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Discipline Necessary for Marriage

By Father Walter Cushing
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Associate Director, Family Life Bureau

The number of couples attending Pre-Cana Conferences is truly impressive. It is very encouraging to see so many making the effort to learn as much as possible and plan for their marriage. The following thoughts are the result of reflection on marriage in this era, and on the social pressures and goals that sometimes make married life difficult.

We certainly are living in a push-button age with the latest appliance for just about any type of work. We have a pill for almost anything — from the slightest ache or pain to the avoidance of pregnancy. Our people are being sold on the need for comfort, pleasure and material wealth.

But in America, where we have such a high standard of living, where we have such opportunities for personal advancement, where we have more time to enjoy life, we find many unhappy couples.

We are living in an age when man's body is more than well cared for but his total person is often undernourished in the things that make him a successful and fulfilled member of the human race.

Because of our tremendous economy, man is able to purchase things consid-



Father Walter Cushing

ered necessities today that were formerly in the class of luxury. It is the rare young couple who cannot furnish their home or apartment today with those things which their parents could only have acquired after years of hard work and savings. We are definitely living in an age of have-it-now and pay-for-it later.

Are the elements our culture emphasizes those which add to happy and successful family life? In many cases they seem to be tearing down and

slowly destroying many a home and family.

Many of our young people have had to go without very little, and the idea of denying themselves anything is often hard to accept. Yet where else than in marriage will you find daily situations which will demand much sacrifice and going-without for the good of the other person or the family?

In marriage the person has to sacrifice comfort often and learn to discipline himself for the greater good of the family. This idea in our present culture is often hard to accept.

The great emphasis on personal achievement at any cost often leads to an added emphasis on selfishness. Personal responsibility is often so important that the responsibility to others is neglected. Concern for the sick, the aged, the poor, the underprivileged is something that many of our young people worry little about. They know that "Society," whoever that means, will take over and care for them.

The close tie that formerly bound families together is no longer there. The modern young couple is often so separated from their parents, brothers or sisters that their concern about them is lacking. Because of this isolation, many of the problems in life which were shared and often solved with the help of parents and relatives are now left entirely to the young couple to

solve by themselves. We feel that our present social structure has isolated families and thus moved them farther apart rather than closer together.

The added emphasis on material wealth has brought with it a false sense of security. There is little encouragement today to save for the future. People often feel that unless they have the latest appliances, cars and clothes they are unsuccessful in life. In order to achieve this type of "success," very often both husband and wife must work; perhaps the husband is working at two or more jobs. Imagine for a moment what could happen to a family living on multiple incomes if an accident or serious illness struck. Utter tragedy.

A happy marriage and indeed a successful one must be built on a secure life made with some thought for the future. We must turn a deaf ear to the noisy salesman of the world and turn our thoughts to what really are the important and essential things in making the family successful.

There are no easy answers to these problems which our present culture and society have brought into family life. We feel that to be simply aware of these pitfalls of false values and false security can help many couples avoid them.

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