

Is Age Difference An Obstacle To A Happy Marriage?

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I'm nineteen and in love with a man thirty-five years old. We want to get married but live in a small community and are afraid that we'll be the laughing stock of the town. We really do love each other, and I'm quite mature for my age.

Although I've discussed the problem of age differences in marriage in a previous article, the question keeps recurring in my correspondence.

For example, one letter reads, "I'm a woman 34 in love with a man 27. All my friends feel that seven years is too great a difference. Is age so important?"

As I read through these letters, I keep wondering whether the problem is new or whether it has always been around. However, marriage statistics indicate that there is a growing tendency for partners to be about the same age, so this may account for some of the unfavorable attitudes toward marriages involving marked age differences.

At any rate, Helen, it is well to keep in mind that you are not alone. Many young people are facing the same problem. Because marital companionship is currently being so strongly stressed, the false assumption is sometimes made that this necessarily implies similarity in age.

Hence the age spread in your case, Helen, clearly differs from the average. Does this imply that your chances for happiness and success are less than average? The answer will depend not on your differences in age but on your characters.

Because men and women are complementary, they complete each other in marriage not only in terms of reproduction but of mutual personal development as followers of Christ. This requires affection and love, mutual service and assistance, a sense of loyalty and responsibility, constant solicitude for the good of the partner, and so forth.

It follows that in considering your chances for success and happiness in marriage,



Helen, you can ignore the relatively superficial fact of age differences and ask the following questions.

What do I know about the Christian meaning of marriage? What am I prepared to contribute in terms of companionship, personal service, devotion to duty, loyalty and responsibility? Knowing myself as I do, am I now prepared to dedicate myself to the more or less monotonous task of bearing and raising children and running a home?

What about my partner? Reflecting that in marriage it is not sufficient to love your partner, you must be able to live with him, ask yourself the following questions about him.

Can he hold a job, that is, is he willing and capable of supporting a family? Does he show adequate respect for you and your opinions or does he appear self-centered, domineering, and determined always to have his own way?

What are his attitudes toward having a family?

Is he more than a nominal Catholic, that is, is he faithful in attending Church services and regulating his actions according to Catholic moral codes? Do you know his primary interests and goals and are they acceptable to you? Is he emotionally mature, that is, not overly dependent on his family and reasonably capable of maintaining his balance and self-control under trying circumstances?

If you both score well on these questions, you're ready for marriage and you seem to have your man! Don't worry about what you imagine others may think or say.

Mature people will recognize that this is your marriage and it is up to you to choose your partner. If you're sure of yourselves, the thoughtless opinion of others won't seem important.

Assisi Spirit Leads Artist To Faith

Assisi—(NC)—An American painter who first came to Italy as a soldier in World War II has been received into the Church. He attributes the beginnings of his conversion to his visit to St. Francis.

WILLIAM CONGDON, whose conversion required seven years, was baptized by Bishop Giuseppe Placido Nicolini of Assisi. He received his first Communion from His Eminence Amleto Cardinal Cicognani, former Apostolic Delegate to the U.S.

While he was a soldier in the U.S. 5th Army, Mr. Congdon first came to Italy in 1944. He returned seven years ago, and in the course of his travels visited Assisi, the birthplace of St. Francis.

The artist said his conversion began with his first visit here. He said he was deeply moved by Gregorian chant, the beauty of the liturgy, Giotto's paintings which line the Basilica of St. Francis, and by the spiritual atmosphere of the small town where the Franciscan Order was born.

Mr. Congdon was born in Providence, R.I., on April 15, 1912. He attended Yale University and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. His paintings are exhibited in a number of art galleries in the U.S. He has won several prizes for his paintings, including the W. A. Clark award of the Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C., in 1953.

Sociologists Elect Jesuit

Chicago—(RNS)—Father John L. Thomas, S.J., of the Institute of Social Order at St. Louis University, was installed as president of the American Catholic Sociological Society at the group's 21st annual convention here.

(Father Thomas' article appears each week in The Courier Journal.)
New officers named were Dr. Jack Curtis, Canisius College, Buffalo, N.Y., president-elect; Father Joseph F. Scheuer, C.P.S., St. Joseph's College, Rensselaer, Ind.; and Father Ralph A. Gallagher, S.J., Loyola University, Chicago.



Formosa Land Of Promise

Pusan—(RNS)—A Maryknoll Sister, at the order's Pusan clinic in Korea, comforts an ailing child brought in by mother. For the past ten years on this Nationalist stronghold, the Church has been chalking up conversions at such a rate as to compensate in some degree for the ruthless repression it is experiencing at the hands of the Communists on the China mainland. By all accounts the Church in Formosa, where the first missionaries were Portuguese and Spanish Franciscans and Dominicans, is enjoying a rate of growth matched only by its rapid progress in parts of Africa.

Smoking, Lay Garbed Nuns Coming To U.S.

Rome—(RNS)—A group of nuns, whose only symbol of their religious vocation is a small golden cross, will leave Rome soon for the United States where they will start a branch of their unusual order.

DEVOTED TO working among Non-Catholics, the congregation is known as the Ladies of Bezanis. To carry out their apostolate, the sisters wear secular dress.

They also have been granted the privilege of smoking on occasions when doing so would

Chaplains Charge

Smut Degrades College Students Religion Courses Asked

Albuquerque—(RNS)—Over 150 Roman Catholic chaplains of secular universities and colleges meeting here at the 45th annual convention of the National Newman Club Federation called for strong "remedial" legal measures for controlling pornography.

Don't Quit School

Noting "the degrading effect of pornography on the moral quality of youth at American colleges and universities," the National Association of Newman Club Chaplains said it felt "impelled in conscience" to warn the nation of a worsening situation and to urge the federal, state and local legislatures to use their traditional constitutional authority in remedial action without prejudice to freedom adequately comprehended.

Washington—(NC)—Labor Secretary James P. Mitchell has urged young men and women who plan to drop out of school this academic year "to reconsider and return to school."

In a special statement urging young people to continue their educations, Mr. Mitchell said:

"In our studies of the changing occupational patterns of America, one fact stands out: the years immediately ahead will show a significant increase in the educational requirements for good jobs.

"The fact is this—getting a job and succeeding in it depends more and more on the amount of education and training a young person has, and on how well he has used his time in preparation."

Creative Contribution

In their contacts with students, faculty and professional leaders, the chaplains observed there was an "almost overwhelming emphasis on secular goals and objectives in education and life."

"Near complete absorption in particular fields of specialization or profession," they asserted, "have left thousands lacking the insight that flows from a knowledge of religion, philosophy, history and other subjects dealing with human relations."

Albuquerque—(RNS)—Delegates to the 45th annual convention of the National Newman Clubs Federation here were urged by their national chaplain to make "creative contributions" to their communities, according to their own talents and according to community needs.

"Too many Catholics have a distrust of institutions outside the Church," said the Rev. George Garrelts. "But creative Catholics like U.S. Sen. Eugene McCarthy of Minnesota or Hawaii's new governor, William F. Quinn, are contributing creatively to our political institutions just as Evelyn Waugh and J. F. Powers are contributing to our literary heritage."



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