

MARRIAGE FOR KEEPS

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There's a difference between being married and being an expert on marriage. There's a difference between having a group of letters after your name and a group of children at your heels. I'm married, with a group of children. I'm not an expert with a Ph.D. Consequently, in writing about marriage I'll not approach it as a subject, but as an experience.

Along with that explanation of the perspective I intend to take, I should add that I am no past-master. My children are not grown up, they are babies and the oldest is eight. We don't know what it would be like to be without an infant in the house. My writing room is not an ivory tower but a kitchen table.

So, there you are. When I speak about children, I'm talking about Mike, Paul, Elizabeth, Ann, Marie, Peter and Clare. Mike breaks windows and says prayers very well. Paul is always smiling, even while he's letting the air out of our neighbor's tyres. Ann has the most beautiful eyes for an eight-year-old I have ever seen, but the school examiner tells us she needs glasses. Marie is as shy and as curious as a kitten. She has cheeks like an apple and an appetite like a truck driver. Peter's just beginning to walk and he looks like Dopey the Dwarf. Clare is the centre of attention in her bassinet. Tack their pictures on a wall against a background of nappies, milk bills, broken toys, worn-out shoes, outgrown overalls, jam-stained doorknobs, broken glass and complaints from the neighbours, and you begin to see marriage as I see it.

But that's only part of the picture. To see the rest, you must see Elizabeth preparing for her bath in the evening; two feet tall and as formidable as Gibraltar. Just to look at her cherubic countenance after we have flushed off a few inches of topsoil subtracted from the back yard, gives a father a feeling of security. Her smile removes any doubt you might have about the bountiful providence of God. And the evening prayers (in spite of the fact that Ann shows off her facility with words and Elizabeth falls asleep) binds every thread of the day together into a pattern of marriage that is convincing. It's here to stay and it's for keeps. It's a way to spend a life. It's a way to God that's heaven all along the route.

That will give you an idea of the way I tackle marriage, but I'm not speaking only for myself. I didn't invent marriage. It has been with us a long time. I see my family as one unit among millions of families. I see it as a long chain of wedding rings extending back through generations, and this tradition goes back to a table at which Christ sat. There was a wedding banquet and the wine ran out. He changed the water into wine. By His presence there, His act of divine generosity and His sanctification of marriage, He has made the water of marriage into sacramental wine.

Adventure with Christ

Christian marriage is like nothing else, least of all like that caricature of marriage—the typical modern thing (which is a kind of legal cohabitation). It isn't a love song sung with “a girl for you and a boy for me but heaven help us from having three.” It isn't two people making the best of an uncomfortable situation. It is an adventure with Christ.

The Pre-Marital Jitters

Along about the last month before the knot is tied, the average fellow begins to bite his finger nails. The girl has taken over and she's in a sweet swoon about the details. The fellow finds himself in a rapidly moving caravan, dashing by jewelry counters, clothes dummys, flats-to-rent ads, consultation of the bank book, furniture stores, draperies, best man, bridesmaid, and all the little details that the girl sees with uncanny intuition. Looming before him is one thing, MARRIED LIFE. It's a big thing! What will it be like? Never mind about details, look at this big, strange unknown!

Most fellows go through that and so did I. With some very tidy arithmetic I had concluded that we could live as cheaply as one and a half. I had a steady job, as jobs go. We could afford my staying away from work a week, have an inexpensive honeymoon, and then get by on bread and water until the first payday. Of course, we could have grown old apart, instead of together, as so many couples

do, waiting until we could *afford* it. "Not for us" said we, and it was clinched!

Marriage was a few weeks away. We hadn't found a place to live. Dorothy lived in one town and I in another. We had decided to set up house in my town. But, as I say, flats (at the rent we could afford) were scarce.

The day I'm describing had been pretty rough. I operated a machine in a small plant. That day, the machine was balky and the stock was bad. I fretted and fumed, my feet itching to be pounding around town, looking for a flat. This one, gnawing desire being frustrated, discolored my entire picture of the future. I went home on the subway in a blue funk. My mother detected the mood as I played golf with my peas at the supper table. So I put it up to her. "Listen, Mum, we've got plenty of room here. Why can't Dot and I move in here after we're married and then we can take our time looking for a flat.

I should have known better! My mother was always a lady for calling a spade a spade (and still is, for that matter). I wouldn't have missed it for the world! Her exact words I don't remember, but they went something like this:

Mum's Sermon

"Listen here, Sonny. I prepared you for Baptism about twenty-three years ago. I nursed you, bundled you up and put your booties on. After that, when you were seven, I tucked in your shirt and brushed down your cowlick when you went to receive your First Communion. At Confirmation you were twelve, and still helpless. I fixed your necktie, tucked in your shirt and sent you off. But (and here she laid it on) if you think for one minute that Mama is going to lead you down the aisle for matrimony and home again, you don't know your mother! Matrimony is for men and women, not for children. If you can't handle this problem on your own, probably the simplest problem you'll ever face as a couple, then you may be old enough to marry, but you're not a man!"

In retrospect, her speech added up to this:

A family needs a head and God designed the man for that role. By nature, the man is aggressive and independent. He works best in the open, free, with liberty to make choices of direction. The woman, on the other hand, achieves her freedom within limits. No matter how valiant she may be, she likes the role of a help-mate to a man of whom she is proud. (A simple little picture that illustrates this point is the fact that in the outdoors, on the plains, in the woods, or behind a plow, a man who is a man, is at home. In such a picture, the woman is dwarfed beside him. As a matter of fact, any woman who does look at home in the great outdoors isn't very feminine. She's likely to have a rasping voice and a horsey look. Just move the couple into a living room and the woman grows in stature. The enclosure reflects her importance.)

Men in our time have not been taking this headship. God forbid that we should return to the tyranny of the Bible-thumping patriarch, but the pendulum is now way over in the other direction. All around us we have seen the way in which men have allowed the brutality of masculine affairs to invade and desecrate the personal environs which the women hold dear.

Wars, the work of men, have ripped the families and slain the children. The economic processes designed by men have depersonalized the worker, prescribed the number of children and turned men into irresponsible paychecks. The neuroses which characterize our times are the result of this assault upon the heart and sensibilities of society. The women, because of their capacity for generous compassion and the sensitivity that such warm-heartedness engenders, have borne the brunt of this injustice. The intimate personal concern which it is a woman's glory to give, has been disregarded in the masculine madness of money-making, empire-building and forensic debate.

Women Prefer Marriage

Because of that, women have difficulty trusting the modern man. Most women still prefer marriage, and they would choose marriage if men assured them a dignified and devoted leadership.

Where this lesson particularly applied in my case and in the case of so many fellows today is that we tend to reflect rather than remove the woman's fear of insecurity. Instead of providing a shoulder to be

wept upon, too many men go to their mothers, girl friends or wives, looking for a hankie. Yes, a man can be gentle, but he can be a gentle-man. He can softly but firmly lead the way out of difficulties, not capitulate to the fears for the future.

It will always be true in marriage that the greatest giving will be on the part of the wife. Through pregnancy and child raising, she loses the independence which the man continues to retain. If today the woman is reluctant to do this, it is because she does not trust the man to be loving, confident and considerate when she must of necessity depend solely on him. We confirm this mistrust whenever we hesitate. A good woman is happy to go through torture for her husband as long as his step is firm, his love tender and his faith strong.

When my mother concluded her sermon, I still wasn't convinced. I know better now, but it takes time to grow up. I just grouched away from the table and sat in the parlor glowering at the design in the carpet. The doorbell rang and my mother passed me a telegram. That telegram gave me the deepest, most gratifying belly-laugh that I have ever had. It isn't easy to explain why it tickled me so much or why I still regard it as one of the most provident lessons that God taught me about marriage. All it said was that it was from Dorothy and would I mind changing the date of the wedding because her Aunt Sarah, who lived in Washington, had sprained her leg and would not be able to get there as early as we had hoped.

To get the picture you've got to realize that I was looking at that wedding date with the same awful expectancy of a condemned prisoner marking off his calendar. Then along comes my beloved and kicks that awe-inspiring date into a cocked hat simply because Aunt Sarah had sprained her leg! The scales suddenly fell from my eyes and I discovered with a gasp of joy that a woman always has her lovely finger on somebody's pulse, and that pulse means more to her than anything, especially more than a paltry wedding date.

Take the man who is directing the setting in place of the central span of a bridge. He gets a call from the construction shack. It's his wife on the phone. "I'm sorry to bother you, dear, but would you mind dropping in to the shop on the way home and getting some yellow paper napkins? It's uncle George's birthday and the frosting on the cake is yellow, and all I have in the house are red ones."

You see, the subtle point of the thing is that the man considers these things *petty*—that is, unless he is the one about whom the fuss is being made. You will never really appreciate a woman unless you have seen her at the end of a day of moving into a new flat, the furniture in disarray, the children bedded in make-shift bunks, quietly putting up the nicely ironed curtains. The mere male dwindles in stature as the woman unobtrusively proves that the dignity of the human soul transcends time and circumstance. It is no wonder that God entrusted His Divine Son as a gentle Babe to the warm, confident love of a valiant woman.

Consideration and Acquiescence

A fellow and girl have to be equipped with a great deal more than mutual infatuation if they hope to survive the difficulties of marriage. During the course of married life I have picked up a working set of principles that help to make for compatibility between the sexes.

To begin with, it is not an easy thing for a man and woman to get along together. I stress this point especially for young lovers who have not yet had a real spat. If there comes a time or occasion when you would be delighted to subject your mate to some form of mayhem, do not consider yourself peculiar. Resist the urge to inflict injury, by all means, but do not for a moment conclude that your marriage is shattered or that love has fled. Saint Paul said that marriage is a great mystery. Every husband and wife has learned that it is a mystery for which there is no solution except love.

The family relationship is a dynamic one. By that I mean that it is a living, moving, maturing relationship. It is not static. It is not the relation between a nut and a bolt, or between a set of gears. The man and woman must become one flesh. Their two lives must fuse together and yet remain vital. The man is not consumed by the woman, nor is she consumed by the man. They must be joined together without any loss of personality. In fact, when a marriage is successful, the personality of both husband and wife becomes more mature, more vital. The man becomes more manly, and the woman becomes more feminine.

Attract and Repel

To make this possible, the two sexes must not only attract one another, but they must also repel one another. This may sound like a contradiction, but it can easily be demonstrated. It is normal, for example, for a man to be attracted to a woman, but it is equally normal for him to be repelled by femininity. No normal man would want to live in a beribboned and scented boudoir. On the other hand, it is normal for a woman to love a man; it is equally normal for her to be repelled by masculinity. No normal woman would like the loud talk, rough comradeship and bare decoration of a barracks or clubroom. The point to be stressed is that a man may love a woman but he hates to be womanly. A woman may love a man but she has no desires to be manly.

The love, then, that should exist between husband and wife can be expected to have the qualities of reverence and respect. In other words, when a husband loves his wife, he must love her because she is a woman and love her as a woman should be loved. He cannot love her as a pal and treat her like one of his football mates. The wife must love her husband because he is a man, and love him as a man should be loved. She must not treat him like a child or regard him as an old school friend. In this way, we respect the mystery of marriage. The man will never thoroughly understand the woman and usually admits it. The woman will never thoroughly understand the man, but will seldom admit it. Because of this mystery, the love of a man for a woman has a special character that makes it different from the love of a woman for a man. The nearest we can come to defining this difference is to say that the love of the man must be considerate and the love of the woman must be acquiescent.

Late for Supper

I could take a few cases from my own experience to show you what I mean by consideration and acquiescence. Suppose I were to work late at the office. As I approach the house after getting off the bus, I try to phrase my excuse in advance so as to placate my wife's very understandable ire at having "spoiled" her dinner. In my mind, the whole excuse boils down to the fact that I just had to work late. That's all there is to it! I had to work late. So when I open the door and behold the frown, I say, "I'm awfully sorry, dear, for being late, but I just had to work late!" The thunder cloud is not so easily dispelled. But, after all, I did have to work late, didn't I?

Before abstracting any lesson from this, let's consider the opposite situation; when I get home on time and the wife doesn't have the supper ready. Dorothy immediately goes into a lengthy and elaborate explanation: "You see, dear, Mrs. O'Connor called me over to meet Abigail Updyke, who is engaged to Mrs. O'Connor's son. You can imagine my surprise when I discovered that Abigail went to school with Daphne Hothouse. You know Daphne, she was at our wedding—wore a silk taffeta skirt with a belt in the back—Well, you see, Mrs. O'Connor was awfully anxious to make Abigail feel at ease and she was delighted to discover that I have something in common with her—So, you see, one thing led to another..."

This explanation cannot be stemmed. It continues through supper and beyond. Finally, just before going to sleep, my wife breaks into tears, "You simply won't forgive me for not having your dinner ready, will you?" Of course, I have already repeated at fifteen minute intervals for the past four hours, "That's perfectly all right, dear, don't let it bother you one little bit." Naturally, near the end, my words of forgiveness had a slight note of "For Heaven's sakes, forget it, will ya!"

I don't intend to pass out a formula for handling such situations as these. My intention is only to demonstrate what I mean by consideration and acquiescence. Please notice that the husband's crisp and precise explanation would have been quickly accepted by another man and the wife's lengthy and elaborate excuse would have met the approval of another woman. In the second case (where the wife makes the excuse), the husband's consideration for the feminine nature of the wife could make the whole thing come off very neatly. He should come to expect lengthy excuses (for that's a woman's way). If, for example, he showed a certain amount of enthusiasm for his wife's story (which she is elaborating to take his attention away from her negligence), the first thing you know is that the entire attention would be centered on the story and the late supper would be forgotten.

In the first case, if the wife were to acquiesce to the masculine habit of crisp explanations, and accept it as a precise statement of fact, everything would be fine. She needs merely say, "Of course, dear, you

had to work late, that can't be helped."

Consideration is an active, aggressive virtue. Acquiescence is a passive, docile virtue. The husband has to summon up his enthusiasm for his wife's lengthy story. The wife has to quiet and pacify her anger at his being late, and also squelch her curiosity for details.

Another example that illustrates consideration and acquiescence is the formality of a man's opening a door for a lady. Picture a couple, arm-in-arm, approaching a closed door. For the entire formality to come off gracefully, the girl must step back and the fellow must step forward. If the fellow fails to step forward, the girl feels that she has been ill-treated. If, on the other hand the girl fails to step back, the man must either roughly push her aside or else follow her shame-facedly through the doorway. The same kind of consideration and acquiescence are necessary in every intersexual act.

Men Must Lead

Why should this be so? Human experience throughout the ages prescribes that in every joint enterprise of men and women, the man must lead. It would be foolish to defend this male leadership here, because the defense lies with those who doubt it or who can produce a plausible alternative. As individuals, men and women have been endowed by God with an equality in dignity and potential. They do not, however, have the same function to fill in society. It is merely in this role, when their functions are wed to conceive a joint enterprise, that the leadership falls to the man. It is only when men exploit their leadership by active brutality or passive weakness that women refuse to accept the supporting role. Today is just such an era of brutality and weakness. Consequently, there has been a concerted endeavor on the part of women to throw off a yoke that robs them of their dignity. If it is true (and history proves it so) that a woman gains full stature and great dignity beside a virtuous and virile husband, it is equally true that a weak man will have an even more debilitating effect upon his wife.

Human nature does not change, however. If it is true that the men of our generation exhibit a gross brutality in their war and a shameful weakness in their peace, failure on the part of women to acquiesce will do nothing more than aggravate the situation. The wife who refuses to accept the dignity of a supporting role forces her husband to be either brutal or weak. There is no alternative to mutual harmony, and the requirement will always be that the man be eternally considerate of the sensitive nature of the woman and the woman acquiesce to the active aggressiveness of her husband. Sacrifice and great charity is needed in either case.

The Eternal Triangle

I suppose any fellow or girl who ever paused to consider the privilege of being married and of accepting its responsibilities has asked himself if he were worthy or adequate. At one time I thought that I was a bad risk. Suddenly my marrying Dot seemed like a dirty trick on her. My health was not too good. I had a chronic ailment as the result of an early football injury. I'm no genius, especially at making money. Along with that, I have certain principles that I wouldn't violate for any paycheck, a resolve that had made me disliked by more than one boss.

Without being morbid, and just being honest with myself, I had to admit I was a bad marital risk. Yet I marshalled up the courage to take the plunge, and I have weathered other periods of misgivings which persist to the present day. The key to the riddle is my faith.

Any parent who has ever taken his new baby in his arms and looked at it has had an experience that should have touched his head as well as his heart. No one could believe for a moment, unless he were a presumptuous fool, that this unbelievably wonderful creature, so perfect and brand new, could be an effect of which he and his wife were the sole and simple cause. Could either of you, who hardly know how to care for this creature, who fumble with many thumbs to sustain it, be so foolish as to suppose this child is wholly yours? The bare minimum of humility demands a "No!"

This moment can be priceless. It is easy to see a great mystery here. There is a special grace from God that comes with the first visible fruit of matrimony. You suddenly see yourselves as participators in a tremendous drama in which the elements are real and the stake is life. Your part is a great privilege, but a simple task. God has fashioned a body and a soul. You had a part in it, but how little a part, considering

this wonderful, tangible, vital infant. With this there would come an awful awareness of the presence of God. This God, Who can in His perfection transcend all things, deigns to become an intimate of our home. His presence here is warm with life. Our babies grow mysteriously; we merely feed and wash them. Then come words and ideas. A new will exerts itself against the bars of the crib. A new consciousness watches the visitor and recognizes the parent. A new personality makes its mark on the high chair and eventually on the world.

Three Providers

You see yourself working along with God. He has enlisted your aid, not you His. He has made you His agent. It is His plan, His scheme of things, His harvest. You are in attendance, removing the obstacles to His workings. It is in the light of this that the idea of being a bad risk is defeated.

For who is a good risk? In what way does a million dollars, bountiful health, or human genius guarantee a successful marriage? Are these safeguards against conflicting wills, sickness or poverty? Not at all! The things that make for happy marriages, as anyone who is happily married can testify, are intangible things that moths do not consume nor with which thieves abscond. In fact, it is money and the power it gives, it is human genius with its ugly pride, and it is the constant concern about opinions and possessions, to which divorces attribute their failure.

Trust in God not only is a guarantee of our needs, as Christ promised it would be, but it also disposes our minds and wills to bear with the difficulties of conflicting wills. God's spiritual gifts of mutual charity and trust are far more precious and indispensable than His bounty in providing bread.

Knowing this, I told my wife right at the beginning that there was only one reason why she should trust me in spite of my obvious failings. That reason was that I trusted God. The strength of our family would not depend upon Daddy's right arm, his foresight, his intrepid character, but rather upon the infinite mercy of God, Who is more concerned for our good than we are, and far more capable of providing for it. There are three providers in our house, Christ and His two agents, my wife and me.

Fidelity in Marriage

The faithfulness of partners in marriage is a thing seldom discussed. Those who are unfaithful usually try to keep their infidelity a secret, and those who are not, consider infidelity as something "nice people don't do." This secretive attitude might be appropriate were it not for the fact that infidelity is no longer a rare and isolated event, but rather a social epidemic. Conversations in shops, club rooms, and offices would be enough to indicate its prevalence, but in addition we have the infidelity of pre-marital sex-relations, and the infidelity of tandem remarriages.

To regard unfaithfulness as the isolated and strictly personal affair of the parties concerned is to overlook the entire significance of human contract. The bond which unites men harmoniously in society is trust in a common God, and trust in one another. All human relations depend for their proper resolution on an exchange of trust and confidence. At the root of each social contract, whether between co-partners in business or between nations, lies the most sacred, most selfless, and most intimate of all contracts—marriage. Nowhere, apart from the strict profession of religious life, do you find a greater relinquishing of human privilege for the sake of a common goal than in marriage.

The ultimate infidelity, divorce, strikes a murderous blow at the innocent children who cannot help but be left with a wound that grows fetid with mistrust and cynicism. As the children grow, they carry a wariness into their relations with others. The divorce society shies away from all commitments and violates every contract. When this paranoia becomes political, you have something like Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany—mistrust and persecution manias hover like ghosts over the conference table, and wars are waged in the name of imaginary injustices.

From each family flows a tiny spring that empties into the moral reservoir of society. Here at its source the waters are either purified or polluted. When the pollution has reached the reservoir, the moral health of every social institution is jeopardized.

Chastity—The Guardian

Standing watch over this entire process of human inter-course is the virtue of chastity. This picture of guardianship would be ludicrous were we to portray chastity in the role assigned her by the prude or the libertine. It is to the advantage of those who reap personal or corporate profit from moral degeneracy to reduce chastity to the level of a cartoonist's old maid whose only claim to fame is a record of "no hits, no runs, no errors." If we look at the thing boldly, however, and realize that the fate of nations depends upon the inviolability of contracts, and that the marriage contract is the keystone in the contractual arch, and that chastity is the guardian of the marital act, then we must conceive of a virtue—of an adequacy—that demands the heroic.

Chastity fills this role and fills it well. It is in the pure splendor of new love that chastity takes root in marriage, when the young lovers regard their union as inviolate. Their ardor would abhor nothing as much as infidelity. This vital tree is cultivated through sickness, trials and failures, and bears fruit and casts seeds as their children are betrothed and marry. There is no greater tribute of man to man than this concentration of love on one person undeterred. Infidelity is the love-tragedy, the ultimate betrayal of every human confidence.

Immodesty—The Enemy

The alarming thing about infidelity is its ability to grow without studied malice. Those who betray their wives or husbands usually do not violate their vow in hatred, but in despair. Their passions refuse to be subservient to their love. Consequently, the enemy to be sought out and destroyed is not infidelity or divorce, but the virus which breaks down resistance. The name of the virus is immodesty.

When we concentrate upon immodesty our inquiry covers a broader social field. The provocations to lust are not limited to those areas where lust can be satisfied. The unhappy fact is that very chaste women frequently dress as though they were not. The most faithful wives often dress as though they were advertisements for infidelity. Thus the theatre and movies, the advertisements and novels, the styles and postures, spread their propaganda for lust into every home, and those who feel the least vulnerable may be the first to become infected.

The most striking evidence for this is the impossibility of finding today a living symbol for the chaste spouse, the valiant woman, yet within a hundred yards of wherever you may be, you can find in print or in the flesh, a symbol of female prostitution. It was just such a lack of dignified symbol that recently led a young Jewish psychologist to the discovery of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

In her, he saw woman glorified, fruitful, valiant and inviolate. In her, he saw a modesty that was not a posture, but an exterior radiance that clothed her dynamic vitality. Summed up in all the veneration extended to Mary throughout the ages, he saw the challenge to today's glorification of the street walker. He concluded as I have concluded, that the salvation of human fidelity and the sacredness of contracts ultimately depends upon the veneration of womanhood glorified. Fortunately for us, Christ has given us not merely a symbol but a mother of flesh and blood who stands through time and eternity as the prototype of humanity redeemed, invulnerable to sin, triumphant over temptation, free from treachery.

The Children—Focus of Family Concern

George Bernard Shaw once said that if a man lived three hundred years he would know everything. G.K. Chesterton answered, "Yes, and if Shaw lived three hundred years, he would be a Catholic." The point Shaw had in mind when he made the crack was that history tends to repeat itself. Mankind is always sitting in the pasture of history, rechewing its own cud. In any three-hundred-year period, all theories and revolutions prove themselves either true or untrue, either sane or insane. What Chesterton had in mind was that any man who saw his own lifespan within a perspective of three hundred years would see the logic of Christianity and the need of a Church to perpetuate that logic through history.

To understand marriage we must also regard it from a perspective that embraces a number of generations, other-wise we do not see it wholly. Matrimony is a love affair, but it is a love affair in which many more than two people take part. Two is company, but it takes at least three to make a family.

Suppose, for instance, that we look at marriage according to the current mores, what do we see? We

see two people in love. They are young and at the height of their idealism and vigor. They marry. The first few months are preoccupied with mutual adoration. Reasonably and observably this can't go on forever. When the fever-heat of the honeymoon has cooled, what is left? They usually try to bank the fire and, while reducing its intensity, attempt to extend its quiet warmth throughout the years. As time goes on, and the lovers grow in age, their attempts at maintaining their love become frantic and all-absorbing. In their narrow scheme of things the climax has passed and all that is left is a prolonged and inevitable anti-climax. They proceed from youth to old age, and finally to the grave. Their love story is more tragic than that of Romeo and Juliet. It is suicidal, but a suicide extended over many dull years, rather than over a few dramatic moments.

Marriage and Life

But contrasted with this concept of marriage, let's try to see it in the perspective of generations. Two people meet, each of them an heir to a valuable heritage. They bring to the altar an inheritance of culture, of wisdom and of faith. Their ancestors suffered, died, endured sea voyages, imprisonment, preserving this treasure which the two lovers offer one another when they plight their troth. In their marital embrace they generate the seed of a new generation who will take these historic gifts and weave them together in a new pattern—a new way of life. The process of events is no longer tragic as the lovers grow old they see their early vigor transplanted in their children. The children become adept at using the cherished culture, wisdom and faith.

This glorious tradition blossoms anew within the family. The parents are unaware of their declining years and passing youth because they are too engrossed, cultivating a new and more wonderful life in their children.

Without this conception of marriage as a vehicle for extending a life of culture, wisdom and faith throughout the years, the entire adventure and the very reason for marriage is lost. Without it, marriage is a flash in the pan, a glorious sky-rocket that drops in a moment, charred and inert. We cannot, however, maintain this conception of marriage unless we truly cherish the culture, wisdom and faith to which we are heirs. If life for us means no more than the thing that began at our birth and ends with our death, then we, in truth, have no troth to plight. We are asking our beloved to wed tomorrow's cadaver, to share a requiem, to share our grave.

The Christian home is a shrine that glorifies a living culture, wisdom and faith. It is not a museum for the accumulation of outmoded gestures, relics of the past, but a place of new birth. In the children the faith comes to life, taking on new forms, developing unique social patterns.

All the moralizing against birth control is almost always in vain unless this vital conception of marriage is retained. Who would have children if the end of childhood were nothing but a dull wait for death? Who would want children if he had no treasure to offer them? Who would give life unless life had an eternal significance, dating back to Genesis and extending forward to eternal union with God?

In the modern scheme of things the child too often comes as an obstacle to the parents' wallowing in their own childish and selfish indulgences; whereas in the Christian scheme of things the child becomes the focus of family concern, the new messenger, the new apostle, to carry the flame through another generation.

The Christ-life Lived

Realizing this, Dorothy and I are trying to revive the cultural patterns of the past and adapt them to the new generation in which Ann and Marie, Paul and Michael, Elizabeth, Peter and Clare, will live. We want them to know and appreciate the Christian thing as it was appreciated in ages past, as it is understood today by the Catholic natives of Hong Kong, of Czechoslovakia, of Italy. During the weeks before Christmas, the Advent wreath is hung and its candles lighted, while the sole absorption of many neighbors is with Christmas shopping. Christ comes into our house on Christmas Day and the Infant remains with us through the Epiphany. The children learn of the exchange of gifts, the constant beneficence of God. Later we go through Lent. Michael learns a new significance for the bumped head and the scraped shin-bone as he vaguely perceives the positive value of suffering. Easter is a glorious

reward for the endurance of fasts and penances, consonant with their age and capacity.

The significance centers, not in pious gestures, but the children are taught the Christ-life lived. Justice and charity in their dealings with playmates. Poverty and ingeniousness in their little arts, such as those exemplified in the carpenter shop at Nazareth.

Slowly they will perceive the vast Christian mission and their part in it, the splendid adventure of restoring to Christ a world that has strayed. Their pettiness will be replaced by a docility to greatness. They will become alarmed at the vacuity of selfishness and let that vacuum be filled with divine purposefulness.

Children mean just that to us. We do not pray and work so that everything will go well. Our concern is that everything will grow well. Will we try to become better-off for the sake of the children? No! We will try to become better for the sake of the children, because by becoming better we will become closer to God Who is the Source of all good, material and spiritual, and because we have learned that the desire to become better-off is just as likely to exclude children as to include them.

The Will of the Child

The last few paragraphs may be a little top heavy with the idea of placing traditional burdens on young shoulders. We haven't forgotten that each child has a life of its own to be led. A child never goes according to the book. Each one is unique, and the formula for each one's happiness differs in details from that of the other.

Persons who have no children usually possess dogmatic principles for raising them. It is sheer poetry to envisage children as either saints or devils. Experience proves that each child is a unique combination of conflicting elements. The parent must strive gently to resolve those conflicts, always respecting the delicate instrument with which he works. When a child does something against the wishes of the parent, his motive may be either weakness, love, malice, ignorance, fear or imitation. For example, Mike constantly strays out of the neighborhood. We have had to put the police on his tail at various times. Should this crime be treated as malicious disobedience? No! Mike has a memory that doesn't retain a thing. He proceeds from one wonderful experience to the other. Even on the way to the woodland his anticipation is forgotten in the delight of watching a passing butterfly! Virtue must be made adventurous for Mike or he's not interested.

Marie is sent to the corner store. She returns an hour later with some strange tale and no groceries. Marie is timid and she just waits until the proprietor finds her down below the counter. Paul talks back to his Grandma simply in imitation of the sport he has with the neighbors' teenage boys. Here and there is malice, unbalanced nature, original sin forcing its way through. Each of the motives must be recognized. Malice is punished. Imitation is channeled. Ignorance is instructed. Fear is dispelled. Weakness is strengthened. Never is the will bent too far, but only slowly and carefully, in keeping with its nature.

Learning from Children

Influence in the home is by no means one-sided. If the family dynamic is working properly while the children are being counselled by the parents as to the ways of adulthood, the parents are being reminded by the youngsters of the virtues of childhood. Any parent who is honest with himself has his tongue in his cheek whenever he says, "I don't know why it is that Junior persists in doing the things I tell him not to do!" At such a time he cannot help but think of his own disobedience and perversity in relation to God. Why do we, the parents, persist in our disobedience to God?

What adult, when talking to a youngster, does not envy his guilelessness and sincerity? His upturned face so open and sincere? Often I have brought worries home only to have them dispelled by the gaiety of the children. Their happy innocence gives us a nostalgia for the innocence of the sons of God. "Unless you become like little children," Christ said, "you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." How fortunate to have the evidences of childhood all around us to pin-prick our sophistications and remind us of our helplessness before God.

Adulthood can become an awfully grim and desperate state unless it is tempered by the sanity of childhood. Yet the homes today are few and far between in which you can find that elusive ingredient.

The vogue now is to tolerate the child within an adult milieu. Mother and father keep their world autonomous, limiting the children to playpens. The children are bribed with toys to keep their distance. The tribulations of the child are treated as so many “cases” with the formal competence more becoming to a social worker than a parent. Fortunately with a brood as large as ours, childhood cannot be relegated to an area. It’s all over the place. Lonely children sense this and seek out our home as though it were an oasis. In spite of their electric toys and three-shift tricycles, they would rather spend their time among our youngsters. In the eyes of the children, it is our brood who are privileged because our home is for children, not for grown-ups. In other houses you may find a child, but in our house you can find childhood.

Fear and Worry

One experience we had that has done much to relieve us of fears and worries was that which occurred when we were expecting our fourth baby. We were living fairly snugly in a finished attic in a pleasant neighborhood. Things had become somewhat crowded since the time we had moved there as starry-eyed newlyweds. The landlady didn’t like our propensity for propagation. She didn’t like the wailing and gnashing of teethings, and she also felt that large families reduced the value of real estate; this in spite of the fact that we had painted and decorated the exterior and interior of the house. She had asked us to leave.

We had gone about on Sunday afternoons, scouting the area for vacant flats. If there had been some way by which we could have boiled down our three children into one dog, we might have made the grade with some landlords. With three toddlers, we didn’t have the chance at all.

This had not bothered us too much until my wife became pregnant. The attendant increased sensitiveness made her more vulnerable to the scathing remarks of the landlady. We were also learning that having a large family so close together shared the same social stigma as chronic drunkenness or dope-peddling. Our neighbors and relatives compounded a hypocritical concern for our plight with an equally obvious unwillingness to assist us in any way. Our spirits were at a low ebb.

At that time I was working as a shipping clerk in a warehouse. We were very busy and overworked. My chronic ailment had become worse. In addition to that, I had been giving all my leisure hours to the preparation of the yet unborn INTEGRITY magazine.

One evening a friend of mine dropped in to mind the children while Dot and I went to see the doctor. He had unpleasant news for us. “It is impossible,” he told us, “at this late date to make a hospital appointment for your wife.” The hospitals were overcrowded and beds were scarce. The second piece of news was that I had to take a month in bed, or else.

Well, that was the picture when we went home that night. Here were all the circumstances that trembling newlyweds foresee with horror. Sickness, eviction and childbirth, and no money in the bank. The way the thing worked out has only reconfirmed our trust in God and taught us something about the way He acts.

We prayed and asked the prayers of others. We encouraged one another and went ahead with our plans. To my great surprise the company paid my salary for the month of absence. I felt no compunction in accepting it because I had spared no effort in their behalf during the preceding two years. The rest left me free to concentrate on the magazine plans, undisturbed by the urgency that I had felt before. My wife was shunted to another, less expensive doctor who found her a bed in a truly Christian hospital, and her lying-in period was the happiest she had known.

Shortly after my recovery, I came to New York where we were planning to publish the magazine. My associates and I made a novena of prayers, and I placed an advertisement in the newspaper reading, “Undesirable tenant wishes to rent apartment. Have four children and will probably have more.” There was one answer. A small house, badly in need of repairs, was available in a suburban part of the city. I plastered up the sagging ceilings, repaired the furnace, and we all moved in.

Trial and Triumph

In retrospect it is obvious that what we had at first considered to be great troubles, were actually the

stepping stones to great treasures. When we were at what appeared to be the depth of our miseries, we were in fact on the threshold of a new adventure. The poets have made much of this universal experience, phrasing it in such ways as “the darkest hour is just before the dawn.” The Christian can see a more mysterious element and abstract a more profound conclusion.

God desires our faith or complete trust in Him. He permits troubles and fears to arise so as to strengthen our faith, much as a football coach will drill his squad vigorously so that their strength will grow. Every ill to which the human is prone exists singly for the purpose of our placing our trust in God. We do this by bearing with the suffering but always with the realization that we will at last be triumphant.

If we reject the trial through timidity, we inevitably reject the triumph and fail to gain the reward. A man who resorts to dishonesty in order to swing a deal because he fears that honesty will gain him nothing, by so doing erects an obstacle between himself and God’s providence. A new baby has often been the occasion for a husband’s getting a promotion and a wife’s regaining her health. Yet most people deny themselves children on the erroneous presumption that a new baby inevitably means unhappiness. In their denial of the sacrifice, they turn away from God’s bounty. God’s concern for them, His desire for their happiness, is continuous and generous, but they, through timidity, refuse to grasp the cross which will release the treasure.

Trust God—Help Yourself

The enemies of Christianity have always used whatever weapons might be lying around without regard for truth or fair play. The communist weapon is slander. They do not condemn a Christian belief for what it is but try to prove it is something else, less grand, less desirable. Ever since the death of Christ there has been a campaign on foot to deform His simple teachings. One of the most subtle of these lies is the one that makes a trust in God’s providence appear to be an excuse for sloth and irresponsibility. It is true that a religious man is not money-hungry, nor does he want to get the best of his neighbor in a deal, but it is not true that a trust in God makes him less diligent.

The married man today must trust in God and that implies much more work and greater ingenuity than he would need if he were single, or without faith. Society makes little, if any, provision for the responsibilities of parenthood. The prices of children’s clothing, rents, doctors’ bills and natal care are all in the luxury bracket. Yet there is no corresponding increase in his income. He must shoulder all the extra burdens that go with sustaining unproductive children, and rather than receiving help, he is considered foolish, ostracized from many areas of the city, charged exorbitant sums for children’s clothing, excluded from associations he can no longer afford to belong to, and frequently must work for longer hours at a lower rate of pay.

To do this requires hard work and ingenuity. The father of a normal-sized family must learn to take care of as many of his own needs as possible. He can’t afford to be without a set of simple tools and the knowledge of how to use them.

He must be able to make minor electrical, carpentry, plumbing and mechanical repairs. The wife, in turn, must also, in spite of her additional burdens, acquire skills that will lessen the need for calling in experts.

My wife has saved many dollars of doctors’ bills by learning to diagnose and treat minor ailments. We have learned the proper procedure in first aid and medical treatments for the innumerable germs and accidents that invade a family. Not long ago, by a simple trip to the distributor’s and fifteen minutes with a screwdriver, I saved the cost of a repair bill for my refrigerator. With a pair of hair clippers, I can rival the average barber at giving the boys a haircut. Things have to be really bad before we must resort to doctors’ fees and the bills of repair men.

Beyond this there is the need to keep our children entertained as well and with far less money than that expended by our less productive neighbors. We must teach them games and build them toys. The toys must be beyond comparison with the store-gotten fantasies showered on the pampered kid next door. We must instill in our children a sense of leadership so that they will not grow timid under the persecution that nice people dish out to what they so hypocritically term the “underprivileged.”

Trust in God implies a mighty diligence and an adventurous ingenuity. Please notice that under the

time-honored system of Christian marriage, husbandry and house-wifery are not the moronic vocations that the careerist deceitfully claims they are. A father who places life first, who not only accepts children but really provides for them, is likely to make more decisions in a day than a business executive makes in a month. His life is intensely interesting. There is no time for boredom. He must be a philosopher, a craftsman, a politician, a doctor, a psychologist, an administrator and a poet.

His wife must be a nurse, a teacher, an artist, a hostess and a director of souls. The society of the future is made under the eyes and hands of the mother and father, for after the child leaves the home the fate of society and his role in it has already been decided.

A Family of Families

It is no surprise that today's family has come in for such a beating once you realize that the family spirit is just the opposite to cut-throat competition. No one expects that one of a gang of robbers holding up a bank will stop to pick up a lady's handkerchief or help an old lady across the street with her bundles. For the same reason you can't expect the family spirit to survive in a society where everyone is concerned with self-expression, self-aggrandizement, and even the religious people solely concerned with self-improvement. This is especially true when the idea of self-improvement is divorced from the traditionally Christian notion that the way to self-improvement is self-sacrifice.

Christ told us we must love God and love our neighbor. He did not need to tell us to love ourselves or further our own ambitions. If we really want to be perfect and perfectly happy, we gain this state by seeking the happiness of others and not bothering too much about ourselves.

I have already indicated that this modern self-centeredness makes a unity between the husband and wife thoroughly impossible. The modern man and woman lack the generosity for sacrifice that is required before two bodies and two souls can work in harmony. It is precisely this self-centeredness that the Sacrament of Christian Matrimony was designed by God to erase.

Christian Matrimony provides a God-given grace that sublimates our natures so that the man and wife are enabled to overcome their human selfishness and to become docile to the daily task that lies before them. This grace not only tends to unite man and wife, but it also unites family with family. This is a fact that my wife and I discovered only after many preliminary mistakes.

All by Ourselves

You see, we were a pair of starry-eyed idealists when we walked away from the matrimonial altar, hand-in-hand. I'm not sorry about that. If there is one time when the heart should be filled with daring plans and great adventure, it should be on the day of marriage. Because we were idealists, we knew the scorn which the modern world has for ideals. It isn't the man who can hold an ideal that is admired today, but the man who can swing a deal. Our contemporaries are not interested in prophets but in profits.

Even before we were married, the persons were few and far between who truly encouraged us in our hopes. Everyone and his brother, it seems, feels obligated to warn the prospective bride and groom of the precautions that must be taken against disaster, even the "disaster" of having children. Advice for the engaged has the grim quality of modern book-keeping that fastens its eyes not on success, but upon bankruptcy and resale. After being subject for so long to such wet-blanket counsels, we decided to keep our ideals to ourselves. We were not marrying on speculation, we were playing for keeps. If no one believed this, then we would keep it as our own secret.

As we furnished our home and had our first children, and developed family customs, we kept pretty much to ourselves. We were friendly with our neighbours and relatives, but never intimate. We did not wish to have our ideals challenged. We wanted a Christian family life without having to defend our position at every step.

The time came, however, when we saw that things cannot be handled quite so neatly. An ideal is not a thing that is meant to be hung as an immaculate sword about the fire-place, but a thing to become bloodstained and muddy in battle. The occasion for this lesson was the arrival of our third baby.

At that time we had neither a telephone nor a car. As is inevitable, the first pangs of childbirth came at the cold, unholly hour of 4:00 a.m. I had to fumble into my clothes, run across the street to a neighbour,

wake him and beg the use of his phone. I received no response to my calls for a taxi, and had to go to another neighbour for the use of his car. Much to my delight and humiliation, the same neighbours whom I had tried to keep out of my affairs so assiduously, were extremely generous when I asked them to help me with my affairs. If I had wished to do so, I could have taken a vacation at that time and left the care of the two children to these friendly women. I did not do this, but I did gain a far more valuable service from them because I learned in an unforgettable way that the family cannot and should not, no matter what its ideals may be, exist for itself, but that it must be part of a community of families.

Neighbourliness

The fact that these people, in times of emergency, leaped happily to the aid of a family in need, proved to me that if this same neighbourliness were revived as a continuous social attitude, each individual family would have a far greater chance of survival, as well as an opportunity to grow normally.

Having our ideals challenged did us no harm. Most of our neighbours had accepted in varying degrees the sterile and fatal prescription for marriage dispensed by the popular magazines and upheld by popular opinion. They did not regard children as a blessing but as a burden. The women were more intent upon retaining the appearance of youth than gaining the dignity of dedicated motherhood. The husbands were more concerned about making more money, than passing on to their children a spiritual bank account that can never be overdrawn. Making friends with such people meant many an argument, and a certain weariness at defending our principles. But, as I say, it was worth it. We were forced by such intimate contact to re-examine our stand. If we were right, we became more convinced. Where we had become spiritual snobs, we were forced to admit it. Many of the people who would not accept our high ideals practiced a charity in their lives far greater than ours. Some who practiced birth control were more patient with children they had than we were with ours.

We learned about all that despite any difference of religious views or practical policies, God intended that we should need one another. We learned that our family was only a small part of a larger and greater family. We became aware in a very practical way of the implication of that magnificent Christian teaching called the Mystical Body of Christ: that all men are part one of the other, and the Head of that Body is Christ.

This was not all we learned. The more we sought to live in charity with our neighbours, the more we observed the universal hunger that people have for the spiritual food the Church dispenses. Sometimes, for example, in the course of an evening's conversation, we would mention a Christian truth that we had come to look upon as commonplace. Our guests would be amazed and ask us to repeat it. They would carry it away as a treasure, and before long they would have made it as important a part of their lives that we would be ashamed at having let it become commonplace.

Community and Providence

God makes use of the community as an instrument of His providence. No family has everything it needs all the time. Few families have everything they need at any time. Yet if many families were to add up their needs and possessions in a collective pool, perhaps all of them would be able to extract all that they needed at a given time. I can hear harsh words of "communism" in the background, but that is utter nonsense. Wherever people have lived together in harmony since the beginning of time, there has always been a spirit of mutual co-operation. It is thoroughly perverse for any family to be forced to conclude that it is completely dependent upon its own efforts. Yet this is the spirit of to-day. So afraid are we to depend upon our neighbors in time of need that we timidly hoard every penny against such a day. Private property is a good thing and so is thrift, but if the emphasis on them is so great that each family becomes an independent kingdom, then society will destroy itself.

At the present time I am engaged in building a group of houses in company with thirteen other families. We have been at it but a short time, but yet long enough to see the tremendous benefits of neighborly co-operation. First of all, hardly any of us would have considered the possibility of owning our own homes, for, since we have large families and average incomes, we could not possibly afford it. It is yet to be proved that we can do it or afford to do it in a group, but we are working as though it were

possible. This working together has given us new assurance and moral courage. We have helped each other in various ways and will grow in knowledge of community co-operation. Already men have learned skills and wives have reconfirmed one another's faith in Christian living. Each family knows that if it suffers it will not suffer alone, and if it prospers, the others will rejoice. We are not competing against one another, but seeking a common goal as a complementary company of neighbors.

Families LIVE Together

The alternative to this is for each family to go ahead, seeking its own, letting the Devil take the hindmost. Yet every family that breaks up, or becomes dependent upon the state for support, threatens the entire society of families. New laws are invoked to meet the breakdown of the family, and these laws limit the liberty of other families as well as condoning the weakness. The fact that most families can no longer own property has caused us to lose a respect for property. This, in turn, causes us to relax our vigilance against the development of a government policy which will eventually make ownership completely impossible. The municipal apartment dwellings are an insult to a free people: concrete birdhouses for government wards so small that there is no room for children. We can neither rant nor fume against this unless we seek the only alternative: free co-operation of families to build houses in spread-out areas, where there will be room for children, shops, vegetable gardens and livestock.

It is very sad that engaged couples and newly-weds when they are young and vigorous cannot be persuaded to join forces with others and do things in a community way. When the third and fourth child come along it is hard then to face the obvious fact, that our urban society does not want normal families. They suddenly realize that they must rely on their own efforts at a time when their cares and burdens are greatest.

Thank Heaven, more and more men are buying tools and meeting at planning sessions. More and more wives are sewing together, shopping together, and minding each other's babies. There is some residual Christian liberty and American independence left so that a welfare state and a communist state will not evolve without our putting up a good fight. Families are coming together, yours and mine, and discovering this splendid thing—a community.

“Yes” to God—“Yes” to Each Other

Not long ago my wife and I had a few moments of peace together. I had arrived home from the office after a day of tiring conferences, capped by the usual hour on the subway. The seven children were having their supper and my wife's hectic day was at its climax. Ann had been told in school that she needed glasses. Marie had pictures to show me which she had painted in kindergarten. Paul was in line for a spanking for having resisted a neighbour's attempts to remove him from his rear bumper. Michael had a cold. Elizabeth had fallen downstairs. Peter's new tooth had blossomed beautifully in the middle of his grin. Clare, too, had a cold.

We organized the rambunctious crew through their supper, washed them up, packaged them in their pajamas and lined them up for prayers. Paul was able to get through the “Hail Mary” without any help. Michael characteristically thanked God and asked God for “food.” Elizabeth made the others giggle when she said “blessed is the soup” instead of “blessed is the fruit.”

Prayers having been finished, we tucked them in bed. Everything had been tended to except listening to Ann's “reading.” *God bless you's* were exchanged and Dot and I sat down at the kitchen to eat our cooled-off dinner. Surprisingly enough, the children went immediately to sleep. We became suddenly aware of the ticking of the kitchen clock—things were that quiet!

Suddenly a feeling of great peace descended upon us. We lingered over a second cup of tea and began to reminisce. Nine years of married life were behind us. We talked about our various experiences together. I asked Dot which of these experiences struck her as being the happiest. We both knitted our brows and tried to remember. After a while Dot said, “You know, I don't think I was ever more happy with you than I am right at this moment.” I had to admit with some surprise that I felt the same way!

Ours, we think, is a successful marriage. How do we account for success when all the trials and troubles we go through are the very things that other people avoid as pit-falls? I suppose that at the root of

the happiness is a mystery. Through a process of elimination, we always arrive at the conclusion that it is nothing but God's helping grace. We are living a Sacrament. All the other things that seem to explain our peace in the midst of trouble are more an effect than a cause. Certainly a husband's love matures as he sees his wife constantly attentive to the endless demands of the children, rising in a cold bedroom to early-morning emergencies. His love is no longer a fairy-thing, floating in the mirages of courtship. This is a woman with courage and a capacity for sacrifice. She is no stoic, no creature of iron will and vigorous constitution. She is a woman sensitive to pain, yet beyond pain when someone else needs attention. I have not the slightest doubt that come hell or high water, Dot will be right beside me, doing a masterful job. She may weep, but she will work through her tears and she will smile when a smile is needed.

There is a strength far beyond our own that mans the helm of our family ship. Each joy and sorrow has a place in the divine scheme of things. Take one iota of trouble away, and the balance would be lost, the happiness less poignant, the peace less complete. This is Christian marriage, a star, real, practical, full adventure, a thing of days, nights, years and eternity. The price we pay is merely to reiterate the original vow, "I will," saying over and over again, "Yes" to God and "Yes" to each other.
