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BEFORE MARRIAGE

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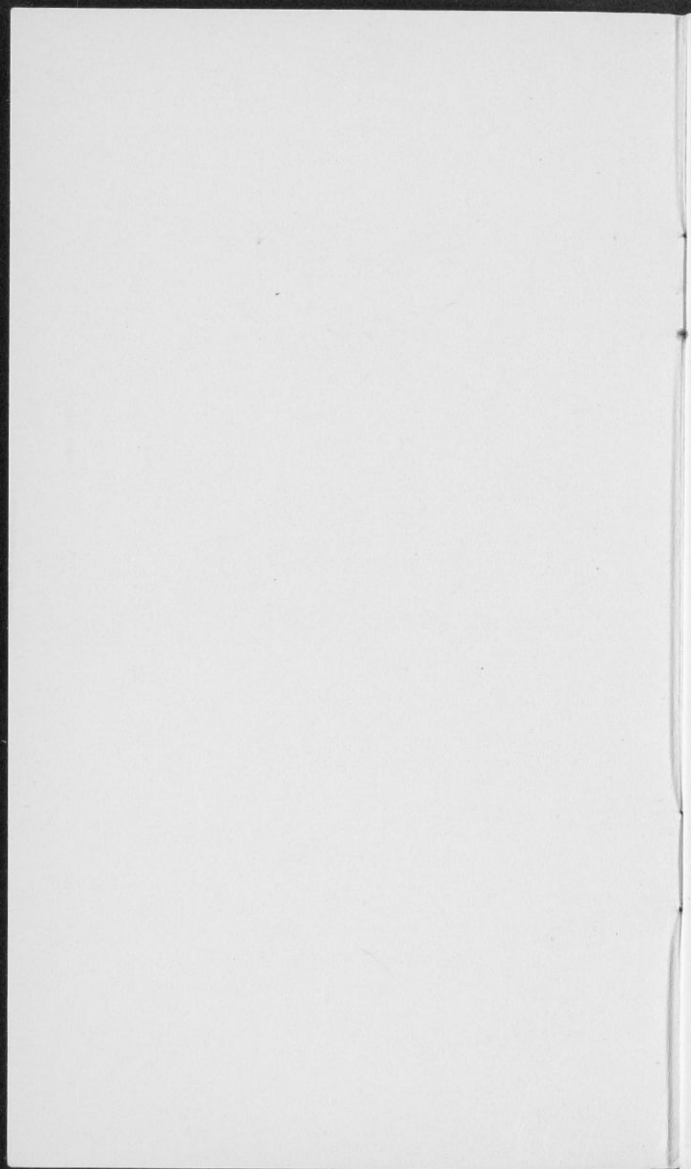
The Very Reverend
Francis J. Connell, C. SS. R.

Price 10¢

A GRAIL PUBLICATION

St. Meinrad

Indiana



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The Very Reverend
Francis J. Connell, C. SS. R.

Dean of Sacred Theology
Catholic University of America

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Imprimi potest.

*John M. Frawley, C.S.S.R.,
Provincial.*

Nihil Obstat.

*Philip M. Hannan,
Censor Deputatus*

Imprimatur.

✠ *Patrick A. O'Boyle, D.D.,
Archbishop of Washington*

NOTE: This booklet was prepared for the non-Catholic party about to marry a Catholic. However, it is excellent for a review for Catholics and for non-Catholics who are not planning marriage also.

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Deacidified



God and Our Soul

The most important fact in the world is the existence of God. Our reason tells us that there must be a Supreme Being, the Creator and Ruler of the universe. For the myriads of wonderful beings that make up the universe, their exquisite formation, the complicated yet harmonious laws that regulate their functioning bespeak an all-powerful, all-wise Being who made and who governs all things outside Himself. A man would be regarded as a fool or a liar if he held up a watch, beautifully made and keeping perfect time, and claimed that through mere chance the screws and springs and crystal and hands had been fashioned and had assembled themselves to form the watch, without the cooperation of any human being. Now, the universe is much more marvelous than the finest watch. Hence, only a person of meagre intelligence or one who is perverting his reasoning powers can assert that it came into existence and continues to function without the creative and regulating activity of a God of infinite wisdom and power.

Every human being is composed of two elements—a body, which is a material thing, similar to the bodies of other living creatures, and a soul which immeasurably elevates man in dignity above all the other living things of earth. For the soul of man is a spiritual substance, capable of thought, endowed with free will, not depending for its existence on the body. Consequently, when man dies, his soul continues to live forever. This is what we call the immortality of the soul.

Since man derives all that he is and has from God, he is obliged to adore and thank God, and above all, to obey God's law. Man's own reason tells him that certain things are morally good and other things are morally bad. It is very evident that God wishes us to perform the actions which our intellect tells us are good, and to avoid those actions which we know to be evil. Thus, we know it is good to be generous and kind, to obey our lawful superiors, to practice temperance and purity; we know it is bad to lie and to steal, to be intemperate and unchaste. This knowledge of right and wrong derived from our own reasoning powers is called the natural law. It is truly the law of God, since He has given us the power of reason whereby we know it. But the highest and most important com-

mandment of the natural law is to worship and to love our Creator. A man who claims that he is leading a good life just because he is honest and kind to his fellowmen, but does not worship God, is sadly deceiving himself. God does not indeed need our homage; but we need to give it to Him, since our very nature demands this tribute of honor and love to our first Benefactor, our Father in heaven.

Since God is just as well as merciful, He will reward or punish us in the life beyond the grave in accordance with our good or evil deeds. Hence, the chief purpose of life is to live in such wise that we shall be happy with God forever. It will profit a person nothing if he gains everything this world can give, but leads a wicked life, so that God's justice must punish him in the world to come.

All these truths could be learned by our own reason. However, Catholics believe that there is another source of knowledge about God and our duties to Him, which is known as revelation. This consists of the truths which God Himself has made known to men through His inspired prophets, from the beginning of the human race, down through Jesus Christ and His apostles. These truths are found in the Bible, which is the written word of God, and in

tradition, which is the unwritten word of God. There are good arguments to prove that the Bible and tradition are truly the word of God; but in a brief course of instructions, such as this will be, we cannot go into details. Suffice it to say that anyone who studies the matter honestly and thoroughly will be convinced that revelation, as the Catholic Church proposes it, is truly from God.

This course is not intended to be argumentative; it is simply an exposition of the chief doctrines of the Catholic Church, without any intention of deriding or ridiculing the belief and the sincerity of those who told other religious tenets. Neither is it our intention to force the non-Catholic party into accepting the Catholic religion. The Catholic Church will never accept anyone into its membership unless he freely asks admission with the sincere conviction that the Catholic religion is the true religion. The purpose of these instructions is to serve as a review for the Catholic party of the most important teachings of the Church, and to help the non-Catholic party understand the attitude of his life-partner toward religion, and thus to render married life smoother and happier.

Above all, you should both pray fervently during the next few weeks, that God may

enlighten you to understand the religious doctrines that you will study, and to observe faithfully His holy law. Pray too that your marriage may be happy and holy. For prayer is the great means whereby we obtain from God what we need for the welfare of both body and soul. Our heavenly Father always hears and answers fervent and confiding prayer. And so, to obtain blessings upon you and your married life, we shall close now with the recitation of the Lord's Prayer... Our Father, tec.

(It is suggested that each of these instructions conclude with this prayer).

Second Instruction

Creation and Redemption

The first book of the Bible tells us that after creating heaven and earth, God created Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, the parents of the entire human race. Besides endowing them with the gifts of nature, the Almighty conferred on them certain extraordinary privileges such as freedom from suffering and death. The great-

est gift He gave them was sanctifying grace, a supernatural quality residing in their souls, making them in a special sense the friends of God, and giving them a right to be happy with Him in heaven, when their term of earthly life was ended. However, Adam and Eve were commanded not to eat of the fruit of a certain tree in the Garden of Eden where they resided. It was further stipulated that on the obedience of Adam would depend the welfare of all his descendants. If he obeyed God's commandment, all human beings would come in to the world with the extraordinary gifts which were given to him, and with sanctifying grace in their souls. If he were disobedient, all his descendants would be deprived of these gifts.

Adam and Eve both disobeyed the commandment of God, and ate of the forbidden fruit. Consequently, all human beings are born subject to suffering and death, and deprived of sanctifying grace. This privation of sanctifying grace—which we would have in our souls when we come into the world, if Adam had not transgressed the command of God—is called *original sin*. It is distinct from *actual sin*, which we commit ourselves. Actual sin is divided into *mortal sin* (a grave violation of God's law, deliberately committed) and *venial sin* (a

light transgression, or even a grave transgression committed without full advertence or full consent of the will).

God did not act unjustly in allowing all the members of the human race to inherit original sin from Adam. For original sin does not imply that we have been deprived of anything due to our nature. It involves only the deprivation of something supernatural, a free gift of God, sanctifying grace. Similarly, the other gifts of Adam which we lost as a result of his sin, such as immunity from the vehemence of passion, freedom from suffering and death, were all extraordinary prerogatives, freely granted by God. Hence, we cannot complain of any injustice on the part of God because we do not receive them. If a rich man told his servant that he could have the use of a house on his property, with the right to pass it along to his children, provided he would be faithful to his master, the latter would be guilty of no injustice if he took the house back as a result of the unfaithfulness of the servant. In such a case the children could certainly not claim that they had been unjustly treated. Similarly, we have no grounds for complaint because we have been deprived of certain free gifts of God because our first father disobeyed His command.

However, God did not abandon the human race after Adam had sinned. He promised that at some future time a Redeemer or Saviour would come into the world who would make satisfaction for the sin of Adam and for all other sins which men would commit themselves. For centuries the human race awaited the coming of the Saviour. From time to time God spoke about the Redeemer through His prophets, describing the events of His life. It was known that the Saviour was to be a member of God's chosen people, the Jews. It was also predicted that He would be born in Bethlehem and that He would suffer much in satisfaction for men's sins.

This Redeemer is Jesus Christ, who was born in Bethlehem almost two thousand years ago, and passed His life in Palestine. He preached a sublime system of religious doctrines and precepts. He proved that He was the Redeemer sent by God, by working many wonderful miracles. Furthermore, He claimed to be true God. He was put to death on the cross by the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, at the instigation of the leaders of the Jewish people; and in accepting this death He offered a most pleasing sacrifice to God, and made satisfaction for the sins of all men. By rising from the dead the third day after His crucifixion

He proved conclusively that His teaching was approved by God, and that He Himself was truly God.

From the teaching of Christ we know that Almighty God, though one in nature, is three in Persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost—all perfectly equal, all existing from eternity. Jesus Himself is the Son, the Second Person, who has taken to Himself a human nature, so that He is a divine person having two distinct natures, the nature of God and the nature of man. The doctrine that there are three distinct persons in the one God is called the doctrine of the Most Holy Trinity. It is the most sublime doctrine of the Christian religion and is a profound mystery—a truth which we cannot understand, but which we believe on the authority of God who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

The mother of Jesus Christ in His human nature is Mary, who conceived and bore Him while remaining a virgin, by a special miracle of God. Catholics honor the Blessed Virgin because of the exalted honor God Himself bestowed on her. We pray to her, asking her to help us by her prayers. In the same way we honor the saints in heaven. As is evident, this does not detract from the honor that is due to God.

Rather, we honor Him by honoring His Mother and His friends, the saints.

From the teaching of Jesus Christ we know that in the life to come those who serve God faithfully in the present life and leave the world in sanctifying grace will be eternally happy in the intimate company of God. Those who die with mortal sin on their souls will be cast forever into a place of great punishment where they will suffer forever. We know also from the doctrine of Christ, as interpreted by the Catholic Church that besides heaven and hell, there is a state called purgatory where souls which leave this life with venial sin only or with a debt of temporal punishment—but in the state of grace—will remain for a time until they are fully cleansed, and then they will be admitted to heaven.

Third Instruction

The Church of Jesus Christ

It is evident from the Gospel, the portion of the Bible which narrates the earthly life of Jesus Christ, that He established a religious society, which He called His Church. He promised that this Church would en-

ture for all time (Matt., 16:18; 28:20). He made His apostles the first rulers of this Church (Matt., 18:18), and Peter the head of all the others (Matt., 16:16; John, 21:16-17). He commanded that all men should listen to the preaching of the apostles and become affiliated with His Church (Mark, 16:16; Luke, 10:16).

Hence, it is vitally important to know which of the many organizations calling themselves Christian is the true Church of Christ. Evidently, since His promises are those of God Himself, the Church which He established will endure until the end of time, and so must still exist in the world. Evidently, too, only one of the many Christian churches can be the true Church, for Christ founded only one Church. And since He willed all men to join His Church it is logical to expect that He endowed it with certain characteristics by which it can be recognized.

If we examine the Church established by Christ, as it is described in the New Testament, we shall find that it was to possess, by His will, four outstanding characteristics. First, it was to be *one*—that is, all the members were to profess the same faith, practice the same form of worship, be united under the same laws and government (John, 17:11; 10:16; 3:5; Romans,

12:4-5; Ephesians, 4:4-6). It was to be *holy*, for Christ prayed that all His followers should be holy, and He gave His Church means of making its members holy (John, 17:17; 6:55). It was to be *universal*, for He intended it to spread over the entire world, available to all men at all times (Matt., 28:19; Mark, 16:15; Acts, 1:8). It was to be *apostolic*, for He founded it on the apostles, and intended that through their successors it should continue always (Matt., 28:20; Ephesians, 2:20). To find the true Church we should apply these notes to the denominations existing today, calling themselves Christians, and find which of them possesses these characteristics.

When we do this, we shall find that only the Catholic Church possesses these characteristics. Certainly, the Catholic Church is one, for all its members profess the same faith, practice the same form of worship, and are united in government under their bishops and the Pope. The contrast between the Catholic Church and other denominations in the matter of unity is most striking. The Catholic Church is holy, for it preaches an exalted ideal of the Christian life, gives its members the means of advancing in holiness, such as the sacraments, daily Mass, the religious life, etc. The Catholic Church is undoubtedly universal, for

it exists in all parts of the world. It is apostolic, for its bishops are the successors of the apostles in an unbroken line. This is especially noteworthy with respect to the Pope, the bishop of Rome, who is the 260th successor of St. Peter. All other Christian denominations began some time after Christ—most of them in the sixteenth century. Surely, these cannot claim to be apostolic.

Catholics logically hold, therefore, that the Catholic Church is the only true Church and that all men have the obligation of joining this Church. This does not mean that all those who are outside the Catholic Church are necessarily lost. We realize that there are many persons who are not members of the Catholic Church but who are sincere in their religious convictions and are striving to serve God as their conscience dictates. Such persons are pleasing to God, and are actually *in purpose and desire* members of the true Church. Nevertheless, we believe that everyone should thoroughly and honestly examine the claims of the Catholic Church.

The Pope and the bishops, as successors of the apostles, are the official teachers of the Church. When they unite in teaching officially some doctrine of faith or morals (or even when the Pope alone with the fullness of his authority teaches a doctrine)

they are preserved from error, in accordance with the promise of Christ that the gates of hell would not prevail against the Church and that He would be with His official teachers at all times (Matt., 16:18; 28.20). This is called *infallibility*. It does not mean that the Pope and bishops are sinless, or that they enjoy any special protection against error in any other sphere than faith and morals.

The Pope and the bishops are also recognized by Catholics as their spiritual rulers. This does not involve any lack of loyalty to one's country, for it is only in matters related to faith or morals that the authorities of the Church exercise jurisdiction over Catholics, not in matters of politics. Hence, the Catholics of the United States are just as obedient and loyal to our country as the members of any other religious group.

The Church commands us to obey the ten commandments of God, revealed in the Old Law to Moses, and also the two great commandments of Jesus Christ: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and soul.... Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The Church also imposes on Catholics certain obligations on its own authority, such as the hearing of Mass on Sundays and holydays, fast and

abstinence on certain days, the receiving of the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist at least once a year. (Of course, all practical Catholics receive these sacrament more frequently). These prescriptions are known as the commandments of the church.

Fourth Instruction

The Sacrament,

Grace and the Mass

Catholics have a great respect for certain religious rites called the sacraments, and make frequent use of them. A sacrament is a sacred sign, or external ceremony, established by Jesus Christ for the purpose of giving grace to those who receive it with the proper dispositions. The sacraments are seven in number—Baptism, Confirmation, Holy Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Holy Orders and Matrimony.

Grace, which the sacraments confer, is a supernatural gift of God, communicated to the soul of man. There are two kinds of grace, sanctifying and actual. Sanctifying grace is a spiritual quality which makes the soul like to God Himself and

gives it a right to be with God forever in the future life. The soul possessing sanctifying grace enjoys a dignity higher than any earthly honor can give. Sanctifying grace, once conferred on a soul, remains unless it is driven out by deliberate mortal sin. The soul in sanctifying grace is spiritually alive and beautiful in the eyes of God; the soul in mortal sin is spiritually dead and loathsome in His sight.

All the sacraments are intended to give sanctifying grace. Two of them—Baptism and Penance—are chiefly intended to give grace to souls that are spiritually dead, souls lacking sanctifying grace. Thus, Baptism gives sanctifying grace to the infant, whose soul is defiled with original sin. Penance gives back the life of grace to one who has lost it by actual mortal sin after Baptism. The other five sacraments are intended primarily to give an increase of sanctifying grace to a soul that already lives the life of grace. Hence, if a person knowingly and deliberately received one of these sacraments in the state of mortal sin, he would be guilty of a grave sin of sacrilege.

The other kind of grace, actual grace, is a supernatural help given to the soul for the performance of a good action or the avoidance of a sin. It means that God en-

lightens a person's intellect as to what he should do, and strengthens his will so that he can do it. Each of the sacraments gives the worthy recipient a claim to actual graces in accordance with the end of this particular sacrament. Thus, the sacrament of Holy Orders gives the priest a right to receive actual graces, when he needs them, so that he may faithfully perform the tasks of his sacred ministry; the sacrament of Matrimony gives husband and wife a claim to actual graces needed in the course of their married life to help them to be faithful to their duties.

It should be noted that grace is given at other times, as well as when the sacraments are received. A person who prays for God's help in time of temptation or affliction will receive actual graces to make him staunch and courageous. And whenever a person in the state of grace performs a good deed out of love for God, he receives an increase of sanctifying grace. This is known as *merit*.

Several of the sacraments deserve special attention. The sacrament of Baptism, the first of the sacraments (which must be received before a person can receive any other sacrament) makes one a Christian and a member of the Church. Infants can receive this sacrament and thus be cleansed of original sin and endowed with sanctifying

grace, so that they will be admitted immediately to heaven if they die. It is most important that a child who has not been baptized should receive this sacrament if he is in danger of death. If a priest is not present anyone may baptize, though the child's parents should not do so, if some other person capable of baptizing is present. To baptize, take ordinary water, pour it on the child's forehead so that it will flow, and while pouring say in an audible tone: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

The sacrament of Penance is much misunderstood. Sometimes people object to this sacrament on the grounds that a mere man cannot forgive sin, or that it is degrading to confess one's sins to another human being. To this Catholics answer that the priest in the sacrament of Penance forgives sins, not in his own name or by his own power but in the name and by the power of Christ. The priest is only the instrument of divine power. And it surely is not degrading to confess one's sins to another human being, if Jesus Christ commanded it—as He did, when He gave the apostles and their successors in the priesthood the power to forgive sins, in the words: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they

are retained" (John, 20:23). How could the priest know whose sins should be forgiven and whose retained, unless penitents honestly confessed their sins? The strange fact is that many persons who deride the sacrament of Penance do not hesitate to reveal their most secret thoughts to a psychiatrist. They have not the same assurance that their self-manifestation will be kept secret as have Catholics, who know that the priest may never reveal even the slightest sin told in confession.

The Holy Eucharist, according to Catholic belief, is the real living body and blood of Jesus Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. This belief is based on the words of Christ Himself, who, at the Last Supper, told His apostles that what He was giving them—though it appeared to be bread and wine—was really His body and blood: "This is my body . . . This is my blood" (Matt. 26:26-28). Hence, when Catholics receive Holy Communion they firmly believe that Christ is really present within them for a brief time, and they ask Him for the graces they need. Moreover, in the tabernacle of the Catholic Church the Holy Eucharist, the Blessed Sacrament, is kept, so that people may visit Christ, and speak to Him as to a beloved friend.

It is at the Mass, when the priest says the words of Christ Himself: "This is my body This is my blood" that Our Savior becomes present through the change of the bread and wine into His body and blood (Transubstantiation). The Mass is also the renewal of the sacrifice which Christ Himself offered on the cross, insofar as the same body and blood which were sacrificed on Calvary are made present and offered anew to God. However, the Mass does not add anything to the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but rather applies to individual souls the merits and satisfactions of Calvary. These are applied through the Mass not only to the living but also to the souls in purgatory in payment of the debt of punishment for which they must satisfy God's justice. Catholics also offer their own good works and prayers for the souls in purgatory, especially those who were dear to them in life.

The Sacrament of Matrimony

In the Garden of Eden God established marriage when He created Adam and Eve as husband and wife and gave them His blessing with the command to increase and multiply (Genesis, 1:28). Hence, marriage is a holy state. It is the union of man and woman, involving special rights and duties, having as its principal purpose the preservation and propagation of the human race through the generation and upbringing of children. By the upbringing of children is meant the care of their physical, intellectual and moral development until they are able to care for themselves. There are also other ends of marriage, particularly the mutual help and love that normally result from the marriage of a good, devoted couple, and the natural alleviation that marriage affords to the strong sexual urge implanted in human nature.

Marriage has two essential properties—unity and indissolubility. By unity is meant that a man is forbidden to have more than one wife, and a woman more than one husband, at the same time. The opposite of this is polygamy. It is evident that this property of unity is called for by the very

nature of marriage, for the wholehearted love that should bind husband and wife cannot be present when it is divided among several wives or husbands. Indissolubility means that the marriage bond is to last until the death of one of the parties. This, too, is demanded by the very nature of marriage. For the proper bringing up of children, which belongs to the primary purpose of marriage, is impossible if the couple separate and form new unions. Besides, **the ardent and generous love that should characterize every marriage cannot be present if the thought of a possible divorce is before the mind of the couple.** The great evils of divorce are very manifest in modern American life, with its hundreds of thousands of homes destroyed and millions of lives wrecked because of the loose attitude of our American people toward the perpetuity of the marriage bond.

Before the coming of Jesus Christ, God granted exceptions to the law of unity and indissolubility of marriage, and permitted polygamy and divorce, under certain circumstances. However, Christ restored marriage to its primitive dignity, and put an end to these exceptions to unity and indissolubility, apart from some extraordinary dispensations from indissolubility, which will be mentioned afterward.

Jesus Christ also elevated marriage to the dignity of a sacrament. The Bible does not state just when this took place, but in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Ephesians (Chap. 5) we have an implication of the sacramental nature of Christian marriage, when the Apostle compares it to the union between Christ and His Church. Since this latter union is supernatural and productive of grace, we conclude that marriage between Christians is also a supernatural ceremony, productive of grace—a sacrament. However, our best argument is Christian tradition, which from the beginning has ascribed to Christian marriage a holiness and a power to confer grace which stamp it as a sacrament.

Catholics believe that every valid marriage between two baptized persons is a sacrament, whether these are Catholics or non-Catholics. For, it was the very contract of marriage between Christians that Christ made a sacrament. Hence, the marriage of two Protestants before their minister is just as truly a sacrament as the marriage of two Catholics before their priest. It is true, by the law of the Catholic Church a priest must be present (with two witnesses) at the marriage of a Catholic (either with another Catholic or with a non-Catholic) in order that the marriage

may be valid; but the priest is present, not to administer the sacrament, but to act as the Church's official witness and to impart a blessing. The couple themselves administer the sacrament, each conferring it on the other in the act of giving and receiving consent.

Since Christian marriage is a sacrament, the Catholic Church has laid down certain laws governing it, as in the case of all the sacraments. Of special importance are the impediments to lawful or valid marriage established by the Church. Thus, the Church declares null and void the marriage of a boy under 16 or a girl under 14 years. Similarly, the Church prohibits under pain of nullity the marriage of a person with a relative to the third degree of blood relationship—which extends to one's second cousin. Another invalidating impediment is affinity—the marriage of a widower with his deceased wife's sister or first cousin, or the marriage of a widow with her deceased husband's brother or first cousin. Another impediment by Church law exists between a godparent and godchild in Baptism. However, for good reasons the Church may dispense from one of the impediments of ecclesiastical origin. Evidently, the Church cannot dispense from an impediment established by the law of God, such as that which

is present in a person who is physically incapable of marriage relations.

The Catholic Church is particularly opposed to divorce. At the same time, the Church believes that the marriage of two baptized persons which has never been consummated can be dissolved by the Pope because the marriage has not been completed. Similarly, in certain circumstances, a marriage between two unbaptized persons (Which marriage is not a sacrament but a natural marriage) can be broken if one of them becomes a Christian and the other refuses to live with the convert or will be a hindrance to the practice of his faith. This breaking of the bond of a natural marriage in favor of the sacramental marriage is called the Pauline privilege because it is spoken of by St. Paul in the First Epistle to the Corinthians (7:15). But under no circumstance can the bond of marriage between two baptized persons (whether Catholic or not) be broken, once the marriage has been consummated. Only death can end such a marriage.

The Rights and Duties of Marriage

By the contract of marriage a man and woman bind themselves to certain duties toward each other of a most important and sacred nature. The most basic concerns sexual intercourse. Each has a right to ask this, each has a duty to render it at the other's reasonable requests. It would not be reasonable, for example, if a man asked for intercourse when he was drunk, or when his wife was very sick. The marriage act must not be regarded as something degrading or ignoble. It is something very noble and holy, for it has been established by God Himself as the means toward the propagation of the human race and toward preserving and fostering love between husband and wife.

Just because the conjugal act is so important and so sacred, the action known as contraception or birth control is most degrading and sinful. By this action a married couple deliberately frustrate the primary purpose of sex relations, as God intended it, and make use of their great privilege merely for the selfish and sensual gratification. For this reason the Catholic Church is absolutely opposed to contracep-

tion and teaches that under no circumstances is it ever lawful. It should be noted that contraception does not violate merely a law of the Catholic Church; it violates a law of God Himself. Hence, not only Catholics but all human beings are forbidden to practice contraception.

Sometimes, it is true, married people have a good reason for not having any more children in the immediate future, such as the ill health of the wife, grave financial stress, etc. But in that event the only lawful means of avoiding more children is abstinence from conjugal relations, either total or partial. This latter form of abstinence, adapted to the sterile period of the month, is sometimes called the *Rhythm*. This is very different from contraception, for it is the *proper use* of marriage (even though limited to certain periods) whereas contraception is the *abuse* of marriage. At the same time it must not be imagined that the use of Rhythm is permitted to all couples at all times. Only those who have a just reason for not having more children (at least, for the time being) may avail themselves of Rhythm. Those who have no just reason for avoiding children are guilty of a sin of selfishness if they use Rhythm, which may become a mortal sin if they persist in doing so for a long time.

Husband and wife must be loyal and faithful to each other, even when they are separated from each other, as when the husband is away on business or in the army. One of the worst sins a married person can commit is adultery—giving to a third party the sacred expression of love pledged on the day of marriage only to husband or wife. However, even when the matter does not go to this extreme, it is very wicked for a married person to have secret meetings, ardent manifestations of affection, etc., with another. Such actions also are mortal sins, grave violations of the promises made in marriage.

Married people must bear with each other's faults. Before marriage they see only the admirable qualities in each other; but after marriage, as the months and years pass by, they become conscious of each other's defects and failings. Then it is that they show their true greatness of soul and genuine love, if they forgive and forget the little offenses they cause each other. It is tragic when a married couple start a quarrel over some minor incident, and perhaps come to a point where the stability of the marriage is endangered. In this connection it should be remembered that the husband is the head of the household. This does not mean that he may

tyrannize over his wife and children; but in all important decisions affecting the domestic life, he has the final decision.

When children are born to a married couple, they should regard it as a great blessing from God. It also brings a grave responsibility, the obligation to bring up these little ones properly, to provide for their needs of body and soul, until they can make their own way in the world.

The most important duty of parenthood is to give the children a training in religion and morality, so that they will be prepared to live in such a manner that they will merit the happiness of heaven. For this reason the Catholic Church demands, in the case of a mixed marriage, that both parties promise that all the children shall be baptized and brought up in the Catholic faith. The Church must logically do this, since she is convinced that the Catholic faith is the most precious gift in the world. The non-Catholic must also promise not to interfere with the religious beliefs and practices of the Catholic. And the Church reminds the Catholic party of the obligation to live up to the highest ideals of a practical Catholic, and particularly to receive the sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist often. This is the best assurance of a happy marriage.

The Church expects that the parties to a mixed marriage will not make the promises unless they sincerely intend to keep them. It would indeed be a most dishonest thing for either or both to sign the promises and have no intention of living up to the obligations they entail. It is only by a concession of the Church that a Catholic is allowed to marry a person of another religion, for generally speaking the Church does not favor mixed marriages. However, in your case a request for an exception is being made and the Church will pray that your marriage may be a happy one.



