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**Catholic View of Marriage**

Preaching to a congregation in Salt Lake City, recently, the Rev. Patrick Flannigan, C. M., delivered a powerful sermon on the sacrament of marriage, and incidentally took occasion to express some Catholic views concerning the evils of divorce and of birth control. Father Flannigan also gave to young women his advice on matrimony in no uncertain manner. His hearers listened in rapt attention throughout the sermon. Father Flannigan said in part:

Once a marriage is completed according to the laws of God, no power on earth, no law, can break that bond. Hence the Catholic Church has always regarded marriage as an indissoluble contract. Christ has clearly stated that "what God has joined together let no man put asunder." The Church, following the teachings of Christ and of St. Paul and other great doctors, has always looked upon divorce as licensed immorality. Divorce is the blackest, the worst, the most dangerous evil in the world today.

**Permission Denied.**

You students of history will remember that Henry VIII, a king of England who was for many years a loyal son of the Church of Rome, was honored with the title of "Defender of the Faith" for his opposition to the reformation of the sixteenth century. But he became entangled with a woman of his court by the name of Anne Boyleyn. From Rome he sought a divorce from his lawful wife and queen and permission to marry this other woman. He was told that the Church had not the power or the right to grant his request, and because of this decision a whole nation was lost to the faith. Yet the Church did not hesitate, in the face of such a terrible blow to proclaim the indissolubility of marriage.

But there are two words which are sometimes misunderstood these days—divorce and separation. Divorce gives one permission to marry again, and therefore the Church cannot sanction divorce. But for good and sufficient reasons the Church does permit separation of husband and wife. The Church teaches that the rights of men and women are equal. If the husband is cruel or refuses adequate support, the wife may obtain a legal separation with the permission of the Church. But she cannot marry while the man lives. You occasionally read of the ecclesiastical courts pronouncing a marriage invalid, and permitting the parties to remarry. This is only done in cases where it is carefully determined that the first marriage was not complete, where there was some technical fault, where the church is convinced that the marriage was not permissible in the first place, and therefore was invalid.

**State's Rights.**

The state has certain rights of legislation in marriage. It has the right to legislate as to all the simple effects of marriage. God's Church, and God's Church alone, has the power to legislate. Marriage is a sacred institution. The state never attempts to legislate regarding baptism, confirmation, the sacrament of Holy Communion and the like. And the state has no more right to legislate regarding sacramental marriage.

The church is obliged to protect and safeguard you from dangers to your soul. When Christ said "he that heareth you heareth Me," He conferred upon His apostles and their lawful successors a divine power in matters relating to spiritual welfare. The Church has seen fit to make laws protecting its children in all important matters.

Among the laws of the Church pertaining to matrimony is one that forbids her members to marry Jews, and the same is true of the Jews, who have a similar law against marrying Christians. Another law forbids Catholics to marry within the fourth degree of blood relationship. Sponsors in baptism cannot marry either of the parents of the Baptist, let Methodist marry Methodist.

In accordance with a law promulgated by the Church on April 8, 1908, Catholics are not truly and validly married unless married by a priest in the presence of two witnesses. This rule does away with all these romantic, runaway marriages. Marriages must take place before a priest, or otherwise the Church does not consider Catholics as married.

**Mixed Marriages.**

One of the laws relating to matrimony forbids mixed marriages, unless by dispensation granted by the Church authorities. Outsiders are often under the impression that the Church exceeds its authority in this matter. But the Church makes this law for three reasons: To protect its Catholic subjects,

to protect the children of its Catholic subjects, and to make sure that peace will reign in the homes of her Catholic subjects.

Statistics gathered by the Catholic Church show that 70 per cent. of the mixed alliances are failures. In the majority of cases where the wife is a Catholic, her husband has little or no definite religion, or even belief in God. Hence, she generally becomes careless or negligent. The Church is your spiritual mother, and she cannot stand idly by and see you go into relationships that will endanger your faith. Church statistics further prove that 60 to 65 per cent of children of mixed marriages are lost to the Church.

Unhappiness is often caused in the homes of mixed marriages, because the Church is criticised or belittled by the non-Catholic party. Let Baptist marry Baptist; let Methodist marry Methodist; let Presbyterian marry Presbyterian, let Mormon marry Mormon, and let Catholic marry Catholic; for by such marriages there is a greater possibility of their supporting their faith and happiness in their homes. Now, understand me, I do not mean to say that your non-Catholic friends are not as good as you are. They may be a thousand times better. It is a question of obeying morality, it is a question of obeying because your happiness depends upon it.

**Men Are Scarce.**

I have been told, though I cannot vouch for the truth of the story, that marriageable young men are so scarce in Salt Lake that many girls flirt with the wax figures in the store windows. I would rather see them marry the wax figures than some of the figures they do marry, at that. They say love is blind; I think it is also deaf and dumb, for unless marriage is based upon the laws of God it is dangerous.

The normal state of happiness is marriage. But girls who are contemplating marriage should consider seriously several questions. And I want to make a few suggestions. In the first place, I urge girls to marry men of their own faith. Or, if the young man becomes a convert to their faith, let them make sure that he becomes a convert through conviction and not through sentiment, for the sentimental convert does not usually persevere long.

Another important question to ask yourself is this: "Is the young man industrious? Is he able to work, and does he work?" Of course, if you don't mind taking in washings for the rest of your life, it may be all right to marry a man who is not industrious.

Again, is he addicted to excessive drinking? Some of you young people try to convince yourself that after marriage you can effect reformations that God apparently cannot accomplish. Do you young women know the lot of a drunkard's wife? It is estimated that 3,000 wives go down to premature graves every year because of broken hearts caused by drunken husbands.

**Causes of Failures.**

I attribute the failure of so many marriages to three reasons: First, the lack of proper motives; second, they do not prepare themselves properly; and third, some do not live up to the laws of marriage within the bounds of reason.

Those who take the liberties of marriages and not its obligations are not fit for it. Policemen are shot down in the performance of their duty; firemen are killed by falling walls; soldiers to-day in the trenches of Europe face the cannon's mouth as a patriotic duty. And so you will find that in every state of life there are certain obligations along with the state of matrimony, and it is incumbent upon you to assume both the privileges and the obligations. And the same is true of the single state.

The primary obligation of the married state is the propagation of children. No pure woman will fail to fulfill this obligation. There are thousands and millions of women who have fulfilled this obligation, and I say God bless them. And there are thousands of childless-wives who have fulfilled this obligation, but to whom God had not seen fit to give children, and I say God bless them. But there are thousands of homes which are childless because women have been conniving with the demons of hell to prevent conception.

A violation of this law is a violation of the law of nature, and the guilty one will suffer the penalty. The crime of race suicide is a deadly blow to the human race, a violation of the commandment of God. "Thou shalt not kill." Unless you are mentally and morally and physically prepared to fulfill the obligations of the state of matrimony, at the risk of your life, you have no right to enter it.

I say that many do not prepare themselves properly. Their conduct before marriage is not such as to make them ready to enjoy the privileges and meet the obligations of marriage. That causes many failures. And many do not live up to the laws of the marriage state within the bounds of reason. You are rational animals, and as such are supposed to regulate your desires.

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