

BEFORE YOU WED

By HUBERT McEVOY

FIRST STYLE

"BEHOLD, all things are ready: come ye to the marriage." These words of St Matthew's may be heard from many Catholics coming to see the priest about marriage.

The date is fixed, the civil authorities given due warning that this couple intend to be married on this particular day, at this church, by such a priest. The guests are invited, bridesmaids and best man chosen, the appointment made with the photographer, details of the reception settled, down to the last place at the table. The couple then attend to the least important matter—they come to *tell* Father . . . "Come you to the marriage."

"We want to be married, Father."

Every priest knows that feeling of taking hold of himself and preparing for the worst when he hears this announcement. "Both Catholics, of course?"

"Oh, yes." (The priest makes an act of thanksgiving.) "Well, we can perhaps arrange a suitable date.

"Oh, it's all arranged." (This with a firm sort of smile.) "I see. What date had you thought of?"

"A fortnight on Friday, Father. You see . . ." and so on.

The priest notes that he's not supposed to have any arrangements of his own, but decides not to say anything. It will mean some rearranging; he's had to do it so often before.

"You know the banns have to be called *three times*, and there are only *two* Sundays left?"

The answer to this is silence, implying that if the Church likes to make awkward regulations, she has only herself to blame. "Well, we shall need your baptismal certificates."

"I've got my birth certificate, but it doesn't say anything about baptism."

The priest knows what has happened. The certificate had not been brought in at the baptism for endorsement.

"Have you any idea in which church you were baptised? There are over fifty churches in Manchester, you know!"

"No. My father and mother can't remember the name of the church. We didn't live there very long."

"Well, we shall have to find out."

The priest, of course, is expected to do the finding out. He notes the address, and wonders which of the Manchester priests, all perfect strangers, he can try his luck with and ask him to find out in which parish this particular street is. Experience tells him that the effort to *find out* means letters, perhaps long-distance calls and telegrams, the cost of which will never be mentioned.

Then he has an idea—

"Can your parents remember the name of the priest who baptised you?"

"My father says it was a Fr Richards. But mother says it was a Fr Richmond."

However, the priest has to keep his optimism going. In the end it turns out to have been a Fr Wilson—one of the many things that were not as they were said to be.

"Well, we'll see what we can do. We have to make sure you are baptised."

By this time the atmosphere is getting, not as yet tense, but doubtful. It's a nuisance the Church going on as though "all things were *not* ready." All this about baptism seems so very unimportant to the young couple when everything else has been settled so efficiently.

The red light begins to glow!

"I didn't think there would be all this bother, Father."

The priest sighs and resolves to be kind, if he's given half a chance. He's heard this remark about "all this bother" so often. He might point out that he's merely asked for a proof of baptism, just as the Registry Office wanted a proof of the date of birth. But he decides to get on with the business of finding the baptismal record which, after all, is not his responsibility.

He reflects ruefully that he hasn't yet tackled James, the less important partner. This time the situation is quite clear—James has no baptismal certificate but knows definitely where he was baptised. So the priest resolves that James, at

least, shall do something for himself.

"That's simple. You write for a baptism certificate, giving the date of your birth. Send a stamped addressed envelope." (The Church considers courtesy as one of the important virtues.)

"But the priest who baptised me is dead now, Father." "That's all right. He hasn't taken the baptism register with him. Mention that you want a certificate of freedom." "What's that, Father?"

"You know that people do commit bigamy, and the law only punishes them if it happens to find out ?"

(Silence here as good as to say—"Go on, it's your move.")

"Well, the Church goes one better. As soon as you are married I have to send a record of it to both places where you were baptised. If you have really been married before, you'll be found out when you write for that certificate of freedom."

The priest notes that this information about the up-to-date methods of the Church isn't thought very interesting.

"It *will* be all right about the date, won't it, Father ?"

"I suppose so. I'll have to make sure no one else has booked it." (About the only bull's eye he's been able to score!)

He can't, rather wickedly, help hoping it *has* been booked. However it hasn't, so he returns to say so. He doesn't say anything about the changing of his own arrangements, knowing the state of mind which goes with, *Behold, all things are ready.*

(Then, on the way to the door.)

"The certificates will be here in time, won't they, Father? You see, *everything else is ready.*"

SECOND STYLE

"I came about getting married, Father."

"Splendid. Both Catholics, I hope ?"

"No, he's not a Catholic, Father."

"That's a pity. Have you known him long?"

"Nearly four years."

"What religion is he ?"

"I'm afraid I don't know what it is exactly."

"And you've been going with him four years! You know that strikes me as strange and rather risky. He might be a spiritualist who doesn't believe our Lord was God, or a Quaker who doesn't believe in Baptism or any other Sacraments. Why, he might even be a Mormon, and that would be awkward for you!"

"I'm sure he's not any of those."

"How do you know? Does he go to any church ?"

"Yes, nearly every Sunday, but I've forgotten which it is." (N.B. This conversation, so far, is founded on fact!)

"Have you ever asked him to come to church with you?" "No, Father."

"Why not? You might easily find he would get interested."

"Well, I wouldn't like him to change just to please me."

Now after the ancient saying, *I didn't think there would be all this bother*, there's no more worn-out and wearisome remark than, *I wouldn't like him to change just for me!* It hits the priest hard just because it is so ancient and hard.

One can't help wondering is the reason for never mentioning religion dictated by fear of losing the chance of marriage? Is it that they would sooner have a partner who doesn't know too distinctly how a Catholic should live up to the faith? Is it the fear that the non-Catholic might become inconveniently religious ?

"But he wouldn't become a Catholic *just to please you*. He would have to show that he was becoming a Catholic *just to please God.*"

"Does that mean he would have to take instructions?" "It does."

"I don't think he would like to, Father. He wouldn't mind being married in the Church, and he wouldn't interfere with me."

"How can you be sure about all that if you've never mentioned religion to him? Have you asked him about these points ?"

"No, but I'm sure he would be willing to sign the promises and let the children be brought up as Catholics. He told me so."
"Then you *must* have spoken about it."

"No. You see, he asked a Catholic friend of his."

The priest wonders would it be any use saying how very curious it seems that the young man goes to a stranger to find out things which affect the girl most intimately, but he decides to stick to the main issue.

"You say he's faithful to his religion and goes regularly to his church. I know that you go regularly to yours—but, does *he* know? Doesn't it strike you as a contradiction that a man can be keen about his religion and yet allow his children to be brought up in a different one? If he's really keen on his religion, that means he thinks it's true, and that yours isn't. Yet he'll promise to bring his children up in it! Would you promise to bring your children up as Quakers?"

"Of course not, Father; but he's not at all bigoted."

"That's another contradiction, and even if it's true, I still wouldn't answer for his keeping the promises."

"Why, Father?"

"Because you haven't shown him that you care very much whether he does or not."

(She manages to evade this unpleasant truth rather neatly.)

"I really came to ask if you would get a dispensation."

"I'll do what I ought, of course, but it isn't the priest who asks for the dispensation, it's yourself. Lots of people think the dispensation depends upon whether the priest is kind enough to ask for it. That's not true. It depends absolutely upon the reasons which the Catholic party can produce. As far as I see, in your case, there isn't any good reason except that you want to get married."

The priest knows that this is a "nasty one." Naturally, that they want to marry is the best possible reason.

"You see, your age is against you. You are only twenty-one."

"But I know a girl who got one and she was thirty-eight."

"Yes, that was the reason. The Church was merciful because she wouldn't easily find another partner at that age!"

"My cousin got one and she was nearly as young as myself."

"When was that?"

"About twelve years ago."

"That was before the war. Times have changed now. You can think of lots of things you could do 'once upon a time.' The Church applies the law according to circumstances. She applies it easily, today, in the matter of fasting and abstinence."

The priest, being due to take the evening devotions, decides to let these arguments sink in, and leads up to the important question.

"You know that when forwarding *your* application for a dispensation, the priest has to testify that, in his considered opinion, it is morally certain that your young man, having signed the promises, will also keep them. But I can't say *I'm* certain, because I don't know him at all."

"I could bring him to see you, Father."

A more careful remark than it seems. What is desired is a sort of state visit for the purpose of securing the dispensation, with everything conducted in the presence of the girl. There's always a fear that the priest will "spoil the chances."

"But I should want to see him more than once. I can't make up my mind until he has had a number of instructions, and he knows what he is binding himself to in signing the promises."

"I don't know when he could come. He works very late."

There are always a lot of obstruction tactics at this point. Sometimes it's night-work, sometimes night-classes.

"You only see him at week-ends then?"

"Oh no. I see him on week nights too."

"Well, you can easily spare him one night. Bring him to Benediction next Sunday, and I'll see him afterwards."

A very doubtful silence here!

"He's never been in a Catholic church before, Father."

"That's no reason why he shouldn't make a start." (It turns out that he has been mystified why his girl never asked him to go.)

"By the way, when were you thinking of being married?" "About next May. We haven't fixed the date yet."

The priest breathes freely. It gives him a chance to see what he can do, and time for the grace of God to work.

"Bring him along. You needn't be scared or you'll scare him. Tell him I'm interested to know whom you are marrying."

The girl goes away plainly doubtful about the wisdom of all this, and the priest makes a note to keep next Sunday evening free, as the girl may be sensible and bring the young man to Benediction. Probably he will have to remind her to let her see that he's in earnest. He looks at his watch as he closes the door—four minutes to Evening Service.

THIRD STYLE

"Good evening, Father. I wanted to see you about getting married. I don't think you know me."

"Good evening. Actually I do know you. At least I've seen you before. But I didn't know you were in this parish."

"Oh, yes, my family have been living here six years, Father, but no priest has called. My mother is a bit upset about it. In the last parish, the priest used to come regularly."

"So would this priest if he'd known. But *he's* not upset about it because it isn't his fault. Did you give your name and address in when you came to the parish?"

"I don't think so, Father."

"Well, you mustn't ask the impossible, you know. The priest isn't trained as a parish sleuth, or a private inquiry agent."

However, all this is so familiar to the priest that he merely takes the opportunity to get details of the family, then turns to the business in hand, and slowly collects the awkward facts: the girl is not a Catholic, isn't interested in religion, though willing, as they all are, to sign promises and be married in a Catholic church.

"It's a pity you should want to marry a girl who hasn't any religion when there are plenty of good Catholic girls."

"Catholic girls are so stand-offish, Father."

"I've often heard that said, and your saying it again doesn't make it more true. I should have thought you were old enough not to judge by impressions alone, and not to believe all you hear just because you hear it often. Do you know any Catholic girls?"

"No, Father."

"Well, don't you think it unfair to charge them with being stand-offish when you are clearly the biggest culprit yourself? Have you been to any parish dances, plays, and other meetings?"

"I went to a concert once, but nobody spoke to me."

"Why didn't you start the speaking yourself? Seriously, it doesn't surprise me that you've made up with a non-Catholic considering the lone-wolf Catholic you seem to have been. No, you mustn't blame Catholic girls. My experience has been that, although they have a right and a duty to be reserved, they're a lot more forthcoming than the Catholic men.

"However, this non-Catholic girl you think of marrying—have you ever thought that you are gravely deceiving her?"

"How do you make that out, Father?"

"Because you are not the kind of man she thinks you are. You tell me that she is not interested in religion, and because you accept that calmly she's bound to think that you will fall in with her views. Therefore, you are deceiving her by leading her to believe that you can live happily with her, when in fact, you can't.

"She can't help your children to be good Catholics in the way that your own mother helped you. I'm not forgetting that some non-Catholic mothers do their duty in that respect much better than many Catholic ones, but they are the exception. And she can't help *you* to be a good Catholic."

"Well, I think I'm old enough to look after myself now."

"Don't you believe it! Nobody's old enough to do that. We all depend upon each other's example much more than we think, as you can tell by the number of people who come late for Mass."

"I'm hardly ever late for Mass."

"It's good to hear it, but isn't that because your mother trained you, made you get up, told you what Mass to go to, made sure that you did go? Perhaps she does some of these things still?"

"I'll say she does!"

"Exactly, and your non-Catholic wife won't, because she doesn't know the importance of being in time at Mass, or even of

being at Mass at all. That's just one of the many things she can't be interested in, or understand. Again, there is our custom of abstinence days. Your wife will have to do without meat, or, if she chooses to have it, as she is free to do, then it won't look well. These customs do cause inconvenience in a household, you know, and it's hard for a non-Catholic to see the sense of it."

"I admit I hadn't thought of it. But she knows we have different customs and I'm sure we will get on all right."

"I hope so. You can't tell which, or how many, of them she will dislike. It's not the practices themselves—it's *you practising* them that's the trouble, and you don't solve the difficulty by telling her *of* them; she has to appreciate the reason *for* them. Have you ever spoken of Confession?"

"There surely wouldn't be any difficulty there?"

"I can only say there might be, because there often is. Quite good, careful wives do have suspicious natures. They can't get used to the idea of their husbands having confidences with, for instance, the doctor or lawyer. They even object to a private conversation with their own mothers! And, as you know, the Confessional is the last word in secrecy. Most non-Catholics regard it as the last word in what is strange and sinister. They imagine their husbands saying all kinds of things in there! Sometimes there's real difficulty about the husband, still more the children, going out fasting to Mass and Communion. So you can take it these difficulties often cause serious quarrels, *serious* because they're constant, because the observance of Catholic practices has to be constant, unless the Catholic partner gives in *for the sake of peace*. Even that giving in doesn't really bring happiness. Catholics can't be happy neglecting their religion and seeing their children neglecting it."

"I'll never let that happen, Father."

"Perhaps not, but it may cost you more than you think. There's a deep-rooted conviction in every girl's mind that, once married, she can bring her husband round to her ways of thinking, and she's got all the wisdom of Eve for centuries, as well as the experience of her friends, to help her to do it in a way that you won't spot. She's seen so many other wives do it successfully, and they're quite ready to share the recipe with her!"

"Thanks, I'll watch out for that!"

"Do, but do it in time. Many married men would find it a revelation to sit down and note the number of things they're doing they never intended to do, or made up their minds never to do. Also the number of things they've given up hope of doing which they once regarded as part of their young lives."

"Well, everything's a risk, Father."

"Not *everything*, many things. And you do try to cut down the number of risks you have to take, don't you?"

"Oh, we've thought about it pretty carefully, Father."

"I know what you mean. You've done a lot of *planning, talking*, about houses, furniture, money, and how far your relatives come into the picture, and so on. That is what you mean, isn't it?"

"Well, yes."

"But these are the least important things, though they are important. They are the things which make a *house to live in*, but not necessarily a *home to be happy in*. I know a fair number of handsome houses that aren't homes. Has your girl said anything about children?"

"We've mentioned it. We should like to have children, of course."

"I see. You haven't answered my question, but you've made me understand quite a lot."

"You mean the Church forbids birth-prevention?"

"Yes, mainly that, though remember the Church says *it is forbidden*, quite a different thing from saying that *she forbids it*. It is forbidden by God and by the very make-up of man's nature, as continued drunkenness is forbidden."

"I know birth-control is wrong, Father. I've made up my mind not to have anything to do with it."

"I'm glad to hear you say it, but I want you to realise that it comes under the heading of risks to be foreseen and guarded against. Have you ever mentioned the matter to your girl?"

"I remember telling her that the Church didn't agree with it."

"In fact, you have no idea about her attitude on the matter."

"I suppose that's so."

"Now, look, this really does touch the point. I said you were not fair to the girl, leaving her in ignorance about the

Catholic way of life, under the impression that she could go *her* way and you go *yours*. Now it's quite true that there's no difficulty about her not going with you to Mass, or not fasting or abstaining, or not doing a lot of other things. There you can, up to a point, agree to differ, but, in the question of the use of marriage, that principle won't work. It makes many a mixed marriage become unbearable and leads to loss of the faith. Just as it would be wrong, from the wife's way of looking at things, for you to want her to follow Catholic customs in the matter of worship, so to her it's wrong that she should be asked to observe Catholic principles in the use of marriage, when she definitely doesn't want to."

"I've got to admit you're right there, Father."

"That brings us then to the one possible conclusion—your girl has got to know what living with a Catholic husband means, therefore she has to be told what his religion is. You admit your girl has the right to know all important matters about the man she's going to marry?"

"Certainly."

"For instance, you would gravely deceive her if you led her to believe you were in perfect health with a good salary and therefore reasonably certain to go on supporting her, and any children, when you knew your health was very uncertain and your salary poor?"

"Of course. But, isn't that a question of *ifs*, Father? I'm healthy, and my job is steady and well-paid."

"But you admit that it would be unfair if you deceived the girl on these points?"

"Yes, it would."

"Well, it's a true comparison. I've shown you that from the point of view of religion, you are *not* the man she thinks you are. I've shown you that some of these differences are so important that they amount to grave deception. And, it's because non-Catholic partners afterwards come to feel, and rightly, that they've been badly taken in that so many mixed marriages break down.

"However, it comes to this: I've tried to make these points bigger question-marks in your mind. I'm leaving it to you to think it all over and let me know what you decide."

FOURTH STYLE

The priest summoned to the parlour, and given the caller's name, with the added information, "and there's a lady with him," knows he's going to meet the non-Catholic girl of the last chapter. He knocks at the parlour door, pauses a diplomatic moment, and then enters.

"Good evening. You will be Miss —. I'm glad to meet you."

A faint, very cautious smile is the only reply. The priest chats generally for a few minutes in order to learn something of the girl, her home, friends, work, even the places she may have lived in. Experience has taught him that, in these days, when people move about so freely, nearly always some common interests are discovered. He waits until the girl has got to the stage of contributing a few remarks of her own, and then gets down to the business of the evening.

"Well, I know you are expecting me to say something else with you and your young man being here."

He knows the *your young man* is important. It puts the girl's mind at rest in a wonderful way; non-Catholics are so apt to think that the priest is out to stop the marriage, an opinion which even the Catholic partners seem to have sometimes.

"I know your *future husband* and naturally I would like to know his *future wife* well. You see, it's my job as a priest to look after him even after he is married. So I would like you to know, not only a Catholic, but what Catholics are. It will help you to make a success of your marriage."

"I suppose it would, but I don't really believe that religion should make any difference. I've some good Catholic friends and we get on quite well, agreeing to differ."

"But I'm sure you see the difference between getting on well with friends and getting on well with one's husband, or you wouldn't have made up your mind to marry Michael here rather than some other Catholic friend you get on well with."

"I still think it's a question of his going his way and my going mine, just as we do in other things."

"Not quite. To a Catholic, religion isn't just one of *the other things*; it's *the thing*. And I wouldn't advise marrying a Catholic who didn't think that. I've said a great deal to Michael on that point, and I'm willing that he should tell you all I said. Experience proves that it isn't wise for people of different religions to marry without each knowing something about the other's religion."

"Then why shouldn't he know something about my religion?"

"I think it would be best for you to ask him that question yourself. He should know something of your religion for reasons of this kind—it would be unwise for a Catholic girl to marry a Baptist without knowing about his religion. She would be very unhappy finding out that her children had to stay unbaptised until they were grown up because her husband didn't believe in infant baptism. So, '*your way and my way*' won't always work. I could give you dozens of examples, living ones, at this minute, to *prove* it. Do you know anything about the Catholic religion?"

"A few things—not much."

"I suppose Michael here hasn't told you very much. Catholics are very sensitive about their religion. They're aware that it seems strange to other people, and they're so afraid of its being ridiculed that they don't often speak about it unless they're asked, and then say as little as possible."

An eloquent silence here shows that the boy knows that he has been like that, and that the girl knows that she's found him like that.

"So, it comes to this. As a priest I know that there's a better chance of your marriage being a success if you have these explanations, and a clear danger of its being a failure if you don't. But you can see that someone else will have to do the explaining. Your young man could never bring himself to do it. That's true, isn't it, Michael?"

The priest regrets this question as soon as it's asked.

"Yes, Father, but I wouldn't like her to become a Catholic just to please me."

He can't help feeling a bit mad at the way the lad has put both feet through the already thin ice, especially when he's thrashed this point out very carefully with him. He tries to steer the girl out of the danger zone, but it's too late—she takes the opportunity.

"I've no intention of changing my religion."

"Of course you haven't. How could you when you don't know anything about the Catholic religion? You don't become a Catholic just by knowing what a Catholic believes. Do you mind telling me, though, what your religion is?"

"Oh, Protestant."

The priest knows that this most likely means that the girl practises no religion, but he wants to be sure.

"Yes, but there are all kinds of Protestant religions, aren't there? Which church do you go to?"

"I'm afraid I don't go to any just now. We seem to have got very slack in our family."

"What church were you baptised in?"

"The Presbyterian."

"Well, could you tell me what the word 'Presbyterian' means?"

"I don't know. I suppose it's just the name for people who are Presbyterians."

"Do you think you could tell me something that Presbyterians believe, that Catholics don't believe?"

Silence.

"But you could tell me a whole lot of things which Catholics believe, which Presbyterians don't believe, couldn't you? Now, because we want to talk sensibly, I'll put it this way. Wouldn't it be true to say that the only hold you've got on what you call *your* religion is the fact that you were baptised in it?"

"I agree there isn't much, but I still hold that it's *my* religion."

"Well, I should want a lot of convincing before I would even advise you to change it."

"Then I can't see why I'm here tonight."

"That's easy to answer. To turn round something I said to your young man, you wouldn't marry him without knowing what his job was, and his prospects were. Moreover, I take it you would certainly not marry him *without finding out* whether he led a decent life?"

"Not being quite a fool, I wouldn't."

"Well, you can take it from me that it's far more important to be sure about the 'decent life' than about the 'decent job.' And that means *finding out* about his obligation to lead a 'decent life.' In fact, it's what his religion has made of him that makes you want to marry him. Well, all I want to do is to convince you that it's to your interest to do *that finding out* because you can't otherwise encourage him to stick to what helps him to lead a good life."

"I suppose there's a certain amount of sense in that."

"There's more than a *certain amount*. I should also say this—you will certainly find it interesting. You won't be asked to do what you would call 'study.' Your young man can come with you. You can ask all the questions you like. So, the point is—are you willing to come once a week, oftener if you like, and listen to some simple explanations?"

"So long as it doesn't mean I have to become a Catholic."

"Now, I thought I'd answered that one. I know the idea of becoming a Catholic frightens you. It would me, if I were in your place. But you needn't be afraid. One thing only could make you *have to become a Catholic*, and that would be your own conscience, but you can be quite certain that if it did happen, you wouldn't feel frightened about it at all."

"I don't see it happening."

"Perhaps not. However, as you are willing, it might be as well to fix up your first instruction right away. Would you prefer to listen to a priest, or to a nun?"

"I really can't tell just now."

"You see, sometimes a woman understands a woman best. Have you ever met any nuns?"

"There were some that used to come to a friend's house to collect for the poor. I always used to give them something."

"That means you must have spoken to them sometimes, so I think I'll take you along and introduce you to one of the Sisters. Once you've made a start, you'll know quite well that you're not being 'got at'."

The priest feels that the interview has been definitely successful. The only anxiety is whether the girl will have sufficient instructions before the question of marriage comes up.

He can't help thinking how little positive help he's had from the Catholic boy; how little the Catholic boy realises he's been helped and has no doubt at all in his young mind that he's been very broad-minded in meeting the priest's wishes.

MORAL.-If you are a Catholic wanting to marry a non-Catholic, don't let these situations arise. The priest has only one man's energy. If he's using it up at this rate, doing what intelligent young Catholics should be doing for themselves, then he hasn't got energy for other important things.

APPENDIX

WHAT TO DO BEFORE MARRIAGE

1. Notify the priest who will perform your marriage *before* the names are entered at the Registry Office.
2. Arrange to have your banns published on three successive Sundays in the parish, or parishes, to which you belong. In some cases, publication is required in all parishes where the partners may have lived since the man was 14+ and the girl 12+. (N.B.—For publication the present addresses and the names of both partners are to be given. A Holyday of Obligation may, if necessary, count as a Sunday. It is well to inquire if any fee is usual for publication.)
3. Proof of Baptism, and sometimes of Confirmation, will be needed. A partner not baptised in the parish where the marriage is to take place will need an up-to-date baptismal certificate from the church of Baptism. If this is to be written for, a stamped addressed envelope and a suitable offering for clerical expenses, if the parties can afford it, should be enclosed; though this is not of obligation.
4. If either partner has married before, the death certificate of the previous consort should be produced.
5. Go to the Registrar, who requires 21 clear days' notice before the date of the marriage, and have the names put up. After consulting the priest, arrange the day, hour and place of the marriage. In Scotland it is sufficient to give the Registrar the day and the place, and to arrange the time with the priest. Since new *Pre-Nuptial* forms have now to be filled in, it is well to have as much as possible of the above information already available when the priest is first notified.
6. Before marriage go to Confession.
7. Arrange to have two Catholic witnesses, best man and bridesmaid.
8. Bring the ring (and in England a silver coin).
9. Be punctual, especially if the marriage is to take place before a Mass which is normally attended by the faithful.
10. Have a Nuptial Mass at which you both receive Holy Communion on the wedding-day, otherwise, as soon as possible afterwards. If there is to be no Nuptial Mass, or if the Mass is at rather a late hour, Holy Communion could be received by both parties together at an earlier Mass.

11. Those under 21 should not marry without the consent of their parents nor against their reasonable objections.

12. The facts must be stated if there is any relationship by blood, or marriage, or any spiritual relationship such as godmother or godfather; if one or other of the parties is bound by any vow, religious or private; if one is in any sacred order; if either party has deserted his (her) religion.

13. Remember that the marriage ceremony is a Sacrament for the administration of which the priest is responsible. He should therefore be consulted upon all matters connected with it.

14. If you will have non-Catholic friends at a Nuptial Mass it is a kindness to give them beforehand a copy of the rite of the Nuptial Mass, and even some simple explanation of the ceremonies of the Mass, like *What is he doing at the Altar?* or *At Mass*, by Fr Martindale (C.T.S., 6d.).
