

A Marriage Handbook

By Casti Connubii.

London Catholic Truth Society No.ctss175 (1960)

Parents in the first place have the duty and privilege of teaching their children. The very fact that children ask so many questions at home is an indication that the first School is the Family.

This handbook gives a summary of the whole encyclical of Pius XI on Christian Marriage in twenty-nine instructions. Speaking of the duty of parents to instruct their children on Holy Matrimony, Pope Pius XII says (in effect):—You must be ready for that difficult time when certain unspoken questions begin to trouble the minds and senses of the young. It will then be your duty—mothers to your daughters and fathers to your sons—to unveil the truth reverently and carefully and thus to give a true, prudent and Christian answer and set their minds at rest. If this comes from the lips of Christian parents at the proper time and place, there will be less danger than if they were to pick up knowledge by accident or from some secret source. (*Address to Catholic Mothers*, abbreviated). See also Instruction XX in this handbook.

A Summary of the Encyclical of Pius XI *

I—Origin of Marriage

1. Marriage was instituted by God, not by man.
2. The Creator of the human race spoke to all married people when He said to our first parents: *Increase and multiply and fill the earth.*
3. Christ raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament and placed it under the care of His Church.
4. Everyone is free either to follow the council of Virginity according to the words of Jesus Christ or to use his natural right to bind himself by the laws of marriage.
5. The chief object of marriage is the procreation and education of children.

II—Object of Marriage

1. Children should be begotten in love, tenderly cared-for and educated in a religious atmosphere.
2. The Apostle, St Paul, is a witness that marriage is for the sake of children. *I wish young girls to marry*, he says. And as if someone had asked him "Why?" he adds immediately: *To bear children, to be mothers of families* (1 Timothy 5 : 14).
3. A true Christian mother will be filled with joy when she realises that her Saviour was thinking of her when He said: *A woman when she hath brought forth a child remembereth no more the anguish for joy that a man is born into the world.*
4. Both husband and wife should receive their children with joy and gratitude from the hand of God regarding them as talents to be restored to Him with interest on the day of reckoning.

5. A secondary object of marriage is that love and help which husband and wife give to one another.

III—Loyalty and Honour

1. The second blessing of marriage is the loyalty of husband and wife to one another.
2. Christ our Lord very clearly taught that in this bond of marriage only two persons are to be united: *They are no longer two but one flesh.*
3. Married honour between husband and wife excludes any third party even in thought.
4. The man is the head and the woman is the heart of the home. *Let women be subject to their husbands as to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the Church.*

IV—Married Love

1. Husband and wife are joined together in a pure and holy love: *Husbands love your wives as Christ loved the Church.* Man and wife must help each other day by day to advance in goodness, in the love of God and of their neighbour.
2. Husband and wife should always in their marriage intercourse treat one another with the greatest respect and reverence, obeying the law of their most wise and holy Creator.
3. The Apostle, St Paul, says: *Let the husband render the debt to the wife and the wife in like manner to the husband.* This is a law of charity as well as justice.
4. Let divine charity be the constant guide of husband and wife, for the one represents Christ and the other the Church. Thus will the peace, happiness, and dignity of married life be preserved.

V—Permanence of Marriage

1. The bond of marriage is lifelong.
2. Our Lord points out the unbreakable nature of the marriage bond when He says: *What God hath joined together let no man put asunder. Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery and he that marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery.*
3. The training and education of the children require the united efforts of both parents.
4. The knowledge that marriage is permanent gives a sense of steadiness and calm security to the home, to the parents, to the children, and hence also to the nation (which is made up of families).

VI—Marriage a Sacrament

1. Christian marriage is also a sacrament.
2. This sacrament places a treasure of grace in the hearts of the husband and wife, a treasure always ready for use. If, however, they make no effort of the will to use this grace it will remain like the talent hidden in the field: but if they make use of this grace to strengthen their wills they will find it easy to carry out the duties of married life and so to obtain true peace and happiness for themselves and their children.
3. Those who are adorned with the golden bond of marriage must strive to remain always a living image of the fruitful union of Christ with His Church, the sacred token of perfect love.

4. *This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church.*

VII—Modern Attack on Marriage

1. Holy marriage, the gift of God, is to-day mocked and degraded.
2. The sanctity of marriage is ridiculed in novels, plays, cinemas, wireless lectures, and other methods of publicity. Divorce, adultery, and vice are praised or painted in such colours as to appear free from all shame. Cheap books coated with a veneer of science instil these "new" ideas into the minds of all, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, married and single, godly and godless, young and old. The worst snares are laid for the young, for they are the easiest victims.
3. We would prefer *not even to name these iniquities as becometh saints*; but lest the good seed be choked by the weeds we must *reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine*.

VIII—Birth Prevention

1. Some people falsely argue that marriage is not a Divine institution but is simply a means for producing life and indulging passion. They suggest that there should be "temporary marriages" in which the partners can indulge their passions without the "disagreeable burden" of children.
2. Such practices would drag down civilised nations into a state of savagery.
3. Any use of marriage which deliberately prevents conception by unnatural means is a mortal sin against God and against the law of nature. St Augustine writes: "Intercourse is unlawful and wicked when conception is prevented. Onan, the son of Juda, did this and the Lord killed him for it."
4. Virtuous continence in married life is not wrong when both parties freely agree to it.

IX—Difficulties in Married Life

1. God in His goodness always gives grace and courage to overcome difficulties.
2. A mother bravely risking her own life to preserve the life of the child she has conceived is worthy of the highest admiration. God will richly reward her for doing her duty.
3. We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who in extreme poverty experience great difficulty in rearing their children.
4. No difficulty, however serious, can justify the breaking of God's laws. Strengthened by grace, husband and wife in spite of their difficulties can faithfully fulfil their duties in wedlock and preserve their chastity unstained by sin.

X—Abortion

1. The life of the unborn child is as sacred as the mother's.
2. The direct killing of an innocent human being is against the Divine command: *Thou shalt not kill*.
3. Upright and skilful doctors strive most admirably to guard and preserve the lives of both mother and child: on the contrary those who deliberately bring about the death of the one or the other on the excuse of medical practice or through misguided pity show themselves utterly unworthy of a noble profession.*
4. *Evil is not to be done that good may come of it.*

5. Public authorities are in duty bound to defend the lives of unborn children precisely because they are so helpless. Let them remember that God is the *Avenger of innocent blood which cries from earth to Heaven*.

XI—Sterilisation

1. Public authorities can never have the right to mutilate the body of an innocent person. Medical advice (doctor's "orders"!) can never justify the breaking of the Divine law. The words of the Pope, quoted here and in the next section, show how necessary it may be to consult a Catholic doctor in preference to any other.
2. Private individuals are not free to destroy or mutilate the members of the body or to render themselves unfit for their natural functions except when there is no other way of preserving life.
3. If it seems that certain individuals might give birth to defective children it may be well to advise them not to marry: but it is wrong to brand them as criminals if they use their natural right to marry.
4. It must always be remembered that men are born not for this world but for Heaven and eternity.
5. "The Family is more sacred than the State."

XII—Emancipation of Women

1. The modern "emancipation of women" tries to abolish that honourable and trusting obedience which the wife owes to the husband. It seeks to free the woman from those important duties which properly belong to a wife as companion and mother.
2. This so-called emancipation is a crime; for it lowers the dignity of a woman as wife and mother and destroys family life. The husband suffers the loss of his wife, the children of their mother, and the home loses its ever watchful guardian.
3. If the woman descends from the queenly throne in the Kingdom of the home to which the teaching of the Gospel has raised her she will soon be reduced to the level of slavery as in pagan times and become once more the mere instrument of man.
4. Husband and wife are equal in dignity of soul and in the rights and obligations of the marriage contract: but in other things there must be some inequality for the sake of family life and right order in the home.

XIII—The Bond of Marriage

1. The enemies of Christian marriage say that the only bond of marriage is sympathy between husband and wife. When that ceases (they say) marriage ceases. This is like building a house upon sand.
2. Husband and wife should build their marriage on a true and solid love, a sense of duty towards one another, a deliberate union of wills for life. This is like building a house upon a rock, a house which no adversity can shake.
3. Family life is built upon the authority and wisdom of the Creator of the human race. It cannot be changed by public laws or private opinions.
4. It is the duty of the State to see that the legal rights of a wife are suited to modern conditions taking into consideration the womanly character and the good order and morality of family life.

XIV—Marriage is Sacred

1. The enemies of marriage are striving to remove this sacrament from the care of the Church and to place it entirely under government control.
2. The human race has always looked upon marriage as something religious and sacred.
3. Marriage is holy because it comes from God in the beginning, holy because it begets and educates children for God, holy because it consecrates man and wife to God by Christian love and mutual support, holy because it makes fathers and mothers to be the instruments of God's creating power. Therefore marriage is essentially religious.
4. Marriage is religious and honourable from every point of view because Christ raised it to the dignity of a sacrament, in the words of Scripture *a great sacrament*.
5. Those who marry should therefore be full of reverence for the religious character of this great sacrament.

XV—Mixed Marriages

1. The Church forbids mixed marriages everywhere and with the greatest strictness. (Canon 1060.)
2. Those who rashly contract mixed marriages are seriously lacking in reverence towards marriage and its religious nature. They sometimes put their eternal salvation in danger.
3. Where there is danger to the Faith of the children or of the Catholic partner such a marriage is against the Divine law.
4. Experience shows that there is a sad falling away from religion amongst the children of mixed marriages.
5. The union of husband and wife is like the union of Christ and His Church. This union of spirit is very difficult in a mixed marriage. When there are differences of belief and sentiment, the union of mind and heart is often broken or weakened. Hence arises the danger of love growing cold and the peace of family life being destroyed.

XVI—Divorce

1. Our modern pagans ought to learn wisdom from the sad state of the world to-day in the matter of morality. Nevertheless they are seeking every day to invent new excuses for divorce.
2. Anything which would make married life hard or unpleasant is considered sufficient grounds for divorce. The civil law (they say) must be suited to new opinions.
3. Others go further and declare that marriage is a private contract and can be dissolved by private agreement.
4. The possibility of civil divorce makes marriage insecure, causes jealousies, suspicions, rivalries, and family quarrels. It encourages the breaking of the marriage vow and shamefully lowers the dignity of women with the danger of their becoming outcasts and slaves of the lust of men.
5. Unless things change there is reason to fear that both the Family and the State will come to absolute ruin.

XVII—Adultery

1. The sin of adultery cannot break the bond of marriage.
2. The consequences of divorce are clearly stated by Christ: *Everyone that putteth away his wife and marrieth another committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her that is put away committeth adultery.*
3. In certain cases Church law allows the separation of the parties but the marriage bond remains unbroken. The education of the children and the well-being of the family must be safeguarded.
4. In such cases the civil law should protect the civil rights of the parties concerned.

XVIII—Married Chastity

1. The only way to restore order in this matter of marriage is to carry out the original plan of the Creator.
2. The chief obstacle to right order is unbridled passion.
3. Without humility man cannot master the rebellion of his flesh. "If thou dost not obey thy Master, thou shalt be tormented by thy servant."
4. When the bond of marriage is lifelong (as God intended) the home is safe, the children are secure and the door is closed against rivals. The goodwill and determination of husband and wife are wonderfully strengthened against temptation and both are encouraged to preserve their purity and loyalty to one another "until death."
5. Priests act wisely when they urge married people to be faithful to their religious duties, to receive the sacraments frequently and to beg God's help for the keeping of His commandments.

XIX—Loyalty to the Church

1. God's law sometimes calls for hard sacrifices.
2. A weak man seeks for excuses to avoid the commands of God.
3. To avoid moral corruption the faithful must be humble and devout towards God and show a loving obedience to His Church, the teacher and guardian of truth.
4. Let them be on their guard against the foolish independence of private opinions.
5. *God resisteth the proud but giveth grace to the humble.*

XX—Instructions on Marriage

1. It is most important that the faithful should be well instructed about marriage both by word of mouth and by the written word.
2. All true followers of Christ will allow themselves to be taught and guided by the Church of God through the Pope who is himself guided by Christ.
3. The faithful under the safe guidance of the Church will whole-heartedly thank God that they are united together under His command and thus taught to escape from the idolatry of the flesh and the vile slavery of the passions.
4. Wholesome instruction and religious training as regards Christian marriage is quite different from that exaggerated "sex-education" which sometimes teaches the art of sinning in a subtle way rather than the virtue of living a pure life.

XXI—Need of Courage

1. Instruction is not enough. The will, also, must be brought into play.
2. Married people must arouse their courage and goodwill. *I admonish thee that thou stir up the grace which is in thee.*
3. Let them keep a steady determination to follow the law of nature and of God in marriage.
4. In spite of false opinions spread abroad let husband and wife resolve (i) to stand fast by the laws of God in all the demands of married life (ii) to give each other the assistance of mutual love (iii) to use their marriage rights in a reverent and Christian manner especially in the first years of wedlock, so that if a time should come when it may be necessary to live for a time "as brother and sister" the habit of reverence will make it easier for both.
5. The grace of the sacrament grows stronger as time goes on if husband and wife are sincerely striving to live according to the laws of their state in spite of all difficulties.

XXII—Training the Young

1. The foundation of a happy marriage is set in the soul of the child.
2. A child should be trained in self-control and good manners from the earliest years. His heart should be strengthened with the sacraments from early childhood onwards.
3. No one can curb evil desires without the help of Divine grace.
4. The education and training of the young cannot be complete without the help of the Church. Christ has provided her with heavenly teaching and Divine Sacraments to make her a perfect educator of mankind.

XXIII—Choice of Partner

1. The future happiness of married life depends very much on choosing the right partner in life.
2. To avoid the miseries of an indiscreet marriage each one should pray and think carefully before choosing the person with whom he must afterwards live continuously.
3. Let them not forget to ask the prudent advice of their parents, so that they may win the Divine blessing: *Honour thy father and thy mother that it may be well with thee.*
4. In choosing a partner for life let every one think first of the interests of God and His Church and then of themselves, of their partner, and of the children to come.

XXIV—Courtship

1. Let them pray for God's guidance so as to make their choice prudently, not led away by blind passion nor by the desire of riches or other unworthy motives but by a true and noble love and a sincere affection for the future partner.
2. Those who are about to marry should be quite ready and willing to support one another through life, to help one another on the road to Heaven, to love their children as God wills and to make their home, even though poor, a foretaste of paradise for their little ones.

3. Those who indulge their passions before marriage will, perhaps, in after life reap what they have sown: in the home there will be sadness, discontent, quarrels, mutual contempt, and—what is worst of all—they may find themselves at last left alone with their unconquered passions.

XXV—Unemployment

1. If families, especially large ones, have unfit dwelling places, if the husband is unemployed, if the cost of living is too high, if the mother is compelled to go out to work, if in childbirth she lacks proper food and medical care, it is clear that parents may lose their courage. In this way it may become difficult to keep an orderly home and to observe the laws of God.

2. This state of things may become a menace to public peace.

3. If the authorities neglect the needs of married people and their families, great harm will come upon the whole country.

4. The Family is more sacred than the State.

5. The State exists for the protection of the Family.

6. The head of a family has the right to a "family wage."

XXVI—Public Morals

1. Unmarried mothers and their children must, of course, be helped in order to avoid greater evils.

2. We are sorry to note that, often, willing and generous assistance is given to unmarried mothers while at the same time help is denied or given only grudgingly to married mothers. This is a curious reversing of the true order.

3. Just laws ought to be made for the good of married life, for the protection of chastity and family life. It is the duty of the State to see that such laws are obeyed.

4. History proves that no nation can be prosperous when immorality attacks marriage and family life. It must be always remembered that marriage and family life are the very source of life for the nation.

XXVII—Need of Religion

1. The State alone cannot preserve good morals. Religious authority is needed. Such authority can only be found in the Church of Christ.

2. We earnestly appeal to statesmen to work in union with the Church. The Church and the State working together can overcome the tremendous evils which threaten family life and marriage. Such evils are a menace to both Church and State.

3. Governments can greatly assist the Church by recognising the laws of the Church.

4. People often think that an immoral act is not wrong if it is not punished by the State.

5. In order to restore order in married life the Italian Government has officially adopted the marriage laws of the Church. This is a striking example of the State working in harmony with the Church.

XXVIII—The Dignity of Marriage

1. How great is the nobility of marriage!

2. The Creator of all things ordained marriage as the foundation of human society.
3. God became man and raised marriage to the dignity of a great sacrament and placed it under the care of His Church.
4. If men are to reap the full benefits of this sacrament their minds must be enlightened by Christ's teaching concerning marriage.
5. If married people will think and act according to the pure law of Christ they will obtain happiness and peace of mind both for themselves and for their families.

XXIX—Conclusion

1. We desire this letter on Christian Marriage to be widely known.
 2. Correct teaching on Marriage will put the children of Christ's family on their guard against false teachers.
 3. Marriage is meant to be an image of Christ's fruitful union with the Church. We pray that Christian Marriage may again blossom into a new vigour and fruitfulness "raising up children for God."
-