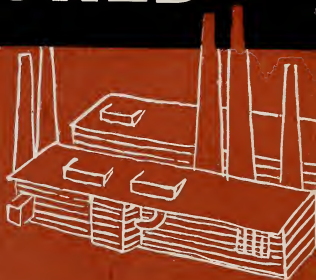


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IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD



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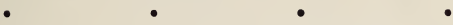
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IT'S A WOMAN'S WORLD

THREE WAYS TO FAMILY HAPPINESS



The Wife and Her Husband

by Helen Withey

ONE'S choice of vocation is at the same time one's choice of the road to heaven. Perhaps every vocation means not only the way to heaven for one's self, but also for those with whom one travels. The priest takes with him the death-bed penitents, the absolved sinners of the confessional, and those who listened to and heeded his words of instruction. Doctor and nurse often heal spiritual as well as physical ills. The teacher instructs the soul as well as the intellect. And I, the wife, help my husband and my children to heaven.

My first work is, of course, to get myself to heaven. Through the duties of the married state I must seek the Beatific Vision by adoring, loving, thanking and petitioning my God. I must make reparation to Him for my sins and the sins of the world. And I must obey God by keeping the Ten Commandments and the Commandments of the Church. I should develop, as much as I can in my lifetime, all the virtues, and I owe to others justice and loving charity. But, as a married woman, I cannot do this work of personal salvation alone or just for myself. I must help my husband to God too.

It is an exciting thought to consider how well chosen is the symbol of union, the clasping of hands in the marriage ceremony. As on the day we were married, so throughout our lives together, my husband and I clasp hands. We work together to reach God, and in every way: physically, mentally, spiritually. "These two are one." One flesh, yes, but one mind and one

heart too. I must help my husband to heaven and he must help me too.

This obligation of mine to literally take my husband to heaven with me is not so incidental as "lending a helping hand." I must work for his salvation with the same fervor as I work for my own. The fullness of my obligation is implied in the unity imposed upon husbands and wives. Immediately it is obvious that this work is two-fold: positive and negative. I am to help my husband eradicate the faults that may lead him to sin and increase his personal holiness. The positive side is far simpler.

As I work, for instance, to restrain my impatience with the children's blunders and demands, my example may prompt my husband to put away the weariness of the day and give some of his too-brief evenings to playing with and helping the children, or fixing a leaking faucet or broken light plug. It is easy to encourage him to go to the Lenten services with me, to join the family Rosary, because in a very real way we are doing it all together.

To help anyone get rid of his sinful habits or even smaller faults of long-standing is a far more difficult matter. Destructive criticism is never palatable, particularly from one near and dear. I cannot say directly more than once, "You haven't been to confession lately, dear. Why not go this Saturday?" After that I can only proceed indirectly. I might be careful not to use the car on Saturday in order to make his confession-going more possible and convenient. But then what?

I discussed this point with many other wives. We were agreed that after one direct discussion with one's husband about his fault or even sin and using whatever indirect appeal presented itself, the best and final action is prayer. Let God take care of it. We chose this as best, not only because of the value and effects of prayer, but in order to avoid that cardinal fault of many women—nagging.

Mutual Exchange of Love

Another obligation I have in my role as wife is the one that fiction writers, the newspaper advice columns, and radio programs would have us think is the only obligation a wife has to her husband. Only today I read, "It takes a woman to make a wife." This was the come-on heading of the article. I glanced rapidly through the paragraphs. The author maintained that without what he called sex appeal, a wife is a failure, even if she possesses all other wifely virtues. The Catholic Church emphasizes sex, if we may use that much misused word, but only as God emphasized it. God made man and woman different sexes, but complementary. They were made for the definite purpose of producing children and satisfying the sex urges of each other.

This gift of my body to my husband so overemphasized in today's press and so beautifully emphasized by the Catholic Church, is one of the duties of my state in life. When prompted by love, which is the mainspring of every true marriage, this is truly always a gift, never an obligation. It is difficult to draw definite limits to a gift, but considered impersonally the extent of this duty is fairly easy to mark off. Whenever there is a serious request for the marriage debt from either husband or wife, the other is obliged to comply.

That the physical rapport of a husband and wife is important there can be no doubt. For in the solid, happy marriage physical unity is the expression of the great love that exists between the married couple. And both husband and wife, in their love, are eager to give themselves to each other. But the success of a marriage certainly does not rest upon sex and sex love. If it did we would have to conclude that the periods of continence in every marriage—during illness, by mutual consent for various reasons, in time of necessary separations—were periods of unhappiness or even causes for a marriage to

fail. We have only to look at any average, happy, and well-adjusted couple to know that this is not so.

Today secular writers on marriage and its problems seem to forget, when they unduly stress the importance of sexual relations, that a couple who chose each other for life, have done so because they love each other. A woman marries the man she loves because she wishes to give him her entire self. Time will make its mark upon her physical attractions, but the gifts of her mind and heart can grow and grow with the years. This mutual outpouring of love, of giving everything to each other, is the essence of marriage as it was meant to be.

Obligation of Conjugal Love

Is there, then, an obligation to love? By implication the answer here seems to be yes. Catholic books on marriage, Cana conferences, pre-marriage instructions, all seem to be developing this very point of the obligation of married love. Of course real love cannot be forced. This wishing to give everything to another is a spontaneous outpouring, but it certainly can be cultivated. The cultivation of love is an obligation of the married woman. The bride who feels a tremendous emotional love for her new husband is not free of this duty. And she will be amazed at the end of ten or twenty years to look back upon that early love which she thought so great that it was incapable of increasing. It will seem shallow and dull compared to the deep and moving love of maturity, the love that she has made grow. (This is true in spite of the copious writings that attempt to pigeon-hole mature love as settled and dull as compared to the "thrill" of young love.)

The unhappy wife who is certain that life has destroyed the love she once had for her husband ought to rekindle the spark, if she can. If a true love ever existed it can be restored and increased. Hers is a permanent union and she must not

allow it, for want of love, to head toward separation or civil divorce.

How can one recapture a lost love, resurrect a dead love, increase a satisfyingly full love? As in almost everything that grows it must be done by daily tending and constant watching of little events. The first step is directed to saving the surface.

Everyday Courtesies

There should be external signs of affection. One of these is observing the usages of everyday politeness. A wife should treat her husband with the same unflinching courtesy in the small things of daily living that she observes with strangers and friends. Perhaps the reason why so many presumed loving spouses are downright rude to each other is the feeling, "Oh, he knows me so well; he'll understand." It would seem that it should work the other way around: the closer we are to each other the more gracious we ought to be. At any rate, the same "thank-you, please, if it doesn't interfere with your plans; would it be convenient for you to . . ." that we use with everyone else, has the same pleasant effect upon a husband. Small signs of consideration of his ideas and of his plans are outward signs of interest, concern, and love for him.

One need not overdo these acts of courtesy. There will be times, due to the stresses and strains of family life, when one is curt and impatient, and when circumstances demand skipping the rules of Emily Post. And a good husband sees these occasions and understands the reaction to them. But one's habitual conversation should observe the niceties of polite society.

Another external sign of affection would be dressing to please one's husband. In popular women's magazines there are hundreds of pages devoted to this subject. "Do you greet his return with a smiling face, a fresh hair-do, and a clean house

dress?" "If your husband has a favorite color, use it and wear it often." While I cannot always have the lipstick on straight, or tint even the mashed potatoes green, there is something to be said for improving my personal appearance. Too many wives spend all of their time and effort on the appearance of their houses and their children, and simply cease to be interested in changing and improving themselves.

Some wives, as the years go by and children and duties become more clamorous and pressing, begin to omit the small signs of love that husbands are more often accused of neglecting. The good-by or return-home kiss is certainly not always indicative of a successful marriage, but in most cases it shows an awareness of each other that is warm and good. A light caress or an understanding look does wonders when the noise of a vigorous family tears at strained nerves. Words of praise and appreciation for help with the dishes or for the repaired sweeper should always be voiced, not merely thought.

That Word Obey

There are many jokes about the omission of the word "obey" from the non-Catholic marriage ceremony. And in religions where everything is or can be changed this is often done. The word "obey" does not appear in the Catholic ceremony, and yet that the husband is the head of the household is sound doctrine. In the epistle of the Nuptial Mass are these telling words: "Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord; because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church. . . . Just as the Church is subject to Christ, so also let wives be to their husbands in all things." Why should a loving wife resent this? It does not mean a servile subjection, for the Church goes right on to say, "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for her." With such love binding her

husband, how can a wife resent her position? Her lot is truly enviable.

This recognition of the headship of the husband is, then, a duty of the wife. I must place my husband first with myself, (my love for him has already put him there) first before the children, and first before our friends. This has rather subtle implications. In regard to myself, is my husband really first? Did I leave mother and father for him, or do I constantly quote my father's opinions and what he would do under like circumstances? Do I fly to my mother with criticisms of my husband when things are not running smoothly? If my husband is truly first with me, I do not go to my parents with problems and complaints. It is my husband I lean upon for advice and encouragement and understanding.

Placing Dad first with the children is not difficult if Dad is naturally assertive and likely to take the lead. My task is more difficult if, through the character of my husband, I have had to make many decisions and take on burdens usually reserved for the father. But, in the presence of the children, I can often ask for Dad's ideas and seem to seek his counsel. And I must not complain in their presence of extra duties that would ordinarily belong to Dad, such as furnace tending and the so-called heavy chores.

In the economic set-up today Dad is absent from home the major part of his days. This means that Mother deals most with the children. She must be especially careful, therefore, to place Dad first in her conversation and references, and to make opportunities when Dad is home for him to do things with the children. They will respect him, and equally important, so will she.

In what specific cases does the husband have the final word? In decisions of importance to the family, such as a change in jobs, or a proposed move to another city, or the amount of money that should be spent to buy a house or car, the ulti-

mate decision is his. Let the wife take heed and play fair. Tears, assumed illness, and a general air of unpleasantness can make every decision the woman's. Since a man is often more stable, more prudent, more just, and less swayed by emotion and physical weakness it is fitting as well as right that he be the head of the home.

In this discussion of the primacy of the husband it is apropos to mention the effect of the wife working outside the home. The only real justification for this is economic necessity. Psychologically it often seems to weaken the position of the husband in the home and with his wife when she is a breadwinner too. The capable wife with unused leisure may use that ability and time to help the many crying needs of Catholic Action today, and even earn some money too. But a full-time job for her seems undesirable in an ideal marriage.

Talking Him Over

Putting her husband first with her friends is something many an otherwise model wife does not do. She even seems to take pleasure in either laughing at his minor faults and weaknesses, or comparing them with those of another's husband. Sometimes, in the conversation of wives, there is even lively competition to tell the biggest story about their husbands' foibles. This may seem, at first glance, to be harmless, but such belittling certainly damages the respect and love of a wife for her husband. There should be no discussion with friends of a husband's personal idiosyncrasies or lack of business acumen. If I must talk about my husband to our friends, I can list his fine qualities or vie with other wives in boasting about what a wonderful husband I have.

Sometimes when husbands and wives are together socially a wife will display a form of rudeness that she would never tolerate from her children. She will interrupt her husband's

conversation to correct him, to give her interpretation of what he is saying, and even to flatly contradict him. This is, no doubt, a habit of slow growth and perhaps the well-intentioned wife does not realize how seriously she offends the sensibilities of her husband and those of her friends. Perhaps I may not be able to laugh heartily at a joke I have heard many times, but I can smile with approval as I think once again what a marvellous story-teller my husband has become.

Sympathetic Consideration

One of the most important obligations of a wife who wishes to achieve an ideal marriage is the development of an attitude of loving consideration: a constant solicitude for the well-being of her husband without his being particularly aware of this concern. This attitude has many facets. It might begin with interest in my husband's work and outside activities. Automatically I become less inclined to talk (or even think) about my own small irritations of the day. I find myself gradually understanding what my husband's job involves, the demands made upon him in a highly competitive world, and what he hopes to accomplish. Since husbands and wives cannot actually exchange jobs, this is the next best way to reach an appreciation of the problems on the other side of the fence.

This knowledge of what my husband faces each day in the outside world gives me greater incentive to have his home as clean, as comfortable, and as peaceful as I can make it. I may not be able to greet him at the door with pipe, slippers, and folded newspaper, or keep the children from descending upon him with loud whoops and strangling holds. But he will always feel welcome, wanted, approved, and the center of everything. This effort to make my husband's home a refuge will keep me from becoming what men hate most: a nagging woman. There should be no talk of failures, of the faults of

his relatives, of the mistakes of the past. There is nothing to be gained by renewed talk about annoying habits that he cannot or will not correct. They must be endured, and without the air of a martyr.

For the Discouraged

If all this seems impossible of achievement to a wife already harassed with baby-tending, household chores, meals, money worries, the problems of growing children, sickness, and the demands of modern living, she can remember three things:

1) Not even the holiest and happiest Catholic marriage possesses all the characteristics mentioned here, perhaps not even one in its fullest development. The perfect human relationship is not possible here on earth. We can only strive for it. But as we work, what we have becomes better.

2) We have not discussed marriage as it is, but as it can be. There has been no listing of the numerous occasions when even loving and close personalities verge on hatred, of the spells of boredom and dreariness which even real love does not dispel, of the days and nights of weariness, discouragement, unhappiness, and almost despair, of times when one can and does think, "If marriage is to be like this—" The facts given here simply show how these times can be made fewer, but do not deny their existence.

3) Improvement is bound to come because of all the help we have. Husbands should be working for the ideal marriage, and many more would if husbands and wives could sit down together and discuss ways of making their lives happier. (Suggestion: Persuade your husband to read Wingfield Hope's book, *Life Together*, if you quail at a heart-to-heart talk.) God furnishes the cooperative wife with innumerable graces; those particularly conferred by the sacrament of matrimony, actual

grace, and sanctifying grace. This means a real lift to progress at the very moment you need it most.

Summed Up In a Word

It can be readily seen now that all the obligations of a woman to her husband can be summed up in one sentence: "Love your husband with all of your mind, and heart, and body." It is this "attitude of love" that marks off the soul-satisfying and spiritually-rewarding marriage from those where the husband and wife "jog along in double harness," "make a good job of their marriage," "have a nice working agreement," "get along as well as most couples," "stay together because of the children or for appearance's sake." This turning outward toward the beloved instead of inward to self-pity, or selfishness, or 'what I have to do' puts an end forever to thinking in terms of obligations or duty. In this kind of Catholic marriage a wife is not even interested in determining the line of demarcation between what she must do in her marriage and what she can do. Her marriage is no fifty-fifty proposition; she isn't measuring out half of the love, and gifts, and even work. Even should she know, as many wives do, that her husband gives a grudging twenty per cent of affection and effort, it does not matter. With his hand in hers, it is her love that will carry them to God.

The Mother and Her Children

By Eileen Nutting

I BAPTIZE thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." By this very legal and technical and sacramental procedure the child of your body becomes an adopted son of the Lord of creation and an heir to His kingdom. No longer is the babe a mere creature of the Lord. He is now His son. His inheritance has, in these few minutes, been increased from nothing at all to Heaven itself, and it is your duty and privilege as his mother to train and educate him. It is not enough to aim at bare salvation. You must aim at equipping him with all the character, grace, and dignity possible, for him to take his very exalted place in the mansions of the Lord.

Here is your baby and there is his future, and then there is all that in between called "life" to fill up with living and learning and doing. It is a breath-taking job. If you have contracted for it, it is the most important thing in your life. It comes before your health and your wealth; it comes before your success and your ease; it comes before your desires and your talents. First of all, in the sight of God, your work is that of a wife and mother.

Be Vocal About God

But God gives wonderful help to lighten the load. The very earliest help is love. Mother's love, which God plants firmly, is the big means of reaching out to a baby, and now that the doctors and child guidance experts recognize the baby's need

for love and its constant expression, the modern mother can go all out in enjoying her baby. She can use her love for her children to teach God's love for us all.

It is in the home that the child first learns to know and love God, and this must be accomplished by the mother's talking about God. From the first moment the child is put in your arms the "God bless you's" should flow freely from your lips, *out loud*. "Thank you, dear God, for my baby." "Jesus, I love you." "Mary, protect my child." You are not going to feel foolish saying such aspirations in the presence of an infant—or not very foolish—and by the time he is old enough to take in what you are saying, you both have become so familiar with constant, daily, almost hourly invoking of the name of God in praise, petition and thanksgiving that there is no self-consciousness at all in it. Sing His praise if you can sing at all. There is nothing little children love so much as a song; nothing they learn quicker or remember longer.

At any rate, be vocal. Strong, silent worshippers may be very well in a Carmelite cloister, but they fail miserably in a home.

Holy Water In a Mason Jar

That home is a little church, and it should be a holy place. In it can be used countless sacramentals—and the word is *used*. Holy water in a mason jar on the top shelf might almost as well be left in the thermos jug in the sacristy. Blessed candles put away carefully from one sick call to the next—often years apart—teach very little. It is the *use* of the sacramentals and the reverence shown them that teach the child to love God's holy things.

Home—The Little Church

The Church sees in the little church—the home—much that is like unto herself; and as she has a table at which we all are

fed the Food of Life, so the little church has a table at which her members are nourished both in body and in spirit. The family meal is the symbol of the Great Sacrament, and it should be a holy meal, blessed by prayer. You may have great difficulty getting your flock to the table, washed and clean and their tempers under control and their thoughts turned to the business at hand, but ask any pastor and you will find that he has much the same problem getting his flock to the table in the big Church.

Analogies should be carried only as far as they do any good. There is nothing infallible about them. They are intended merely as helps, and the ones that fail to help should be skipped. Therefore I am not going to try to see the mother of the family as the symbol of the priest at the altar. At least in my home there is scant similarity. There in the kitchen stand I, the cook. It is the last ten minutes before the meal is ready. I call down to the boy painting his car in the basement to get ready to stop! I call the girl from the delights of her latest library book, to toss the salad! I tell the little fellow for the ninety-ninth time that he may not have a Milky Way just before dinner. The cake is lop-sided and the carrots a trifle—oh, just a mite—scorched. I am an overworked mother in a cluttered kitchen, and I do *not* feel like a priestess who is preparing a sacrifice at the table of the Lord.

But when the children finally get to the table and get some food into them and begin to relax; when the events of the day are brought up and admired or regretted, but at least placed in their proper niche; when the give and take of family life is indulged in and a little humor dares to raise its head, then a feeling of well-being comes over me and, though I still do not feel like a priestess, I do feel that this is a symbol of the table of the Lord—my home, my family meal, scorched carrots and all.

Love Your Neighbor

The hardest thing for the mother to get across to her children, I think, is love of neighbor, especially when that neighbor is a bossy big sister or a tormenting younger brother. The little folk love their parents, and they often love their next-door neighbors and the friends who come to visit, but they'll be darned if they will love the brothers and sisters of their own household—those pests who are forever in their hair, breaking toys, telling tales, causing trouble from dawn to dark. Yet to teach them to do what the second great commandment prescribes is next in importance to teaching them to know, love, and serve God. It must be done, and, fears to the contrary, it is done, and usually very successfully.

In spite of the constant bickering that goes on among the children in most families, it is astonishing when one realizes the love that is growing there too. And it is real love. You love your brother and sister in spite of the many failings you know they possess. Your friends are loved dearly, but close as you may be to them you seldom see them in the morning before they have had a cup of coffee. That early morning encounter takes place daily in the family. It is sandpaper against rough wood and tortures the nerves. Agony though it is, it serves a useful purpose. Right in the home, where all this construction should be done, the rough edges are rubbed off and the corners rounded. The children may think that they despise one another, but a short separation or a common foe often shows the depth of their love.

This is natural love. It is a mother's job to nurture it and supernaturalize it and help in making it grow to embrace all men. The method is example. If the child can say "Mother is kind," that is better than "Mother is smart," or "pretty," or "clever," or "a good cook." It is one of the nicest things a child can say about his mother, and it is often one of the hardest

things to be. Just to speak kindly is an effort we find it hard to make, sometimes, merely for the family. Have you ever noticed a sudden change in your voice when you have been lecturing the children and then answer the phone? That "Hello" seems to come from another world. If we could always be polite at home!

The love of our neighbor cannot take holidays, nor exclude any one of God's people. We must show love for the clerks in the store, bus drivers, the children who come to play with ours. Negroes, Protestants, Jews, the driver of the "other car"—and in them all we must see Christ and show Christ to our children.

Love is shown in word and deed. The mother cannot fail to give the cup of cold water, for her own soul's salvation as well as for the training of her children. In fact, to get the idea across to the young fry, she had better make it a glass of iced lemonade, and then work on the toddlers to get them to give up half their bunch of grapes in love of their neighbor for love of Him. Then she has really done something.

After he has shared with his neighbor, have you ever noticed how a child will pray for that person? By that time the youngster feels that he has a vested interest, and he will go all out in his petition.

Teach Them to Pray

A child's prayers are wonderful things. We adults have schooled our faces to assume during prayer blank expressions which we fondly imagine to be reverent ones. Behind those masks our thoughts roam from the contemplation of His mysteries to the consideration of our infirmities, from near ecstasy in His love to frustrating distraction in our own self-love. But all the while, by all external signs, we have been deep in prayer.

A child has no such guile. Remember Christopher Robin's *Vespers*:

"God bless Mummy. I know that's right.
Wasn't it fun in the bath tonight?
The cold's so cold, and hot's so hot.
Oh! God bless Daddy—I quite forgot."

But it is the closing lines that give us pause:

"Hush! hush! Whisper who dares!
Christopher Robin is saying his prayers."

The baby's words are precious, but they must grow up. The prayers should remain child-like but never childish. The mother teaches her children to use new words and form new concepts, and she must not neglect to increase their vocabularies for their conversations with the Lord. If a person's prayers are forever on a "God bless Mummy" level, then forever is vague to him the realization of the awful majesty of God. The power and splendor of His reign, as well as the simplicity and gentleness of His Incarnation are much more clearly pictured in the mind of the man whose concepts in spiritual matters have kept abreast of his mental development in general.

We learn word power by studying the poets. Why not prayer power by studying the *psalms*? There is the richness of literature for developing man's mind. The richness of liturgy needs but its use to develop the powers of his heart and soul as well. The morning offering is wonderful, but do not stop there. Teach your child the beauty and the imagery of such great praise as Mary's

"My soul doth magnify the Lord,
And my spirit doth rejoice in God, my Saviour."

The praise of the Lord should be a regular, accepted, nor-

mal part of the life of the family. There should not be just petition, but complete prayer—praise, petition, thanksgiving, atonement. It need not be tiresome and monotonous, but can be varied with the seasons and colored with domestic ceremonies and traditions, blessings and festivals.

Home—The Little School

THE home is a little church, and it is also a little school. The mother is the school marm. In moments of controversy we parents stand on our dignity and refuse to be pushed around. We declare in very positive terms that since it is the duty of parents to educate their children, *we shall* decide in matters under dispute, rather than the teacher. Then when the conflict has passed we quickly retire from the field of education and leave our children to others to whom we say we are delegating the task of teaching.

However, the word that we ourselves used was duty, parental duty. To no one may we delegate the education of our children in that most important of all fields, the knowledge and love and service of God. If you love God you can teach your child to love Him. And you get your best groundwork laid before the child is of school age. These are the wonderful years when you have no distracting outside influence. The child's heart and loyalties are all yours. Work well! You will soon have many rivals.

At seven your child has officially reached the age of reason, and soon will be making his first confession and First Communion. The Sisters who teach religion to beginners have a remarkable system of presenting the sacrament of penance to very young minds. They come right down to earth about it, without any sentimentality, and wing the thoughts of those small penitents right up to heaven. Take any child out of the First Communion class and you will find he knows what sin is and what

it does to his soul; what forgiveness is and how to get it. His sincerity is amazing. There is no question but that he has contrition for his sins and has made a firm purpose of amendment.

But as time goes on and a routine of confession and Communion has been developed, then there is grave danger that the whole thing be reduced to mere routine. Here the parents must be ready to step in. The mother knows the child's weaknesses, and she sees them shown over and over again. It is time to secure some spiritual guidance for that soul. A mother cannot pry into a child's heart, but she can be on hand to listen and to advise. She can explain to her child that the same sin, committed over and over again, does not have simply numerical importance. It is what lies behind that sin and causes it that must be sought out and confessed and fought against. Is it pride? Is it envy? Is it sloth? No little sin just happens over and over again, unless a big sin hides back there and causes it. A good father confessor can make things clear to this child, and give strength to his spiritual life thereby. But a good father confessor does not offer spiritual guidance unless he is asked for it, and a child does not know how to ask; and often does not realize that there is anything to ask about.

Road to Sanctity

Here is where the "family group movement" has great possibilities. The chaplain of a group of five or six couples becomes well acquainted with all the children in the group, and many matters are discussed with him. If he has the parents' confidence and the children's confidence, the parents can lead the children to him for guidance, and receive some of it themselves. With good guidance and good will and God's good grace the whole family is on the road to sanctity.

On the road they often pause and eat the Flesh of the Lord. Here the child receives the Sacrament that has been sym-

bolized in the meals in his own home all his life, way back to high-chair days. As the family makes its way toward eternal life, part of the joy is its togetherness. It is good for the members of the family to be together in their work; it is beneficial for them to be together in their play; it is almost imperative for them to be together in their worship.

If the very first time the child goes to the altar rail he goes with his mother and father, he goes without fear. He goes with his mind on the Sacrament and not on how many steps per minute he must take. It is the beauty of the great Mystery that is uppermost in his mind, not uniformity and timing. The onlooker may say that this way is not so *pretty* as a First Communion Procession of boys and girls, but the mother, who is an *inlooker*, knows that the calmness of soul that her child experiences is the factor most worth striving for.

An Invisible Milestone

With his First Communion the child enters a whole new life. He goes to confession and Communion weekly, and grace is poured into his soul in a manner that his teaching allows him to understand. Not so with Confirmation. The bishop comes and imposes his hands with great pomp and ceremony. Then life goes on and nothing seems changed. These "strong and perfect Christians" have a feeling that they are not so strong and definitely not so perfect as one might wish, and the workings of the grace of Confirmation are not particularly discernible either to the recipient or to his neighbors. To outward appearances, Confirmation seems to mark no milestone in one's Christian life, and therefore its significance does not stand out.

One of our problems to be solved is how to make Confirmation take a place of *recognized* importance in the life of the child. If children were confirmed at a more uniform age the reception of that sacrament could mark their actual introduc-

tion into some form of apostolic work, and thus it could be the badge of maturity. But since, as conditions now are, children are confirmed at any age from eight to fifteen or over, the mother must privately see that at Confirmation each child is given responsibilities and duties suitable to his age.

As the child grows older his activities and his responsibilities increase, not only in the home but in the community. He will be taking his place in one or more of the countless organizations that have been set up to serve the youth of today. Parents must see to it that the group their child is with is a worthwhile one. This means more than checking on the purpose, aims, and personnel. It means more than interest and approval. If a child is to feel the deep satisfaction of being a part of a movement that gets where it is headed, he must receive more than moral support from home. The need is for lay people, preferably parents, to participate actively in the plans, programs, and entertainments of every youth group, from Cub Scouts and Bluebirds to CYO.

Families of the Future

In season and out of season the mother of a family must train her children for marriage. First she can, with her husband's help, make her own marriage come as near perfection as possible. Then she can encourage the development of those traits and virtues in her children that they will need to make their own marriages good. Always in her conversation she can show the need for preparation for that very wonderful kind of life that marriage is. The girl must learn to cook and sew and keep the house so that she will know how to care for that house of her own some day. She must learn gentleness and firmness, seriousness and humor for that family of her own. The boy must learn judgment and justice and kindness, for he will sometime need all these virtues in abundance when he is the head of the house.

The mother and father both must teach their boys and girls what marriage really is—its oneness, its holiness, its permanence, its trials, responsibilities and enjoyments. A Cana Conference right in the home, day after day!

A Realistic Viewpoint

The family can pray to the Holy Family not only for guidance and care now, but for help and direction in establishing the new families in the future. But it seems to me unwise to say to young people in a general way, "Model your family on the Holy Family." There are too many discrepancies between that Family and what their families can possibly be. Planning to live our family life from day to day the way the Holy Family lived theirs, is something like trying to settle our problems the way God settles His. In His existence there are no problems, and in the Holy Family many of the problems that we have to wrestle with constantly did not exist. The problems in the relationship of husband and wife, for instance, are so dissimilar that the analogy between the Holy Family and ours falls down. Moreover, in the Holy Family there was only one case of original sin. In my home we put up with the effects of six of them. Mary had one Child, and that Child was God. My situation is somewhat different.

The Holy Family had its problems, but they were hardly like ours. But the Holy Family does know the answers to our problems and can bestow the grace we need to meet and conquer them. Let us teach our children to go to Jesus, Mary and Joseph for help and comfort and understanding, and to rely on them as our patrons and our source of inspiration.

Perhaps you have a religious vocation in your family. That must be nurtured and cared for and helped to grow; but the training for marriage should be given to the one you are sure is headed for the convent or monastery in as complete a man-

ner as it is to the one you are sure will take unto himself a mate. Make marriage beautiful to all the children. "The renunciation of marriage because it appears distasteful," says Rudolf Allers in *The Psychology of Character*, "is not consistent with morality, and implies cowardice and flight. . . . Only he who looks on this world and all its gifts as unutterably beautiful and precious is entitled to renounce them because he sees something even finer and more splendid before him. . . . One can sacrifice only what one values."

The family should pray for good priests and good Sisters, and pray that if it be God's will there should be vocations in the family. The children should become acquainted with the clergy and religious. Invite priests to your home. Ask the pastor and—on a different day—the curate to dinner. Keep the children present during the visit and don't talk down to them. Let them listen to your conversation on religion and morals and the spiritual life, and let them take part when they can. They will learn a lot that is not in the catechism, and they will, above all, learn the importance you attach to such matters.

"Such matters" *are* the important things in life. All our conversation should point up that fact. We can teach our children by everything we do or say, by the magazines we take and the books we read, by the friends we make and the parties we attend. And alas, we can teach them only too well by the things we leave undone.

A Job Well Done

It is a tremendous job, this training of our children for heaven, but for each problem that arises God gives us enough grace—well, not necessarily to solve it, but to face it. Sometimes we never find the answers, but the search can be illuminating, the study can be clarifying, the work with the family can be downright fun, and the final solution well worth the waiting.

The Woman and the World

by Mary Mullally

THE present crisis in world affairs has brought woman's unique position to a rightful recognition. Women have a contribution to make toward the right ordering of human life which cannot be denied to them and of which women themselves must become more keenly aware. Today there is a need of women "with a vision of their great task as women who will help to restore the social equilibrium by creating a vital current of the great womanly virtues; the spirit of love, compassion for the suffering and generous self-sacrifice." As women their fundamental contribution to the new order lies in finding their proper role in society.

Woman's Dignity

Everything womanly, of course, begins with Our Lady. She is the embodiment of all womanly perfections and she gives to woman her dignity and influence. Today, as never before, it is a woman's duty to maintain and strengthen that dignity. To view woman's position merely from an economic, political or educational standpoint would be to evade the real point at issue, which is dignity of woman.

Pius XII said, "What, then, is this dignity that a woman has from God? Put the question to human nature as formed by God and elevated and redeemed in the Blood of Christ."

In their personal dignity as children of God a man and a woman are absolutely equal, as they are in relation to the last

end of human life, which is everlasting union with God in the happiness of heaven. By proclaiming this truth through all the centuries of her history, the Church has freed woman from degrading, unnatural slavery.

But a man and woman cannot maintain and perfect this equal dignity of theirs except by respecting and promoting the individual characteristic qualities which nature has given to each of them. These qualities, which are both physical and spiritual, cannot be ignored or eliminated without nature itself stepping in to restore the balance. These characteristic qualities which divide the two sexes are so completely obvious to all that one cannot overlook or ignore their significance in social relations.

The two sexes, by the very qualities that distinguish them, are mutually complementary to such a degree that their co-ordination makes itself felt in every phase of man's social life. We shall here recall only one of these phases because of its special importance to the married state.

From Responsibility to Maturity

For the vast majority of women the natural state of life is that of marriage. The responsibilities of the family develop her powers and help to mature her spiritually, mentally and physically.

Spiritually, a woman becomes mature through surrender, through finding the particular role in which she can achieve her complete dedication to God. The woman who has found her vocation in life in marriage and who is wholly devoted to her task of bringing her family to God is a mature person whatever her age. "She will have that air of serenity and peace which are the sign of the basic fulfillment of her being. The woman who has never surrendered wholeheartedly to any purpose outside herself remains immature all her life, like a bud

which never unfolds itself." In marriage, woman can develop a spirit of selflessness which makes her dedication deeper and richer with the years. Her service to her family both expresses her love of God and increases her ability to love. The woman who is always concerned with the needs of her family, can unfold those qualities of love, gentleness and unselfish devotion which make her truly great and truly happy.

Mentally, a woman's mind matures under the stimulus of the varied practical activities which she performs for those she loves. In the day to day living of the family, she can develop sound judgment and a keen insight into human nature. The responsibilities of her family life exercise a woman's mental powers. Her intuition and powers of observation are called into play constantly to discover the unexpressed desires of her family, particularly the needs of the small child. Her intuition as well as her tact are invaluable for the solution of the many problems of human relations and practical affairs which come up in the course of her day.

Physically, too, marriage and childbearing represent a development and completion for most women, giving them new beauty and vitality.

"In a well balanced society where the family performs all its proper functions, the home is a society in microcosm; presenting all the problems of human relations, all the variety of human activities. The home is at once an economic and industrial center, preparing foods for family use; a school in which the young are introduced to the universe; a sanctuary for rest and relaxation, a temple dedicated to the praise of God." It is woman's duty to organize and to direct this complex undertaking, a task which demands intelligence, talents and spiritual qualities of a high order.

One of the most important responsibilities of a woman is her job as educator, passing on the basic heritage of civilization,

the traditions of culture and religion, to the new generation. Perhaps it is in this role more than in any other that we see how woman's influence diffuses itself on the world. It is the mother who socializes the young human being, training him to those virtues which are necessary for the existence of a well-balanced society. She molds the men and women of the future. And "in so far as a mother sees her children as instruments of God, she will automatically avoid the inclination of so many parents and teachers to overemphasize self-preservation, self-sanctification, self-development and self-enjoyment—as if one's only purpose in life were to take care of his or her own soul and his or her own body, letting the rest of the world, literally and figuratively 'go to the devil.' If women would be "Christbearers" they will be less concerned that their children choose profitable careers and more concerned that they find for themselves a sphere of influence for good." Father Keller suggests that the greatest good can be exerted by having a steady stream of young people from the average home entering the four great fields of education, government, labor-management and writing.

Woman and Society

We cannot possibly exaggerate the importance for society of woman's achievement in the family. The family is the foundation of all the larger social structure, the basic cell on which all the other agencies depend for the very existence and first formation of their members. A nation can flourish only to the extent that it is composed of healthy, thriving families. Consequently, the true woman can see all the problems of human life only in the perspective of the family. That is why her delicate sense of dignity constantly puts her on guard against any social or political order that threatens to prejudice her mission as a mother, or the good of the family. Unfortunately, this is the modern threat in today's social and political situation.

Despite the fact that woman's supreme place is in the home, modern conditions call for woman's participation in public life, social and political. "Every woman has then, mark it well, the obligation, the strict obligation in conscience, not to absent herself but to go into action in a manner and way suitable to the condition of each so as to hold back those currents which threaten the home, so as to oppose those doctrines which undermine its foundations, so as to prepare, organize and achieve its restoration." In these unmistakable terms Pius XII speaks to the modern woman, and he continues, "to this powerful motive which impels a Catholic woman to enter upon a way that now is opened to her activity, there is added another, her dignity as a woman." She has to collaborate with man towards the good of the State. Woman has a contribution to make to the commonweal that she alone by her nature is capable of making.

The preparation and formation of a woman for social and political life is an integral factor in the development of a stable society. The motherly instinct in a woman is a human instinct which is not determined by nature down to the details of its application. It is directed by free will and this in turn is guided by intellect. "Hence comes its moral value and its dignity but also its imperfection which must be compensated for and redeemed by education.

"Education proper to the sex of the young girl, is therefore a necessary condition of her preparation and formation for a life worthy of her. This education should begin in the home and be continued in the school."

Woman and the Ballot

The practical activation of woman's social and political life evolves as the second aim of the program of woman's duties in the world. The electoral ballot in the hands of Catholic

women is an important means toward the fulfillment of their strict duty in conscience, especially at the present time. Good social legislation is the duty of the State, that every family may develop and prosper. The true woman understands that the activity of the State and government must be concerned with the common welfare, the good of the family and its individual members. To her politics does not mean the domination of one class, or economic or social imperialism. Her vote is always a vote of peace.

As we read about non-stop flights around the world, new atomic developments, biological warfare, directed missiles, and the conflict with Russia, we are apt to heave a helpless sigh and hope our children will not have to live through another war. Each of us must choose the most sensible and effective way to exert our efforts towards the cause of world peace.

Woman and the World

One of the most important issues of the day is the question of a world society. Christian morality enjoins all men of good will to exert a common endeavor to challenge international anarchy and to work unceasingly for a world society in which peace, order and justice will hold sway. The politics of power must be displaced by a truly Christian policy of justice and charity and authority. As Catholic women we have the duty to promote in whatever way we can a Commonwealth of Nations as proposed by Pius XII as one of the conditions of a lasting peace. The very desire and attempt to do this will bring a blessing upon you, your home and humanity. You will be imitating the world vision of Christ.

No matter how little time you have to spare from the duties of your home (which must always take precedence) try to use any spare moments, says Father Keller, on the bigger national projects as well as on those of your immediate envi-

ronment. As citizens and taxpayers you can make your voices heard by insisting on truth and integrity in education and government, and by taking steps to eliminate all that is opposed to them. With regard to the objectionable in newspapers, magazines, books, movies, radio and television, you can accomplish much if you will but pass the word along and enlist, in every way you can, the cooperation of other parents.

Some Social Duties

What are some of the social problems in the world today that need our attention and look primarily to the Catholic woman for a charitable and Christian solution? Space does not permit a lengthy discussion of the many existing injustices of the social order. Therefore, we shall dwell on only a few of those problems which cry out for the immediate introduction of reforms.

Family Allowances are an integral part of the Church's program of social reconstruction. Pius XI in his famed Encyclical Letter, *Quadragesimo Anno*, urged the adoption of such reforms where the father of a family failed to receive a wage sufficient to meet adequately, ordinary domestic needs. The introduction of Family Allowances in the United States should meet with our favor and receive our backing for the following reasons:

Social justice demands it. Each family has a right to sufficient income to support itself. A good proportion of the workers in the United States, do not at present receive incomes that can honestly be called family living wages, and it seems unlikely that the immediate future will bring very much improvement on this score. Consequently, the only remedy to satisfy the demands of social justice would seem to be a system of Family Allowances.

Good economic judgment urges the introduction of Family

Allowance plans. The more money a family has, the more commodities it is able to purchase. The more it can purchase, the steadier are business and employment, the more steady business and employment the greater our national prosperity.

The importance of family stability urges the introduction of Family Allowances. It is universally acknowledged that one of the important factors contributing to our high divorce rate is the large number of childless marriages. Children in a family make for family stability and consequently point toward the power for good in a Family Allowance System.

For these and other reasons a system of Family Allowances is one of our greatest social needs in the United States today. Side by side with all our efforts to raise the standard of living for all people must go a concerted drive for the introduction of some such system. Forty-seven per cent of the families in this country do not have enough income to support a family of four decently. Hence a general rise in income is extremely important. But no matter how high wages may rise, no matter how greatly living standards may be improved, there will still be an imperative need for a Family Allowance System. Why? Because family responsibilities will vary, and these responsibilities, large in the case of some, small in the case of others, cannot be met by a uniform wage. A group of men doing the same kind of work, living in the same kind of neighborhood, members of the same socio-economic class should be able to maintain pretty much of a standard of living. Unfortunately, for too many the standard of living will always be determined by the majority of the group. And unfortunately again, the majority group is made up of the families in the United States that average one child to each family. Hence the standard will be a standard that larger families still find impossible to attain without the aid of supplementary incomes.

The family is supposedly the foundation of all social improvements in the country. Without security the family can

hardly become a sound foundation. Our job is to give it that security.

Another social problem which must be faced and solved is the Negro problem. During the past few years several groups of Catholics, who are vitally interested in the conversion of the Negro and in the general program of interracial justice, have been zealously seeking to remove the prejudices and apathies that prevent Americans from rendering support to the missions, and to bring about such a change of attitude on the part of American Catholics as to convince the Negro of the just and charitable spirit of the Catholic Church. The Catholic woman, if not a member of one of these groups, can do her part to heed the Holy Father's admonition by her prayers, example and financial assistance. It is obvious that the Negro Apostolate is immensely helped forward by Negroes administering to the needs of Negroes. One of the quickest ways to cure your latent and pagan prejudice is to offer Mass with a Negro priest. We should stop talking about them as colored and start thinking about them as Catholic, stop talking about the "Negro Question" and start thinking about "Negro Conversions." Then perhaps we can change our disgraceful record of only one Catholic in every forty-three Negroes, and eradicate the startling fact that religious work among the fourteen million colored people in the United States is America's greatest missionary failure.

These are but a very few of the ways in which we can try to carry out the Holy Father's plea to restore the Christian spirit in the world today. The whole-hearted surrender of man to God and the humble acknowledgment of our complete dependence on Him will help to bring that peace for which this chaotic world yearns. To show the way to this surrender is the primary spiritual mission of the Catholic woman in the world today.

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