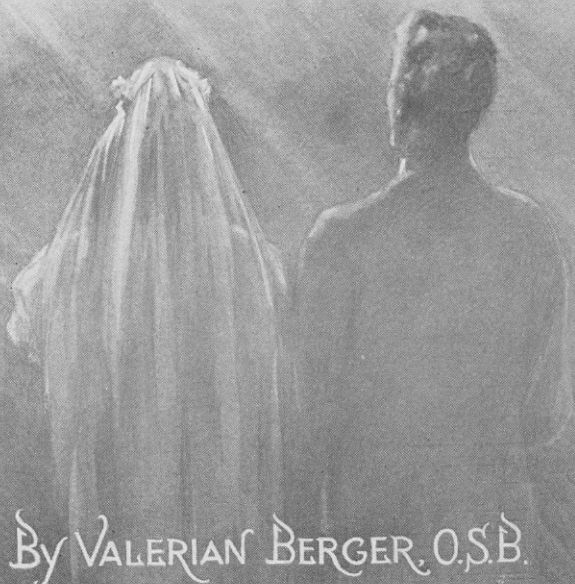


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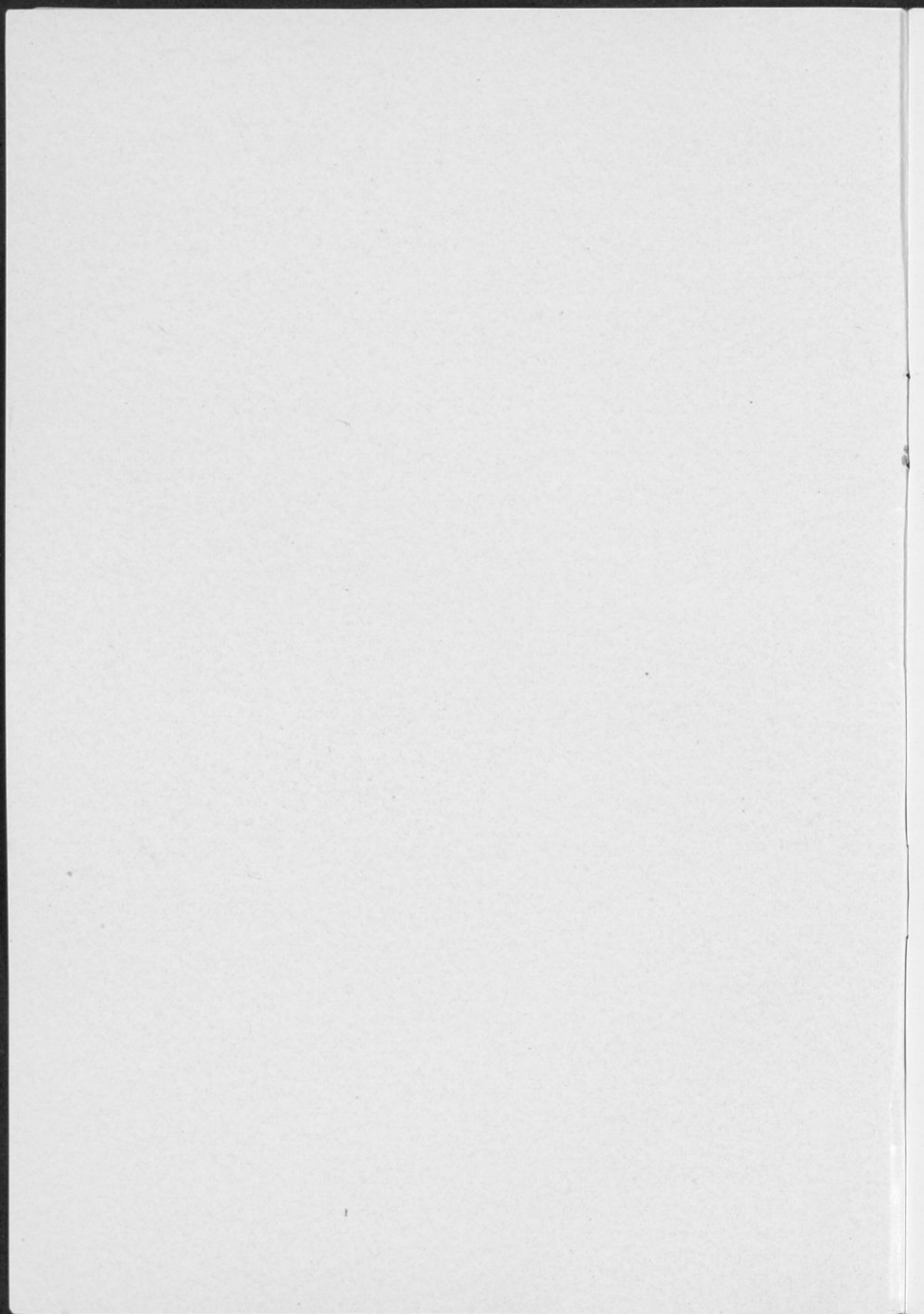
Berger, Valerian

THE EVE OF MARRIAGE



By VALERIAN BERGER, O.S.B.

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NEW YORK
THE PAULIST PRESS
401 WEST 59TH STREET

Nihil Obstat:

ARTHUR J. SCANLAN, S.T.D.,
Censor Librorum.

Imprimatur:

✠ FRANCIS J. SPELLMAN, D.D.,
Archbishop of New York.

New York, June 13, 1941.

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IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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PRINTED AND PUBLISHED IN THE U. S. A.
BY THE PAULIST PRESS, NEW YORK, N. Y.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to all the noble and God-fearing young men and women who seek holiness and happiness in the wedded state, and in particular to my friends, Mr. and Mrs. X. Y.

May their mutual love reflect the love of Christ and His Church.

THE AUTHOR.

INTRODUCTION

On the occasion of the marriage of a Catholic, it is customary to give a short instruction covering the duties of married life. The excitement caused by the preparations for the wedding has a tendency to lessen the effect of this instruction. Not infrequently has the author of this little pamphlet heard such remarks as, "I wish I could remember the practical advice Father gave us on the eve of our marriage." *The Eve of Marriage* is intended to help fulfill this wish.

Nothing that I may say in this heart to heart talk is intended as personal criticism. When I refer to the past there is no thought in my mind that you have made mistakes in courtship days. When I speak of the future there is no supposition that you are without the general knowledge of the divine laws which govern marriage and the things of marriage. When I offer a word of warning there is no supposition that you have any evil intentions. I refer to the past merely to suggest the correction of possible mistakes and I speak of the possibilities of the future with the view of offering you guidance unto happiness and holiness. The words of warning are for the wise. I often think that there are many married people in the world whose married lives might have been very different, much better, and much happier, if before marriage there had been a heart to heart talk on married life. There is only one purpose in my mind, namely, that you welcome whatever help there may be in my words. I shall try to add some few practical suggestions which may enable you to obtain a greater measure of happiness here and hereafter, then the future will bring God's blessing upon the author of these pages.

The Eve of Marriage

Origin of Marriage

WHAT is the origin of marriage? Outside the Catholic Church there is very little consideration of that important question. Many see marriage as merely a human arrangement, a rather practical and natural arrangement. Marriage is practical in as far as it would seem reasonable for a woman to remain in a home and be provided for by a man. Marriage is a natural arrangement in as far as nature calls for the union of man and woman to perpetuate the human race. However, the Catholic Church has a far more serious view on the origin of marriage. The Church teaches that marriage was instituted by God in paradise by the union of Adam and Eve enjoining upon them, "Increase and multiply and fill the earth" (Gen. i. 28). Now God might have provided for the human race in many other ways. He might have created a million men and a million women or He might have created two million human beings without sex faculties. But as a matter of fact God created one man and one woman and He gave to them the sacred duty and privilege of perpetuating the human race. Even today, centuries removed from the beginning of the human race, with the certain knowledge that this sacred duty and privilege has been much misused and abused, God still makes the human race depend upon the human agents, men and women.

Purposes of Marriage

From the origin of marriage we pass quite naturally to the consideration of the purposes of marriage. Apparently there are millions who seem to think that marriage is merely a civil justification for a man to live with a woman with no thought of responsibility to any human or divine power. Some go so far as to contend that the prime purpose of marriage is to

offer man and woman the opportunity of doing those things which decency forbids to those who are not united in the bond of matrimony. Others consider marriage merely a medium of exchange. The man provides the income for the home and the woman keeps the home for their mutual use and comfort.

What does the Church say about the purposes of marriage? The teaching of the Catholic Church is that the prime purpose of marriage is the begetting and subsequent training of children. This is the very definition of matrimony. So strict is the teaching of the Church on this point that we can put it down as a principle that men and women have no right to marry unless they accept this first purpose of matrimony. This is of such grave importance that the Church teaches that those who enter the marriage state with the positive purpose of avoiding the begetting of children do not contract the sacred bond of marriage but merely prostitute themselves to their selfish and sinful desires. The willingness to effect the reproduction of the human race is necessary to contract the sacred bond of marriage.

The Church recognizes other lawful and so-called secondary ends of marriage, namely; pleasure, human consolation, provision for the future, inheritance and social standing. However, there can never be a real marriage bond where the prime purpose of begetting children is positively excluded. Lest there should be any misunderstanding on the foregoing, let it be said that those parties to a marriage contract who through no fault of their own are not blessed with offsprings are not to be disturbed in conscience. It is indeed a cross for God-fearing couples not to be blessed with their own offspring. Such unfortunate couples would do well to consult the family physician. And after there seems to be no possibility of children, even with medical and surgical aid, then such couples would do well to consider the adoption of one or more of God's homeless orphans. The pastor of the couple will be able to advise properly. We cannot help stating that those selfish men and women who positively refuse to accept the prime purpose

of marriage have no adequate idea of life and its ultimate ends. They have no idea of the emptiness they are creating for their later years.

Sacredness of Marriage

From the consideration of the origin of marriage, God being the author of marriage and the primary end of marriage being the begetting of children, it should be easy to realize the sacredness of marriage itself. If marriage were something of human origin one might easily doubt its sacredness and, doubting its sacredness, make light of marriage and the things that pertain to marriage. However, when we realize the fact that marriage is not a human institution but God's eternal plan for the propagation and perpetuation of the human race, then trifling with marriage begins to appear as what it really is, an insult offered to God.

Seriousness of Marriage

The seriousness of marriage is second only to its sacredness. Many who enter the wedded state have very imperfect ideas of the seriousness of marriage. It is the very seriousness of marriage that makes the Catholic Church surround it with so many safeguards. For example, it is the seriousness of marriage that makes the Catholic Church anxious to have her children consider well the thought of approaching marriage. How many married men and women would be free today if they had had three weeks to prepare for marriage? The very consequences of marriage should be sufficient to make the thoughtful person mindful of the seriousness of marriage. Surely the entering into a life-long partnership should occasion the most serious thought and most careful preparation.

Unity of Marriage

The ideal of marriage as set up by God and confirmed by the teaching of Christ is the union of one man and one woman. It is a union of mind, heart, and body. It must indeed take

great courage for both parties to a marriage contract to choose each other to the positive exclusion of all other men and women. And yet that is exactly the ideal established by God and confirmed by the teaching of Christ and His Church.

Life-Long Bond

Perhaps it would not take so much courage to enter the marriage state and establish the marriage bond if it were possible to undo it. In the teaching of the Catholic Church, however, the bond that is effected by the mutual marriage vows is a bond that binds both parties together until death frees one or the other. Incidentally, it is the lasting character of the marriage bond that makes marriage worth while. When we recall that death came into the world only in answer to God's threat to punish the willful disobedience of Adam and Eve, the first married couple, we can understand the awfulness of the threat of death and at the same time understand the pining away of the aged wife or husband shortly after the death of the beloved companion in marriage. For those who love with a love which is true and loyal, a life time is too short to be bound together; but to those who do not love with this loyal and true love a life time seems well-nigh endless.

Those contemplating marriage will do well to consider that they enter into a partnership not for a day, a week, a year, or even for ten years, but until death separates them. It is indeed a serious thing to obligate oneself to a life-long partnership, and those who enter into such a partnership without serious reflection do not realize what grave consequence may follow their thoughtless action. On the other hand, those who are well mated, self-sacrificing and generous need have no fears about the possibility of their living faithful to such a life-long partnership. God will supply natural and supernatural aids to enable married people to be true to the highest ideals of marriage. The natural aids which enable married people to be faithful to each other until death are many. The first of these aids is human love.

Human Love

God has implanted in human nature a certain group of what we call human passions. One of the noblest of these passions is human love. St. Thomas says that "to love is to will that good should befall a person." True lovers need not have human love defined. They know what human love is and they know something of the demands of human love. Now real human love has God for its foundation and real human love is an aid to reaching God. It is a thing of the spirit more than of the flesh. In fact, when it has fruit in the spirit, we judge it to be true human love. When it shows itself only in the flesh, it may be suspected of being more lust than love. Our divine Saviour tells us "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John xv. 13). God alone knows in how many a turn of married life there is a need of this supreme test of human love. Married people should be careful to keep the love of the marriage day both fresh and sweet. Let me explain.

More Love

There is something wrong with the husband or wife or with both when they love each other just a little bit less with every day of married life. This is not God's plan. The span of human life should see, not the end of human love between husband and wife, but its constant growth. Their love should increase with every day of married life only to be perfected in the next life with God. Every day of married life should find both husband and wife anxious to do those things which will keep the love of the marriage day growing. This love will be kept fresh by a mutual striving to do those things which will make them more beloved by their life companion. There is something wrong with the married people who cease doing all the nice things which they did during courtship days. Birthday cakes, surprises, boxes of candies and the making of little presents, these are but so many slight efforts to assure the

freshness of the love of the marriage day. And lest you should forget, "The corruption of the best becomes the worst." The opposite of love is hatred.

Harmony

The deliberate and intended effort, on the part of both husband and wife, to keep harmony is necessary if love is to last until death. Do not be so foolish as to think that there will never be disagreements in your married life. The best mated couples now and then run into little things which might cause disagreements. Most of the causes for disagreements between married people are very trivial. It would be ideal if married people would remember that since the causes of disagreement are usually trivial the disagreements themselves should be short-lived. If married people have misunderstandings they should do everything possible to straighten out these domestic affairs as soon as possible. There should be a balancing of accounts every day. If you quarrel at the breakfast table you must not fail to be at peace by nightfall. If your husband or wife makes a mistake, it is not the first human mistake. The one who has failed should admit the mistake and the other party should forgive and forget. Of course, it is extremely foolish for a wife or a husband to be constantly recalling the mistakes of the past.

There was once a philosopher who gave these two bits of advice to married people, First, balance your accounts every day, beginning anew each day. Secondly, when you have what you consider a grievance against your husband or wife you should write down the cause of the grievance. Hand the note to your mate. You will find that as you write you will be ashamed to complain about such trifles and you will forget the whole affair. If the grievance is considerable, you will come to a more definite understanding by clearly stating your grievances. If your grievance is not well founded you will be corrected in your **judgment**.

Remember, life in the married state is very much a 50-50 proposition and it is only when you are willing to bear your share of the burdens of married life that you can hope to have real peace and love. There can never be harmony in the home unless both parties to the marriage contract are willing to do their individual parts to produce it.

Jealousy

Jealousy, a human passion, is a sister of pride. Like all other human passions jealousy may be a strong force for good but may become a terrible force unto evil. It makes husbands and wives anxious to have all the affection and attention of their mates. Jealousy is one of the hedges with which God has surrounded the bond of matrimony. However, an uncontrollable or an unfounded jealousy may be the occasion of much evil. Newlyweds should begin life fully aware of the possibilities of jealousy. It is well for married people to know that jealousy is not a constant passion. Men who have never felt the sting of jealousy may, under certain circumstances, experience a blind surge of jealousy. Women who have scarcely known the inclination to jealousy may experience a very violent siege of jealousy at a certain period of life. It is well for both husband and wife to resolve to avoid with utmost care those things which might awaken the passion of jealousy in the breast of the other.

Faith in Each Other

Another great aid toward the preservation of love and harmony is the element of mutual trust. Many people go through the world distrusting their neighbors. The newlywed couple should begin married life fully determined to trust each other. Do not be too easily influenced by what others may say about your life partner. Do not listen to every bit of gossip which might come to you. Gossip is often started by malicious informants who secretly hope to awaken the monster of jealousy.

Business dealings and other arrangements which effect the welfare of the home should be common knowledge of husband and wife. Many a foolish business venture would have been avoided had the wife's opinion been consulted, and she is a wise wife who is satisfied with the giving of her honest opinion. The final decision rests with the husband, who is the head of the household, even as Christ is the head of the Church.

Mother-in-Law

Much has been said about mothers-in-law. Holy Scripture advises properly, "That the wife depart not from the husband" and "let not the husband put away the wife" (1 Cor. vii. 10-12). Your husband or your wife comes before your mother. Live for each other, not for your mothers. Really wise mothers know that the happiness of their children depends upon mothers keeping their proper distance. However, it is very foolish and very uncharitable to take the attitude that nothing good can come from a mother-in-law. That mother-in-law is your life partner's mother. Respect her, love her, and if she is wise she will leave you to make your own little home even as she wanted to make hers. To the one who is tempted to be too uncharitable toward a mother-in-law perhaps this thought will be of value, "that woman cannot be such a bad woman—she is the mother of my spouse."

Marriage Ideals

God established marriage. Originally marriage was a life-long contract. With the coming of Christ, however, marriage became more than a contract. It became a sacrament. St. Paul speaking in the name of Christ and the Church calls matrimony a great sacrament. Incidentally, St. Paul expresses the very ideals of Catholic marriage. He sets up the proper relationship between husband and wife. "The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church. Therefore as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to

their husbands in all things" (Eph. v. 23, 24). In this does St. Paul clearly indicate that the wife is to be obedient to the husband. Of course, this obedience is to be only in things which are lawful. Christ is the head of the Church only to direct it and use it unto good. In like manner is the husband, the head of the household, to expect the obedience of his wife. There can never be any problem of the wife's freedom when there is question of doing something unlawful or ungodly. There can never be any right on the part of the husband to command or expect co-operation in evil. A woman is always the image of God and the temple of the Holy Ghost. Hence the power of the husband over the wife in marriage is always limited to that which is within the law of God.

"Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered himself up for it. So also ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself" (Eph. v. 25-28). Indeed, is there a more sweet and blissful intimacy than the union of Christ and His Church. And yet the Apostle sets up this model and example for married people. I wonder whether those outside the Catholic Faith can have even a faint notion of this truly Christian ideal of marriage? Surely the exchange of the obedience of the wife for the love of the husband is a very fair exchange. No good woman could begrudge her obedience in lawful things when she knows that for that obedience she is to be loved even as Christ loved the Church. St. Augustine said, Eve was not made from the head of Adam that she might rule man nor from the foot of Adam that she might be trampled upon by man but from a rib of Adam that she might be loved by man and help man.

Marriage a Sacrament

With the establishment of Christianity marriage was raised to the dignity of a sacrament. This means that there is something about the marriage of Christians not to be found in the marriages of those who are not Christians. Through the sacra-

ment of matrimony not only is the union of a Christian husband and a Christian wife blessed by God but that union is constantly receiving God's abundant graces to enable the parties to the union to live lives worthy of Christ, their leader.

Preparation for the Sacrament of Matrimony

If the sacrament of marriage is to bring the graces which it should bring, then the sacrament must be received in the state of sanctifying grace. You cannot be too careful with your confession on the eve before your marriage. Let nothing in the world deter you from making a worthy confession. Sometimes there is hesitation when the penitent is known to the priest. The priest can only admire you if you have the courage to tell him what you know has been a serious offense against the law of God. At times those about to be married make general confessions the night before their marriage. The priest will help you if a general confession is necessary. Don't think of receiving the sacrament of marriage unless you have settled any doubt which might exist. The priest who has the privilege of assisting at your marriage is anxious to insure your worthy reception of this sacrament. Above everything else, go to the altar on the occasion of your marriage free from the guilt of sin.

Marriage, Rights, Privileges and Duties

It is not easy to suppose that those who are about to be joined in holy wedlock can be ignorant of the fact that the marriage bond, established by the exchange of the mutual consent of man and woman, before properly constituted authority, sets up certain so-called marriage rights, privileges and duties. We now take up the consideration of these points and wish to do so with the greatest possible reverence, reserve and religious delicacy. By way of introduction, let it be said that there are people in the world who seem to lose sight of all consideration except the consideration of self. They are the

men and women who have no thought of the rights of others and no thought of the eternal laws of God. O how much unhappiness and sin is brought into the world by these self-centered men and women. Their whims and fancies are their guiding lights, their passions their masters, their associates pitiable victims, their God an unacknowledged Being, their goal pleasure and their end eternal death.

Marriage Rights

Upon the exchange of the marriage consent before properly constituted witnesses, man and woman acquire what are known as marital rights. By this is meant that the two parties to the marriage contract obtain a right to the use of each other's bodies to the end for which God made man male and female. This right is a mutual affair so that either party to the marriage contract may ask for the marriage right. The marriage right is also a mutual affair in the sense that it is to be given by the other party when this right is asked for reasonably to the proper end of its existence and with due thought to the welfare of both parties concerned. It would be the height of selfishness on the part of the husband to demand the marriage right without any thought of the welfare of the wife. It would be highly contrary and detrimental to real human love for the wife to expect the frequent postponement of the exercise of the marriage right. Neither husband nor wife violates the right of the other party when by mutual consent the exercise of the marriage right is postponed. In fact, both parties should strive to respect each other's request to abstain from or postpone the use of the marriage right. The self-restraint and self-control necessary to respect the wish of the other party will go a long way toward building up reverence for this sacred right. Happy marriages are the outcome of sacrifice—sacrifices made by both parties. The marriage right, properly used, is sacred and chaste. Only the improper use of the marriage right is a matter of shame and sin.

Privilege of Marriage

The marriage bond brings with it the privilege of fatherhood and motherhood. In the design of God the right of human association enjoyed by husband and wife is for several good ends. Normally, fatherhood and motherhood result from this association. And when this has been the result of their association, husband and wife have accomplished the first end of the marriage state and we say that there is fruit from their human love. Unfortunately, there are many married people who do not set the proper value upon this privilege. We shall say more on this in the division entitled Misuse of the Marriage Rights.

Duty of Marriage

In youth there is perhaps little danger of either party refusing to fulfill the marriage duty, but with the advance of age there may be some temptation to neglect this mutual obligation. St. Paul expresses the whole teaching of the Church on this point: "Let the husband render the debt to his wife, and the wife also in like manner to the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body but the husband. And in like manner the husband also hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud not one another, except, perhaps by consent, for a time, that you may give yourselves to prayer; and return together again, lest satan tempt you for your incontinency. But I speak this by indulgence, not by command" (1 Cor. vii. 3-7). Remember, real human lovers will sacrifice themselves to prove their love for each other. Since it is true to say that by far the heavier burden of married life falls to the lot of the wife it is not too much to expect the husband to exercise self-control. It is the part of a real man to do all that he can to help his beloved wife to bear her burden with the greatest possible ease. The greater sacrifice on the part of the mother no doubt accounts for the natural tendency to love one's mother more than one's father.

The marriage act being good and sacred, its use is good. Whatever might help to make it more pleasurable in a virtuous manner is permitted. That regards whatever might happen before, during and immediately after the marriage act. Moreover, what a married person is justified in doing that a married person may think of, desire and discuss with one's husband or wife. Besides the marriage act itself, certain marks of endearment which would not have been allowable in courtship days are good and virtuous in married life. "As long as husband and wife in their mutual sexual behavior do not intentionally or consciously cause pollution in themselves or the other party, or wilfully expose themselves to the approximate danger of it; whatever they may do to foster or show mutual love, and however, it is done, is not in itself sinful." Moderation, however, in all things pertaining to sex conduct is to be carefully observed in order to avoid the danger of selfishness and sin. Worthy husbands will do everything possible to respect the wishes of virtuous wives. Children should be the fruit of love, not the result of lust.

Misuse of the Marriage Rights

Although the marital act is a sacred right it is unfortunately frequently misused. Each misuse of the marriage act is an abuse of nature, an abuse of the very institution of marriage itself, a physical abuse of the faculties entrusted to human agents by the Creator of human nature. The pleasure of marriage is to be enjoyed only by married people, only in the married way and only for the lawful ends of marriage. Therefore, there can be no question of the use of the faculties of the human body except in the manner of husband and wife and for the ends of marriage.

It is always wrong to take the pleasure of marriage and positively remove the possibility of accomplishing the prime purpose of marriage, the begetting of human life. Onan was the first human being to practice the detestable and nasty thing now called birth control. God slew Onan for his sin

against nature (Gen. xxxviii. 9, 10). Married people who repeat the act of Onan, in any way whatsoever, multiply death unto themselves physically, morally, individually and racially.

Followed to its logical conclusion the practice of birth-control must eventually mean the destruction of the human race. Countless books and pamphlets have been written to show the progress of this detestable practice. Judgment day God will require an accounting of the use of the human faculties.

Prophets

Newlyweds must expect to meet false prophets—a host of them. Some will advise against parenthood in the first years of marriage. Others will openly advocate having one or two children but no more. You will find more who will openly advocate having at most one, two or three children. God save you if you listen to these false guides. Follow the voice of conscience and the guidance of Mother Church. In doing so you may have to forego some of the advantages which childless or near-childless couples have, but these questionable advantages will be more than balanced by the love of those who have come to bless you and by the peace of conscience which will approve of your living true to the laws of God. Many a childless home is childless because there was a refusal to accept parenthood when it was offered.

The artificial restriction of birth frequently brings with it physical penalties. You cannot provide for yourself better than God can provide for you. If He sees fit to care for the birds of the air and the lilies of the fields, can you reasonably doubt His care for the human souls which He entrusts to you? Above everything else, do not desecrate the first months of your married life. If, after God has blessed you with children, the problem of health or income makes the having of a larger family questionable, then go to a good Catholic doctor or to your Father confessor for advice. Nature itself has provided a perfectly lawful solution for your difficulty.

And be assured that when you face death the earnest petitions of the little hearts that beat because of you will more than balance all that you have borne to enable them to live.

The society shams and the cheap friends who advised you against having a family will have their own accounting. And what an accounting! If you bless your father and mother for their acceptance of your soul from the hand of God, then have the courage and spirit of sacrifice to fulfill your duty to God in the acceptance of the lives which He would give you.

Destruction of Life

If it is wrong to desecrate the use of marriage and thus prevent human life, it is certainly worse to destroy human life. Human life exists immediately after conception and is as much human life as the man or woman who walks the streets. Parents can indeed set the stage for the production of human life, but only God can give it, and God alone has the right to take it away. The destruction of an unborn babe is as much murder as the taking of any other human life. It is only more cowardly. The Church would prevent such terrible crimes by imposing penalties upon those who knowingly commit them. Although the mercy of God extends even to this sin, nevertheless the gravity of the sin and the special penalty imposed by the Church should deter married people from committing it. The fact that more is not said about the terribleness of this crime and far-reaching consequences of the same does not justify the inference that more could not be said.

Mutual Respect

The very sacredness of marriage and the holiness of the things that pertain to it must not destroy the fine sense of shame and self-respect which are to be found in decent men and women. Even the marriage right should not destroy the sense of shame and self-respect. Unfortunate indeed is the wife who has set aside those fine womanly qualities which make her

respect herself and demand the highest respect of her husband. Every wife should be a wonderful ideal in the estimation of her husband. If after months and even years of married life the husband can still look up to his wife as an ideal, as he should have done when he was courting her, she will be very happy of her position. Happy the husband who has always been as noble as his bride considered him to be when she was being courted. God help both when mutual respect comes to an end. The wife will suffer the more because of her very delicate nature but the husband will not escape many sad punishments for his failure. The husband should avoid everything which might shock the fine sensibilities of his wife. This must be done from the very first day of marriage. This is particularly to be advised for the marriage day itself. Demands upon the wedding day have left lasting unfavorable impressions. Rather than run the risk of such a demand it would be better to follow the example of Tobias who said: "Sara, arise, and let us pray to God today, and tomorrow and the next day; because for these three nights we are joined to God: and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock. For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God" (Tobias viii. 4, 5). Forget not the dignity of the human body. It is the temple of the Holy Ghost.

Children of Saints

Speaking of the saints, their lives reveal many examples of heroic efforts made to practice self-control in the matter of the marriage rights. Nor are the saints men and women of the distant past. There are married men and women in the world today who voluntarily limit themselves to certain days for the sacred use of the marriage right. Although this is not of obligation upon any married couple it is nevertheless an admirable safeguard against an immoderate use of the marriage right. This voluntary self-restraint will enable married people to practice self-control when the same is of real necessity.

God in Married Life

When Mother Church witnesses a marriage wherein both parties are Catholic, she feels that she is establishing a union of hearts determined to worship and serve God. Both husband and wife have the same understanding of God and the same obligations to God and to God's Church. There is reason to expect great things for God from Catholic marriage. But if this expectation is to be fulfilled God must be the center of your married lives.

Daily Prayers

The first evidence of God in your daily lives will appear from the practice of daily prayer. Each morning and each evening, beginning with the first night, following your marriage, you should say your morning and night prayers together (provided of course that you rise and retire at the same hour). Doing this you will both be conscious of your entire dependence upon God. When the prospect for the coming day is none too bright, because of the difficulties which are foreseen, you will unite in asking for God's blessing. When the day is spent, your night prayers should ascend to God together to thank Him for His blessings, to petition God for needed favors, and to appease His anger for your shortcomings. Common daily prayer will accomplish much in your married lives.

Sunday Mass

There should be no question of fulfilling or not fulfilling your obligation of assisting at Sunday Mass. Go to Mass together whenever possible. Look forward to being at Mass side by side. Prepare to hear Mass. Talk about the Mass and sermon on your way home and at your Sunday meals. Make the assistance at Mass the central thought and action of your Sunday, not just one of the things you must do on Sunday, a something which you must attend and attend in as short a time as possible. When God has blessed you with children at times

it will be impossible to assist at Mass together. Then make every effort to help each other to assist at Sunday Mass.

Reception of the Sacraments

One of the surest and best means of keeping right with God is to receive the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist. Married people will not depart far from the ideal of Catholic marriage if they make frequent and careful use of these Holy Sacraments. Daily life and human weakness might occasion an unfortunate failing but a sincere confession will bring both forgiveness and courage to amend. Make your confessions opportunities not only to repent but also occasions to seek the Church's guidance. Your Father confessor will show a fatherly and sympathetic interest in your problems. When you have failed, he will point out your mistakes; when you are sad, he will show you the bright side of life; when you have a sorrow, he will unveil before you the Man of Sorrows and the Mother most sorrowful; when your courage seems gone, he will help you to find new courage. You will never receive more sure and more unselfish advice than the advice you receive from your Father confessor. Call on him at least once a month. If unfortunately you must call on him with a grave mistake on your record, you will find him your kindest friend.

After a good confession, surely you will go to the rail to receive our Lord and Saviour. When you go to Mass on Sunday, why not go fasting and bring home your mutual Friend and God. From the Tabernacle He calls to you, "Come to Me all ye that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." He is talking to you wives and husbands. And when your problems are particularly grave, why not accept the invitation of our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament? If you value the Bread of Life at all, you will not fail to partake of that Bread at least once a month. Receiving the sacraments frequently, you may unfortunately fall into sin, but you will not live in sin.

Joys, Sorrows, Disappointments

In this vale of tears there is a mixture of pleasant and unpleasant things. Sometimes the proportion of the one or the other is rather marked. However, most human lives contain a very generous share of good things. Ever since the fall of man there has been the possibility and the necessity of taking the bad with the good. Even people who constantly strive to please God have a goodly share of hard things to bear. Married people should be constantly prepared to bear disagreeable things. When there is an abundance of the good things there is danger of becoming too occupied with passing and material considerations. Of course, when there are good things there must be gratitude to God for them. When there are disagreeable things, reverses, sorrows, disappointments, those are the times when you will need our Faith most. Those are the times when the people who give God little thought fail miserably. In the mercy of God reverses are sometimes sent to awaken the conscience of the wayward.

The Holy Family

If the life of Christ was intended as a model for Christians, certainly we can say that the life of the Holy Family should serve as a model of family life.

Joseph, "the just man," gentle, kind and chaste, no ordinary model for a Catholic husband.

Mary, every married woman will find her the woman of women, the sublime model. There is something so beautiful and perfect about Mary which cannot fail to command the respect of every good woman. And her intercessory power with God should give her clients without number. Christian wives, share your joys, your sorrows, your problems with Mary. She will understand and help.

When God has blessed your home with the fruit of love, human life, it will not be unlike the life of the Christ Child. **Remember, souls are given to you so that you may bring them**

to the knowledge and service of God. Teach your children to imitate the Christ Child.

Simplicity of Family Life

The thought of the Holy Family suggests the love of simplicity. There is so much inspiration in the example of the Holy Family. Too many married people imagine that happiness may be found in the things which are beyond their reach. On the contrary, domestic and marital happiness is closely bound up with the simple but good things of one's state of life. If married people could only be persuaded to seek their happiness within the range of their incomes, their social and their domestic and family circles, how much more happiness there would be in the world, and how many heartaches they would be spared! Husbands should be fair with their wives and families in trying to provide the necessities and the ordinary comforts of life and wives should strive to live within the incomes which are provided. When either fail, it should only be to strive anew and study more carefully how to succeed. In the dark days of unemployment or partial unemployment, wives must try to adjust themselves to the situation. Both husbands and wives must be loyal to each other in such periods of trial, and they should confidently seek the blessing of God in prayer.

Your Home

There are two points of advice which newlyweds may appreciate only in the years to come. The first regards the setting up of a home. If at all possible go to housekeeping in a home of your own. By home of your own is meant a house or an apartment which is not shared with others. Many an otherwise promising marriage has been ruined by having to move in with the in-laws. It is still true, "there is no house big enough for two families." Later, circumstances may make it necessary to take in an aged parent but this should be done only when no other arrangements can be made for the decent

and comfortable keep of the loved one. The rule should be, to yourselves in a house or an apartment. There will always be plenty of time to make exceptions to the rule.

Working Married Women

The second bit of advice is the admonition to avoid the mistake of thinking that a married woman should work outside her home. America is fast becoming a nation of working married women. Some parallel tendencies which must be associated with working married women are limitations of families, unwholesome independence of married women and a minimum of home life.

A married woman's place is in her home, giving her full time to the making and keeping of the home. Every married woman who engages in a gainful occupation helps to make her husband's labor of less value. If married women were to return to their homes married men could command more for their labor and would be able to support their families with less difficulty.

Your Priest

Although we have said something about the necessity of frequent and good confessions, it will not be out of place to say a word more about your priest. If given a chance, your priest can play an important part in insuring your marital happiness. Give him that chance. Have great confidence in your priest. His advice is yours for the asking. He can hear the stories of both husband and wife without becoming prejudiced against the one or the other. The difficulty that looks like a mountain will become a molehill when seen through the eyes of your priest. The well-nigh impossible task of straightening out domestic differences will become easy with the help of your priest. He will show you how to love again even when you think that your love for your wife or husband is gone forever. Whether you go to your priest in or out of the confessional, you will find that your case is not the

hardest or the worst case he has had to solve. Your priest was intended, by the Founder of the priesthood, to be the spiritual Father of Christ's people. Let him play that role in your lives and in the lives of those dependent on you. Respect him, obey him, and love him for what he is, the ambassador of God.

Pictures

I have two pictures which are faithful reproductions of my father and my mother. These photos present my mother and father in their Sunday best. I like to think that husband and wife should, figuratively speaking, be at their best in their daily lives, in their homes. Be your best for your wife, your husband and your children. Don't keep your best manners for your neighbors or your company. Some men are wonderfully kind and considerate to strangers but lack every semblance of human kindness for their families. Some women are suave and charming in company but very different when the company is gone. Be your best to the members of your household. They have the first right to all that is good in you. They must live with you. Others only visit you.

Reading

The foregoing pages present the fundamental teachings of the Church and a few practical suggestions on the subject of marriage. It is hoped that the readers of these pages will find time to read much more on the subject of Christian marriage. There are so many excellent books and pamphlets which might be read profitably. In the following pages you will find a reprint of "To a Modern Madonna—an Open Letter." A reading of the same will convince you of its beauty and sublimity. If your reading is going to be very limited then the pamphlets: *What of Lawful Birth Control?*, *Speaking of Birth Control*, and *Artificial Birth Control* should head the list of readings. The *Encyclical on Christian Marriage*, *Plain Talks on Marriage* and *The Beauties of Motherhood* will be

well worth the time of those who read more extensively. Other titles appear in the list of suggested reading. Newly-married couples who are anxious to make their lives conform to the laws of God and the teachings of the Church will find it profitable to do extensive reading on the subject of marriage. The priest who witnessed your marriage will be glad to help you get these books and pamphlets. He may even be able to lend them to you from his own library.

The Goal of Marriage

The ultimate goal of marriage is the eternal possession of God. Every other consideration should yield to the thought of aiding each other to attain the ultimate goal of life, God. Nor must we think that in doing so religion will play too great a part. It is only when religion permeates daily life that it fulfills its purpose. Husband and wife will find real happiness in direct proportion to their efforts to make God the very center of their married lives. The same prescription holds good for the happiness of their children.

Children! Usually marital happiness is closely linked with the blessing of children. Accept them as God sends them. He will provide for you and for them if you honor Him in your daily lives. Having received children, remember you have the duty and responsibility of preparing them for their true home, heaven. Don't think that they are your playthings to enjoy, to spoil or to use as you please. Before they are born, consecrate them to God, and should He call them to dedicate themselves to His direct service in the Priesthood or Religious life, be the first to thank God for their vocations.

Having helped each other to live worthy lives, it will be the sad duty of one to help the other prepare for death. If your love had been real, true and loyal in life, you will make every effort to help each other in the hour when death threatens. The survivor will not forget the departed. And the departed will make intercession with God for the living. This

exchange will go on until God has called both and sealed their love in His own eternal love. The fondest wish of the priest who witnesses your marriage vows is that time may bring you an abundance of marital happiness and love and that eternity may perfect that love and happiness. If these lines contribute a little to insure your happiness, the author is well repaid for his efforts. He begs the kindness of an occasional prayer from those who have been benefited. God bless and keep you and yours.

* * * *

TO A MODERN MADONNA: AN OPEN LETTER

(Reproduced by the kind permission of the Editors of the Queen's Work.)

DEAR YOUNG MOTHER:

We have just heard the good news. May we congratulate you most heartily on your newborn child? Of course you are very happy. And will you give our deepest congratulations to your fine young husband?

It is a marvelous thing, you know, to be a young Catholic mother. You are continuing a noble tradition. Someone surely saw you as a modern madonna when you smiled up with the child in your arms. For a modern madonna is precisely what you are, one of that lovely race of Catholic mothers, the first of whom was Mary, the mother of the Incarnate God.

Life must have seemed suddenly very precious and very beautiful when for the first time you held your baby against your heart. You had often heard that life was important; but when life became personified for you in the little body of your infant, you knew just how important life was. The child you cradled was and is the immortal child of God. You knew that

hidden in the tiny body was the immortal spark of endless burning, a soul that will live as long as God is God—a soul that will live forever.

One thing is certain: as you lay loving your child with all your heart, you realized a new respect for yourself and for your husband. You and he had been co-creators with the eternal creator in the making of a human being. And you realized that mere human achievements pale before this glorious creation. The book you might have written would be forgotten with the passing of a few years. The statue you might have carved would eventually crumble into marble dust. The greatest of your husband's achievements will perish with the quick corroding of time. But this child is God's immortal being; and you helped God bring that child into existence. Your body harbored and nourished a spark of endless life. You and your husband have given to heaven someone who is capable of infinite happiness.

At that moment when you looked for the first time upon that child and knew it to be yours, you must have been glad you kept yourself pure. You must have been deeply happy too that the child's father, your husband, had kept himself pure. How terrible if your love had been a spoiled and polluted thing! How terrible if, before you and your husband had brought your love to be blessed at God's altar, you had used passion for the satisfaction of your own selfishness and had then accepted to be the future father of your child a man who had given himself to animal lusts! But you know that love, not passion, called your child into being.

Mary leaning as she surely did over you, her modern madonna, must have been pleased. Like her, you had kept yourself a virgin. Like her, you are now a mother. Like her, you have given a pure life to God. Like her, you have for a husband, a strong, pure man. A miracle preserved Mary's virginity even in motherhood. Mary asks no miracle of you, but she is happy that, in an age that asks girls to betray their virginity and enter marriage impure, spoiled, soiled wantons.

you walked in her holy footsteps. She is pleased that—perhaps largely because of you—the father of your child safeguarded you until the day of your marriage. We don't need to remind you that your attitude toward marriage and life is not the attitude of the pagan.

Pagans have always had a sneering contempt for mothers, because they have always had an open contempt for life itself. For the pagan, life is always a joke or a curse or a burden. The pagan will honor a woman who writes a poem or carves a statue. But a woman who brings forth a human life and who sets herself whole-heartedly to the task of training that life for the enjoyment of a glorious eternity? Well, he doesn't believe in eternity, and he despises the woman who brings forth life and trains it for that eternity which he disclaims.

Don't let them mislead you, modern madonna. God's mother, the greatest woman that ever lived, was poet enough to give us the masterpiece we know as the "Magnificat." Her voice was sweet enough to be preferred to the caroling of the Christian angels. Her lullaby was the sweetest song ever heard. She was of the royal race of David and a daughter of kings. Yet she knew that her great work in life did not lie in the writing of poetry, nor in singing for an applauding public, nor in the ruling of a nation. She wrote poetry, but she wrote it in the heart of her little boy; she sang her songs, but she sang them over the little world that was the holy house of Nazareth.

And because she did those simple things, mankind has never forgotten her, and even the pagan has been forced to pay her tribute in art and music and poetry.

Remember then that in your child, and, we hope, in the other children who will follow, you have a splendid life's career. There is no more pressing business and no more exalted natural profession than that of motherhood. What greater achievement could you perform than to make this child worthy of his eternal destiny? If you form his mind to goodness and virtue and shape his body to strength and purity and service of God and his fellows, you will have accomplished

something very much akin to the blessed work of Mary, the first Catholic mother.

You will not, surely, allow your husband to forget that the career of Catholic fatherhood is an exalted one, too. Mother, father, and child; that is the trinity on earth. Mother, father and child; that is the completion of the human triangle. Mother, father and child—working together, influencing one another, united in mind and in heart, one in love, one in divine aspiration, moving together through life toward an eternal destiny with the divine Trinity. Your motherhood is a trust and a noble responsibility; and your husband must know that his fatherhood is modeled on the Fatherhood of God.

So we congratulate you, modern madonna. While so many modern women rush about in search of trinkets and baubles to adorn life, you have found life itself. While they are busy fashioning a poem that will be forgotten with tomorrow's newspaper, or a song that will die as the ether wave ceases its weak vibrations. You have given us a soul that will sing forever in the presence of God. While many a modern woman has been imitating the sad, sinful pagan women of other days, you have kept yourself pure for the sake of this innocent child. You and your husband have helped the Creator of the universe fashion another citizen for heaven.

May you be happy in your child. And may your child see in you the earthly mother who has come very close to catching the beauty and the sweetness and the innocence of the lovely Mother of God.

THE QUEEN'S WORK STAFF.

SUGGESTED READING

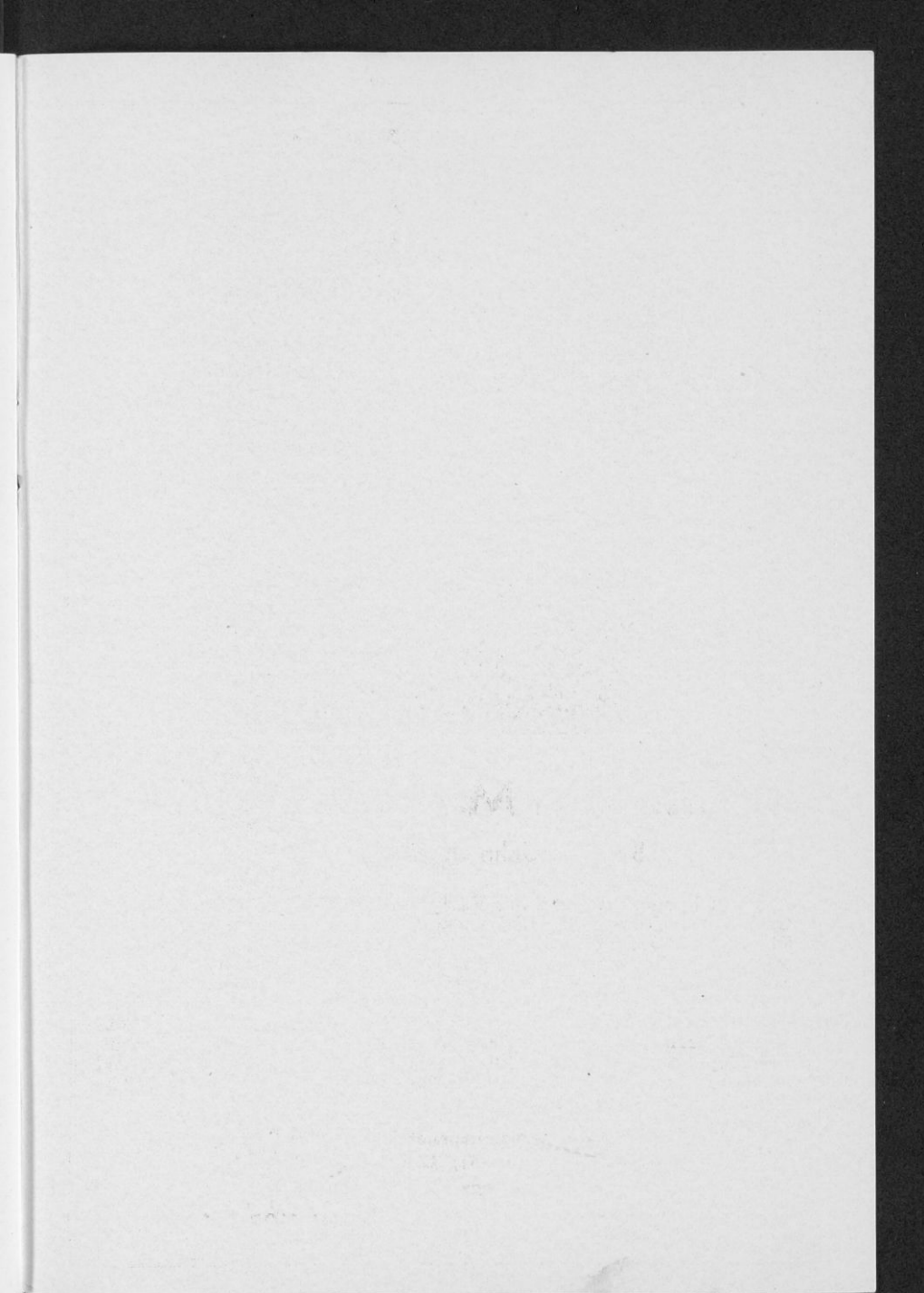
- Encyclical on Christian Marriage, *Pope Pius XI*, 10c.
Marriage, *Martin Scott, S.J.*, 25c.
Marriage Problems, *Martin Scott, S.J.*, 10c.
Parent and Child, *Edgar Schmiedeler, O.S.B.*, 10c.
Birth Control, *D. Pruemmer, O.P.*, 10c.
Divine Romance of Marriage, *Ignatius Cox, S.J.*, 10c.
Sex—Sacred and Sinful, *Gerald C. Treacy, S.J.*, 10c.
Whom God Hath Joined, *Rev. J. Elliot Ross*, 10c.
What Is Love?, *Rev. J. Elliot Ross*, 5c.
The Eve of Marriage, *Valerian Berger, O.S.B.*, 10c.
I'm Keeping Company Now!, *Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M.*, 5c.
Preparation for Marriage and Family Life, *John O'Connor, S.J.*, 25c.

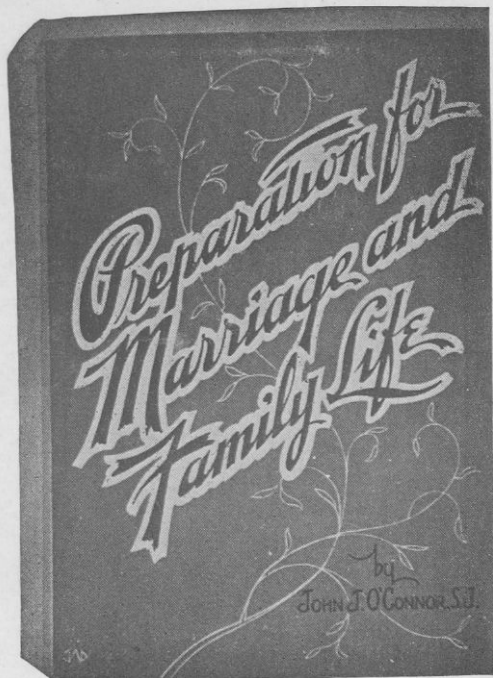
These books and pamphlets may be obtained from The Paulist Press, 401 West 59th Street, New York, N. Y.

OTHER SUGGESTED READING

Plain Talks on Marriage, *Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M.*; The Beauties of Motherhood, *Glogger*; The Church and Marriage, *O'Brien*; Short Catechism for Those About to Marry, *Byrne*; A Catechism on Birth Control, *Noll*; What of Lawful Birth Control, *Lord*; Speaking of Birth Control, *Lord*; Artificial Birth Control, *Lucey*; The Catholic Mother, *Jarrett*; Birth Control, Its Medical and Ethical Aspects, *Doctor and Priest*; A Doctor Speaks Out on Birth Control, *Podvin*; Legitimate Birth Control, *O'Brien*; Marriage and Parenthood the Catholic Ideal, *Gerrard*

These books and pamphlets may be obtained through your pastor or from any publishing house in your city.





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