with a higher kind of life, a supernature. This was a sharing of God's own life. Through it, man was destined to union with God throughout eternity. Although this sanctifying grace, this sharing in God's life, was something distinct from human nature, it permeated and elevated it in a supernatural manner. However, because it was added as a special gift, distinct from human nature, it could be lost. This happened at the Fall when our first parents disobeyed God in the Garden.

Since the Fall, we are born without the gift of sanctifying grace, but our nature is still capable of receiving this gift. As the Church teaches, the sacrament of baptism restores sanctifying grace to us, and this grace can be lost only by committing mortal sin. Hence, the noblest aspect of our nature is its capacity to be elevated by grace, to share in God's own life. Once we have received the life of grace through baptism, it is our supreme privilege and duty to protect, foster, and develop this spiritual life within us by avoiding evil and doing good. Through the sacrament of marriage you will receive the special spiritual helps and graces which you need to reach perfection as husbands and wives, fathers and mothers.

Our Goal Is Heaven

Our Destiny. We have considered where we came from and what we are, now we want to know where we are supposed to be going. Briefly, we are created for eventual union with God in heaven. The purpose of our earthly life is to love, honor, and serve God in this world so as to be happy forever with Him in the

next. How do we serve God? By fulfilling our role or vocation in life to the best of our ability and in accordance with the divine plan made known to us through the teaching Church.

In his encyclical on Christian Marriage, Pius XI clearly summarized the purpose and manner of Christian life. "For all men, of every condition and in whatever honorable walk of life they may be, can and ought to imitate that most perfect example of holiness, placed before man by God, namely Christ our Lord, and by God's grace to arrive at the summit of perfection, as is proved by the example of many saints."

Summary

What, then, are the essential points of our "philosophy of life"? First, we see ourselves as dependent upon God for our origin and continued existence in life. Second, we understand that we are a unity composed of body and soul. We are neither pure spirits nor pure animals. As rational creatures, we possess an intellect and will, memory and imagination, and bodily senses which place us in contact with the world about us. Through our intellect, we can distinguish good from evil. Through our will, we can choose to perform good actions or bad. We clearly recognize that we are responsible for our conscious activities.

As men and women, we possess different generative systems. Since these are reproductive faculties through which we are privileged to cooperate with God in the production of life, we know that they are not intended primarily for our selfish pleasure. We must use them according to the purpose for which they were

created by God. Because we are capable of love, sympathy, understanding, and the communication of good, we need the cooperation of others for our full self-development and perfection. Thus, we look upon marriage as one of the normal means for the expression of this sociability and for the fulfillment of our sexual complementarity.

Further, we believe that we have been redeemed by Christ and now possess sanctifying grace, the grace which permeates and elevates our nature, making us children of God and heirs of heaven. We know that this supernatural life can be lost only by mortal sin, which is the deliberate, conscious violation of God's law in a serious matter. Because sanctifying grace unites us with God, it is the most precious possession that we have. As long as we are in our right senses, we would never perform an act which would deprive us of our share in the divine life. "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his immortal soul?"

Third, we see our destiny as eternal union with God. The purpose of life, therefore, is to achieve this union. All other life purposes are secondary. God has made us for Himself. He has placed a desire within us which can be satisfied only by Himself. The enduring happiness which we all seek can be found only in Him. It follows that we look upon this present life as a preparation, a way leading to eternal fulfillment and happiness in heaven. This view enables us to put order in our lives. It gives us a yardstick by which to measure the temporal, passing things of this world. One thing is necessary—to strive for perfection. One

way is open—to imitate Christ. In every condition and walk of life, we are called to the same destiny. To all of us is given the help needed to achieve this purpose.

Conclusion

Yes, these are sobering thoughts. They present the long range, over-all view of life. They offer the framework within which you must view your love and happiness in marriage. Marriage is a life partnership. Your love must be such that it fits into the meaning of life or it cannot last. Marriage is a life companionship. The happiness which you seek from your togetherness can be satisfying and enduring only to the extent that you are really “good” for each other, that is, only to the extent that you support and help each other in attaining that happiness for which you were created.

It is easy in your new-found love to separate marriage from the purpose of life. But marriage is only a way of life. As a way, it has meaning only in terms of its destination. Either it will offer you an opportunity for the growth and development of yourselves as followers of Christ, or it will prove an empty, frustrating experience. There are many types of “love” and “happiness” between the sexes. Some are shallow, some are counterfeit, and some are little more than thinly disguised selfishness. True love and happiness are rooted in life. They are developmental. They are aids to personal perfection, not distractions or positive hindrances.

Chapter II

MARRIAGE AS A GOING CONCERN

NOW that we have reviewed our over-all philosophy of life, let's take an objective look at marriage itself. Yes, we're still interested in love and happiness, but since it's *married* love and happiness we want to discuss, we had better review a few facts about marriage itself in order to get the right perspective. This means we want to think through what marriage is, and what it implies in general. We can get down to *your* marriage a little later.

In the first place, marriage is a vocation or a way of life which is freely chosen. You don't *have* to get married. There are other vocations or ways of life, although marriage is the most common. Your choice in regard to marriage is twofold. First, you choose to marry or not to marry. Second, you choose to marry this person rather than somebody else. However, you are not free to choose the kind of marriage you want. The nature of marriage is unchangeable. God is its founder. If you choose to marry, you must accept the nature of marriage as God planned it. You are not free to write your own type of marriage contract.

Some Definitions

How is the marriage contract defined? It is a legitimate agreement between a man and a woman conferring the mutual, exclusive, and perpetual right both to acts which are of their very nature proper for begetting offspring, and to the sharing of life together.

Since marriage is founded on a contract, it implies your consent. How is matrimonial consent defined? It is an act of the will by which each party gives and accepts a perpetual and exclusive right over the body, for acts which are of themselves suitable for the generation of children.

What is the effect of the marriage contract? It establishes the conjugal union or conjugal state which can be defined as the legitimate union or society of a man and woman for the purposes of generating and educating offspring, and for mutual aid and companionship.

The stiff, formal terms of these definitions speak some simple truths. Since the purpose of marriage is the generation and education of children, when you enter marriage, you establish a society which is apt for this purpose. Thus you leave your own families in order to found a new one of your own. Further, you mutually give and accept the right to acts which are proper for the generation of children. This exchange is exclusive so that you have the assurance of loyalty and loving fidelity. It is perpetual so that you have lasting security in your love. In other words, you are entering a life-partnership in which not only your love but your marriage promises bind you to make the necessary adjustments and adaptations which living together and raising a family require.

Marriage Is A Sacrament

But the blessings of children and of loyal companionship are not the only benefits you will receive. Through baptism you have been made children of God and members of Christ's Mystical Body. When

you marry, your marriage is a sacrament. This means that Our Lord has made it the sign and source of special internal grace. The effect of this sacramental grace is threefold. It perfects your natural love for each other. It strengthens your bond of unity. It makes you more holy, providing there is no obstacle placed in its operation. Thus by pronouncing your marriage vows at the altar, you open up for yourselves a treasure of sacramental grace from which you can draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of your vocation.

In a sense, by means of the sacrament, you are consecrated, that is, set aside and assisted for a special work within the Church. The family which you are about to establish is not only the cradle of the race, it is a cell of the Mystical Body within which new members are developed and trained in the service of God. You are given the grace to share, then, not only in the creative act of God, but in the redemptive work of Christ. The great benefit of the sacrament is that you are given the right to the actual assistance of grace whenever you need it for fulfilling the duties of your special calling.

Your marriage, as the sacrament of two in one flesh, has a further sublime meaning. It symbolizes the union of Christ and His Church, and is consequently the sign of something eminently holy. As the visible image of a sacred thing—the mystical union of Christ and His Church—your marriage is holy. It becomes the source of those supernatural graces which we have mentioned above. Just as the union of Christ and the Church is the efficacious cause of numerous graces,

so your marriage, as a symbol and type of this mystical union, supplies the grace needed for your mutual sanctification as husband and wife. In other words, your marriage is an efficacious sign, that is, it contains and causes the grace which it signifies.

Moreover, since your marriage is the visible image of the mystical union of Christ and His Church, your love as husband and wife must be patterned after the love of Christ for the Church. Christ loved with a boundless love, seeking not His own advantage, but only the good of His spouse—"even unto death." So your love must be expressed in mutual service, seeking the good of your partner considered not only as a marriage mate, but as a companion on the road to perfection.

The Need For Realism

You may protest that the above explanation of marriage is rather technical and formal. It lacks all warmth and life. I have given you the technical definitions for very good reasons. You should know exactly the contents of the marriage contract, the nature of marital consent, what the conjugal state implies, and what help the sacrament gives you. There's nothing very mature in saying, "We'll think about those things later. Right now, we just want to get married!" I have always been a little curious about the mentality of couples who seem to look upon marriage as nothing more than a prolongation of the engagement period. Some never seem to push their thoughts beyond the wedding day—as if there were not a wedding night, as well as "the morning after the night before!"

It need destroy none of your romance to see marriage for what it is. When a normal man and woman are drawn together by love, they naturally seek to give themselves to each other as they are, that is, as complementary partners in the reproductive act. This is what our definition of the marriage contract states. The specific quality of the marriage contract which differentiates it from all other contracts is its reproductive character. This also gives it its unique significance. Whether they think about it or not, love between man and woman always bears this stamp of mutual reproductive complementarity. This is only saying that they love each other as male and female. As we have seen, the quality of maleness and femaleness (sex) permeates their whole being. When they love, they love as man and woman. When they enter a life partnership in marriage, their partnership is necessarily sexual.

I would not have to spend so much time on this point if many people did not have such confused ideas about the meaning of sex. Most moderns apply the term almost exclusively to the stimulation and exercise of the reproductive organs. They make the further mistake of separating the use of these faculties from their natural generative function so that "sex" and "sexual" stimulations become legitimate forms of pleasure and entertainment outside of marriage.

In opposition to this crude, partial view of sex, many have gone to the opposite extreme. They tend to speak and act as if sex did not exist—at least, not among decent people! This view gives rise to a highly

unrealistic approach toward love between men and women and toward the meaning of marriage. We do not change reality by denying its existence. The crude, materialistic view, and the head-buried-in-the-sand, ostrich-like attitude are both equally erroneous and harmful. The Christian approach is to see things from God's point of view, that is, as they really are.

What Marriage Means To You

Now that we have seen what marriage is, let us look at the conjugal union as a going concern. For purposes of study, we can consider it under two aspects. First, we can consider what it means to the persons involved. This is its personal aspect. Second, we can consider it as a specifically reproductive social union. This is its institutional aspect. Both aspects are interdependent and closely related, but they may be considered separately for purposes of discussion.

What does marriage mean to the persons involved? Briefly, it means what you are looking for primarily when you want to get married. Because you are in love, you wish to share life together. You want companionship, oneness, complete union as man and woman. This means you expect the conjugal union to offer you a means for the display of affection and intimate emotional response, for the secure and loving fulfillment of your reproductive desires, and for the development of your spiritual life. In other words, you look upon marriage as a life partnership in which you can express and develop your powers as man and woman by mutually aiding, supporting, and completing each other throughout life.

In terms of your Christian philosophy of life, this

means you look upon marriage as an intimate society in which your love for each other will strengthen and support you in living your life according to the divine plan. Pius XI has clearly emphasized this aspect of married love.

The love, then, of which we are speaking is not that based on the passing lust of the moment nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but in the deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action, since love is proved by deeds. This outward expression of love in the home demands not only mutual help but must go further, indeed must have its primary purpose that man and wife help each other day by day in forming and perfecting themselves in the interior life; so that through their partnership in life they may advance ever more and more in virtue, and above all that they may grow in true love towards God and their neighbor, on which indeed "dependeth the whole law and the prophets."

Your love for each other, expressed through your differences as man and woman, helps you to achieve your purpose in living and in fulfilling your destiny as children of God. There is no contradiction here. It is not "all this *and* heaven too!" as the song has it. Rather in the Christian view, your married love, together with the pleasures and happiness which are associated with its expression, serves as a divinely planned means to promote your mutual perfection. If you recall that the sacrament of matrimony "elevates and perfects" your natural powers, you will readily understand the intimate relationship between your married love and mutual sanctification.

What Marriage Means In Itself

This personal aspect of marriage is probably what you have uppermost in mind when you look forward to married life. However, as you think through the

full meaning of companionship in marriage, you soon realize that you are partners in a very special kind of enterprise. Your marriage contract has established a new social unit having a highly specific purpose which differentiates it from all other social units. It is a reproductive unit, that is, it is a society set up to provide for the fitting procreation and education of your children. This is marriage considered under its specifically institutional aspect.

You Live Together

Let us look at marriage from this viewpoint and see what it implies. First, it implies cohabitation—the intimate, continued living together in which you share “bread and bed” in a common habitation which you call home. Marital cohabitation is characterized by its special intimacy. This intimacy is extensive. You are together not for only a few hours as on a date. You are interacting with each other not for only eight hours a day as you do with others at work. Marital cohabitation, however, stands for a complete and integral togetherness, all day, every day—for life. It is also intensive, pervading your physical, psychic, and spiritual powers and coloring all their manifestations.

Further, since cohabitation is based on your sexual differences, it involves a highly meaningful intimacy. No other intimacy implies such a total giving of self. At the same time, it is a productive intimacy. In the normal course of events, children will be born. These will be the loving visible fruit of your intimacy. They will embody your mutual love and hope, and bind you together for the future as no verbal contract or fervent promise of love could ever do.

This intimacy is both an ideal to be achieved and a process growing out of your detailed, day-to-day contact in the home. It admits of many degrees in depth and extension, but the very nature of the marriage contract calls it into existence so that your marriage will have little meaning if this intimacy does not exist. I am not speaking of a mere emotion, a "feeling" of oneness which accompanies all true companionship. The Catholic ideal of marriage calls for an entire, personal giving of self, a "two-in-oneness" which cuts through the protective walls of your selfish individualism and molds the complementary qualities of manliness and womanliness into a higher unity productive of growth on the physical, psychic, intellectual and spiritual levels of your being.

You Work Together

Second, marriage demands an economic foundation. Marriage is not primarily an economic unit, but the economic forms the solid underpinning for all marital relationships. In other words, there must be some kind of house in which to found the "home." There must be support for the wife and children during the child-bearing and child rearing stages. As husband and wife, you will have to cooperate in building this economic foundation: the husband, through his earnest attention to his employment and his careful budgeting of expenses; the wife, through her work in the home and her prudent shopping.

Keeping your marriage economically sound may require considerable self-denial and sacrifice of both. A reproductive enterprise is an expensive affair under modern conditions. In a very real sense, your en-

trance into marriage represents a commitment to the future. But you are not entering marriage because you believe that "two can live cheaper than one," or because you believe that marriage is an economically profitable venture. You are entering marriage because you are in love and hope that God will bless your union with children. You take for granted that you are going to work. Marriage will give motive and purpose to your efforts, as well as the joy of sharing the fruits of your labor with those whom you love.

In discussing the economic element in marriage, it is well to recall that in this area as in all others, there is a scale of values. For example, you give up some of your freedom when you marry, but you want to do this because you desire to be with the person whom you love. In the same way, while working and saving for the support of the family, you give up the personal enjoyment of many items because you want to provide for the needs of those you love.

Unfortunately, in our society so much emphasis is placed on acquiring the material symbols of success that you can easily get your scale of values confused. You can decide on a new car rather than a baby, not only because you can get quicker delivery, but because you mistakenly value the car more than the baby. You can put off having babies in the early years of marriage so that the wife can go to work, in the mixed up belief that it is better to accumulate a little "nest-egg" before having the babies.

To follow such a course reveals a complete confusion of values as well as a serious mistake about where your true happiness lies in marriage. Individual self-

ishness, as well as selfishness as a couple, is destructive of marital happiness. As I have pointed out, you can choose to marry or not to marry; you can choose your mate, but you cannot choose the conditions for happiness in marriage. Marriage has its own rules laid down by the Creator when He created you man and woman, and you can find happiness in marriage only by following these rules.

You Form A Special Social Group

Third, marriage implies a social unit. By this I mean that if you are to be happy together and are to rear children in a manner befitting their pattern of development, you must establish a community, a little society in which you interact as complete human beings. More than the provision of food, shelter, and clothing is required for the fostering of marital love and the full development of children. There must be communication, interaction, the doing and sharing of work and play together. The man who becomes so involved in earning a living or in his hobbies that he has no time for his family cannot justify his failure to cooperate fully in the intimate life of the family by insisting that he is a good provider. The woman who becomes so involved in her children that she neglects her husband, or is so taken up with work and extra-familial activities that she never gets around to mother her children, seriously fails in her obligation to cooperate in making the home a social unit for the development of all.

A true home is the place where family members come together as a unit. It is the only place in society where people can really be themselves. It alone sup-

plies the security and atmosphere for intimate emotional response and fulfillment. If many moderns find it difficult to distinguish between a home and a hotel, it is because they have failed to develop the home as a social unit in which the members are bound together by their memories, shared experiences, and secure mutual understandings.

You Acquire New Relationships With God

Fourth, marriage implies a religious institution. By this I mean that it has by its very nature a special relationship to the service of God. It is founded on a sacramental contract. The union between husband and wife is a symbol of the union between Christ and the Church, as St. Paul tells us. As a procreative union it requires the intervention of God for the creation of each new life. As a going concern, it is the society within which husband and wife work out their salvation.

Finally, it is the social cell, the unit within which new children of God are developed and trained. The role of the family in the religious formation of the child is irreplaceable and vital. In the final analysis, it is within the family circle that the child acquires his enduring attitudes toward God and his neighbor, toward good and evil, toward life and its purpose.

Summary

To summarize briefly, the vocation of marriage is a freely chosen way of life. As a way, it takes its meaning from its destination or purpose. In other words, it can be fully understood only in terms of the ultimate purpose of life itself, which is the attainment of heav-

en through the service of God. It is *one* way of life, differentiated from others by its specific reproductive character. In marriage, therefore, man and woman, united by love and the sacramental contract, work out their salvation by cooperating with God in the procreation and education of children.

Considered under its personal aspect, marriage appears as a unique companionship or life partnership in which the married couple share life's joys and burdens together. In its specifically institutional aspect as a reproductive unit, marriage implies cohabitation, an economic foundation, the formation of an intimate social group, and a basically religious atmosphere. These requirements flow from the very nature and purpose of marriage.

Although it is normal to look at marriage primarily under its personal aspect, it should be noted that the implications of the personal and the institutional aspects of marriage are complementary. This is to say, you cannot expect to enjoy companionship and partnership in marriage, or can you expect your love to produce happiness unless you can make the adjustments and adaptations required by cohabitation, economics, sociability, and religion. Never forget, the love and happiness you seek is *domestic* love and happiness. Only in the movies can one separate love and happiness from the realities of life.

Chapter III

MARRIAGE IS A SOCIAL AFFAIR

YOU MAY not realize it, but your marriage is not the private affair you tend to consider it. We saw in the last chapter that the vocation of marriage derives its nobility primarily from two sources. First, as companions in a reproductive union, you are privileged to cooperate with God in the procreation and education of children. Second, the matrimonial bond which unites you is both the sign and the source of the sacramental grace which you need in your special vocation. By its very nature, then, your marriage implies the concern of extra-familial institutions—the state, the Church, and the social system.

Because they are concerned, these institutions have established a series of regulations and customs governing the marriage contract and your entrance into the married state. Getting married involves more than saying “I do” at the altar. Definite preliminary procedures must be completed before you are allowed to marry. For people in love, these are likely to be considered annoying obstacles or hindrances. In reality, they are necessary safeguards which long experience has taught us are required for the protection of marriage and the family. Further, every society develops a set of practices and customs related to entrance into marriage, and although these do not have the force of law, they generally exert considerable pressure on the average couple. It will be worthwhile to go over

some of the more important preliminaries so that you will know what to expect when you decide to marry.

The Church And The State Are Interested

Two systems of law regulate the legal conditions for your entrance into marriage. The reason is that you are members of two separate societies—the Church or ecclesiastical society, and the state or civil society. Through baptism you became members of the Church, the society established by Jesus Christ for the salvation of all men. By your membership, you acquired new rights and new obligations and became subject to the jurisdiction of the Church in matters pertaining to these rights and duties. The Church is particularly interested in marriage because it is one of the seven sacraments or channels of grace through which the merits of Christ's redemptive sacrifice are dispensed to the faithful. The Church's laws are stated in the Code of Canon Law.

Through birth or naturalization you have become citizens of the United States. By your citizenship, you acquired new rights and new obligations and became subject to the jurisdiction of the state in matters pertaining to these rights and duties. Although the state has no direct or indirect power over the validity or licitness of your marriage as Christians, it has the right to prescribe reasonable regulations for the protection of the public order, health and safety, and also to pass laws governing the merely civil effects of the contract.

Age

According to the Code, a man before completing his sixteenth year, and a woman before completing

her fourteenth, cannot contract a valid marriage. This is the minimum required for validity, but in our culture young people should not marry at such an early age since they are scarcely prepared to assume the responsibilities of marriage until they are older.

Impotence

In order to be capable of making a valid marriage contract, one must be capable of performing the marital act which is the substance of the contract. One who is not capable of the marital act is termed impotent. The marital act, or conjugal copula, can be defined as the act by which semen from the male is placed in the vagina of the female by a natural act. Impotency must be distinguished from sterility because sterility does not hinder the contract.

Sterility is the incapacity for generation, that is, for procreating offspring. In practice, one can make this broad distinction between impotency and sterility: whatever hinders the natural process of generation (capacity to have children) constitutes sterility only; whatever hinders the human action of generation, that is, marital copula, or intercourse, constitutes impotence. For example, if a woman has had her ovaries removed, she is sterile but not impotent. Consequently, she is capable of contracting marriage.

Existence Of A Previous Marriage Bond

If one of the parties seeking to contract marriage is bound by the bond of a prior valid marriage, he is incapable of contracting a valid marriage. Simply stated, until the previous bond is clearly dissolved, no new marriage bond is possible. Further, even though the previous marriage was invalid, a clear

proof of its invalidity must be offered before a new contract can be made. Hence, if either partner has been involved in any type of previous marriage, they should inform the pastor of this fact when they consult him about their marriage services.

Mixed Marriage

Catholics are forbidden to marry non-Catholics, since such unions are a danger to the faith either of the Catholic partner or of the children. If there are just and grave reasons for the marriage, and guarantees are offered that the faith of the Catholic party will be respected and the children born to the union will be baptized and educated in the Catholic faith alone, a dispensation may be granted for the marriage. As we have seen, marriage is a way of life, and as such, it should assist, not hinder one in achieving the purpose of life. There is always grave danger that a mixed marriage will prove a hindrance. Of course, once a couple have fallen in love, they are not likely to admit the possibilities of any problems in *their* marriage. Religious differences cause trouble only in the marriages of others!

Marriage Between Relatives

Canon law regulates marriages between relatives. People may be related either by "blood" or by marriage. Blood relatives in the direct line, that is, when one descends from another, cannot marry. For example, marriages between fathers and daughters, grandfathers and granddaughters, and so on, are prohibited. Blood relatives in the indirect line, that is, when neither person is descended from the other, but both are descended from a common ancestor, as brother

and sister, are forbidden to marry up to the third degree of descent inclusive, that is, up to and inclusive of second cousins.

Relatives by marriage cannot marry in the direct line of descent. For example, marriage between a man and his mother-in-law, daughter-in-law, and so on, is prohibited. In the indirect line of relationship by marriage, marriage is prohibited up to the second degree inclusive, that is, between a man and his sister-in-law, his aunts or nieces by marriage, and so on.

The appropriate authority may grant a dispensation from these prohibitions for certain degrees of relationship, providing just and grave reasons exist for the marriage. However, dispensations are never granted for the direct line of blood relatives or in the first degree of the indirect line (brother and sister). They are seldom granted for relationship by marriage in the direct line.

These canonical impediments represent the principal factors which affect the capacity of individuals to make a marriage contract. There are a few others mentioned in the Code, but it is not necessary to treat them here since they cover special cases. Your pastor in the premarital examination will see to it that the requirements of the Code are adequately fulfilled.

The Conditions Required For Consent

Let us now consider the conditions for valid consent. Since marriage is based on a contract, it can be effected only by the agreement or consent of the contracting parties. Valid consent, therefore, is required by the very nature of marriage. It follows that neither the state, nor the Church, nor any human power out-

side the contracting parties can supply the necessary consent. The reason for this is evident if we analyze the marriage contract. Every contract transfers some right, and the right which it transfers is called the object of the contract. As we have seen, matrimonial consent is defined by the Church as an act of the will by which each party gives and accepts a perpetual and exclusive right over the body for acts which are of themselves suitable for the generation of children. Hence, as an act of the will, only the contracting parties can give consent. Since it involves the giving and acceptance of a right, some mutual expression of this consent is required by the very nature of the contract.

In order to enter a valid contract, the partners must be capable according to the law. This holds for all contracts. The Code defines the factors which hinder true consent in the marriage contract. They are: want of the use of reason, defective knowledge of the object of the contract, mistaken identity, pretense or fictitious consent, duress and fear, and intention contrary to the essence of the marriage contract. When one or several of these factors as defined by the Code are present, there can be no true consent and, consequently, no marriage. Most of these factors are self-explanatory, but I have mentioned them here so that you will understand the reason for some of the questions which your pastor will ask you when he instructs you for marriage.

The Conditions Required For The Ceremony

Certain conditions are required for the valid celebration of marriage. The Code defines the form of celebration by stating, "only those marriages are valid

which are contracted before the pastor or the Ordinary of the place, or a priest delegated by either of these, and at least two witnesses." The purpose of this law is to safeguard the liberty of the contracting parties and to have assurance that the marriage has taken place validly.

As you well know, the priest who officiates at your wedding does not administer the sacrament of matrimony. His presence is required as a witness representing the Church. Also, as a representative of Christ, he blesses your marriage. However, you, as the two contracting parties, confer the sacrament upon each other when you exchange your marriage vows. In this way, you are the ministers of grace to each other, and this first act which is the foundation of your marriage should be the model for all of your mutual actions throughout your married life—you should remain the ministers of grace to each other by mutually assisting each other in striving for perfection in God's service.

Your Pastor And Your Marriage

This legislation of the Code covering capacity, consent, and form has been established to protect the sanctity and validity of your marriage contract. With the same purpose in mind, the Code also enforces several other conditions concerning your marriage preparation. Your pastor is required by the Code to make certain that there are no obstacles to your valid marriage by questioning each of you separately concerning the impediments, freedom of consent, and your understanding of Christian doctrine. In many dioceses of the United States, you will be asked to fill out a questionnaire covering these factors.

Further, your pastor will want to know whether you understand the sanctity of marriage, the mutual obligations of husband and wife, and the duties of parents toward their children. In most cases, he will ask you to meet with him for three or four "instructions" shortly before your marriage is to take place. You must keep this fact in mind in making your plans for marriage.

The "Banns"

Finally, the Code requires the publication of the "banns." On three successive Sundays or feast days of obligation before your marriage is to be celebrated, your names are to be announced at the principal Mass, and the faithful are informed that they are gravely obligated to make known to the proper authorities any impediments or reasons why you should not be married. The banns must be published in the parish church of each place in which you dwell and, should you not be well known, in the parish church of each place where you have dwelt for longer than six months since reaching the age of puberty.

The publication of the banns represents one further attempt to guarantee the validity of your marriage contract. Although you may foolishly believe that such protection is not required in your case, long experience has taught that the publication of the banns serves a useful purpose. Only the bishop can dispense from their publication for just and grave reasons.

State Laws Regulating Marriage

The laws of the state. Since marriage is the primary unit of human society, the state, in its office of protecting the common good, assumes the right to

specify the civil law conditions for its inception. In the United States, the legislatures of the several states have laid down definite procedural requirements which must be complied with for entrance into marriage. This legislation differs considerably from state to state but it may be of some help to take an overall view of the principal laws which have been enacted.

Marriage License

All states require that couples who wish to marry first obtain a marriage license. The license grants *legal* permission to marry. In most states, it is issued by either the county recorder or a county officer. Most states require a waiting period between the time of the application for a license and the marriage. The average waiting period required is five days. Many states have a venereal disease law which serves the same purpose as a waiting period since results of the tests are not returned for several days. In many states the judge may waive the waiting period if the bride is pregnant or other circumstances appear to render the waiting period unnecessary.

Physical Examination

A total of 31 states have venereal disease laws. These laws require a physical examination of both the man and the woman for venereal disease shortly before the marriage. This examination is good for a period of from 10 to 40 days depending on the various state laws. If marriage does not take place within that period, the examination must be repeated. In seven states the test is for all venereal diseases, in 24 states it is for syphilis only.

Interracial Unions

Interracial marriages are forbidden in about half the states, but the definition of what constitutes a "race" is very vague in most statutes. As a rule, intermarriage between Negroes and whites is prohibited in the southern states and between Orientals and whites in the western states. The constitutionality of these laws has been questioned in several states, but there is little doubt that the pressure of public opinion will keep them operative in many regions for some time to come.

Age

All states have laws prohibiting the marriage of young people before a certain age. The states usually set two ages at which marriage may take place. One age which is legal if the parents give their consent, and one at which the young people may marry without parental consent. The most common ages for permitting marriage with parental consent is 18 for boys and 16 for girls. The most common minimum ages for marriage without parental consent are 21 for boys and 18 for girls.

Prohibited Degrees Of Relationship

All states have some regulations concerning marriage between relatives. All states prohibit marriage between close blood relatives such as brothers and sisters, fathers and daughters, mothers and sons, and so forth. Twenty-nine states do not permit marriages between first cousins, and brothers and sisters of half blood. About half the states have some regulations concerning marriages between various degrees of in-laws and step-relatives.

Non-Legal Controls: Social Customs

In addition to these regulations of Church and state, the society in which you live imposes certain customs and practices which you are bound to think about in your marriage preparation. The normal transition from courtship into marriage passes through three stages: the engagement, the wedding, and the honeymoon. Society has surrounded these stages with certain practices and customs which differ from region to region and according to the circumstances of your social class and standing in the community. You will probably have to think about premarital parties and "showers," the persons to include in your wedding party, the size and type of wedding reception you desire, and the place where you will go on your honeymoon. Since the circumstances and desires of individual couples differ so greatly, there are few general rules which can be laid down covering these stages. However, you ought to keep the following principles in mind.

Some General Advice

First, the period of engagement should be one of progressive adaptation to each other. By working out plans and making decisions concerning your wedding and honeymoon, you should take the first step in working together which marriage requires. Unfortunately, some couples allow their parents and relatives to do all the planning for them so that they derive little benefit from this opportunity to work together.

Second, although the wedding is both a religious and a social event, it is ridiculous to turn it into a fashion show. You should not attempt to "show off"

by the size and splendor of your wedding reception. It is a healthy thought to reflect that you won't fool anybody, anyway. People know pretty well how much money you have, and what you can reasonably afford.

Finally, your honeymoon should be planned with some consideration of its essential purpose in mind. The honeymoon represents the period of your initiation into the conjugal state. If you decide to travel, the destination should be mutually agreed upon. This is hardly the time for breaking records in distance traveled and places "seen." Normally, the honeymoon should provide you with an opportunity to be alone and to enjoy your new-found intimacy together in a leisurely, mutually satisfying way. Your past experience together should help you decide what type of vacation you will find most enjoyable under the circumstances. At any rate, remember you are not out to impress others with your durability as travelers or with the size of your bank roll.

Conclusion

Your marriage has social characteristics which you cannot ignore. You will visit your pastor in due time before the marriage so that you can arrange a convenient date for the wedding and can complete the necessary premarital preparations without hurry and haste. You will obtain a marriage license and fulfill whatever regulations your state laws may require. Finally, you will show your maturity and common sense in planning your wedding and honeymoon. Keep their essential purpose in mind, realizing that this is *your* marriage, and they represent the first stages of a lifetime together.

Chapter IV

ADJUSTMENT IN MARRIAGE

FROM the viewpoint of personal adjustment, your wedding represents little more than a learner's permit—and you have much to learn. As we have seen, none of our human actions are purely instinctive. Although they may be founded on basic drives, they are expressed in learned activities. In other words, we cannot rely on instincts, or the complementarity of male and female, or the naturalness of marriage to produce marital adjustment. This should be obvious, but many young couples act as if the wedding celebration were a guarantee that they are to live happily ever after. This ending may be all right in a movie script. In real life, however, this represents only the first scene in the lifelong drama of marriage.

Why Adjustment Is Necessary

The words of song-writers to the contrary, your marriage was not “made in heaven,” or were you specially “made for one another.” Your marriage will be “made” from day to day through your ability to adjust to one another in the intimate, routine experiences which characterize life together. A little thinking reveals why successful marriage requires considerable adaptability and adjustment.

You Really Don't Know Each Other Very Well

In the first place, before marriage you cannot observe all the character traits of your partner. Besides, during courtship you are on your “good behavior,” and

new love tends to stress similarities rather than differences. You may even think that once you are married, you can change those qualities in your partner which you do not like. However, after marriage you will see yourselves as you really are—no better and no worse. In their home, people tend to be their unpremeditated selves, and the differences which are revealed may come as a shock to the immature spouse with romantic dreams of perfect unity. In reality, this means only that the “best” husband or wife in the world is not perfect. God alone is perfect.

Marriage Is A Unique Partnership

Second, adaptability and adjustment are required because you are establishing a unique kind of partnership. This calls for companionship on the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual levels. Since you do not operate on mere instinct, and you both have been differently conditioned through past learning and experience, you must work out mutually satisfactory adjustment at all these levels of intimacy. Hence you must learn each other's moods and attitudes, and learn to interpret each other's reactions. This is knowledge which comes only from experience. Your parents may tell you that “men are that way,” or “women are that way,” but these sage generalizations won't help you very much. The question you must answer is: “Is *my* man that way?” or “Is *my* woman that way?” Individual differences are great, and part of the exhilarating experience of marriage is the discovery of the unique qualities in the person you love.

You Must Make Long Range Decisions

Third, since the partnership you are forming has

social implications, you must work out adjustments in your individual aspirations and relationships. What social status are you aiming at? Who are to be your intimate friends and guests? How are you to spend your money? Should you buy a new car, go into debt to purchase a house, "splurge" on a vacation, or on entertainment and recreation? You must work out an agreement on these points as the occasion arises.

The Family Cycle

Finally, adaptability and adjustment are required throughout marriage because you yourselves will undergo some changes and because new situations will arise which require a modification of established relationships. The arrival of children, sickness, or death in the family circle, financial loss or marked success, separation occasioned by work or war—all these factors call for adaptability and adjustment.

Further, the development of the family cycle itself brings change. It starts with the newly married pair, evolves into the enlarged family circle, and then, with the maturing of the offspring and their departure from home, returns to the original pair in the pattern of the "empty nest." You must be prepared to grow together in your married life, and all growth implies adaptability and adjustment to changing situations.

Some General Principles For Adjusting

Circumstances and couples differ so greatly that it is not easy to say just what elements make a successful marriage. The best we can do is point out a few general principles and indicate the chief areas in which adjustments must necessarily be made. Let us start with the general principles.

Determination To Succeed

First, one of the main requirements for success in marriage is the determination to succeed. If you have made up your mind that come what may, you are going to make a success of your marriage, there are no problems you cannot handle together. This will to succeed must flow from the deep conviction that achieving success in your marriage is the most important goal of your lives. No matter what other successes you may gain, if you fail here, your life is a failure since marriage is your vocation.

Self-Knowledge Leads To Self-Control

Second, the practical key to adjustment in marriage is self-control motivated by love. Self-control implies self-knowledge. In other words, your ability to understand and control your marriage will not exceed your ability to understand and control yourselves. How much insight do you have into yourself? It is the universal mark of the immature and the neurotic to have no insight into themselves. They constantly blame others when things go wrong. They have no adaptability because they have no understanding of themselves. In marriage, they expect their partners to make all the adjustments. To an outsider, they may appear to be merely extremely selfish; actually, they are children who have never grown up.

Love Must Permeate All Your Activity

Third, the intensity of love at marriage is no index of its permanence. The highly emotional character of your love during courtship and the honeymoon period is temporary. You couldn't go through life "emoting" at that rate even if you would! Early love lacks depth

and extension. In a sense, it exists as a thing apart from the prosaic process of everyday living. During courtship, you like to feel that love changes everything. In reality, the routine tasks of "keeping house" and earning a living remain as they were. Your love can change these only if it develops.

In successful marriage, love grows and permeates every area of your life. By sharing and working together, your personalities can be gradually blended so that your life touches at many points. In this way, your love becomes a part of life, a total orientation of your whole person, rather than a highly emotional relationship which seeks constant expression through the external display of affection. What I am saying is that true married love must be a part of your lives, not something alongside of life, super-added as a kind of emotional luxury in constant danger of being destroyed by contact with reality.

Love Is Not Calculating

Fourth, successful marriage is not based on calculated giving. Marriage is not a fifty-fifty proposition for the simple reason that what each of you as man and woman contribute to its success is different and non-comparable. Each must give all—the wife of her womanliness and the husband of his manliness. Success and happiness result from the blending of these complementary features in a loving partnership. For this reason, selfish, self-centered persons are such dangerous marriage risks. They do not ask, "What can I give?" but rather, "What do I get?"

Love Seeks To Share

Fifth, your married love must follow the law of all

loving. This states, first, that love is expressed more in actions than in words; and second, that love consists in the mutual communication, the giving, the sharing of the goods which each of the lovers possesses. By your very nature of maleness and femaleness you can complete each other only by sharing, and you can find self-fulfillment only by the gift of self. In this manner, married love exemplifies the paradox of all love. Remember how Jesus explains love in the Gospels? "Believe me when I tell you this: a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die, or else it remains nothing more than a grain of wheat; but if it dies, then it yields rich fruit. He who loves his life will lose it; he who is an enemy to his own life in this world will keep it, so as to live eternally" (John 12:24-25).

Love Requires Trust

Finally, all love for another involves a risk, for in loving another we are putting our trust in one who is weak and fallible like ourselves. Only God can be loved with utter confidence and security because He alone is perfect. For this reason, if you are in earnest about success, you will base your marriage on prayer and the sacraments. These are the means which Christ has given to you to strengthen, elevate, and perfect weak human nature. As you draw closer to Christ, you become more like Him in nature, and your love ceases to be a gamble because it is founded on one who is Christ-like.

Basic Areas Of Marital Adjustment

These general principles govern all love relationships. It will be helpful, however, to take a closer look

at marriage in order to outline the chief areas in which your love must operate. These are areas calling for cooperation and adjustment. They flow from the very nature of the married state. To the extent that your love permeates and motivates your actions in these areas, you will find happiness in marriage.

First, there is the area constituted by your intimate marital relations. Since these involve the very essence of the marriage contract, I shall reserve their treatment for a separate chapter.

Family Ideals

Second, there is the broad area which we might call "definition of roles." Each of you enters marriage with a definition or concept of the roles that husband and wife should fulfill in marriage. Whether you recognize it or not, your definition is probably based largely on the example of your own parents, particularly if you are the product of a happy home. But the definition of roles in no two families is entirely similar. Happy and successful families tend to differ considerably in this respect. Consequently, you will probably be entering marriage with somewhat different ideas concerning your own roles and those of your partner. This can be the source of real misunderstanding and conflict. Each tends to think his own definition is the right one so that when the partner does not conform, he appears unreasonable, stubborn, and even wrong.

You must understand that there are many ways to fulfill marriage roles. First, find out what your partner thinks and then through a process of give and take motivated by love, work out a mutually satisfac-

tory definition. This requires insight and patience. Of course, the selfish or immature person will childishly insist on his own definition as the only correct one and will probably have the support of his parents in doing so. Although one must be willing to adjust, it is not well to start off marriage by making all the concessions. You are laying the foundations of a new family, and from the very nature of the case, it is not going to look exactly like the parental home of either of you.

Spiritual Ideals

Third, there is the area of the spiritual life. Because of temperament and previous experience, partners may differ considerably here. One's spiritual life is a highly personal affair. Hence there must be deep respect for each other's sensibilities in this regard. At the same time, marriage is meant to be a means of mutual religious support. If you truly love each other, you will work for each other's spiritual development. Further, by starting at once to pray and worship together, by mutually helping each other to interpret the happenings of life in a Christian sense, you establish an area of profound shared experiences and understandings which is one of the stablest sources of happiness in your married life.

Domestic Economics

Fourth, there is the area of economics. You are not likely to start out with the same scale of values regarding how money is to be spent. Temperament, common sense, and previous experience play major roles in our attitudes about money. Since marriage is a partnership, family income is a family affair. You

can be very selfish here. Personal expenditures must be made with the partner and the good of the family unit in mind. Once you are married, you can never again think only of yourself. You are now two in one flesh and you must plan and act accordingly. Take a realistic view of your family income. In drawing up your plans for the future, don't ask yourselves how the "Jones" are spending their money, but in terms of your own scale of values and your own needs, work out your own program.

This is your marriage, rich in the possibilities for happiness and love. Don't make the common mistake of yearning and striving so hard for the things you don't have, that you find no time to enjoy the things you have—until it is too late. Isn't it queer that when people get married they expect to find love and happiness in themselves, yet afterwards, many engage in a nervous race to acquire the material symbols of success as if these were the source of love and happiness? If you are tempted in this way, ask yourselves whether you will think this "rat-race" in search of things has been worthwhile when you are fifty, or forty,—or even thirty-five.

Your Relatives

Fifth, there is the area of in-law relationships. Marriage represents a union of two families. Your relatives normally will be a source of friendship and support. However, working out a balanced relationship with them is not always easy. In a sense, marriage is a "weaning" process through which you must learn to transfer your primary loyalties to a new unit—the family which you are establishing. Parents sometimes

forget this, and some young married people do, too. There need be little trouble if you learn to stand together as a couple from the beginning. Settle your problems between yourselves. Don't carry them to outsiders—even your mother.

On the other hand, in-laws are not out-laws. At times, immature spouses resent any attention their partner pays to his in-laws. This is childish. One cannot be attached to a family during the first twenty or more years of one's life and then suddenly start to act as if this attachment did not exist. You must grow up to a mature relationship with your in-laws. Accept them as they are. Decide together how much help and advice you will receive from them. Don't make the mistake of working out some mathematical formula for visiting them so that you find yourselves committed to visiting his parents on the first Sunday of the month and hers on the third. When you marry, you are presumed to have grown up. You can show proper love and respect for your parents without being chained to them. This is a process which must be worked out with understanding, patience, and love.

Your Social Life

Sixth, there is the area of friendships and entertainment. The circumstances of marriage and the passing of time will take care of many of your former friendships. On the other hand, there should be no resentment shown if each partner retains some friendships which are of little interest to the other. The important point is that you start acting as a couple in acquiring new friendships and in seeking entertainment together.

Some couples can "work" together, but cannot "play" together. Work and play are equally a part of life, and there is something seriously wrong with a couple's relationships if they don't enjoy doing things together. Many successful married couples make it a point to go out together at least once a week. Perhaps it is only for a movie, a drive, or a meal, but they do it together each week lest the busy rush of making a living and raising a family should cause them to forget how to enjoy being together as a couple.

Your Rough Edges

Seventh, there is the area of personal traits and peculiarities. No two people are entirely alike—thank God! However, some of you may have acquired little peculiarities and traits which are not exactly assets in family life. Some of these will disappear in the process of intimate living together. Some will be carried to the grave. In general, each should try to eliminate in himself what is reasonably displeasing to the other. This is a personal obligation which is not excused by laziness or stubbornness. On the other hand, don't try to remake your partner! You both must undergo the gradual process of "domestication."

From the viewpoints of personal character development and sanctification, this is one of the great goods of marriage. By its very nature, successful family life requires a high degree of unselfishness. This is to say, you cannot seek to have your own way and simply "let yourself go" as you can when you are single. In marriage, love prompts you to think of the desires and needs of your partner. You learn to suppress your petty self-centeredness, your childish habit of thinking

primarily of self. Love for your partner and your children take you "out of yourself," thus teaching you the first principle in striving for perfection, which means that you seek the good and happiness of others rather than your own. In this way, successful marriage becomes, in a very real sense, a true school of Christian perfection.

Reality Vs. Fiction

Finally, there is the area of what I call the "facts of life." By this I mean that you must grow up and accept life as it is. There should be little need to stress this point, but in a society which places such great emphasis on activity and leaves such little time for taking an over-all view of anything, many people find it difficult to face up to the realities of their situation in life. When you were children, you cried when a contemplated picnic or day's outing in the country had to be called off because of rain. As you grew up, you learned that the weather was quite beyond your control, and you learned to accept such things without tears. There are many things in life which, like the weather, are pretty much beyond our control. They result from the very nature of things and must be accepted accordingly. Only a childish person refuses to take a realistic view of them.

Monotony

For example, there is a degree of monotony in every way of life. Marriage is no exception. The routine tasks of making a living, keeping house, raising children, and so on, are bound to involve some monotony at times. One day looks very much like the next. In marriage, this monotony is overcome by com-

panionship and love, but it should surprise no one that there are periods when going to work, washing dishes, preparing meals, and so forth, appear routine, unexciting, and utterly glamorless. Yet these are the basic things of which life is made.

Most Roses Have Thorns

Second, every manner of life includes its specific burdens. Marriage, as a procreative union, implies childbearing and child rearing. The very nature of your love as man and woman impels you to seek complete union, and if God blesses you, this union will be productive. This fact is so obvious that I hesitate to mention it. Nevertheless, the true nature of love between man and woman has become so confused in our society that many couples resent the task of childbearing and child rearing as an imposition on their happiness.

Children are not something added to married love nor are they merely to be accepted if they happen to be conceived. Children are the fruit of married love. They are one of the primary "good things" which marriage makes possible. No one will deny that childbearing involves discomfort and unselfishness or that child rearing involves sacrifice and labor. But to seek happiness in your married love without desiring the normal fruit of that love, is to ask something from love which it cannot give. You cannot escape the "facts of life." Unfortunately, you can deceive yourselves during the early years of marriage; but remember, marriage is for life.

The Grass Always Looks Greener . . .

Third, because of the occupational structure of our

society, the social, or better, the socio-economic position of your family will depend primarily on the occupational status of the husband. In general, what this status will be is fairly evident at marriage. It depends on the ability, education, and previous training of the husband. Now the point I wish to make is this, since your future occupational status and consequently, the future social position of your family, is fairly clear at marriage, a little realism and common sense should induce you to accept this later on. In other words, when you enter marriage with this particular person, you are contracting to spend your life in the social position which he is able to achieve—and this is fairly evident at the time of marriage.

Unfortunately, particularly in the case of some wives, this obvious point is overlooked. Since they become dissatisfied with their social position and the income that their husband is making, they put pressure on him to change his job or to advance more rapidly in his career. This obvious frustration in their wives causes some men to lose confidence in themselves; some turn to drink or "outside" entertainment; some are tempted to advance or make money at any cost. At times, the frustrated wife by-passes the obligations of motherhood and takes a job in order to raise the social position of the family.

Now this implies a tragic lack of realism, a failure to face the facts of life. As I have said, the occupational possibilities of your partner are pretty well known at marriage. You marry him as he is, knowing that in marriage you are joining your life with his. If you love him enough to marry him, you must accept

him as he is, not as you would like to have him be. Your job is to encourage, stimulate, and motivate him in his work, curbing your aspirations in accord with his ability and building your happiness lovingly upon what you have.

Freedom

Finally, every way of life implies some loss of freedom. Your marriage vocation represents a choice, and every choice involves the surrender of other possibilities. The monotony, the shouldering of specific marriage burdens, and the acceptance of a definite socioeconomic position for your family are all related to this loss of freedom. When you choose marriage, you are clearly choosing the framework of relationships, activities, and life scope within which you can expect to find happiness.

It is an old saying but true which states: "You cannot have your cake and eat it at the same time." You cannot have the companionship, security, happiness, and joys of marriage without surrendering much of the freedom which you enjoy while you are single. You are entering marriage because you feel it has more to offer for your mature development. Be realistic. Accept the facts of life, and you will find happiness and growth.

Chapter V

THE MARRIAGE ACT

WE HAVE seen the marriage contract is defined as “a legitimate agreement between a man and woman conferring the mutual, exclusive, and perpetual right both to acts which are of their very nature proper for begetting offspring, and to the sharing of life together.” In other words, when you give your consent in the marriage service, you give and accept a perpetual and exclusive right over the body, for acts which are of themselves suitable for the generation of children. Your marriage, therefore, is the union or society which you and your partner establish for the purpose of generating and educating offspring and for mutual aid and companionship.

What Did God Intend?

In the last chapter we discussed some of the conditions and characteristics of your life together in marriage. We noted that one of the important areas calling for adjustment and adaptation was intimate marital relations. It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss these essential relations in the context of a successful marriage. Since they constitute the object of the marriage contract, it is important to understand them from the Christian point of view. Happiness and success in marriage can result only from the fulfillment of God's plan in establishing marriage. We want to know, therefore, what God intended when He created man “male and female,” and blessed marriage as

the union of "two in one flesh," saying, "increase and multiply."

The Physical Basis Of The Act

Our brief discussion of human nature pointed out that the specific difference between man and woman consists in the possession of complementary generative systems which gives them a different relationship to the reproduction of the species. In other words, it is clear from a consideration of the constitution of men and women that they are prepared to cooperate with the Creator in the production of new life. They possess internal organs for the preparation of the principles of life, external organs for the union of these principles, and in the female body is provided a protective environment in which new life can grow and develop until it is capable of surviving by itself.

At the same time, experience teaches us that men and women are endowed with a powerful drive which strongly impels them to the exercise of their reproductive function. We call the internal and external organs, together with the act by which they function, generative. This does not mean that generation necessarily follows every act of sexual union. However, the nature of the organs are such that their essential purpose is reproduction, and this can and does follow their use.

The Special Nature Of The Act

It is to be noted that the highly unique character of the sexual act derives primarily from two sources. First, it is the act which the Creator has ordained for the propagation of the species. Second, the fruitful exercise of this act requires the special cooperation of

God, the Author of each new life. For this reason, the reproductive organs and their use are clothed with a sacred character. The virtue of modesty prudently guards against their illicit excitation; the virtue of chastity regulates their use; while their misuse constitutes serious sin.

Primary Purpose Is Not Pleasure

It follows that the reproductive organs have been entrusted to man not primarily for his pleasure, but for the good of the species. Although the immediate result of sexual union is physical release, a temporary lessening of the sexual drive, and a sense of intimate union between the partners, these are accompanying effects of the act and not the primary purpose of the generative organs. Just as cessation of hunger and a feeling of well-being follow the act of eating, it is quite clear that the primary function of food is not to give pleasure in eating. In normal, healthy persons, both the eating of food and the exercise of the sexual act are accompanied by pleasure, but only the childishly immature person would confuse this pleasure with the essential purposes of these acts.

Summary

Therefore, God Himself is the Creator of the specific differences between the sexes. He is the Author of the powerful drive which leads them to unite. He has decreed the necessity of their sexual union for the propagation of the race. Finally, He has made them capable of enjoying the pleasure associated with their union. Hence nothing in the sexual life of man is evil in itself, for it represents a divine work. When evil occurs, it results from using one's sexual powers

contrary to the divine plan. In the realm of sexuality, as in all areas of his conscious activity, man must realize the order of reason, that is, he must use things according to the purpose for which God created them.

With these general principles in mind, let us turn our attention to the qualities and characteristics of the marital act in itself. Because our society has grown so confused about this whole matter, a few preliminary observations are in place.

Sexual Behavior Must Be Learned

First, since man is a rational animal, his sexual behavior is learned, not merely instinctive. In animals, the sexual drive appears as a powerful, unrestrained reproductive force. In man, the possession of creative intelligence, reason, and memory completely alters the character of this drive. Further, as a social being, man learns standardized patterns of conduct in regard to matters pertaining to sex. The meaning he attributes to his reproductive powers, as well as his definition of how they are to be used, will depend, therefore, on his previous training in the family and in society and on his ability to reason logically.

Adjustment Is Not Automatic

Two practical consequences for your successful marriage follow from this fact. First, satisfactory adjustment in marital relations is not automatic or instinctive. It must be learned and acquired through experience. This demands patience, tact, and cooperation. In the second place, since you interpret and read meanings into things, ordinarily in terms of past experience and training, your present attitudes toward the generative organs and their use are of paramount

importance for marital adjustment. If you are accustomed to look upon sexual phenomena as bad, nasty, animal, carnal, or "unladylike," the mere knowledge that sexual union in marriage is not sinful will not enable you to make a good adjustment in marriage. You must modify your attitudes, realizing that they have been based on a false and unchristian view of sex.

False attitudes toward sex can present very serious hindrances to successful marital union precisely because they are deeply ingrained in one's character and are frequently not recognized for what they are. It is commonly assumed that to tell young couples before marriage that marital relations and the actions associated with them are not sinful, will settle all their difficulties. This position ignores profound psychological factors in human action. If the couple's attitudes toward sex are false or perverted, no mere assurance that marital relations are not sinful will help them toward successful adjustment. They need to rethink their attitudes in terms of Christian principles.

Attitudes Vs. Techniques

The second observation is closely related to the first. The creation of successful marital relations depends primarily on proper motivation and attitudes rather than upon knowledge of the intricacies of sexual biology. Many modern marriage manuals are designed on the assumption that teaching people the detailed facts of biology and the "techniques" of intercourse will make them sexually "compatible" in marriage. This would be true if man were an animal; but then, if man were only an animal, he would operate

on instinct and would not require printed instructions on how to proceed!

One does not have to master a series of diagrams on the reproductive system or memorize the names of the various organs and nerves involved in sexual union in order to work out satisfactory marital relations. Such knowledge may satisfy the curiosity of some and feed the sophistication of others, but it is not essential. Most persons old enough to enter marriage in our society already know the biological rudiments necessary for successful sexual relations. On the other hand, many of them lack mature Christian attitudes toward sex so that no amount of factual knowledge will prove of much assistance.

A Union Of Persons

Third, the sexual act is by its very nature a social act. It involves another person as a person, not as a thing, that is, not as a mere "sexual object." By this I mean that the sexual act, for its completeness and integrity, demands the cooperation of two persons who mutually give themselves to each other in the act. When this mutual giving is lacking, there may be sexual release and selfish satisfaction but the completeness of the act is wanting.

For this reason, satisfactory marital relations (and sexual relations can be truly satisfactory only in marriage) always appear as the culminating act of love between spouses. When people are in love, they wish to share what they have with each other. In the marriage act, husband and wife share their quality of manliness and womanliness with each other. When people are in love, they desire to be near each other—

they seek communion with the one they love. In the marriage act, husband and wife, through their specific complementarity as man and woman, are united in a unique, unparalleled communion. As the Bible tells us: "They shall be two in one flesh."

Selfish Exploitation Vs. Shared Love

I have stressed the necessity for mutual sharing and loving cooperation in the marriage act because a perverted, actually pagan attitude toward the function of sex tends to hinder adjustment in this area. When the marriage act is regarded primarily as a personal privilege or a duty rather than as a unifying act of love, husbands tend to seek intercourse chiefly for their own satisfaction, and wives tend to submit more or less passively because they feel it is their duty. Under these circumstances, the act of the husband becomes selfish exploitation, and the act of the wife is deprived of dignity. This is a perversion of the Christian view.

To be specific, the sexual act loses its significance as a unifying act of love when it is performed merely for one's personal satisfaction. In performing the marriage act, husband and wife must never seek primarily their own personal enjoyment, but they must seek to give pleasure to their partner. Short of this, the act becomes merely selfish pleasure-seeking or the drab performance of duty. Some husbands assume that the marriage contract gives them the right to seek sexual pleasure whenever they personally desire it. Unfortunately, some wives support this selfish attitude by their more or less passive cooperation based on the false assumption that "men are like that," and women should administer to their needs.

This selfish, undignified view is not Christian. The marital act is a human act. By its very nature, it is a unifying act of intimate communion. God has endowed male and female with mutually complementary generative organs and a sensory system capable of producing pleasure in their use. Although self-centered pleasure may be obtained through their use either in masturbation or selfish exploitation in intercourse, this is obviously a perversion of their purpose. Since by their very nature they are complementary, and by their purpose they are meant for the good of the species, not even in the marital act are they to be used primarily for the personal pleasure of one of the partners. Paradoxically, in the marriage act, as in all acts of love, the more one seeks the good of the beloved, the greater satisfaction one receives in return.

Male And Female Differences Again

One final observation: there are considerable male and female differences concerning sexual stimulus and response. This fact is rather widely recognized in all societies. The elements of aggressiveness and strength which are usually related to the initiation of sexual activity are characteristic of the male. It is generally assumed that he will take the initiative in the dating and courtship process, in the marriage proposal, and in the first performance of the marital act. It is the role of the female to stimulate, excite, allure, and attract. Throughout marriage, however, either husband or wife should feel free to take the initial steps leading to marital relations.

Scientists offer some evidence that the differences between male and female may be related to the ac-

tion of the male hormone. Whether or not this is true, the fact remains that sexual aggressiveness in the male is associated with a marked degree of susceptibility to physical and psychical stimuli. Particularly among normal, healthy young men, the reproductive drive is so active that even relatively slight stimuli are capable of arousing conscious reaction and thus lead to the development of a whole series of sexual responses. This susceptibility to stimuli is less conspicuous in the unmarried woman. Ordinarily she is much less aroused by what she reads, sees, or hears, although all normal women appear sensitive to physical contact.

Differences Within The Same Sex

This observation on male and female differences concerning sexual stimulus and response is a broad, commonly recognized generalization. What is more important from the viewpoint of marriage adjustment is that individuals within each sex differ greatly in this regard. All men are not alike, or all women. Further, susceptibility to stimulus will vary in each individual in relation to age, health, fatigue, and general emotional tone. Consequently, you must attempt to understand each other's desires and needs. If you truly love each other, you will adjust and adapt to each other in this regard.

Ideal adjustment, therefore, will be learned through experience. You should not hesitate to discuss your feelings, your likes and dislikes. The marriage act is a human act and must be treated accordingly. Much misunderstanding and selfishness could be avoided if married couples would drop their false prudery and

be frank in dealing with each other in this essential relationship.

False "Facts"

These observations have been presented to clear away some of the confusion and erroneous attitudes which young couples frequently bring into marriage. If your attitudes toward the function of sex are truly Christian and you are in love, the achievement of satisfactory sexual relations in marriage should present few difficulties. In this area, as in so many others, the American public has been treated to excessive doses of "scare" literature. We are told that between 50 and 75 per cent of married women are frigid (how is this known?); that sexual compatibility in marriage is rare (what is meant by compatibility here?); that up to the present, the majority of married women have been martyrs and the majority of married men have been ignorant (where is the evidence for this?), and so on.

It is well to remember that as far as anybody knows, men and women had been having relatively satisfactory sexual relations for thousands of years before the world was blessed with the modern "marriage experts." Common sense should tell us that one does not have to master all the erotic literature of the Orient nor the numerous treatises on the "art of love" of the pagan West in order to achieve success in an action as normal and natural as intercourse.

Modern Stress On Techniques Stems From Materialistic Views

As a matter of fact, this insistence on the knowledge of sexual biology and the "techniques" of sexual

arousal is based on the assumption that man is merely a highly developed animal so that the most important element in sexual relations is the sensual pleasure which they produce. Consequently, every possible source of sexual excitation and titilation has been explored. The impression is given that all these possibilities must be exploited to the utmost each time marital relations take place.

This attitude is like that of the gourmand who fastidiously studies and plans each meal in order to get the fullest possible sensual enjoyment out of eating. Normal, healthy people like to enjoy their meals. They don't feel they are the most important thing in life. Normal, happy marriage partners like to enjoy marital relations. They will tell you that the sensual pleasure which results from them is an essential but minor element in their happiness. In fact, unless these relations represent a mutual demonstration of love, they become meaningless and even distasteful.

Various Aspects Of The Act

The marriage act is relatively complex. First, it may be considered as the normal expression of the reproductive drive. Second, its specifically generative or reproductive character may be considered. Third, it may be viewed as a special unifying act of love between the spouses. It will be helpful for purposes of analysis, therefore, to consider it under these various aspects. Although it is an act which involves bodily organs, we must always keep carefully in mind that it is a human act, that is, an act of the person, not a merely corporal or bodily act—an act of the "flesh" as it is sometimes described so graphically.

Man is a composite of body and soul—he never acts as a pure animal or as a pure spirit.

The Normal Expression Of A Basic Drive

First, the marriage act may be considered as the normal expression of the reproductive drive in male and female. Under this aspect, actual marital union represents the final stage or culminating act of the process of sexual excitation and arousal. Sexual excitement is a complex phenomenon. It differs in male and female, as well as in individuals. It includes both physical and psychical elements.

Briefly, in both male and female there exist definite erogenous (sexually sensitive) zones. These involve the external reproductive organs themselves (the breasts, particularly the nipples) of the female, and to a more limited extent, the mouth, lips, and tongue of both. Stimulation of these areas by caressing, fondling, or other forms of contact produces physical and emotional responses of a sexual nature. These responses are characterized by increased sexual sensitivity, a narrowing or concentration of attention on this action, and a marked increase of tension.

At the same time, the reproductive organs undergo definite changes preparing them for the marital act. In both female and male, the external sexual organs contain erectile tissues. Through a reflex response to stimulation, blood inflates these tissues causing them to become firm, thus rendering these organs capable of fulfilling their function in physical union. Likewise, various glands in the reproductive organs begin producing an abundance of lubricating secretions which doctors tell us fulfill the dual purpose of neutralizing

any acids which may exist in the reproductive tract and facilitating the union of the organs in the act.

The Curve of Excitation

Hence, once the process of sexual excitation has been initiated, the entire system of male and female is set in motion in preparation for the final act of union. Under these circumstances, sexual excitement tends to follow a normal curve of progressive stimulation and tension which finally seeks immediate release in physical union. Since this curve of excitement develops at a different rate in different individuals, usually progressing more rapidly in the male, this represents an important area of adjustment between spouses. In the same connection, since progressive excitement requires time, the importance of preparatory acts, commonly termed "love play," becomes obvious.

The Usual Position

The act of union is usually effected as follows. When the partners are ready, the wife lies on her back and the husband "comes over," placing his knees between her legs and resting his weight partially on his knees and elbows. Union of the organs can then be effected manually and she may assist him if necessary. Some marriage manuals go into long descriptions concerning the various positions which may be assumed in the act. About the only purpose such descriptions serve is to excite the curiosity of immature readers.

As a matter of fact, there are no prescribed positions for the act. All that is required is a position which is mutually satisfactory to the partners and which makes possible the union of the reproductive

organs. Given the athletic prowess and ingenuity of some members of the human race, it is conceivable that the act might be performed in a great variety of ways. Hence, the detailed description of various procedures gleaned from the erotic literature of the world represents little more than a shallow preoccupation with a highly suggestive subject.

The position indicated above is the one adopted in the majority of civilized countries. This position is probably so universal because many wives are highly stimulated by the pressure of their husband's body upon their pelvic region. In many cases, this pressure plays a more important role in their curve of excitation than do the various techniques of "love play" so frequently detailed in marriage manuals. At any rate, if a couple have the right attitude toward the function of sex and are truly in love, they will be able to discover the position which is most satisfactory to both under the circumstances.

The Male Climax

Once the male organ (the penis) has been inserted in the female tract (the vagina), the curve of sexual excitement tends to rise rapidly to a climax. Since the tension created by excitation of the male organ is relieved by friction, the male responds by a thrusting motion until climax (orgasm) is achieved. This climax is the final stage and actual purpose of the entire process. During the build-up of sexual excitement, the spermatozoa of the male, together with other secretions from the seminal vesicles and the prostate gland, pour into a tube connected with the male organ. At climax, a number of muscles in and around

the genital organs contract in a few rhythmic jerks and eject the seminal fluid into the female tract.

The Female Climax

A parallel curve of final excitation and climax takes place in the female although there is no ejaculation. During the build-up of sexual excitement, her tension has been steadily increasing. When the penis is inserted in the vagina, her most sensitive sexual zones are directly stimulated by the motion and contact of her mate. Normally, she increases this stimulation by moving her hips in a revolving motion adjusted to her needs, thus hastening her climax and aiding her partner. Her climax is ordinarily characterized by a series of rhythmic, convulsive movements of her pelvic region followed by the gradually receding contractions of the muscles associated with her genital organs. Doctors tell us that the pattern of climax in females admits of considerable variation, being fairly evident at times, and at others, appearing to be scarcely perceptible.

Her So-Called "Frigidity"

Further, it is possible for the marital act to take place without the wife reaching climax. This may result from fatigue, her inhibitions concerning the act, lack of preparation, or from the fact that her husband's curve of excitation progresses so much more rapidly than hers. A great deal has been written on this subject in modern times. Unfortunately, the popular literature on the subject contains much that is confusing, misleading, or simply erroneous.

Lack Of Representative Data

First, we have little reliable data on the percentage

of married women who normally experience orgasm in the marital act. Hence, when psychiatrists and others inform the public that 50 or 75 per cent of American wives are frigid, they are making statements which have little reliable scientific foundation.

Widespread Differences In External Reactions

Second, there is little agreement concerning what constitutes female climax or orgasm in the marital act. From the viewpoint of marital adjustment, it would seem that if the act results in release of tension, relaxation, and a sense of well-being and unity with the mate, it fulfills at least the minimum requisites for satisfaction. Some women never display violent physical and emotional response; some desire it only at times and find it too exhausting at others; some always enjoy a marked response; and a very limited number, for one reason or another, appear simply incapable of responding.

Unfortunately, many "experts" ignore these normal and expected differences and set up an ideal of violent physical and emotional response which leaves many wives feeling frustrated or, what is worse, "inadequate." Since husbands frequently read the same literature, they are also made to feel "inadequate" because they feel that it is somehow their fault if their wives do not experience the expected ideal.

The Modern "Ideal" Vs. The Facts Of Life

Third, although it would appear ideal to have marriage partners reach their climax at practically the same moment, a realistic consideration of male and female differences, as well as of individual variations within the same sex, would lead us to conclude that

this ideal consummation may be difficult, if not impossible to achieve in a good many cases. It is true that through the exercise of self control, generous mutual cooperation, and the use of suitable techniques during the initial stages of the process the excitation curve of husband and wife can be regulated to a considerable degree. Obviously, this is an area where true love can well be demonstrated since such conscious regulation calls for mutual understanding, patience, and tact.

Nevertheless, if available research data are trustworthy, the speed with which the average male reaches climax once penetration has been achieved leads one to conclude that his mate will frequently not achieve climax simultaneously. Consequently, marriage manuals are misleading when they leave readers with the impression that the specific act of intercourse, that is, the process of penetration and male climax, should automatically produce simultaneous climax in the mate. There is nothing in the biology of the sexes or in the character of their excitation curves which leads one to conclude that this is typical of the species.

Adjustment Learned Through Experience

It follows that spouses must learn from experience the amount of "love play" which they require preparatory to the act of penetration. Further, if simultaneous climax is then not achieved during the act, the wife should signal her desire to continue the process, and her husband can bring her to climax by manual manipulation, in particular, by stroking the clitoris, a small, highly sensitive organ analogous to the penis,

located just inside the upper region of the external female organs. In this manner, both partners will receive the release which nature has designed as the final result of this process. Further, since the process of release occurs more slowly in the female, some form of contact should be maintained for a mutually agreeable time after climax. This is a point the male should remember, since otherwise it will appear that he has been seeking only his selfish satisfaction.

The Reproductive Character Of The Marital Act

A second aspect under which the marriage act may be considered is its generative or reproductive character. From the very nature of the organs involved, this is the special, distinguishing quality of the act—it is apt for generation. This does not mean that conception necessarily follows the performance of the act. It does signify that an action has been performed from which generation can and does result.

The marital implications of this fact may be stated briefly as follows. In the marriage contract, spouses **give** and accept a perpetual and exclusive right over the body, for acts which are of themselves suitable for the generation of children. They are free to work out a mutual agreement concerning when and how often they desire to make use of this right. However, if they do desire to exercise this right, they must respect, that is, they may not interfere with the natural procreative process of this act. This means that the couple may not place any obstacle which restricts or violates the physiological process of procreation. In other words, they must avoid all deliberate acts (the use of contraceptives) which are aimed directly at

the antecedent frustration of the fecundity (generative character) of the marital act.

Sterility And The Use Of The Marital Act

Whether generation follows the act is not theirs to decide. Furthermore, as long as they perform the act in accordance with its nature, they may have marital relations even when they know that generation will not or may not follow. They are not acting unreasonably or contrary to right order in doing so since the marriage act possesses subordinate effects such as fostering mutual love and the release of tension which may fully justify its use. It follows that to perform the marriage act when one of the partners is sterile, either temporarily or permanently, is not a deviation from the Creator's plan, and hence is not sinful. Under these circumstances, the spouses respect the natural procreative process of the conjugal act. The fact that procreation does not follow is quite beyond their control.

The Moral Evil Of Contraceptives

It is well to note that the use of contraceptives is sinful not only because the Pope or Church says so. Furthermore, the essential and primary evil of the use of contraceptives is not that they may hinder a possible conception. This may or may not follow the conjugal act and is independent of the will of man. The evil of the use of contraceptives consists essentially in its deviation from right order, that is, from the divine plan. God has endowed men and women with the unique and noble faculty of procreation not primarily for their own pleasure, but for the good of the species. Since the generative faculties deal with

life, and God alone has dominion over life, marriage partners usurp dominion which they do not possess when they frustrate the natural process of procreation by the use of contraceptives.

The Marriage Act As An Expression Of Love

Third, the marriage act may be considered as a special, unifying act of love between spouses. Through it, they become two in one flesh. As such, it represents the mutual sharing and giving of self, not primarily for the purpose of seeking personal pleasure, but because it is characteristic of lovers to desire to be united and to share what they have in order to please each other. For this reason, satisfactory marital relations have a stabilizing and solidifying effect in marriage. They represent an important area of intimate, shared experience, a broad area for the manifestation of tenderness, thoughtful considerateness, and unselfishness.

Two False Attitudes

It should be obvious that the marital act will not be seen as a manifestation of love if either spouse has a false attitude toward the function of sex. It is precisely in this connection that we can perceive the far-reaching, evil consequences of two opposite, though equally erroneous attitudes. One regards the reproductive organs as primarily a source of personal gratification. The other considers their use as something "animal," "nasty," or at best, a necessary concession to human weakness. Both deprive the marriage act of its dignity and human quality. As a result, it is not treated as a manifestation of love, or are the virtues of restraint, self-control, unselfishness, and generous

considerateness associated with its use. When we deprive an act of its dignity, we deprive it of its capacity to serve as an instrument of our perfection in the service of God.

Summary

The marital act can be considered under various aspects. It is the normal expression of the reproductive drive. It is essentially a generative act. It is a manifestation of love between spouses. All of these aspects are closely related. To overlook any of them is to deviate from the divine purpose manifested in revelation. "Male and female He created them: and God blessed them, saying: Increase and multiply" (Gen., 1/2 sq.).

In other words, the drive for physical pleasure becomes rightly ordered in marriage. Besides the restrictions and limitations it undergoes because of the demands of mutual service, its directly sexual aspect is brought under the order of reason and consequently, into the service of God. As a manifestation of love, the conjugal act is necessarily freed from selfishness. As the fulfillment of a divine command in the sacramental state, it becomes an act of religion. Thus, in marriage the expression of the sexual impulse is elevated by love and achieves its purpose as a means of personal perfection.

Chapter VI

SOME SPECIAL PROBLEMS

YOUNG couples entering marriage are sometimes upset by needless fears and apprehensions. Particularly if they have an active imagination or are the type that worry, the bits of information they have gathered through reading, conversation and hearsay may leave them with a highly distorted picture of reality. As Artemus Ward once remarked in another connection, "It ain't so much the things we don't know that get us in troubles. It's the things we know that ain't so." Consequently, I have added this chapter to correct some of the common misapprehensions and misunderstandings which experience reveals are more or less prevalent.

The Sexually "Unawakened"

In a society which makes so much of "sex," some girls approaching marriage worry because they have never experienced anything which they recognize as conscious sexual desire. They know that this exists in others, but they have never personally felt any such urge. They love their fiances, enjoy the routine displays of affection, but beyond this generalized type of sexual experience, they are conscious of no specific urge to be intimate. Indeed, listening to the conversation of others, they conclude that they must be undersexed, a little abnormal, and perhaps not prepared for marriage.

There need be no cause for worry here. Providing

they have no special fears, aversions, or inhibitions concerning the function of sex, they may be considered neither abnormal nor undersexed. They are simply "unawakened." Some females experience slight sexual desire until after they have been "awakened" through actual experience in marriage. Individuals differ greatly in their response patterns. As long as girls have a Christian view toward the function of sex in themselves and in their partners, they need not worry about the development of response in marriage. They will experience no difficulty, providing they do not cherish their unawakened condition as the more "ladylike" ideal.

Some Evil Advice

It may not be out of place here to take note of a completely erroneous and misleading view gaining prominence in popular literature. Young people are being told, or at least, it is being rather obviously suggested, that if they desire satisfactory sexual relations in marriage, they must prepare themselves by engaging in various types of premarital "experience." This does not include intercourse—of course (?). However, what is commonly called "heavy petting" is advised on the hypothesis that response to sexual stimuli must be aroused early, particularly in the young female, lest she remain "frigid" in marriage.

Not only is such instruction repugnant to Christian morals, but it is physically and psychologically harmful. As we have seen, "heavy petting" is one of the preparatory stages in the process of sexual union. Consequently, when this process is initiated through premarital petting, the physical and psychic build-up

preparatory to intercourse necessarily occurs. In some cases, the couple may not be able to restrain themselves and will go "all the way." If they stop the process short of its normal conclusion, they will remain tense and frustrated. If this action is repeated throughout the dating and courtship period (as the modern "experts" recommend), this repeated frustration may give rise to a psychological "block" in marriage. In other words, there will be a tendency to repeat the premarital pattern rather than to have the curve of excitation rise to its normal conclusion in marital union.

The Problem Of Modesty

Second, some couples worry about what might be termed modesty. In general, men are less bothered in this regard since previous training and natural disposition tend to make them more or less "exhibitionist." Brides-to-be sometimes worry: Am I expected to undress in front of him? Must we keep the lights on? Am I to show ardor or remain passive? etc.

These are real problems but they are scarcely insurmountable for a couple in love. For example, there is no reason why the introduction to married intimacy cannot be gradual. If there is mutual respect and understanding, the average couple should possess sufficient ingenuity to manage the process of undressing in relative privacy—even in a hotel there is always the bathroom. Likewise, the matter of lighting, permitted degree of bodily exposure, and so forth, should be worked out with due consideration for the feelings of each. The early stage of marriage is definitely a learning period. The restraints, inhibitions, and sense

of privacy acquired during previous years cannot be brushed lightly aside on the wedding night—even if this were desirable. Although neither crudeness nor schoolgirlish prudery have any place in marriage, the intimacy of happy couples is always characterized by mutual respect and delicacy.

Fears Concerning The Initial Act

Third, so much has been written about the importance of turning in a good performance on the wedding night that many young couples are unduly worried about initiating their first experience. Husbands are warned that a mistake on their wedding night can leave their wives forever disgusted or eternally frigid. Wives are frightened by the prospect of being literally raped by their selfishly passionate husbands. Common sense should tell us that for normal couples in love, such fears are nonsense. Although childish, neurotic females, as well as perverted, psychotic males have managed to get themselves married, such cases are relatively few. It is unscientific and grossly misleading to apply conclusions derived from such unusual cases to normal couples.

Points To Remember: The Act Is Natural

However, since these false ideas are current and do disturb some young couples, a few observations seem in order. In the first place, marital union is a normal, natural act which both male and female are constitutionally prepared to perform adequately. The average woman is not such a delicate, sensitive plant that the slightest mistake in her initiation to the marital act will leave her crippled for life. At the same time, the average young man in love is not so carried away

by desire that he acts like an impassioned animal. Neither of these caricatures respond to reality in our society.

Lack Of Skill Is To Be Expected

Further, it should be expected that a young couple who have led chaste lives will display a certain degree of awkwardness and clumsiness in their initial experiences. Only if the act were purely instinctive, would this not be the case. As in acquiring any skill or art such as dancing or driving a car, they must be prepared to make mistakes. A newly married couple face the problem of acquiring a new skill together. Past learning experience in other areas should tell them that this requires patience, analysis and correction of mistakes, a little humility, a little humor, and a generous display of love.

Although there is a natural reticence which justly excludes communication with outsiders, married couples should not hesitate to discuss this topic between themselves. This will have the advantage of diverting their attention from a purely selfish interest in the act, and, at the same time, it will lay the foundation for communication and understanding later in life. In every marriage there will be times when refusal or lack of response occur. Unless married people have learned to be frank with each other, such actions may be misinterpreted as selfishness or loss of love.

Expectations Should Be Moderate: This Is An Initial Experience

Finally, all this stress on the significance of the wedding night, the necessity of using the "right" techniques, and the importance of achieving simultaneous

orgasm causes some anxious young men to approach the nuptial bed with somewhat the same apprehensions as a young surgeon tackling his first major operation. With the cunning of the serpent and the meekness of the dove, they follow the directions of the marriage manuals step by step. If the resulting action does not produce the exaggerated response they have been led to expect, they are disappointed and frustrated. Serious doubts arise concerning their own "adequacy" and that of their spouse. It is inconceivable that a natural act should prove this difficult. The average bride expects her partner to show tenderness, consideration, and understanding. She also hopes that she has married a man with some virility and aggressiveness.

The Hymen

Fourth, because of old wive's tales and some of the current descriptions in marriage manuals, the breaking of the hymen in the initial marital act has assumed the proportions of a major feat in surgery. In the female, the external opening of the genital tract, that is, of the vagina, is partially closed by a thin membrane called the hymen. There is considerable variation concerning the extent, elasticity, and toughness of the hymenal membrane. In some women the membrane has been stretched or broken previous to marriage. This may occur by accident, activity in sports, the use of the tampon type of menstrual protection, or during a medical examination. Hence the condition of the hymen at marriage is no definite indication of virginity or non-virginity.

If the membrane is intact, it will be stretched or

torn slightly during initial sexual union. This will be felt as a tension when the male organ is pressed into the vaginal opening. In most cases, the membrane stretches or breaks easily so that the only sensation felt directly is the cessation of tension in the tissue. At any rate, there is no question of splitting or bursting the membrane as some seem to imagine. Limited bleeding may occur in some cases, but this will not be accompanied by pain and should be the cause of no worry.

Consequently, the exaggerated fear of pain which some brides carry into marriage is utterly unfounded. In fact, this fear is likely to be the cause of pain since it reacts on the muscles of the genital organs, forcing them to contract, and thus rendering intercourse difficult. Only in rare cases is it found that the vaginal opening is so narrow, or the hymenal membrane so thick, that relations are difficult. In this rare instance, a physician should be consulted.

A Note On Anatomy

While we are on the subject of sexual initiation, it may be helpful to point out that the entrance to the vagina lies relatively far back in the vulva (external organs of the female). There are two openings within the vulva. The first is the small opening of the urethra which leads to the bladder. Below it, and consequently, deeper within the vulva, lies the opening of the genital tract or vagina. Inexperienced young husbands sometimes confuse these two openings, with considerable frustration for both partners.

The Morality Of Associated Acts

Fifth, chaste young couples sometimes wonder

about the morality of actions preparatory to union. These actions are morally good since they are part of the normal, preparatory process required for satisfactory marital relations. Of course, the type of love play employed should be acceptable to both. Experience should teach what is mutually satisfying and productive of good relations.

Some young husbands worry about reaching climax before union has been achieved. There is no moral problem here as long as they start out with the intention of consummating the act and are only prevented from doing so by lack of experience or sudden loss of control. During the beginning period of marriage, too early ejaculation appears to be a fairly ordinary occurrence. As the couple come to recognize and control the progress of their curve of excitation, this problem ceases to exist.

In addition to actions preparatory to union, other manifestations of affection are permitted even though they may lead to considerable arousal and excitation. However, these actions must not be continued to the point of producing climax outside of union. Experience will be the best teacher here. At the same time, it seems scarcely necessary to add that to intentionally foster such excitation either by actions or thoughts appears somewhat meaningless and unnecessarily frustrating. There are other, less nervously exhausting ways of manifesting love.

Frequency

Sixth, some couples wonder about the optimum frequency for marital relations. There is no general rule applicable to all marriages. Happy married couples

display wide differences. At the same time, it should be obvious that frequency will vary during different periods of marriage, as well as according to the health and age of the spouses. The force of the sexual drive appears highly variable even within the same individual so that no mechanical regularity as to time, place, or frequency can be readily specified. This is no problem for happy married couples since they have learned to interpret each other's needs and their mutual attraction leads them to engage in love play whenever union is desired.

In general, union should be mutually desired before it is consummated. In other words, it should be a culminating act of love. Due consideration should be paid to the difference in type of preparation required by husband and wife. Furthermore, the wife should understand that the accumulation of fluid poses a problem for the husband which she does not have, so that, at times, her love for him will move her to have union even though she may not feel greatly stimulated. If frequent relations are followed by marked fatigue, weakness, lack of vitality, and a general feeling of weariness, this is a sign of excess. When couples enter marriage with a mature, Christian view toward the function of sex, they are usually able to work out a mutually satisfactory pattern of frequency with little difficulty.

Appropriate Times

Marriage counselors are frequently asked whether it is proper to engage in marital relations during the period in which the wife is menstruating. There is no moral problem here, nor are there any harmful phys-

ical effects associated with the performance of the act at this time. However, the feelings of the wife should be absolutely respected during this period. It is up to her to decide whether she desires the act under these circumstances.

Couples sometimes wonder about the advisability of having marital relations during the period when the wife is pregnant. If she is enjoying normal health, there is no reason why such relations should not be enjoyed up to within four or five weeks of delivery. By this time she will probably be consulting her doctor for routine check-ups, and his advice should be followed for the remaining period. After delivery, four or five weeks should be allowed to pass before relations are resumed. This period is required for the reproductive organs to resume their normal shape and vitality. Husbands must be considerate in this matter.

During these periods, as well as during any other periods when temporary continency is desired, couples should use the knowledge gained by past experience to avoid those actions which they know will produce serious arousal and excitation. Some individuals appear to lack all insight in this regard. Often this pretended inability to avoid stimulation is little more than a convenient cover-up for selfishness or outright refusal to practice self-control.

Marriage "Rights"

Further, since the marriage contract involves the acceptance and giving of definite rights, these should be clearly understood. In marriage, each spouse has an equal right to marital relations and an equal obligation to grant them when the partner makes a

reasonable request. This indicates that frequent or continued refusal to have relations when the partner reasonably requests them is seriously wrong since it is a violation of a sacramental contract. On the other hand, unreasonable requests need not, and often should not, be met. For example, if the husband is partially drunk, if he refuses to support the family, if the wife happens to be sick or highly fatigued, if she is in the final stages of pregnancy or has recently delivered, and so forth, the request may be judged unreasonable and may be refused.

Unfortunately, in modern society, a fear of pregnancy causes many wives to sin seriously against their marriage vows. Of course they use various rationalizations or excuses to justify their actions. For example, they may insist that their health has been impaired (their doctor may have told them to take a *temporary* break); they are disgusted with sex (they fear the consequences of sexual relations); their husband is over-sexed (this generally means that he is a normal male and consequently desires normal marital relations); and so on. Although love should be the motivating force in all marriage relationships, a clear understanding of the obligations in justice flowing from the marriage contract will define the essential framework within which domestic love must develop.

A Final Word Of Advice

Because they are very much in love and wish to share all they have, young couples are sometimes unwise in their confidences with each other. They trustingly confess past mistakes and recount past ex-

periences. This is an unnecessary and even dangerous indiscretion. Let the dead past bury its dead! You love each other for what you are as you now know each other. There is nothing to be gained by making a "general confession." The best of us are none too strong in overcoming jealousy and suspicion. In particular, the confession of past errors and failures with members of the opposite sex can sow the troublesome seeds of later distrust. Why imperil your future happiness with this possibility?

Conclusion

In conclusion, young couples should look forward to marriage with confidence and assurance. There is little to be gained by nervously poring over sex books on the art and techniques of "love." Much of what the future holds in store for them can be learned only through experience. And this experience will be distinctive and unique, just as their love is distinctive and unique—something truly their own.

Chapter VII

YOUR LIFE TOGETHER

IT IS customary in marriage manuals to add two notes at this point. One is entitled, "What Every Man Should Know," and the other, "What Every Woman Knows." Never having been particularly impressed by the supposed special "intuitive" powers of the average female nor the assumed, routine ignorance of the average male, I shall skip these notes. The normal couple should enter marriage with the humble conviction that they both have a great deal to learn. Life together offers a whole series of new experiences. If you are unwilling to learn, you had best not marry.

In the previous discussion, we have indicated some of the chief areas in which your shared experience will take place. These areas constitute the broad framework within which your love must develop and mature. The happiness you are looking for will be measured by your ability to work together in these various relationships.

In this final chapter, let us take a brief look at your future family life. What will your life together be like? Of course, it includes an element of the unknown, as the future always does. This was indicated on the day of your marriage profession when you took each other "from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death do us part." Some of what the future holds in store for you, you cannot know, but you face it con-

fidently because you love each other and will face it together. On the other hand, family life includes many elements which you can reasonably foresee. Let us look at some of them.

Division Of Labor In The Family

In the first place, life together implies a division of labor. In our society, it is assumed that the husband is the principal breadwinner or means of support; the wife's role involves taking care of the home and the children. As a rule, the normal husband takes his role for granted—he is prepared for it through past experience. Unfortunately, the modern wife is not always so well prepared. Frequently she has been employed outside the home and knows very little about cooking, serving meals, sewing and mending, shopping for household needs, and so forth. These now become her principal tasks. This is one of her contributions to the home.

There is nothing to be gained by decrying the fact that many modern girls learn few of these things before marriage. The important point is that the normal female can learn—if she wants to. It would have been easier if she had picked up this knowledge in the process of growing up, but if she hasn't, her first obligation is to start learning at once. This is a practical manifestation of love which she has no right to neglect. Although nourishing, regular meals and a neat, well-kept household are not the most important things in life, they furnish the fundamental, material underpinning of normal family life. Brides might do well to recall the old saying, "Kissn' don't last, but cookery do!"

Working Wives

This brings up the much disputed point of working wives. Of course, in every society, wives have always worked, and worked very hard. The modern problem is their employment outside the home. This is a complex problem for which no ready answer can be supplied. Changes in the social system have so modified the functions of the household and the roles of women that past patterns are no longer entirely applicable. A large percentage of brides have been employed before marriage. They see no good reason why they should not increase the family income by taking a job after marriage. This is especially the case if the couple are living in a rented apartment which demands little care on the wife's part.

Working Brides

Should the young bride seek employment outside the home? We had better review our basic principles before we try to answer this question. First, it is the husband's legal and moral duty to support his family. It is the wife's duty to take care of the home and the domestic needs of her husband and children. Second, this division of labor and responsibilities, initiated at the very beginning of marriage, provides the soundest basis for stable family relationships throughout life. The reason is that the family's standard of living is geared to the husband's income from the beginning, and both husband and wife start married life by assuming the roles required by the very nature of the marriage contract. Third, we must conclude that the employment of the wife outside the home cannot be regarded as a normal situation.

In the light of these principles, let us rephrase our original question as follows: Under what circumstances may the employment of the bride outside the home be tolerated? It should be clear that since her employment outside the home is not a normal marital situation, there must be justifying reasons for permitting it. Some reasons might be that the couple had entered marriage without any savings and were in debt for the purchase of furniture, and so forth, or they had nothing saved up for future contingencies such as hospital bills, or they were renting the type of modern small apartment which occupies little of a competent wife's time, and so on. Under these conditions, the employment of the bride outside the home may be tolerated providing the following conditions are fulfilled.

First, her husband agrees to it.

Second, they both agree that her employment is temporary, that is, she will quit working if she is going to have a baby. In other words, the employment of the bride should never be used as an excuse for postponing the first pregnancy.

Third, employment outside the home should not be used as an escape from domestic duties. Many brides would find that they could make a better and more economic contribution to the home if they worked intelligently at keeping house. Since they have not been prepared to fulfill their domestic obligations in this regard, however, they sometimes find an excuse from learning what they should know about housekeeping by getting a job outside the home.

Fourth, and this is most important for the future

happiness of the family, the wife's pay check should be used only for special expenses such as furniture, down payment on a home, saving for the necessary costs associated with having a baby, and so forth. Under no circumstances should her pay check be pooled with that of her husband's in order to raise the family's standard of living. As a result, there will be no dislocation of the family budget when the wife quits her job to remain home and rear her family.

Young married couples must be honest enough to do a little sincere thinking on this subject. There are so many things they feel they need that they can easily be tempted to "prolong their honeymoon" (to use a smooth saying of the birth controllers) and to postpone having children until they feel they can "afford" them. It is a tragic distortion of values which causes a husband and wife to look upon children as a burden rather than as one of the prime blessings of marriage. To enter marriage with the calculated design of postponing their coming until you are ready, prompts the unpleasant question: "Why did you get married? To enjoy marital relations without accepting their consequences?"

"Working" Mothers

Short of dire and obvious necessity, there can be no justification for mothers with young children to be employed outside the home. Such necessity may arise through sickness, accident, and so forth, but it must always be regarded as a misfortune. Under such circumstances, parents must make every effort to see

that their children do not suffer seriously from their absence in the home. This is a sacred obligation not excused by the fact that they have to work.

Authority In The Family

Second, family life implies a division of authority. Although the terms authority and obedience have become unpopular, the husband still remains the head of the family. There has been so much talk of the changing social position of the modern woman that we have almost overlooked the modern man. Contrary to past ages, modern discussion of male and female roles seems to follow the pattern described by Fibber McGee. He recalls that he and his wife had had words—only he had never been given a chance to use his!

The Nature Of Authority

In discussing the role of the father in the modern home, several important points must be kept clearly in mind. In the first place, we should have a well-defined concept of the nature of the husband's headship of the family. According to Catholic teaching, husband and wife are absolutely equal as persons. They enjoy equal rights in what pertains to the marriage contract. However, inasmuch as they are constituted by nature to fulfill different roles in procreation, they will have different positions and roles in the family. These differences are functional, that is, they are interdependent in regard to childbearing and child rearing. They do not imply inequality since they are not strictly comparable.

The husband's headship, consequently, is function-

al, that is, it must be defined in terms of the common good of the family unit. This does not imply the wife's domination by the husband, but indicates that both husband and wife have united to form a special society in which their sexual interdependence gives them different roles. The husband's headship, therefore, flows from and is limited by his role as protector and provider of the reproductive unit.

In this connection, it is well to recall that all human authority is a social function, that is, it is a service. Hence, although chief authority in the family belongs to the father, it is never a privilege which he can use for his own interest. Since the basis of the father's authority is the common good of the family, his authority can never extend beyond the purpose for which it has been established by God, namely, the good of the family.

The Source Of Authority

All legitimate authority comes from God. It follows that whenever we grant one person authority over another, we must be careful to show that the title to this authority comes from God. Further, it follows that obedience to legitimate authority is not humiliating or demeaning. Obedience also is a social function which leads to God. Hence, to obey is an act which perfects man just as the act of commanding does. In the family unit, both obedience and authority are required by the good of the family. They are likewise defined and limited by the demands of this good.

Finally, since all authority comes from God, and God is Love, all authority exercised in His name will be characterized by love. But love is the gift of self.

In exercising authority in the family, the husband is giving himself to the family according to the qualities which God has given him as a man. Likewise, obedience is an act of love. In obeying her husband in the legitimate exercise of his authority in the family, the wife is giving herself to the family according to the qualities which God has given her as a woman.

The Exercise Of Authority Under Modern Conditions

In the second place, we must understand the structure of the modern family system within which the husband's headship is to be exercised. The modern family system is characterized by its emphasis on the small, conjugal unit rather than on the extended, composite family group of blood and marriage relatives. In other words, emphasis is placed on the unit made up of husband, wife, and immature offspring rather than on the wider family group composed of many conjugal units which mutually support each other.

At the same time, changes in the occupational structure of society have forced the husband to seek employment outside the domestic unit, thus depriving the wife of partnership with him in a common economic enterprise and narrowing the scope of their shared activities and interests. As a result, the emotional content of the remaining familiar relationships has been greatly intensified. There is an increased need for companionship, particularly on the part of the wife, and consequently, a greater expectancy for "oneness" in marriage.

As a result, the relationships of husband and wife have moved toward greater equality. Furthermore,

the husband's preoccupation with his job outside the domestic unit has tended to separate him from his wife in the task of educating and supervising the children. It follows that the context within which the husband's authority is exercised has been greatly modified. At the same time, extra-familial activities tend to direct his energy and interest away from active participation in the family circle.

We must conclude, therefore, that although the family, like any other society, requires someone in authority, and the husband, because of his function is naturally in a position to fulfill this role, the exercise of authority will vary according to different times and conditions. Modern happy married couples tend to work out their problems together. Each contributes according to ability and past experience. In this way it develops that the modern mother makes most of the immediate decisions around the home and the father makes the long range decisions and those pertaining to activities outside the home. As companions in a common enterprise, both should consult each other and mutually support each other, particularly where the children are involved.

It Is The Good Of The Family Which Counts

Mature couples realize that what is really important is to work for the best interests of the family unit. As the chief breadwinner and provider, the husband has not only the authority, but the serious obligation to plan for the long range welfare of the family. When he takes this obligation seriously, wife and children find little difficulty in looking up to him and showing him obedience. Every normal woman is

proud of the fact that she has married a man who is capable of assuming responsibility. In other words, the husband's headship follows naturally from his function in the family.

Unfortunately, too many husbands become totally preoccupied with their work or with outside activities and leave the entire task of running the household and caring for the children to their wives. Since the family must have a head, the wife is forced to take over the exercise of authority which the husband refuses to assume. The exercise of authority is a service—a dedication to the common good of the enterprise within which authority is exercised. It is for this reason that the Pope entitles himself "*servus servorum*," servant of the servants of God. There is little point in decrying the husband's loss of authority in the family as long as he insists on by-passing his obligations. When he assumes his share in worrying about the budget, in planning for the future, and in guiding, instructing, and disciplining his children, there is little difficulty in getting his authority recognized.

Your School Of Perfection

Third, family life is by its very nature a school of perfection. Husbands and wives who cooperate generously in building a happy, successful life together necessarily perfect themselves in the process. Perfection consists in attaining the purpose or end for which one was created. In this life, perfection is a progressive affair. It consists in the steady enrichment of personality through the development of all one's faculties and in the practical carrying out of all the duties of one's state in life in accordance with God's laws.

Unfortunately, because of the Fall, the restless heart of man, though still seeking the Good for which it was created, is constantly drawn aside to worship false gods. Through ignorance or weakness, fallen man tends to concentrate his infinite craving for the good on a finite object whether it be wealth, or power, or fame, or sensual pleasure. St. John describes this disorderly desire: "For all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life" (I John, II, 16). St. Paul gives a graphic description of the struggle which goes on in the average man: "I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and making me prisoner to the law of sin that is in my members" (Romans, 7, 23).

How Married Life Sanctifies You

Christians have always recognized that the achievement of perfection is no easy task. Family life is designed as a powerful instrument to assist you in gaining perfection. In the first place, it is founded on a sacramental contract which, as we have indicated, gives you the right to the graces which you need to accomplish your duties as husband and wife, father and mother.

Second, as parents you are cooperating with God not only in procreation but in the noble task of nourishing, guiding, and educating children. Parenthood by its very nature enriches your personality. It causes you to grow in love, sympathy, and understanding. It takes you away from narrow concern with self and forces you to think of the good of others.

Third, married life is a life of mutual service and

aid. You aid each other through the division of labor in maintaining a home. Your loving companionship produces numberless acts of support, encouragement, and assistance. At the same time, as Christians, your love and companionship is love and companionship in Christ so that in all your actions together you motivate and help each other in the progressively more perfect imitation of Christ.

Finally, by its very nature, your married life is a virtuous remedy for concupiscence. This need not be taken merely in the narrow sense that it offers a legitimate means for the exercise of the sexual drive. Doubtless, this is important, but in all its aspects, married life is a virtuous remedy. It offers you a definite, clearly defined pattern of life. The adjustments and adaptations required by life together furnish an excellent education in self-control, unselfishness, sympathy, tenderness, and kindness. The responsibilities of parenthood deepen your understanding of life and protect you from a shallow preoccupation with self as you grow older. Above all, the sense of being needed, of being loved, of making a worthwhile contribution to the happiness of those you love, gives a peace of soul which strikes at the very roots of concupiscence in the restless heart of man.

Conclusion

Thus is the divine plan fulfilled. Attraction between man and woman leads to the desire for friendship. Friendship ripens into love. Love leads to the desire for life companionship. Since this companionship is founded on sexual complementarity, it spontaneously establishes a unit characterized by intimacy, fruitful-

ness, and division of labor. So all-embracing is this union, both in its personal aspects and its responsibilities, that reason and grace alike seal it with an indissoluble sacramental bond. Further, the living out of this union not only calls forth the finest virtues and potentialities in man and woman, but in loving each other they develop and grow in their love for God. Does not St. John teach us that it is through love for one another that we rise to the love of God?

As the "I" and the "You" are united in the "We" through the consummation of two-in-one flesh and the "We" is inserted in the Mystical Body, husband and wife become absorbed in building up the Body of Christ. Then their desire for full self-actualization has order, their pursuit of happiness has significance, and their search for perfection has a divinely planned route.

PRAYER FOR HUSBAND AND WIFE

Because we, husband and wife, are called to love one another as Christ loves and is loved by His Church + Because the life of that Church, His Mystical Body, is nourished by the welfare, the holiness of our Marriage + Because our children, His tenderest branches, are nourished likewise in that holiness +

We seek Thy help, pledged at the Marriage Feast of Cana and our own nuptials + that our sorrows, our hardships, our countless daily irritations may be transformed into a loving gift to each other and to God that our joys, too, may be offered joyously + that our marriage may become a prayer, an oblation, a giving of the one thing which is ours to give, our life together, as husband and wife, father and mother + and that the splendor of Christ's Love, mirrored in us may draw others to their true life in Him +



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