

# Lasting marriages demand constant work, patience

By Father Paul Cuddy  
Courier Columnist

**Q.:** What do you think of the state of marriage today?

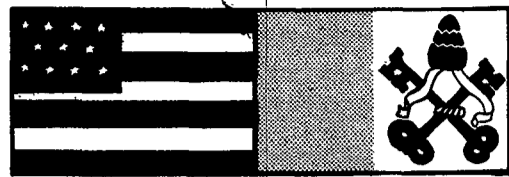
**A.:** Last July, I was serving at Trumansburg for Father Kanka. At Sunday Mass I spoke about vocations to the priesthood, and expressed my wonder at the reluctance of men to seek the priesthood, often because of celibacy.

In response to that objection, I expressed this observation: "It seems to me that marriage is not always a bed of roses." The whole congregation shook with laughter. They evidently thought, 'here is a priest who understands.'"

**Q.:** What do you mean "understand?"

**A.:** Christian marriage is a lifelong commitment of one man to one woman. It is "for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer, in sickness and in health until death do us part."

Anyone who ponders over this awesome commitment should weigh carefully the pros and cons of marriage, remembering the old song: "Will you love me in



## ON THE RIGHT SIDE

December as you love me now in May?"

**Q.:** Why do so many marriages fall apart — even among Catholics?

**A.:** I don't pretend to know sure answers. Ann Landers once wrote that most divorces begin in bed. That certainly is worth considering when we note how much emphasis is placed on sex in such things as TV advertising, books and cinema as well as AIDS, condoms, birth control instruments and the sex queen, Dr. Ruth.

It is strange that syphilis and gonorrhea are so little spoken of since AIDS came to the fore. These have no lobbyists of course. And there is malign acceptance of the dissolution of marriages as if it were normal.

**Q.:** But isn't sex in marriage important?

**A.:** Important? It is essential. But sex satisfaction as the only or most important aspect of marriage places marriage on shifting sands. Marriage requires mutual love and respect between husband and wife, and a mutual concern for the offspring.

**Q.:** What makes for a successful marriage?

**A.:** Recently I asked a friend, who was happily married for many years, "What do you think makes a successful marriage?" Her answer was substantially this: "Marriage is a full-time job! No matter what other work couples do, the marriage requires constant work — every day, every year."

The first few years are especially difficult since an adjustment is required in matters of temperament, moods, values, willingness to compromise. That takes time and patience. And money is an important factor. So many people today think that a conflict or disagreement entitles them to break their pledge "for better and for worse." No. There is a special time for

patience, and often for compromise, and sometimes for forgiveness. If people won't forgive, what can they expect from God when He judges each of us?"

**Q.:** "What of the children?"

**A.:** She said, "A divorce brings psychological damage to the children. But even in a stable marriage, parents must be united in discipline. If my husband tells a child, 'No you can't go to such-and-such an affair' I must back him up, and vice versa."

This reminded me of an incident in Clyde years ago. I asked an ideal father, "Joe, how do you account for the fact that your sons are such good men?"

"Well, when the children came, Helen and I agreed that when we said 'No' we meant no, and when we said 'yes' we meant yes," he said.

Probably the key to a successful marriage comes from a plaque, which read: "The best gift a father can give to his children is to love their mother."

And to this we must add "and vice versa."

# Genuine holiness requires loving one's enemies

By Father Albert Shamon  
Courier Columnist

Sunday's readings: (R3) Matthew 5:38-48; (R1) Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; (R2) 1 Corinthians 3:16-23.

God, who is love, calls us to be holy. He is serious about this because He wants us to be like Himself. "Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy" (R1).

Then God explains what holiness looks like. It's not going around with folded hands, eyes upturned to heaven, being thin as a worm-eaten toothpick from fasting, being a "glumdum" and killjoy. All that is a caricature of holiness.

A really holy person is one who is totally human and humane. Here is how God describes him: he bears no hatred in his heart for others; his reproof, if given, has no revenge or vindictiveness in it; in a word, he loves his neighbor as himself.

Now that is exactly what Jesus teaches in the gospel. He wants us to be perfect, because our heavenly Father is perfect. And He too describes perfection in terms of love of neighbor.

Jesus abrogated the Old Testament Law of an eye for an eye. Before there was a central authority, men took the law into their own hands. The result was they often exceeded the bounds of justice.

If a person, for instance, had blackened someone's eye, his kinsfolk would very likely have not only blackened the offender's eye, but would most likely have killed him. The law of eye for an eye was meant to restrain excessive punishment, out of proportion to the crime.

Jesus, however, speaks out against even

this tit-for-tat action. He gives three examples: If one uses physical force against you, turn the other cheek; if one initiates legal action against you, hand him your coat as well; if you are pressed into service — as was Simon of Cyrene — go an extra mile.

A Charity nun was collecting alms for orphans. She stepped into a tavern. A slightly inebriated man spat at her. She said, "That is for me; now will you give me something for our orphans?"

During the Civil War, Lincoln said he was going to destroy all his enemies. Some members of his cabinet were astounded to find him dining with his enemies. They asked Lincoln, "We thought you were going to destroy your enemies?" Lincoln answered, "I have; I have made them my friends."

The Old Testament commanded God's people to love their countrymen, but it never commanded them to hate their enemies. That was a scribal law; an unwarranted conclusion drawn by the Scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus, of course, would never settle for that. He asks for nothing short of heroism and perfection; namely, to love one's enemies. He asks us to see His face in others, as Mother Teresa of Calcutta does; to realize that whatever we do to others, we do to Jesus.

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To hate another is so contrary to God's way. He lets His sun shine on the bad and the good; He causes His rain to fall on the just and the unjust. So too, our charity should extend to all, not just to our friends. If we love only those who love us, what recompense will we have? If you greet only those who speak to you, what's so great about that? You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours is good paganism. It is not Christianity.

Sure, we might object, "I'm no saint. I'm just an ordinary Jane or Joe." Our



## A WORD FOR SUNDAY

Lord says, "Widen your vision. Reject the marketplace spirituality: *quid pro quo*, tit for tat."

We are called to live and to love as Jesus did. The Christian manifesto is the Sermon on the Mount. We come from God and we return to God. Along the way we are to be like God.

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