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Semmler Nerius
- For bride and groom
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A pre-nuptial instructions

FOR
Bride
AND
Groom



Very Rev. Nerius Semmler, O.F.M. Cap.

For Bride And Groom
A
Pre-Nuptial Instruction

based on

the Encyclical Letter of Pope Pius XI

Casti Connubii, December 31, 1930

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By

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Imprimi potest:

Cyprian Abler, O.F.M. Cap.
Min. prov.

Nihil obstat:

John A. Schulien, S.T.D.
Censor librorum

Imprimatur:

✠ Moses E. Kiley,
Archiepiscopus Milwaukiensis

Published in the U. S. A.
by Our Sunday Visitor
Huntington, Indiana
May 15, 1950



Introduction

Reverend Father—"For Bride and Groom" is offered to serve as a guide for the priest whose duty it is to give the pre-nuptial instruction. It is not meant to supplant those excellent works which treat the subject at length.

The first purpose of "For Bride and Groom" is to place into the hands of the priest the matter, ready-made and handy in form, which otherwise he would have to draw laboriously from other sources. He may restrict his oral instruction to the contents of this booklet with the conviction that little of importance will remain unsaid; or he may select what in his opinion is deserving of special emphasis. The quotations in small print are meant to substantiate and fortify the statements which precede.

Besides, "For Bride and Groom" is intended for the couple itself. It is suggested that a copy be given to each of the couple by the pastor when they come to make the arrangements for the banns. The instruction proper may well take place about a week or so before the wedding—the day preceding the wedding is not the most opportune time. We know that the preparations for the festivity limit the time allotted for the instruction, and at the same time occupy the minds of the people to such an extent as to leave little time for anything else. Having read "For Bride and Groom," satisfied their curiosity, and discussed the matter, they will feel more at ease when they present themselves for the instruction, and will also be in a more receptive mood at a time when the big day is still some distance off.

Nor need we fear that the sensibilities of the young people will be shocked by the booklet placed in their hands. The present-day access to all kinds of information precludes a danger which was real fifty years ago. Furthermore, if necessity, such as lack of time, dictate an abbreviated instruction, the pastor has the consoling assurance that the couple, having read the booklet, possesses the knowledge which the Church expects them to have. "For Bride and Groom" will also be of use to them in the future, and may be read with profit by others, already married.



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Foreword

MY dear Young People: You plan to enter the matrimonial state. It is your firm conviction that by so doing you act in harmony with the holy will of God. To marry is a most serious step as it has far-reaching consequences. Your entire future, temporal and eternal, hinges on this undertaking.

In the pursuit of happiness which you hope to find in this new state, you may not sacrifice your own spiritual welfare nor that of the children with whom it may please God to bless you. The love which at present you bear for one another, however sincere and strong it may be, after all is a human thing and therefore weak and perishable. As good Christians you found your home upon Christ through the sacrament of Matrimony. This assures you of God's blessing and aid. Preserve this blessing! It will give enduring strength to your love and security and firmness to your home.

Today many evil influences are at work, and many a home has fallen victim to them. Modern, pagan ideas, opposed to the laws of God and the Church threaten to rob you of that blessing and destroy the home you are planning. If today you cherish the hope that your home will be an abode of abiding peace and happiness, if you are resolved to secure the salvation of your own souls and of those for whom you will have assumed responsibility, then let Christian principles govern your family life. This will indeed entail sacrifices, but rest assured that far from having been made in vain, they will bear abundant fruit for years to come.

A home without God, a god-less home, is like the house built on sand. Jesus tells us that it cannot withstand the storms. Sooner or later it will collapse and bury in its ruins those who are within. But a home in which God's holy will and the laws of the Church are the guiding norms, a home imbued with a truly Christian spirit, whose model and pattern is the Holy Family of Nazareth, will stand. Holiness, peace and happiness will dwell and abide therein.

For Bride And Groom

A Pre-Nuptial Instruction

INTRODUCTION: Why this instruction? In the first place, because it is the will and the law of the Church. "The pastor shall instruct the spouses, with due regard to their condition, on the sanctity of the sacrament of matrimony, on the mutual obligations of husband and wife and on the duties of parents towards their children" (Can. 1033; Rt. Rom. Tit. VII, C.1 No. 14).

Pope Pius XI regarded matrimony of such importance as to issue an encyclical letter on "Christian Marriage." ⁽¹⁾ He called it the "principle and foundation of domestic society." The reason which prompted the Encyclical was that men should "learn the true doctrine of Christ regarding matrimony," and "that Christian spouses shape all their ways of thinking and of acting in conformity with that pure law of Christ, so as to obtain true peace and happiness for themselves and for their families."

The matrimonial state, being a new state of life for the couple, brings with it new duties, obligations and problems—a new way of living. "It is indeed of the utmost importance that the faithful be well instructed concerning matrimony, and this both by word of mouth and by the written word." (110). Therefore this instruction.

The Pope points out a second reason for this instruction: the sad and distressing fact that to-day so many "false principles," "abominable opinions" and "pernicious errors" regarding the pure law of Christ are being taught, and this "not secretly nor under cover, but openly with all sense of shame put aside," in many kinds of writing, on the stage, in the movies, by broadcasts and every other possible means. He expresses his grief that "such a pious ordinance of divine goodness, should today, and on every side, be frustrated, and trampled upon by the passions, errors,

(1) All references and quotations are taken from the encyclical letter of Pope Pius XI on *Christian Marriage* (*Casti Connubii*), December 31, 1930, as given in "Social Wellsprings" by Joseph Husslein, S.J., The Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee, Wis., 1943.

and vices of men." And because the "latter-day subverters of marriage are entirely devoted to misleading the minds of men and corrupting their hearts, to making a mockery of matrimonial purity and extolling the filthiest of vices by means of books and pamphlets and other innumerable methods," he calls on the "bishops and priests" to "oppose error by truth, vice by the excellent dignity of chastity."

We quote from the Encyclical:

A great number of men, forgetful of that divine work of redemption, either entirely ignore or shamelessly deny the great sanctity of Christian wedlock, or even, relying on the false principles of a new and utterly perverse morality, too often trample it under foot. And . . . these most pernicious errors and depraved morals have begun to spread even amongst the faithful themselves and are gradually gaining ground.

For today alas, not secretly nor under cover, but openly, with all sense of shame put aside, now by word, again by writings, by theatrical productions of every kind, by romantic fiction, by amorous and frivolous novels, by cinematographs portraying in vivid scene, in addresses, broadcasts by means of the radio, in short by all the inventions of modern science, the sanctity of marriage is trampled upon and derided (46).

These thoughts are instilled to men of every class, rich and poor, masters and workers, lettered and unlettered, married and single, the godly and godless, old and young, but for these last, as easiest prey, the worst snares are laid (47).

Thus the pre-nuptial instruction is a duty resting on the pastor, and at the same time it is to the interest of bride and groom to enter their new state of life in full possession of the knowledge which that state requires. The instruction deals with The Nature of Matrimony and The Duties of the Married.

1. NATURE OF MATRIMONY

1 Matrimony is Sacred

NOT a few people entertain low and sensual ideas of marriage, both unworthy of the sacred state and an insult to every pure-minded man and woman. In the eyes of the State matrimony is merely a civil contract, like any other contract entered upon by men and governed by man-made laws. The Church says; Matrimony is a sacred thing; sacred in origin, in purpose and as a sacrament.

a) *Sacred in Origin.* Matrimony was instituted by God. "Matrimony is of its very nature of divine institution." Contrary to the modern idea, we hold "as an immutable and inviolable, fundamental doctrine, that matrimony was not instituted or restored by man, but by God."

Even by the light of reason alone it is sufficiently obvious that there is a certain sacredness and religious character attaching even to the purely natural union of man and woman . . . since it has God for its author . . . This sacredness of marriage arises from the divine origin we have just mentioned, from its purpose which is the begetting and education of children for God, and the binding of man and wife to God through Christian love and mutual support.

It is evident that God established matrimony and the family. God led Eve to Adam and blessed them saying, "Increase and multiply." (Gen. 2, 22; 1,28). As God is the author of matrimony, so also are the fundamental laws which govern matrimony not made by man but by God. Hence no human authority, neither civil nor ecclesiastical, nor the contracting parties, can set them aside or change them. "Once a person has contracted marriage he is thereby subject to its divinely made laws and its essential properties."

Let it be repeated as an immutable and inviolable, fundamental doctrine, that matrimony was not instituted or restored by man but by God, not by men were the laws made to strengthen and confirm and elevate it but by God, the Author of nature and by Christ our Lord by whom nature was redeemed. Hence these laws cannot be subject to any human decrees or to any contrary pact even of the spouses themselves.

The essential order of the domestic society is founded on some-

thing higher than human authority and wisdom, namely the authority and wisdom of God, and so not changeable by public laws or at the pleasure of private individuals.

Husband and wife will find comfort in the thought that not blind chance, but the guiding hand of Divine Providence has brought them together; that the hand of the heavenly Father will lead and guide and protect them as long as they render themselves worthy of that divine guidance and protection.

b) *Sacred in Purpose.* A sacred thing must have a sacred purpose. Those who enter this state moved mainly by the hope of pleasure and enjoyment, will meet bitter disappointment. Family life does indeed offer pure innocent joys. God's wisdom has arranged it so in order to render the state attractive, also to offset and ease the burden and hardships that go with that state. However, these enjoyments must never be sought as the main end of marriage.

The purpose of marriage is twofold: First, the child and its education, second, the mutual sanctification of the spouses.

(1) *The Child.* "The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children, and the secondary purposes are the mutual aid and allaying of concupiscence" (can. 1013). "Amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place." The young couple may be compared to two birds building their nest. The nest is not meant for the parent-birds, but the baby-birds. The home is built around the cradle—its center.

It is easily seen how great a gift of divine goodness and how remarkable a fruit of marriage are children born by the omnipotent power of God through the cooperation of those bound in wedlock.

Giving life to a human being, and leading this child to God Who has given it, is both a noble work and a sacred parental duty. As the Holy Father puts it: "Transmitting life makes parents the ministers, as it were, of the divine omnipotence." Parenthood is the great privilege of sharing God's creative powers.

Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place. And indeed the Creator of the human race Himself, Who in His goodness wished to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life thought this when, instituting marriage in Paradise, He said to our first parents and through them to all

future spouses, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. 1, 28). As St. Augustine admirably deduces from the words of the holy Apostle St. Paul to Timothy when he says; "I wish young girls to marry." And, as if someone said to him "Why?" immediately adds: "To bear children, to be mothers of families" (I Tim. 5, 14).

The Pope adds this solemn warning:

Since the duty entrusted to parents for the good of their children is of such a truly high dignity and of such great importance, every use of the faculty given by God for the procreation of new life is the right and the privilege of the married state alone, by the law of God and of nature, and must be confined absolutely within the sacred limits of that state.

The child does indeed demand much care, work and sacrifice. At the time it radiates joy, and cheer and happiness. It gives sunshine and light to the home. The big days, the "red letter days" which brighten family life are events in the life of the child: Birth and Baptism, First Holy Communion, Graduation, Wedding. After their own wedding day the parents have few such events to look forward to in their own lives. Unconsciously, the child performs also a glorious mission: It brings father and mother closer together, who love one another in the child; it draws out those beautiful qualities which lie dormant in the heart and mind of the man and woman, to make those noble-minded, self-sacrificing fathers and mothers whom we justly admire. The child is indeed a most precious gift of God.

These considerations alone (aside from others) involve those couples in a most grievous wrong, and a mistake no less serious who, from the very outset, exclude children from their homes. They will experience a distressing void in heart and home, since they alone are not sufficient to appease that inborn desire for happiness which they sought and anticipated in the married state.

The other primary end of matrimony is the education of the child. The education of the children is the parents' right and duty. "The most wise God would have failed to make sufficient provision for children that had been born, and so for the whole race, if He had not given to those to whom He had entrusted the power and right to beget them, the power also and the right to educate them." Father and mother assume with the child the obligations of procuring its physical well-being and the sacred

duty of educating it "for God," making it a "perfect man and a perfect Christian." A child deprived of proper education is exposed to many dangers, the most serious of which is that of missing its eternal destiny. A grave responsibility for the parents!

Now it is certain that both by the law of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed forbidden to leave unfinished this work and to expose it to certain ruin. But in matrimony provision has been made in the best possible way for this education of children that is so necessary, for since the parents are bound together by an indissoluble bond, the care and mutual help of each is always at hand.

Both husband and wife, however, receiving these children with joy and gratitude from the hand of God, will regard them as a talent committed to their charge by God, not only to be employed to their own advantage or for that of an earthly commonwealth, but to be restored to God with interest on the day of reckoning.

God wishes men to be born not only that they should live and fill the earth, but much more that they may be worshippers of God, that they may know Him and love Him and finally enjoy Him forever in heaven.

The Pope observes that the most wise God conferred upon the parents the right to educate children, for they are incapable of providing wholly for themselves, even in the matters pertaining to their natural life, and much less in those pertaining to the supernatural, but require for many years to be helped, instructed and educated by others.

Christian parents must also understand that they are destined not only to propagate and preserve the human race on earth, indeed not only to educate any kind of worshippers of the true God, but children who are to become members of the Church of Christ, to raise up citizens with the Saints and members of God's household, that the worshippers of God and our Saviour may daily increase.

(2) *Mutual Sanctification.* As the matrimonial state offers a remedy for those natural desires which lead to many sins, these temptations and inclinations lose much of their danger and force. For this reason St. Paul advises: "Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." (I Cor. 7,2). This will be a most consoling thought in the evening of life: "I have never been an occasion of grievous sin to the partner whom

God has given me." By their mutual good example they make smooth the path for a truly Christian life and make the practice of virtue easier for one another. Mutual sacrifices render the burden of family life and family crosses lighter. They share the responsibilities in the education of the children; they are united in prayer; in trials they find comfort and courage in their holy, pure, disinterested love. Thus Christian spouses go through life, helping, encouraging one another, sharing whatever life brings, and become instrumental in each other's sanctification and salvation. Pope Pius XI put it this way:

This outward expression of love in the home demands not only mutual help but must go further; must have as 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 of God and their neighbor, on which indeed "depend the whole law and the prophets."

This mutual interior molding of husband and wife, this determined effort to perfect each other, can in a very real sense, as the Roman Catechism teaches, be said to be the chief reason and purpose of matrimony, provided matrimony be looked at not in the restricted sense, as instituted for the proper conception and education of the child, but more widely, as the blending of life as a whole and mutual interchange and sharing thereof (24).

c) *Sacred as a Sacrament.* Jesus, Mary and the Apostles attended the wedding at Cana. Jesus even added cheer and joy to the occasion by working a miracle. St. Paul, who says beautiful things about the state of virginity (I Cor. c.7,) speaks no less beautifully about matrimony, which he calls a "great mystery" (Ephes. 5,32; Hebr. 13,4). He compares the union between Christian spouses to the mystical union which exists between Christ and the Church, His spouse. Pope Pius XI calls matrimony "the living image of the most fruitful union of Christ and His Church." Matrimony is sacred because of its Divine origin and noble purpose, but a special sacredness was conferred upon it by Christ, Who elevated that natural union and contract to the dignity of a sacrament (can. 1012). "Christ the Lord, by raising the matrimony of His faithful to the dignity of a true sacrament of the New Law, made it a sign and a source of that peculiar

grace by which it perfects natural love, it confirms an indissoluble union and sanctifies both man and wife."

The recipients enter a holy state. Like the sacrament of Holy Orders and the Profession of religious, the Sacrament of matrimony sets the spouses aside for the sacred and important duties peculiar to their state of life.

For, as St. Augustine teaches, just as by Baptism and Holy Orders a man is set aside and assisted either for the duties of the Christian life or for the priestly office and is never deprived of their sacramental aid, almost in the same way (although not by a sacramental character), the faithful, once joined by marriage ties, can never be deprived of the help and binding force of the sacrament.

As they are united and bound for life by the sacrament so also are they assured of its graces and help for life. The sacramental graces accompany the spouses through life, and being applied at the time of need, aid in their mutual sanctification. "If doing all that lies within their power, they cooperate diligently, they will be able with ease to bear the burdens of their state and to fulfill their duties. By such a sacrament they will be strengthened, sanctified and in a manner consecrated."

By the very fact, therefore, that the faithful with sincere mind give such consent, they open up for themselves a treasure of sacramental grace from which they draw supernatural power for the fulfilling of their rights and duties faithfully, holily, perseveringly even unto death.

Hence this sacrament not only increases sanctifying grace, the permanent principle of the supernatural life in those who, as the expression is, place no obstacle (obex) in its way, but also adds particular gifts, dispositions, seeds of grace, by elevating and perfecting the natural powers.

By these gifts the parties are assisted not only in understanding but in knowing intimately, in adhering to firmly, in willing effectively, and in successfully putting into practice those things which pertain to the marriage state, its aims and duties, and giving them, in fine, the right to the actual assistance of grace, whenever they need it for fulfilling the duties of their state.

Beautiful and appropriate ceremonies surround the reception of the sacrament of matrimony by which the Church impresses us with the sacredness of this union. It is preceded by a thorough

investigation on the part of the pastor to assure the absence of any impediment. The ceremony itself takes place in the house of God, and, by a special privilege in favor of the bride, at the altar, in connection with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The Proper Prayers of the Mass—"Pro Sponso et Sponsa," "for Groom and Bride"—are one prolonged petition for God's blessing. Twice the priest interrupts the Holy Sacrifice—a rare thing—first to bestow the "Nuptial or Bridal Blessing," and then again for the final blessing towards the end of the Mass. The spouses receive Holy Communion during Mass. All of these ceremonies manifest the mind of the Church as considering matrimony "a great mystery" (Ephes. 5,32).

Matrimony being a sacrament of the living demands a worthy reception, that is one should be in the state of grace. How could we expect God to bless the union of those who are neither "well disposed nor well prepared", and receive the sacrament in the state of sin? A General Confession is advisable as a fitting close of the years of childhood and youth. It will also render any future General Confession so much easier.

Let those who are about to enter on married life, approach that state well disposed and well prepared, so that they will be able as far as they can, to help each other in sustaining the vicissitudes of life, and yet more in attending to their eternal salvation, and in forming the inner man into fulness of the image of Christ. It will also help them, if they behave towards their cherished offspring as God wills: that is, that the father be truly a father and the mother truly a mother.

The Form of Marriage. Because Matrimony is a sacrament, the Church prescribes the "form" to be observed by those who receive it. The form of marriage means that a Catholic can contract a valid marriage only before a duly authorized bishop or priest and two (Catholic) witnesses. A Catholic cannot enter a valid marriage before a minister or civil magistrate. It is understood that this law of the Church does not apply to non-Catholics.

In two rare cases a Catholic is allowed to marry before two witnesses without a priest assisting: 1) In danger of death, when a priest cannot be had without a great inconvenience; 2) not in danger of death, when a priest cannot be had for one month (can. 1094).

2 Characteristics of Matrimony

The two fundamental properties of Christian matrimony which are closely connected with each other are Unity and Indissolubility. Both are rooted in the sacrament (can. 1013), but they are also properties of the non-sacramental, purely natural marriage as willed and instituted by God.

a) *Unity*. "Marriage is a conjugal union of a particular man and woman." Unity then means that a husband may have but one lawful wife living, and a wife can have but one lawful husband living.

Conjugal faith, or honor, demands in the first place the complete unity of matrimony which the Creator Himself laid down in the beginning when He wished it to be not otherwise than between one man and one woman.

The dignity and purpose of the Sacrament demands unity. If contrary conditions were to prevail, woman would be degraded and reduced to a mere tool of man. The training and education of children would be seriously handicapped. That noble self-sacrificing love, "true and solid love which is the basis of conjugal happiness" would become impossible.

With reason, therefore, does the sacred Council of Trent solemnly declare: Christ Our Lord very clearly taught that in this bond two persons only are to be united and joined together when He said: "Therefore they are no longer two but one flesh" (20).

Nor did Christ our Lord wish only to condemn any form of polygamy or polyandry, as they are called, whether successive or simultaneous, and every other external dishonorable act, but, in order that the sacred bonds of marriage may be guarded absolutely inviolate, He forbade also even wilful thoughts and desires of such like things: "But I say to you that anyone who even looks with lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart;" which words of Christ Our Lord cannot be annulled even by the consent of one of the partners of marriage, for they express a law of God and of nature which no will of man can break or bend.

This unity assures lasting interests in one another, the children and the family; it combines the wills of the spouses to work for the common welfare. Matrimony even "joins and knits together the souls" into a spiritual unit, so that they no longer are two but

one. This makes Christian marriage "entirely different from the union of animals" and raises it above those unions which go by the name of marriage but are "far removed from it." Therefore, the Holy Father admonishes: "Those about to marry should show a holy reverence toward it and zealously endeavor to make their marriage approach as nearly as possible to the archetype of Christ and the Church" (84).

b) *Indissolubility*. By this we understand that a valid marriage, be it a natural or a sacramental marriage, cannot be dissolved by any human authority, civil or ecclesiastical. The same reasons which make unity of marriage a necessity, namely, the spiritual and material welfare of the parents, children and family, demand that this union be for life—"till death do us part." "It is hardly necessary to point out what an amount of good is involved in the absolute indissolubility of wedlock." The assurance of a life-long union gives man and woman a sense of "safety and security" necessary for surrender of self and all that matrimony demands. As the Holy Father expresses it: "Both husband and wife possess a positive guarantee of the endurance of the stability which that generous yielding of their persons and intimate fellowship of their hearts by their nature strongly require, since true love never falls away," a guarantee of that "generous surrender of his own person made to another for the whole span of life."

This life-long union wonderfully strengthens the good will of husband and wife for mutual cooperation and sacrifice. "It is a fruitful source of virtuous life and of habits of integrity." It helps husband and wife to be faithful and loyal to each other. It removes the fear "of adversity of old age," anxiety about future children and makes possible their proper training. It banishes many occasions for discord, quarrels and jealousy, above all it preserves the dignity of woman who is assured of a position of honor in the home and in society, who otherwise would become, as among the pagans, the mere "instrument of man."

Hence it is clear that marriage even in the state of nature and certainly long before it was raised to the dignity of a sacrament was divinely instituted in such a way that it should carry with it a perpetual and indissoluble bond which cannot therefore be dissolved by any law.

Therefore, although the sacramental element may be absent from a marriage as in the case among unbelievers, still in such a marriage, inasmuch as it is a true marriage, there must remain

and indeed there does remain that perpetual bond which by divine right is so bound up with matrimony from its first institution that it is not subject to any civil power.

(a) *Divorce*. In the foregoing the attitude of the Church towards a divorce is made clear. The Church does not recognize the right which the State claims of dissolving a lawful marriage, or granting a separation to husband and wife which implies the permission of entering another marriage. The Church does not claim the right for herself, and denies to the State "the power to grant a divorce" in the sense stated. It has always been her teaching that the contract of a valid marriage "may not be destroyed by any human authority." The Pope clearly states: "Matrimony is not subject to any civil power," except in civil matters. "The matrimonial bond cannot be dissolved by any civil law." The "exceptions" to this universal law, viz. "certain natural marriages between unbelievers, or among Christians in the case of those marriages which though valid have not been consummated," are not made by man but by God through the Church.

"Others, taking a step further, simply state that marriage, being a private contract is, like other private contracts, to be left to the consent and good pleasure of both parties, and so can be dissolved for any reason whatsoever" (90).

"Opposed to all these reckless opinions, Venerable Brethren, stands the unalterable law of God, fully confirmed by Christ, a law that can never be deprived of its force by the decrees of men, the ideas of a people or the will of any legislator: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." . . . Moreover, these words refer to every kind of marriage, even that which is natural and legitimate" (91).

(b) *Separation*. Matrimony imposes upon the spouses the grave obligation of cohabitation, i.e. to live together in the same house as far as possible (can. 1128). However, the Church does not compel the couple to live together under every condition and circumstance. The Church recognizes the fact that, under certain conditions, it is lawful and even advisable to separate, at least for a time. "In certain circumstances imperfect separation of the parties is allowed, the bond not being severed. This separation, which the Church herself permits and expressly mentions in her Canon Law in those canons which deal with the separation of the parties as to material relationship and cohabitation, removes all the alleged inconveniences and dangers" (cc. 1128—).

The reasons which excuse from cohabitation are: Adultery (can. 1129), if one party joins a non-Catholic sect, gives their children a non-Catholic education, leads a scandalous and disgraceful life, endangers the spiritual or bodily welfare of the other spouse, cruelty and similar such reasons (can. 1131).

In any of these cases the innocent party appeals to the Bishop through the pastor (can. 1131). If it is found that there are sufficient grounds for a temporary separation, permission for it is granted by the ecclesiastical authority. In case the reasons are very weighty, e.g., infidelity, permission is given for starting divorce proceedings, however, always with the understanding that divorce does not imply freedom to enter a second marriage. "But to those who are married, not I, but the Lord commands that a wife is not to depart from her husband, and if she departs, that she is to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to her husband. And let not a husband put away his wife" (I Cor. 7,10). Jesus permits separation, but says to marry again is to "commit adultery" (Mk. 10.11).

Since separation and divorce bring numerous and grave ills to the family, expose man and woman to serious moral dangers, and renders the training and education of the children extremely difficult, it must be understood that recourse to those measures is to be had only after all means of bringing about harmonious Christian life have been exhausted. For the same reason let the young couple be firm in their mind and resolution, to avoid scrupulously whatever by its very nature leads to this sad ending of what had been a happy family life.

Exceptions: To avoid misunderstanding, note:

(1) As to natural marriages i.e., such as exist between non-baptized persons, there is the so-called Pauline Privilege. This means that, if either of the couple received baptism, the baptized party may, under certain conditions, enter a new marriage with another Catholic party, and by doing so the first marriage is dissolved (can. 1120).

(2) There is the case of the non-consummated marriage. As long as a couple has not made use of the right which marriage confers, viz. sexual relations, their marriage is considered soluble. Only when "it has been consummated, the marriage contract has its full completion, so by the will of God, there is also the greatest

firmness and indissolubility which may not be destroyed by any human authority" (can. 1119), (35).

(3) *Declaration of Nullity*. It may happen that a couple laboring under an impediment attempt marriage. This "marriage," while in reality invalid, has the external appearance of a true and valid marriage. When the impediment is discovered or becomes public, the proper ecclesiastical authorities may either validate the "marriage" or issue a declaration of nullity, in which case the parties are free to enter another marriage.—The same holds good in case the proper "Form of Marriage" has not been observed.

II DUTIES OF THE MARRIED

1 *Duties of the Husband*

a) *Head of the Family*. Since the family is composed of members, there needs must be some one in command. As the body is ruled by the head, so the family is governed by the father, the husband, the God-appointed head of the family. St. Paul says: "I do not allow a woman to teach or to exercise authority over men" (I Tim. 2, 12). Yet if the man either shirks his duty or is not able to exercise authority, the woman, with due regard for the dignity of the father, governs the family, because it is better to have her rule than none at all. As the Holy Father observes: "If the husband neglects his duty, it falls to the wife to take his place in directing the family" (28).

The important family affairs, however, ought to be discussed with each other, so as to give both a chance for expressing their opinion and wishes. In this manner a compromise is reached and harmony is preserved. The authority of the man must be mingled with and mellowed by love. "Husbands love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church . . . Even thus ought husbands also to love their wives . . . He who loves his wife, loves himself . . . Let each one of you also love his wife just as he loves himself; and let the wife respect her husband." Such are the repeated admonitions of St. Paul (Ephes. 5, 25—).

Of course, the husband cannot demand anything which is wrong, sinful, "not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to a wife".

It is the husband's duty to establish and preserve order in the family. He must be careful, for example, about the character of the friends he introduces into his home. He is responsible for

the education of the children and must see to it that none but good papers and other reading matter find their way into the house.

b) *Supporters of the Family*. The marriage contract is entered with the understanding that the man support the woman and children. He accepts the responsibility before God for the bodily needs of wife and children, as far as lies in his power and in harmony with his social and financial condition. It is a serious obligation as the Apostle warns: "If any one does not take care of his own and especially of his household, he has denied his faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5,8).

Drink has wrecked more homes and brought more unhappiness into the lives of good women and innocent children than any other single vice. A miserable, unhappy life is followed by an unholy death and severe punishment.

2 *Duties of the Wife*

a) *Respectful Obedience*. Christ earned the gratitude of woman by raising her from the low and disgraceful condition into which paganism had pushed her: a mere chattel, in the hand of the father, the slave of her husband. The punishment pronounced by God: "Thou shalt be under thy husband's power and he shall have domain over thee" (Gen. 3, 16) rested heavily upon her. Jesus gave indeed the wife and mother a place of dignity and honor, but still subject to her husband.

As stated before, "the husband is the chief of the family and the head of the wife." Therefore it becomes the duty of the wife to render due obedience to her husband. This obedience is not that of a "servant" but of a "companion" whom God has given him; it is respectful obedience "as the Church is subject to Christ" (Ephes. 5, 22), and as the lawful authority of the husband is tempered by love, so is the obedience of the wife: "Since the husband represents Christ and since the wife represents the Church, let there always be, both in him who commands and in her who obeys, a heaven-born love guiding both their respective duties." St. Paul, who tells the wife, "let wives be subject to their husbands," also says, "let the wife respect her husband" (Ephes. 5.21). Of this obedience the Holy Father observes: "This subjection, however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her noble office as wife, mother and com-

panion". The respectful obedience demanded from the wife presumes that the husband be always worthy of the same.

The young wife will do well to practice this obedience from the very start of her married life, the more so if in the past she has exercised authority either at home or elsewhere.

Domestic society being confirmed therefore, by this bond of love, there should flourish in it "order of love," as St. Augustine calls it. This order includes both the primacy of the husband with regard to the wife and children, and the ready subjection of the wife and her willing obedience which the Apostle commends in these words: "Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church" (Ephes. 5, 22).

b) *A Good Housekeeper*. "If the man is the head, the woman is the heart, and as he occupies the chief place in ruling, so she may and ought to claim for herself the chief place of love". As the woman receives the love of the man and children, so in turn it is her chief duty and privilege to dispense love to all. It is the mother above all who gives that delightful warmth and radiates the joy, contentment and happiness that make a true home. A loving, pious mother takes her own noble qualities of heart and mind and transplants them into the child. She duplicates herself, as it were, in the child. A pious mother draws God's blessing upon herself and the family. From her the home receives that beautiful Christian atmosphere, that purity of air in which the innocence of the children thrives and flourishes. "Though it suffers the want and hardships of this valley of tears," it "becomes for the children in its way a foretaste of that paradise of delight in which the Creator placed the first men of the human race". And when the sky is overcast and cloudy—every mother is a sorrowful mother—then the pious mother will not lose courage, she will find comfort and guidance and strength at the feet of Jesus and the Sorrowful Mother.

The woman tends to the general household duties in accordance with the financial condition of her husband—not with her former condition of life. She keeps the house and children clean and tidy, so as to make the husband feel proud of his home, his children and his wife.

It is of importance that she be a good cook, able to prepare

a good and tasty meal with limited means. This is a matter of thrift. A good cook saves, a poor one squanders much money. It is no less a matter of health of both parents and children. Sickness may be caused by faulty cooking, and sickness swallows much of the income in the form of doctor bills, loss of time, medicine etc., not to mention anxieties and sleepless nights.

Good cooking is not a matter of only thrift and health. Love, devotion and sacrifice go into preparing a good, home-cooked meal. A prudent, loving husband will not fail to take notice of this; nor must he consider it beneath his dignity to give expression to his appreciation and satisfaction. Many men take too much for granted on the part of their wives, and do not give due credit to their work, efforts and sacrifices.

Few quarrels start at a well-set table. Many a little unpleasant occurrence will evaporate and disappear in the appetizing odors of a favorite dish. If conditions dictate economy, then let superfluities be sacrificed—the table must be the last place to feel the pinch.

In case the young woman lacks the desired knowledge or experience, let her learn the art of cooking. The time spent in training herself to become an expert cook is an investment which will bear bountiful interest in comfort, health and happiness for many years to come.

Economy is of vital importance for the newly married. It is unwise on the part of a young couple to presume to be able to start where their parents left off. It is likewise a poor policy to begin married life with a heavy debt caused by purchasing things one can do without. Sickness, adverse working conditions and the like may cut or even stop the income entirely and payments will become increasingly difficult—a most discouraging outlook for young people. Restrictions, even poverty willingly borne, deepen mutual love and draw husband and wife closer together.

3 *Mutual Duties*

a) *Love one another.* “True and solid love is the basis for conjugal happiness,” the cornerstone of the home. A home built on selfishness or sensuality which at times are mistaken for love, will not last. The love which unites husband and wife, “is an especially pure and holy love.” “The love of which we are speaking,” says the Holy Father, “is not based on the passing lust of

the moment, nor does it consist in pleasing words only, but in deep attachment of the heart which is expressed in action, since love is proved by deeds”.

Genuine love does not seek one's own comfort, ease and pleasure. Its concern is the well-being and happiness of the other, as Christ, who died for us, loved “not for the sake of His own advantage, but seeking only the good of His Spouse.” True love is not a passing emotion, but a sentiment which endures for life. It feeds on sacrifice and trials. It grows stronger and purer as year is added upon year. We can love only what is good, honorable and noble. Husband and wife, therefore, must consider it their solemn duty to keep worthy of each other's respect. Love rests on respect.

This conjugal faith, however, which is most aptly called by St. Augustine the “faith of chastity” blooms more freely, the more beautifully and more nobly, when it is rooted in that more excellent soil, the love of husband and wife, which pervades all the duties of married life and holds pride of place in Christian marriage. For matrimonial faith demands that husband and wife be joined in an especially holy and pure love, not as adulterers love each other, but as Christ also loved the Church.

The spouses should at all times strive to please each other. It is the little things, little acts of thoughtfulness, consideration and surprises that make life pleasant. Bodily charms fade, sincere love never passes away. Love makes life a happier and holier life. It gives strength to bear the common burden. It seeks and fosters the sanctification of the other spouse.

b) *Bear with each other.* During the days of courtship the couple is wont to conceal personal faults and weakness from each other or to take them lightly. As a rule they meet under much the same conditions. After marriage the hidden faults come to the surface, and husband and wife must live together under all conditions, agreeable as well as disagreeable. As they readily accept the good and pleasing qualities of which they were not aware, so they must be prepared to discover shortcomings and frailties, and be willing to accept them.

No one is perfect. Let the spouses, therefore, make sincere efforts to avoid what is irritating and offensive. This calls for mutual allowances, yielding, foregoing likes and enduring dislikes. It's a great price, but peace and harmony are worth it. However,

there is no remedy for all human ills, and after sincere efforts on both sides, the spouses will apply the advice of the Apostle: "Bear with one another in love" (Ephes. 4,2). It takes a period of abiding patience to become mutually adjusted.

c) *Trust each other.* Unshaken mutual confidence is another foundation-stone of a happy home. It must be preserved at all costs. If lost, it is extremely difficult to recover, and married life becomes a painful martyrdom. Jealousy and suspicion, the opposites of confidence, torture their own victims and make an innocent person suffer. To be distrusted and suspected innocently is like suffering from a mortal wound; sooner or later love will die. In case the conduct of one of the spouses seems unjustifiable, let them discuss the matter cool-headedly, frankly and fairly. Nursing suspicions will lead to serious harm.

d) *Forgive and Forget.* Unpleasant things are bound to arise, for the simple reason that husband and wife are human beings. Let them make every effort not to have a quarrel the first year. It is recommended that they make a mutual promise to that effect, which promise is to be renewed on their wedding anniversary.

In case a dangerous situation threatens, they will remind one or the other of the promise and come to a speedy understanding, leaving no bitterness in the heart. Little wrongs must not be allowed to accumulate and grow. The Apostle advises: "Do not let the sun go down upon your anger" (Ephes. 4.26).

If a wrong has been done, let the guilty party admit it. Lies only aggravate a situation and undermine confidence. When a spouse regretfully admits a fault, the other may not withhold sincere forgiveness. Again the Apostle admonishes: "Bear with one another and forgive one another, if any one has a grievance against any other; even the Lord has forgiven you, so also do you forgive" (Coloss. 3,13). Forgive and forget. Do not dig up buried bones.

4 *Duties of Father and Mother*

Mutual attraction, perhaps for reasons unknown to themselves, draws a young man and woman together. The acquaintance slowly grows and ripens into a warm friendship—love. Love, seeking happiness of the other, kindles and deepens the desire of sharing life and all it offers: joys, sorrows, gifts of the mind and of the soul, even the bodies.

The sincere and pure minded youth and maiden look forward to future marriage as a "union of souls" "a bond of union of mind and heart" without however, excluding the intimate union of the bodies, since both union of the soul and the body constitute conjugal love. At the altar bride and groom consecrate their bodies to the noble purpose of marriage. They offer themselves to the omnipotent Creator, and ask for His blessing. Holy mother Church adds her benediction and prayers to those of her two children. Thus natural love, purified and sanctified by the sacrament of matrimony, the means to a noble end, becomes a chaste love. The Pope calls it, "devout love," "holy and pure love," "Christian love," a "sacred and inviolable bond,"—the well-spring of new life.

a) *The Conception of the Child.* To the first pair of human beings God gave life by an act of His omnipotence. "He formed man of the slime of the earth," and He "built the rib which He took from Adam into a woman" (Gen. 2,7,22). After that He willed that children enter life by the cooperation of husband and wife with His omnipotence. "The Creator in His goodness wished to use men as His helpers in the propagation of life" (12). By the physical union of the bodies, called the conjugal or marital act or sexual relation, the germ of life is deposited in the body of the wife. The union of the two cells is the beginning of a human being; the child develops during pregnancy, a period of nine months, and then is born. The uniting of the life-elements (cells) in the mother's body which gives rise to a human being is called the conception of the child. The entire process, as it follows the laws of nature, of which God is the Author, is sinless and pure, since God cannot be the Author of evil. The God-implanted desire for fatherhood and motherhood, and the gift of life itself through the cooperation of both parents, create that wonderful bond which unites husband and wife, parents and children in lifelong love.

The ability to perform the marital act is of importance for the Sacrament of matrimony. A person not able to perform the act cannot contract a valid marriage, by reason of the impediment of "impotency" (can. 1068). In case this condition develops, or is brought about after the marriage, the validity of the marriage is not affected by it. A woman, who does not labor under the above impediment of impotence but who, for some reason, cannot

become a mother, can validly marry. If she is aware of the fact, fairness and justice demand that she inform her future husband of her condition before marriage.

b) *After the Conception*: As soon as the mother knows herself to be with child, she becomes responsible for the germinating life. She may not do anything which directly would destroy it or expose it to serious danger. The exact moment when the two cells unite is not known, or when the rational soul is infused to form a human being. However, it is certainly wrong to believe that this infusion takes place weeks after marital relations or conception, and to act on that belief under the pretense that there is as yet no human being.

The practice, quite common nowadays, that the expectant mother consult a doctor for pre-natal care is recommended. Her own mother will also be able to give sound, practical advice. During pregnancy the mother will refrain from all actions which endanger the hidden life, such as jumping, heavy lifting, etc., which actions may be harmful to herself as well.

The husband is expected to treat the expectant mother with special consideration and thoughtfulness. He will keep from her occasions for undue emotional excitement, such as anger, mental depression, etc., and as far as possible preserve her calm and serene in mind and heart. The mother should frequently receive the Sacraments and recommend herself and the child to the Mother of God. Some time before the birth of the child she will present herself to the priest for the blessing which the Church imparts to the expectant mother.

c) *After the Birth*: The first care of the parents must be to see to it that the child receives Baptism within a week or two. In case of danger for the life of the child, they must notify the priest. If this cannot be done, or the priest cannot be had, any one can and must perform the ceremony. It is done in this way: Take $\frac{1}{4}$ of a cup or a large spoonful of common, ordinary water, pour it over the head of the child and say at the same time: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

Some weeks before the birth, a Christian name should be selected and arrangements made for a godfather and godmother, both of whom must be practical Catholics.

On the occasion of the Baptism or soon after, the mother

should again present herself to the priest for the mother's blessing, commonly called "churching." In the blessing before the birth of the child the priest recommends mother and child to the loving care of the heavenly Father. After the birth the happy mother returns to give thanks to God for the favor granted her.

5 *Duties of Husband and Wife*

Marriage grants the spouses the privilege of conjugal relationship, which it confers as a right, and imposes as a duty. In the words of the Holy Father; "It is a free act of the will by which each contracting party hands over and accepts those rights proper to the state of marriage" (can. 1081;1111). Quoting St. Paul he states: "Let the husband render to the wife her due, and likewise the wife to the husband." These words of the Apostle expresses not only a law of Justice, but a norm of Charity (I Cor. 7, 3).

By marriage husband and wife concede to each other the right of the lawful use of their bodies and agree to its corresponding duty. However, this mutual obligation is not a right without any restrictions nor a duty binding under all conditions. It becomes a grave obligation only when the demand is reasonable and seriously insisted on, and when the other party has no valid excuse, such as bodily indisposition, improper place, frequency etc.

The Holy Father counsels "charity" which renders the right less exacting and the duty less onerous. It must be remembered that the pleasure provided by the all-wise Creator it intended for both spouses, not for one only. The Holy Father also cautions husbands by stating that the wife is not bound to comply with "her husband's every request even if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to a wife".

a) *What is Lawful in Wedlock:* As already remarked, the primary end of marriage is "the procreation and education of children" (can. 1013). Fatherhood and motherhood in honorable wedlock is a dignity in which many saintly men and women glory. What God has ordained, and a duty and right which comes from God must be sinless and pure. Hence lawful are:

(1) The marriage act proper, or whatever is required for or contributes towards attaining its primary end, namely the conception of the child.

Likewise those things are sinless which are helpful in any way to procure the pleasure which the Creator has bound up

with the act. Both parties carry the common burden of married life and therefore are also entitled to the joys which the state provides. For the reason stated above, this phase of their life may become the object of thoughts and desires without sin, as also the subject of clean and becoming conversation.

Actions of an intimate nature are permitted, even though the marital act is not contemplated at the time, provided, complete satisfaction for either party is not intended or sought. Problems and difficulties of a moral nature which married life may present, are best submitted to the Confessor as soon as they arise.

(2) The secondary ends of marriage are "mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love and quieting of concupiscence." Since marriage relationship serves these secondary ends in no small measure, the secondary objects are a sufficient reason for the exercise of the marriage act. Hence husband and wife may make use of their rights in the proper manner even at a time when the primary object of marriage cannot be attained, e.g., because of age, or when the wife is already blessed with a child, or "on account of natural reason either of time or of certain defects new life cannot be brought forth."

"For in matrimony as well as in the use of the matrimonial right there are also secondary ends, such as mutual aid, the cultivating of mutual love and the quieting of concupiscence which husband and wife are not forbidden to consider so long as they are subordinated to the primary end and so long as the intrinsic nature of the act is preserved."

(3) Married people are at liberty to forego or renounce their privilege. St. Paul advises continence by mutual "consent for a time that they may give themselves to prayer" (1 Cor. 7,5.).

Such a "time for prayer" would be before Holy Communion, with due regard for frequent communicants. It must be remembered that this is an advice only, and by no means an obligation of any kind. The practice of voluntary continence, as suggested, has the advantage that when necessity will impose it, e.g., at times of sickness, separation, etc., the couple will be prepared to meet the situation without any great inconvenience. This seems to be the mind of the Holy Father when he says: ". . . to use the rights given them by marriage in a way that will always be Christian and sacred, more especially in the first years of

wedlock, so that should there be need of continency afterwards, custom will have made it easier for each to preserve it."

(4) While the privileges of the married are sufficiently wide to preclude needless fears and undue anxieties, this does not imply the shedding of modesty. The Apostle calls our bodies "temples of the Holy Ghost," which applies to all. Self-respect must not be sacrificed. Mutual respect, a precious thing, must be preserved. The angel Raphael gave the young Tobias and his wife what may be called a pre-nuptial instruction. Amongst other things he remarked: "Hear me and I will show you who they are over whom the devil can prevail. They are they who in such a manner marry as to shut out God from themselves and their mind, and give themselves up to their lusts as the animals do which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power" (Tob. 6, 16). As children of God we owe reverence to one another.

"That mutual familiar intercourse between spouses themselves, if the blessing of conjugal faith is to shine with becoming splendor, must be distinguished by chastity so that husband and wife conform themselves in all things with the law of God and of nature, and endeavor always to follow the will of their most wise and holy Creator with the greatest reverence towards the work of God" (22).

b) *What is Sinful in Wedlock:* Whatever is contrary to the VIth Commandment of God for a single person is sinful also in wedlock, with the exception of the marital rights and privileges. Deserving of special mention are:

(1) Self-abuse—be it solitary or mutual. "The wife has no authority over her body but the husband, the husband likewise has not authority over his body, but the wife" (I Cor. 7,5). By "authority" the Apostle means the conjugal right.

(2) Adultery. In its first sense adultery means sexual relations with another not his or her spouse. In a wider sense it includes "all sensual affections and actions with a third party." God Himself teaches us the importance of conjugal fidelity by one of the ten commandments, and by imposing the penalty of death for its violation (Lev. 20,10, John, 8,5). St. Paul warns: "Let marriage be held in honor by all and let the marriage bed be undefiled. For God will judge the immoral and adulterer" (Hebr. 13,4). Christ declares: "I say to you that anyone who even looks with

lust at a woman has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Math. 5, 28).

"The second blessing of matrimony which we said was mentioned by St. Augustine, is the blessing of conjugal honor which consists in the mutual fidelity of the spouses in fulfilling the marriage contract, so that what belongs to one of the parties by reason of this contract sanctioned by divine law, may not be denied to him or permitted to any third person. Nor may there be conceded anything to one of the parties which is contrary to the rights and laws of God and entirely opposed to matrimonial faith, and so can never be conceded.

"It follows, therefore, that they are destroying mutual fidelity who think that the ideas and morality of our present time concerning a harmful and false friendship with a third party can be countenanced, and who teach that greater freedom of feeling and action in such external relations should be allowed to man and wife, particularly as many (so they consider) are possessed of an inborn sexual tendency, which cannot be satisfied within the narrow limits of monogamous marriage."

"Such unworthy and idle opinions are condemned by the noble instinct which is found in every chaste husband and wife, and even by the light of the testimony of nature alone, a testimony that is sanctioned and confirmed by the command of God, 'Thou shalt not commit adultery.'"

(3) Criminal Abortion: By abortion is meant the removal of a child not yet able to live outside the mother's womb; as Pope Pius puts it: "Taking the life of the offspring hidden in the mother's womb" (63). This act becomes sinful or "criminal" when done intentionally and directly. Intentionally: When anything is done with the set purpose of bringing about the result mentioned; it matters not what means are applied. On the other side, a miscarriage, without any one's fault, being unintentional, is devoid of guilt.

Directly: When the means are applied solely for the purpose of destroying the hidden life—whatever the motive or reason for doing it may be. "Killing of the innocent," "murder of the innocent" is a grave crime, contrary to the law of nature and of God Who declared: "Thou shalt not kill." The crime is punished by the Church with excommunication reserved to the bishop (can. 2350). Nor does the fact alone that it has been declared "legal" in a certain case, or "lawful because there are weighty

reasons," justify the operation in the eyes of God. "The life of each (mother and child) is equally sacred, and no one has the power, not even the public authority to destroy it."

However, in case the life of the mother is threatened by disease, proper means to remedy her condition may be applied, even though they are harmful or fatal to the unborn child.

(4) *Birth-control*: Many persons are willing to accept the pleasures which the married state offers, but unwilling to assume its responsibilities. They wish to live as husband and wife, but refuse the burden of parenthood. "Being weary of children they wish to gratify their desires without the consequent burden. Others say that they cannot on the one hand remain continent, nor on the other can they have children because of the difficulties whether on the part of the mother or on the part of family circumstances." For such and similar reasons they resort to birth-control, which in reality is lack of self-control.

Birth-prevention means the use of the privilege of the married and the conjugal act, but at the same time taking measures "so that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural powers to generate life." By such means the conception of the child is rendered impossible. This is a gravely sinful abuse, no matter whether the preventative measures be taken before, during or after the act itself. Even though this practice is excused, publicly defended and recommended, public opinion and general practice never can declare or make lawful what is contrary to the laws of nature. Nor can personal reasons, however plausible they may appear, excuse from the sin and guilt of deliberately transgressing the law of God. Pope Pius XI solemnly declares: "Any use whatsoever of matrimony exercised in such a way that the act is deliberately frustrated in its natural power to generate life, is an offense against the law of God and nature, and those who indulge in such are branded with the guilt of grave sin."

"No reason, however grave, can be put forward by which anything intrinsically against nature may become conformable to nature and morally good. Since, therefore, the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children, those who in exercising it deliberately frustrate its natural power and purpose sin against nature and commit a deed which is shameful and intrinsically vicious . . . Intercourse even with one's legitimate wife is unlawful and wicked where the conception of off-

spring is prevented. Onan, the son of Juda, did this and the Lord killed him for it" (55, 56).

Husband and wife, sincerely interested in their own welfare and that of their family, will turn a deaf ear to the tempting voice of a pagan world, and listen to the voice of their Christian conscience, and the voice of the Holy Father, which is no other than the voice of God.

Many and destructive evils grow out of this sinful practice: Husband and wife exclude God from their heart and home. Happiness departs from a place where chastity is defiled and the sanctity of matrimony is outraged. Many a woman pays the penalty with impaired health of body or mind. A tranquil, peaceful heart gives way to an uneasy conscience and bitter remorse for years to come. We see the disastrous results of this widespread evil in the fact that childless couples furnish the greatest number of divorces—and divorce is but the climax of a period of quarrels and strife.

If "family circumstance" such as financial difficulties, "extreme want," or the "health of the mother and the danger of her life" are advanced as reasons for birth control, let the Christian spouses bear in mind that they will fare better by keeping themselves pure in the sight of God, and putting their trust in Him, than by using sinful means to ward off an impending evil or danger, in many cases exaggerated and unreal.

"Virtuous continence" by mutual consent, self-control assisted by divine grace, will safeguard the material welfare of the family, and at the same time preserve God's blessing for the home. Pius XI says: "Holy Church knows well that not unfrequently one of the parties is sinned against rather than sinning when for a grave cause he or she reluctantly allows the perversion of the right order. In such a case there is no sin, provided that, mindful of the law of charity he or she does not neglect to seek to dissuade and to deter the partner from sin. Nor are those considered as acting against nature who in the married state use their right in the proper manner although on account of natural reasons whether of time or of certain defects new life cannot be brought forth."

For various reasons young couples at times enter some kind of agreement before the marriage as to the number of children and the time when they intend to have them. Such and similar

arrangements must be avoided. In most cases they result in making married life nothing but a prolonged occasion of sin. They may even expose the sacrament to the danger of nullity. Couples may make the sad discovery that when later on children would be welcome, God refuses to cooperate. By far the best course is to lead a normal married life, and let the good Lord have His will.

Conclusion: Since the home is built on the sacred foundations of a Sacrament, it must be the constant endeavor of the spouses to keep God and His blessing in the home by a good, Christian life. When sin enters, God departs and with Him happiness and lasting peace. People can marry without God, but they cannot have abiding happiness without Him.

Family prayers, the Family Rosary, draw God's blessing upon a home. The images of Jesus and Mary must be given a place of honor. In the hour of darkness father and mother go to Jesus and Mary for comfort and help. Those who tell us that religious pictures are out of place in a modern home, are neither willing nor able to assist us in the hour of need.

The Holy Father gives the following advice: "Those who are joined in the bond of sacred wedlock should be wholly imbued with a profound and genuine sense of duty towards God, which will shape their whole lives and fill their minds and wills with a very deep reverence for the majesty of God . . ." Let them "perform their duty and exercise their religion so that each give themselves to God, continually ask for His Divine assistance, frequent the Sacraments, and always nourish and preserve a loyal and thoroughly sincere devotion to God."

"Even the very best instruction given by the Church, however, will not alone suffice to bring about once more conformity of marriage to the law of God. Something more is needed, in addition to the education of the mind, namely, a steadfast determination of the will on the part of husband and wife to observe the sacred laws of God and of nature in regard to marriage. In fine, in spite of what others may wish to assert and spread abroad by word of mouth or in writing, let husband and wife resolve; to stand fast to the Commandments of God in all things that matrimony demands, always render to each other the assistance of mutual love; to preserve the honor of chastity; not to lay profane hands on the stable nature of the bond; to use the rights given them by marriage in a way that will be always Christian and sacred, more especially in the first years of wedlock, so that

should there be need of continency afterwards, custom will have made it easier for each to preserve it" (115).

"In order that they may make this firm resolution, keep it and put it in practice, an oft-repeated consideration of their state of life and a diligent reflection on the sacrament they received will be of great assistance to them. Let them constantly keep in mind that they have been sanctified and strengthened for the duties and for the dignity of their state by a special sacrament, the efficacious power of which, although it does not impress a character, is undying" (116).

