

FR. LOUIS HOHMAN

The Open Window



Q. In one of your articles you referred to the obligation of the Church in the case of marrying two people who were under age. Now could you give me the rules pertaining to:

• Two persons of legal age.

• Two persons of legal age, one or both baptized, educated in Catholic schools and confirmed, but for the past few years are not attending Mass and making their Easter duty.

• Two persons who have been living together for several months or more.

Before you answer this complicated question may I add — parents with calloused knees — praying hearts — hoping that the Holy Spirit will take this opportunity to re-enter the people and help them back to Christ — also add priests 'making the decision' whether the possible marriage is worth performing — if it will last — this is very hard for parents who have been married thirty years to apprehend — some of the most wonderful marriages that lasted for twenty years have failed — how does a priest who barely knows the couple to be married presume to make a decision if the marriage will last? Where is the faith of the Church? If a kid, for whatever reason wants a wedding in a family church, to me that is a step in the right direction. The path may not be straight — and another Catholic marriage may fail — but a fact that a MARRIAGE failed will be the heartache — not that the ceremony was not a sacrament. That feature would have provided the graces to help it — but maybe the graces weren't used — no fault of the Church. Seems like a matter of pride to me — and I know a Man who wouldn't have worried about it — CHRIST. Do we not have the courage to take a chance — Christ sure did — he even loves me.

A: Your letter IS a little overwhelming. But I'll give it a try anyway. First, the rules for the three cases you mentioned. All three couples can get married but there are requirements for each. The State as well as the Church has them. Getting married is not the same as buying a car or a new suit of clothes. It is the basic unit of society and its success or failure affects all society which has an important stake in it. Marriage is not simply a private affair. Persons of legal age have a right

Father Henry Atwell's column, "Toward Tomorrow," will return in this space next week.

to get married but they may be a poor risk in terms of maturity and responsibility.

The legal age limit is arbitrary to an extent and may or may not be the right one. In view of our experience with very young people, even of legal age, they obviously are a higher risk if we're thinking of a happy stable relationship. It is not a matter of discrimination but of prudence that we demand some extra preparation.

Note: teen marriages are not forbidden — they are sometimes delayed to give time for helping the young couple understand their feelings better, assess the reality of what they are undertaking and acquire a better notion of what real love is.

I'll bet you take a lot longer to buy a new car than you do an apple strudel. The Church in these cases is not expressing a lack of faith in the couple or a lack of faith in the power of grace, nor is she saying this marriage can't be. What she is saying is, let us help you to be happy and have a lasting marriage.

When you say the priest makes a judgment about whether they can get married hardly knowing the couple, that is just plain unfair. The priest is saying, "You know, by reason of your ages you haven't had much experience and I would like to help you (along with your parents) explore your ideas and ideals and feelings and your 'love' and see what you think about marriage then.

And please, remember grace builds upon nature. Even the grace of the sacrament of Matrimony will not perform miracles, especially if we have not tried to lay a solid foundation on the natural level.

Oh yes, the business of Christ taking a chance. Do you think he was very careful in choosing his Apostles on the basis of faith and character? Or do you think he just chose any old twelve and said, "Oh well, you've got to take a chance." He got burned by Judas (and Peter) even after being careful in his choice. Taking unnecessary risks is stupid. Taking ones which can't be avoided is courage.

FR. PAUL J. CUDDY

On The Right Side



When Bishop Lawrence B. Casey left Rochester in 1966, to become the bishop of Paterson diocese, his new diocese had no diocesan paper. Those who wanted to, got the neighboring Newark paper which had some Paterson news. I said to a friend: "I'll wager that Bishop Casey will soon publish his own diocesan paper, with the 100% coverage plan."

"Why are you so sure?"

"He couldn't exist without one. Remember when he was in Rochester, auxiliary bishop though he was he considered his Sacred Heart Cathedral bulletin as a top-top priority. He has a compulsion to teach and to inspire through the print; to reach his people through his own message."

Sure enough in 1967 he established The Beacon for his diocese. It is one of the best diocesan papers in the States; and his own weekly message is written in a simple, folksy style which makes it so readable.

About 1965 I began a dialogue by mail with Father Atwell, who was then the excruciatingly (to me) revolutionary editor of the Courier-Journal. My letters to him were fiery. "Your paper is freighted with items which confuse the people rather than edify them. You suppress the words of the Holy Father!" His letters in reply were placid and unrelenting. "The Church is being renewed. Haven't you been following the decrees of the council?"

One article, entitled "The Greeks had a word for it" was an outrageous blessing of the theology of Leslie DeWart, including the easy brushing aside of St. Thomas and his wonderful teachings. I was furious, and wrote to the editor: "Your Courier is baleful; so I am going to have a democratic vote in our parishes of Clyde and Savannah and offer the people the choice of the C-J or the Register."

The Register is a national Catholic weekly, full of national and international news. Among its virtues were its scope of news, its style and its loyalty to the Holy See.

So we had the parishes vote. Nearly 400 people voted, which was a tremendous number percentage wise. What was the result? Eighty per cent voted for the Courier, 20 per cent voted for The Register. It pointed up that the

ordinary laypeople are little interested in theological controversy. As our people expressed it: "We are interested in the local news: of the diocese, of our bishops, Bishop Kearney and Bishop Sheen; of the priests and Sisters we know; of the activities of other parishes in our own diocese."

Mutatis mutandis, as Pittsford Father Philipps might say, most parishioners are interested in their own backyards. And the farther the outreach, the milder the interest. Consequently the Sunday parish bulletin which informs, instructs and even entertains is a great asset. There are many such bulletins in the diocese, and they are widely read. Recently, for our hospital morning devotions over the loud speaker system I read Renewal which I had found in the local St. Anne's parish bulletin. Within 10 minutes our Sister Visitor, Sister Adolphine, collared me and said: "Mrs. Z in room xxx was thrilled with the thought for the day and wants a copy. Do you have one?" "Of course, Sister. I took it from St. Anne's bulletin, and brought 30 extra to give to the people." And here it is.

"The World's Greatest Renewal"
By Cardinal Cushing

"If all the sleeping folks will wake up,

And all the luke warm folks will fire up,

And all the dishonest folks will confess up,

And all the discouraged folks will cheer up,

And all the depressed folks will look up,

And all the estranged folks will make up,

And all the gossipers will shut up,

And all the church members will pray up:

THEN WE CAN HAVE THE WORLD'S GREATEST RENEWAL."

So, if you are "luke warm" about expressing your appreciation and if you do like your Sunday bulletin, or the Courier, why not "fire up" and tell your pastor, or the editor. And tell the advertisers too, who sometimes wonder if their advertisement is an investment or a charity.

Courier-Journal Tour To The HOLY LAND and GREECE



With Father Henry Atwell

This tour to the Holy Land and Greece sponsored by the Courier-Journal will be personally conducted by Reverend Henry Atwell, past editor of the Courier and now pastor of St. Agnes Church in Avon, New York and Chairman of the Genesee Ecumenical Ministries.

A tour to the Holy Land is a travel dream you cherished all your life. The panorama of the religious, historical, cultural and scenic places of interest it presents is truly fascinating. You see with your own eyes the very sources of christianity. On your return a stop is made at timeless Greece to see a bit of fascinating Athens and the nearby areas.

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