

Marriage — Hell on Earth or State of Bliss?

By Bishop Joseph L. Hogan

In the spirit of a father who loves his children and has the responsibility of vocation to provide for them only those conditions which will redound to their personal happiness and well-being, I have recently instructed my priests to abstain from uttering a blessing of the Church while engaged in the act of consigning our youth to a hopeless condition of 'hell on earth' — the inevitable lot of the immature who enter marriage.



Though immaturity and chronology are not synonymous, they are indeed expected companions. The present marriage crisis seems to bear this out. Most recent studies give clear indication that the vast majority of those who do suffer from a lack of maturity are, in fact, the young. The highest proportion of divorces come from those who married at an age under the traditional legal limits — with between one-half and one-third of all teen-age marriages ending in failure.

The teen-age marriage explosion in the United States is frightening to all of the adult world who care. More than any other factor, it has led to the embarrassing phenomenon that the divorce rate in our country is twice as high as that of the country next on the list

— Denmark — a nation not commonly associated with moral excellence.

Some young couples look upon a marriage license as a ticket to the adult world which they have been trying to enter for some time. They see marriage as instant status, freedom from parental authority, and independence. It may prove to be just that for an exceptional few. The usual result, however, is a marriage that lasts but a few months or years — filled with disillusionment, desperation and defeat — a story to be recorded first in files of a Marriage Counsellor — and then eventually in the divorce Court.

It does not prove a privilege to be given full adult responsibilities — to be forced to choose someone as a lifetime mate before one has even found out who one is oneself. Dr. Reuben Hill, sociologist for the Ford Foundation and the University of Minnesota and one of the foremost authorities on family life, put it very aptly when he said, "In all my years of study, I have listened to a lot of people say they married too young — but I have yet to hear a single couple say they married too late."

This blight on American family life has been in the making for some time. We have been steadily aborting our children from the womb of childhood and thrusting them into adulthood before viability. Problems of growth once associated with high school are

common now in the early grades. What ten years ago was the college scene is now the common high school experience, and the college years have become a frenzied escape from the boredom of a 'nothing-new' experience.

An adult world of parents who see parenthood largely as a biological function and have allowed their children to grow like 'Topsy' have been foremost in the campaign of permissiveness which has brought us to this sad day. They have been joined by a growing number of parents who lack the fortitude to resist the pressures for allowing adult social patterns of steady-dating for their teen-agers. I wonder what they have expected this normal prelude to marriage to lead to!

In an effort to assist the young in being aware at least of the maturity they must have if marriage vows are to have any meaning, I have instructed my priests to require more than the usual interview of the couple in all marriages where the State requires parental consent. The final judgment as to whether or not the couple is qualified for marriage will be based on information provided from many sources — the parents, the parish priest, the Office of Family Life which will provide an intensive pre-Cana course, and any Counseling Agency contacted.

And all of this I do for one reason—I am a father who cares.

Guest Columnist

Desert travelers often gather at a green spa amidst miles of sandy surroundings for rest and refreshment. St. Joseph's on Franklin St., Rochester, with its green copper steeple, now overshadowed by Midtown Plaza, Xerox and the new Lincoln Rochester Towers, is an oasis of faith and grace for shoppers and workers of all ages. Compare it if you will to the cross-roads well where the Lord awaited the woman of Samaria.



In 1835 Father Joseph Prost came by the Barge Canal from New York, on his way to his Redemptorist community in Wisconsin. He stopped off in Rochester, preached in their native language and heard the confessions of the Germans who were then attending old St. Patrick's. They begged him to stay. He could not do so then, but returned the next year as their pastor.

Midtown Oasis

Father Riesner is pastor of St. Joseph's Church, Rochester

The Germans bought a Protestant church at Ely and Minerva Sts. and named it St. Mary's; but Father Prost had donations from Europe for a church or at least an altar in America in honor of St. Joseph. With that money he bought lots on Franklin St.

Father Prost then fell into disfavor with the St. Mary's trustees, and it was not until his successor came in 1841 that they turned over all their assets, \$601.03, and the building of a church to St. Joseph began.

In 1866 Pope Pius IX gave the Miraculous Madonna of Perpetual Help to the Redemptorists for their church in Rome, and told them to "make her known to all of the world": An authentic copy of the miraculous ikon was brought from Rome and enthroned in St. Joseph's on July 4, 1873. The present marble shrine was built in 1911. Since 1927 a Per-

petual Novena of Wednesdays has been held in honor of Our Mother of Perpetual Help.

Vatican II in the Constitution on the Liturgy said: "Popular devotions of the Christian people are warmly commended, but these devotions should harmonize with the liturgy and lead people to it".

Each Wednesday St. Joseph's emerges from the past with a full church, as Midtowners and suburbanites gather with their pains and problems to beg their Mother's Perpetual Help and offer together the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

St. Joseph's is no longer a thriving neighborhood parish. The picket fences and lilac bushes around two-story homes have given way to Xerox and Lincoln Towers. Yet the Eucharistic Christ and His mother still maintain the same address on Franklin St. where Joseph is head of the house. It is Midtown's oasis of faith and grace, the cross-roads well where Rochesterians meet Christ and receive Mary's Perpetual Help.

Editorial

Package More Important than the Pitch

A pair of national figures last week made statements related to our voting process that were neither very startling in their import nor liable to excite any great debate among the general populace. Yet despite their apparent innocuousness and disparity they possess a common theme in revealing a certain cynicism prevalent in our governing methods.

According to Religious News Service, Sen. Mark Hatfield of Oregon leveled some criticism at religious "lobbying" groups for their lack of finesse.

They in no way compare with professional lobbyists, said the senator, and in their amateurishness may cause more harm than good for their causes.

Earlier in the week, speaking in Rochester, David Brinkley of NBC News proposed

a national census to enable the people, by majority vote, to decide on issues facing the nation. Brinkley says that at present elected officials do not reflect the will of the electorate.

Although both of these ideas possess some merit they both take the same road to error. They ignore the essential consideration that issues should be judged on their own merits.

What difference should it make whether "lobbying" is amateurish or high polished — the issues at stake are what count. Sen. Hatfield implies that if the Catholic Church, for instance, had the skill and lobbying technique of the National Rifle Association, for instance, that abortion would never be liberalized. And conversely gun control would be a shoo-in. Neither of these

questions, apparently, are considered on their own merits.

Brinkley's proposal — "ya pays yer money and ya takes yer choice" — falls over several stumbling blocks. For even if the general populace could be educated enough to make valid and enlightened decisions and even if the government could or would tell enough of its dealings to qualify the public to understand what is going on, there is still a glaring deficiency in the idea. The majority is not necessarily right — there is too much history to teach us that.

It is a shame that this age of power politics and Madison Avenue shenanigans can lead even such intelligent men as Hatfield and Brinkley to accept cynicism as a determinant in government.