

New Procedures for Marriage of Minors

Last September Bishop Joseph L. Hogan issued a new set of rules covering procedures involved in the marriage of minors.

The new regulations are:

1—The priest must interview the young man and woman individually using a lengthy, new questionnaire designed to inquire as to the couple's awareness of the responsibilities of marriage and to let them express their judgment of their fitness for marriage.

2—He then must interview the parents whom civil law requires to give permission for the marriage of their children.

(Before a marriage license can

be obtained in this state written consent to the marriage is required from both parents if the man is between 16 and 21 and the girl between 14 and 18. If the parents of both are dead, written consent of the guardians of such minors is required. If the parents' marriage has been dissolved the consent of the one parent who received custody of the minor is sufficient.)

The priest must refer either or both parties to the Catholic Family Center for help from a psychiatrist, psychologist or social worker, if he believes it necessary for "any notable character deficiency".

4—He must then arrange for

the couple to have intensive private or semi-private pre-marriage instructions provided by the diocesan Family Life Office.

5—The priest must put into writing his personal observations and judgment regarding the couple's ability to make a lasting marriage.

6—Finally he must file with the Marriage Tribunal the statements of the couple, the parents, the Pre-Cana staff members, the social worker and his own.

Final approval for the wedding must come from the Bishop through the Tribunal after studying the full documentation on the case.

A Catholic, Protestant and Jewish Statement

Marriage and Family Life

Keenly aware of the role religion ascribes to the home and family life and keenly aware of the powerful and pervasive social conditions which threaten to undermine human dignity, marriage and family life in America, we, as representatives of the major religions — Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox, and Protestant — wish to bring the religious teachings of our respective faiths to bear upon our society and to join with all men of good will to create a healthier social climate in which family life in America can flourish and be strong.

There are large areas of agreement and numerous possibilities for joint programs and action, although we recognize and respect the differences of approach, emphases and contributions of each major faith.

To help families develop foundations for personally meaningful and socially responsible behavior, we offer the following affirmations on which our historic faiths unite.

We believe, and unite in affirming, that God, the Creator of the Universe and the Father of all mankind, did create us male and female and did establish families as part of his Divine Plan. Because of our understanding of this plan, we believe and unite in affirming that our sexuality is a wondrous gift

from God to be accepted with thanksgiving and used within marriage with reverence and joy.

We believe and unite in affirming that our understanding of God's plan for marriage ideally calls for lifelong commitment in fidelity to a continuing, supportive relationship in which each partner helps the other to develop to fullest capacity. We are united in our belief that God is an active partner in sustaining and enriching the husband-wife relationship in marriage.

We believe and unite in affirming that children are a trust from God and that parenthood is a joyous, though strenuous, adventure in partnership with God for the procreation and nurturing of each child. Parenthood calls for the responsible use of all of our God-given talents and abilities in this adventure.

We believe and unite in affirming that family life is the cradle of personality and character for each child and creates an environment for the societal values of each succeeding generation as well as the principal source of meaningful personal relations for each adult member of our society. All children need a father and a mother firmly united in love to guide their growth into manhood or womanhood and to provide the emotional security that fosters de-

velopment toward mature and responsible relationships between men and women.

We believe that the family is the cornerstone of our society. It shapes the attitudes, the hopes, the ambitions, the values of every citizen. The child is usually damaged when family living collapses. When this happens on a massive scale, the community itself is crippled.

There are no easy answers to all the complex problems facing marriage and family living in the world today, and we are aware that there are many fronts on which we must work. We can never finish the task; neither are we free to ignore it.

Therefore, we the major religious groups in the U.S., join forces in exploring all ways and means available to preserve and strengthen family life in America to the end that each person may enjoy fulfillment in dignity, justice, and peace.

Family Life Statement

On Behalf of Children

Parenthood is one of the most challenging and rewarding of all human relationships. Christian parents are called to a prophetic mission, to witness by their love and generosity to the primacy of life. The sacrifices parents make in bearing and raising children are a powerful testimony of their fidelity and their hopefulness.

But even in the face of an uncertain future, most young couples still look positively and hopefully toward parenthood. They see each child as an individual person, capable of bringing new hope and happiness to the entire human family.

Part of the explanation may be that the child is mankind in miniature. He reminds us of our weaknesses and our failures yet he holds out the promise of the future. Those who are parents invest love, commitment and interest in the child. During adolescence they gradually relax control and encourage greater independence and individuality. Their goal is to enable the child to become a free and responsible adult, a contributing member of the wider human community. Society itself benefits most when the child successfully attains maturity. That is why society must support the child and protect his rights and interests.

Society accomplishes this through laws, social policy and government-supported programs, which help parents provide their children with food, Courier-Journal

clothing, shelter, medical care and education. The prime motivation for all social policy affecting children must be the child's good and his chance to develop as a unique and autonomous human being.

A serious danger today is the growing attitude that children contribute to certain social problems — overpopulation, pollution, poverty, etc. At the present time, the United States Congress is considering legislation that would establish the two-child family as the American ideal. There is a genuine threat that the responsible decision-making of parents will be overridden. Attempts are also underway to withdraw legal protection from the unborn child prior to the 20th week of pregnancy. The child's right to life is being traded away for reasons of convenience or political expediency.

Medicine confirms the human status of the child in the womb. Law has traditionally protected him. Human experience proves that when we attempt to assign relative value to human life, we move easily toward loss of respect for all life and an unjust violation of individual human rights.

This is the moment in history when all of society must reaffirm its belief in the worth and significance of children, and the contribution they make to the human family. In God's providence, a child is able to love, to relate personally with others, and to pursue his destiny, both temporal and eternal.

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