

Christ In The Home

Booklet 1. Part 1.

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Meditations on Marriage. Christ Will Enter Your Home.

A Translation from the French.

TO JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH.

THE HOLY FAMILY — THAT THEY MAY OBTAIN FOR THE WORLD THE GRACE OF MANY FAMILIES WHO KEEP CHRIST IN THE HOME.

PREFACE.

A HOME ruled by the spirit of Christ is a happy home. It is also a school of virtue directed to spiritual transformation in Christ.

But Christ does not force His entry into a home. He enters only by invitation. He remains only when evidently welcome.

It is the wise bride and groom who let Him know by their spiritual preparation for marriage that they want Him to accompany them from the altar of their vows into the home they are about to establish. It is the wise husband and wife who let Him know they want Him always present by striving to put on His mind and to establish their family according to His principles.

In such a home, husband and wife and children will enjoy gladness of heart, happiness in the fulfillment of duty, and intense union of souls.

The strength and honor of the family come above all from within, from union with Christ, which gives power to manifest in daily living the beautiful family virtues of patience, energy, generosity, forbearance, cheerfulness, and mutual reverence with their consequent effect of peace and contentment.

This booklet, with those that follow, is an invitation to the married or those about to marry, to spend the interior effort required to unite them solidly in Christ and to make them worthy transmitters of the Christ-life to their family. It is an invitation to fulfill the high purpose of their marriage, which is to help each other to sanctity and to rear saints for heaven; to possess Christ themselves as completely as possible and to give Christ to their children.

Now sanctity is the result of personal cooperation with grace. It is no passive attainment. Equally true is it that spiritual truths and principles merely known but not realized are of little force in stimulating spiritual energy and effort. Consequently, these booklets of spiritual readings make no attempt to present fully developed meditations. It is not to be a substitute for personal reflection and prayer. Its various topics are presented as points of departure into deeper realms of thought and

prayer; by the personal following through of the ideas offered; conviction and realization will be achieved and lives transformed. A stronger bond of communication will be established between the soul and God resulting in real prayer and not 'prayers said'. The affections made will be the outpouring of the individual's response to God and not someone else's pre-planned expression of what that response ought to be.

The essential thing is to talk over the subjects with God. It is important then to enter into His Presence before each reading by a reverent act of recollection; to beg His light to see the truth and His strength to act on conviction and realization. It is important to see; it is more important to will.

The points offered for prayerful consideration are not meant to carry the reader into the clouds of elevated speculation and theory but rather to direct the soul to study prayerfully the daily, common, routine elements of his life in order to lift them out of possible monotony and deadening repetition into the challenging and absorbing adventure of making them divine.

These booklets in no way presume to replace what should be for all Christians the two essential meditation books — the Gospels and the Missal. In fact, it presupposes that its readers are Christians accustomed to live in the spirit of Our Lord's life according to the rhythm of the liturgy. It endeavors to provide variety and to bring into practical application some of the lessons hidden in the Gospels or the Missal.

Of vital importance is it, no matter what the meditation book, to draw from the little that one reads, a maximum of nourishment for the soul. That is not impossible. All one need do is to beg God for His grace and to co-operate with the grace that He gives.

Such a manifestation of good will is a sincere invitation to Christ and a convincing proof that He is welcome in your life.

CHRIST WILL ENTER YOUR HOME.

HE WILL REMAIN TO DWELL WITH YOU.

INTRODUCTORY READINGS.

THE SAINT OF MODERN TIMES.

FORMERLY when people dreamed of sanctity or even of the interior life, they aspired to one thing only — to get away from the world, to go off to the desert, or at least to the priesthood or the religious state. To become a saint in the world, to acquire a true and profound union with God in the world, to exercise oneself in the practice of complete abnegation, and to pursue perfection in the world seemed scarcely possible.

People are beginning to realize better that there is such a thing as sanctity in the world.

We honor those who follow a priestly vocation or a consecrated life in religion. They have chosen the better part, which will not be taken from them.

But are we to conclude therefore that the laity, because they live in the world, or because they have entered the married state, must be content with a cheaper view of perfection? Must assume that the practice of the highest virtues is not for them? That they may not aspire to divine union and the secret joys of a valiant fidelity inspired by love?

Fortunately, there are many who realize the falsity of such a conclusion. Saint Francis de Sales challenged the laity to strive for high sanctity.

“The world of today longs to contemplate the saint of modern times who will take his place beside the ancient and venerable figures of our history,” observes Rademacher, the author of “Religion and Life.” “It demands the saintly man of the world who unites harmoniously in his personality all the aspects of a noble humanism established on correct values, entirely impregnated with a living faith, a strong love of God, and a supple, joyous participation in the life of the Church... There ought to be even now on this earth a type of saintly employee, saintly merchant, saintly industrialist, saintly peasant, saintly wife, saintly woman of Christian culture and refinement. The saint’s role in the world today is to be the pioneer of the new family, of the new State, of the new Society, of the new humanity, of the Kingdom of God which is always new.”

No profession is of itself an obstacle to holiness. No state of life is an obstacle; and marriage, if rightly understood, not only demands holiness but leads those who fulfill all its requirements to true sanctity.

In trying to picture what the saint of the next centuries should be, Foerster, a Protestant author, did not hesitate to write: “Just as in former times the saint was characterized by his courage to confess his faith and die a martyr, since he held faith to be his highest ideal for which he must be willing to suffer; just as the saint of the Middle Ages and even of our own day, has been characterized by virginity, since then and now, and especially in our times, it requires a struggle to conquer many temptations to preserve personal purity; so perhaps the saint of the centuries to come will be the perfect wife or husband, since the vital ideal for which we should willingly suffer today is the sacredness of marriage.”

There is much truth in these words. It may be thought that the age of martyrs is not so far distant as the author would have us believe. And consecrated virginity, thank God, continues to hold a strong appeal for many souls. But is Foerster not pathetically correct in stating that saints in married life, in conjugal fidelity, are a crying need of our age to counteract the attacks on the family and notably the attacks on the indissolubility of marriage?

What thirst consumes me as I begin these booklets of spiritual readings? Is it the thirst for sanctity? How far am I willing to go?

Let me gauge the measure of my desire, of my sincerity.

SANCTITY OF THE LAITY.

THE author of the so-called “Precepts of Contemporary Philosophy” may have been trying to be witty when some years before the war broke out in 1939 he wrote the following comment on sanctity:

“Sanctity: An idolistic (did he mean ‘idealistic’?) word no longer having any more than historical interest. Civil and military society has preserved its heroes; religious society has lost its saints or, if any more of them remain, we no longer hear them mentioned... The age of great Christian fervor has indeed passed away... Without wanting to appear sacrilegious, I believe that the Catholic faith would have difficulty finding martyrs thoroughly convinced of their faith and ready to sacrifice themselves for it even to death.”

True, heroic virtue is rare and where it does exist, it makes so little noise! How much real sanctity there is! Sanctity which may never be officially canonized but real just the same: the sanctity of a doctor who spends himself for the love of God and for the suffering members of Christ without counting the cost; the sanctity of a servant who lives her life of obedience and continual renunciation humbly and in a supernatural spirit — multiple types of sanctity, hidden and unknown but effective and a delight to the Heart of God. We should of course like to see sanctity more widespread, but we must not deny what already exists.

Furthermore, opportunities for martyrdom are not of general occurrence, and sanctity adorned by the martyr's palm is not the only kind of sanctity. As Rene Bazin so truly wrote: "Men do not seem to recognize the sacrifice of life unless it is made all at once." Martyrdom by the little fires of hidden fidelities constantly adhered to, of tormenting temptations courageously and perseveringly repulsed, of the exact and loving fulfillment of duties toward God and neighbor, of prayer faithfully practiced despite disgust, aridity and the pressure of work — is it not a martyrdom? Who can estimate the value of its countless offerings which are not publicized but which cost... and which count!

The amount of sanctity in the world today is not the essential problem; the important question is how much there ought to be, what the needs of the world demand, what the glory of God and Christianity well understood require.

Speaking one day with a group of cardinals, the Holy Father [Saint] Pius X put this question to them:

"In your opinion, what is the most vital need for the salvation of society?"

"To build schools," answered one cardinal.

"No."

"To build more churches," suggested another.

"No again."

"To increase the number of priests," said a third.

"No, no," replied Pius X. "All those things are important, but what is most necessary at present is to have in every parish a group of lay people who are very virtuous, very determined, enlightened in their faith and who are true apostles."

Let us consider now just the two words "virtuous" and "determined."

The Holy Father said "virtuous" — "very virtuous" and he was speaking of lay people.

Do I belong to that number of virtuous lay people?

"What luck not to be a saint!" Doctor Vittoz of Lausanne used to say, "For then I can exert myself to become one!"

Pius X had good reason to add the word "determined" to the word "virtuous." Is my resolution to reach high sanctity resolute, determined?

FANTASY OR SACRED DUTY.

IN his interesting book, "Man the Unknown," Alexis Carrel makes this statement:

“Each individual is set by the conditions of his development upon the road which will lead him either to the solitary mountains or to the mud of the swamps where humanity contents itself.”

If not rightly understood, this statement might imply that, by a sort of pre-established harmony over which we have no control, we are inevitably directed in spite of ourselves either toward the heights or toward the lowlands.

It could be that because of inherited tendencies, family traditions, examples we may have witnessed, or the training we have received, we are more strongly drawn either to laziness or to generosity. However, everyone has the duty on his own responsibility to make himself what he ought to be. The problem of salvation and the degree of sanctity to be attained is essentially an individual problem. We save ourselves or we damn ourselves; we conquer ourselves or we let ourselves be conquered — these are all personal verbs.

“Everyone has the duty,” that is the reality. It is not a matter of satisfying a fantasy, a more or less poetic taste for the heights. So much the better if the heights tempt me! So much the worse for me if I am the prey of a positive spirit of low ideals. I do not have to strive for the Christian ideal simply because of a certain forceful subjective attraction. No, I have an obligation to strive for it and this obligation springs from the Gospel command, a command given to all, ‘Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect’.

Am I perhaps too much in the habit of seeing in the Gospel only the restrictions it imposes upon me? Of viewing religion from the negative side? I must accustom myself to consider the Gospel from the positive aspect — the call to sanctity. The capital problem for the Christian who wants to be a real Christian is not the problem of sin but the problem of perfection.

Not to fall back!

Much more and much better — to rise.

In the “Journal of Salavin” by George Duhamel, Salavin laments in self-disgust, “How can one resign himself to being only what one is and how trying to be other than what one is.”

Then he declares:

“After some indefinite time, I am going to go away.”

“And where are you going?”

“Nowhere.”

Evading — when it should be a matter of ascending.

For me as a Christian, the road is known. I know where to go. And the instructions are clear. Someone expressed them in three points:

1. To commit this year the least number of sins possible.
2. To acquire this year the most virtues possible.
3. To do to others the most good possible.

Here is a program that will not only avoid the abyss but lead to the heights.

MY PERSONAL VOCATION.

NOTHING is more interesting and at the same time more stirring than to study my particular role in the eternal destinies of the world... what God from all eternity has planned for me... what kind of saint He wants me to be... by what combination and sequence of circumstances He established me where I am... all He has given me — a Christian country (for many of us), a Christian family, a Christian education, numberless graces exterior as well as interior, the Sacraments, interior inspirations, invitations to mount spiritually — and then to discover in what degree He intends to use me to lead other souls to salvation and perfection.

Religion in spirit and in truth — what is it? It consists in participating in the very sanctity of God Himself in my own personal life, and in cooperating with God to bring grace into the lives of others and to help keep them to grow in the divine life.

There is no question then of eternity forcing its way into my existence without my opening the door to it; it permeates me from within in keeping with the freedom I give it.

Nor must I be aiming only at my own sanctification. I have the responsibility of souls, not only the souls of my own but of multitudes who are in some way connected with my soul. The salvation of the world depends in part on the saint that I become.

One author puts this thought very well. “Each being in the universe must act with the consciousness of having been chosen for a task that he alone can accomplish. As soon as he discovers what this task is and he begins to dedicate himself to it, he can be sure that God is with him and that He watches over him. Let him be full of confidence and joy! He is associated with the work of creation.” And we might add “with the work of redemption.” This ought to be a continual marvel to him that weak and sinful though he knows himself to be, he is nonetheless called, unquestionably called, to an action of unique value, to the exaltation of the divine in himself and the propagation and the extension of the divine in humanity!

I ought to try to realize ever more deeply the tremendous significance of my personal vocation; to consider the degree and the kind of sanctity to which I am called; to measure the extent of the field where my zeal for souls is to labor — the family, the parish, the city...

Everything in my life should be referred to God. As Saint Augustine said, “Totum exigit te qui fecit te, He from whom you received all things demands all.” I must therefore make the gifts He bestowed on me serve for His glory alone. I should not deny these gifts, nor store them away; on the contrary, I should exploit them, but for Him. To quote Saint Augustine again, “Let everything useful that I learned as a child be consecrated to Your service, O my God. Let it be for Your service that I speak, that I read, that I write, that I count!” He did not renounce the use of his mind, the exercise of his intelligence, the application of his profane sciences but he subordinated all to spreading the glory of God and extending his apostolate for souls.

I can be inspired to a like rule of life. I can use human gifts as well as divine gifts to attain the highest peak of my vocation. I am not what my neighbor is and my neighbor is not what I am. I have a role to fill and no one else but me can fill it.

I must know my capital and prudently determine my investments.

WHAT KIND OF SOUL AM I?

SOMEONE has said, “All beings receive the same light but all accept it unequally. Some are like white surfaces and they shed the light all about them; these souls have the most innocence. Others

are like black surfaces and they enfold the light in their own darkness; these souls are like closed coffers. Then again, some divide the light keeping part for themselves and reflecting the rest as do surfaces of variegated colors and, like these same colored surfaces, change the intensity of light and shadows according to the time of day; these are the most sensitive souls. There are others who like transparent surfaces let all the light pass through them retaining nothing of it; these souls are nearest to God. Some might be compared to mirrors in which all nature and the people who look at them never cease to see themselves and to reflect themselves; these souls are nearest us and their presence alone suffices to judge us. Some make us think of prisms in which the white light is spread out into the rainbow colors of the spectrum..."

In which class do I belong?

I need not indulge in morbid or vain introspection but try merely to get a clear view of God's intentions concerning me. I know the Parable of the Talents. I must not envy the riches of another but determine exactly the capital that God asks me to exploit for His greater glory, for my own sanctification, for the good of all souls with whom my sanctification is bound up, from those nearest to me even to the most distant at the other end of the world. 'Tu quis es?' "Who are you?" the judges asked Our Lord, 'Et quid dicis de te-ipso', "and what do you say of yourself?"

Who am I? The mystery of each personality! It is a mystery which even the most perfect and most intimate union with another personality cannot completely pierce, as for example in marriage. There is a limitless diversity in personalities, since God made all souls originally without ever copying any previous model. How delightful this variety is: rose, anemone, violet; an extraordinary medley, gradations without limit of cut or of color...

Who am I? What are my resources? What are my good points? What are my faults? What is the color of my desires, the force of my will, the intensity of my religious need, my thirst for an integrated life, my Christian fervor, the value of my fidelity?

Who am I? That is a different question from what I say I am or what I give to understand that I am. No, I am not a hypocrite; I do not seek to deceive for the sake of deceiving. But I am like everybody else and, without wanting to, without directly saying it, I fix up the pages of my country's history — I try to let myself be seen only under the most glorious aspects. People believe me to be better than I am. In any case, they have a different opinion of me from what I really am.

Who am I? And what difference is there between what I am actually and what I let others discover of my person and my intimate self?

Saint Augustine prayed, "Lord, let me know myself, let me know You." He desired nothing else. I want to make that my prayer too.

MARRIAGE.

BEFORE EMBARKING. (1) – Preserve Chastity.

WHOEVER desires to marry ought to prepare himself for that great step:

First of all, by preserving chastity.

Then, by praying much for his future home and family.

By preserving chastity: Whoever cannot see the need for this will not be likely to understand the need for anything. But one must be able to see the need for more than this, to desire more.

The practice of purity in its entirety involves not only the avoidance of serious wrongdoing, harmful to the integrity of the body but also whatever sullies imagination, thought or desire. Consequently questionable companions, flirtations, and imprudent reading are out of the question. Custody of the eyes is essential. Death enters in through the windows of the body. Eve and David both sinned through their eyes.

For certain temperaments, such vigilance demands great generosity. No one can deny it.

“The good is more difficult than the evil,” wrote Paul Claudel in response to Jacques Riviere who had explained that to remain pure was difficult. “But there is a return. The good opens up before us incomparable horizons because it alone is in keeping with our reality, our nature, our life and our vocation. This is particularly true where love is concerned. How ridiculous the romantic fever of a purely fleshly love seems to me!”

Sensing the old classic objection in his correspondent, Claudel took the offensive:

“As for the emotional cramping Christianity imposes upon you, I can scarcely understand what you mean. When you speak of sins, I suppose you refer to sins of the flesh, because I cannot imagine that you have any tendency to drunkenness, avarice, acts of violence or similar things.

“The first answer to your difficulty is that when we become Christians, it is not for our pleasure or personal comfort, and further, if God does us the honor of asking sacrifice of us, there is nothing to do but consent with joy.

“The second answer is that these sacrifices amount to very little or practically nothing. We are still living in the old romantic idea that the supreme happiness, the greatest interest, the only delight of existence consists in our relations with women and in the sensual satisfactions we get from them. But we forget one fact, the fact that the soul, the spirit, are realities just as strong, just as demanding as the flesh — even more so; we forget that if we accord to the flesh everything it demands, we shall do so with the consequent loss of other joys, other regions of delight which will be eternally closed for us. We shall be draining a glass of bad wine in a hovel or in a drawing room and be unmindful of that virginal sea which stretches out before others under the rising sun.”

How splendidly Shakespeare has expressed the same thoughts:

What win I, if I gain the thing I seek?

A dream, a breath, a froth of fleeting joy.

Who buys a minute's mirth to wail a week?

Or sells eternity to get a toy?

For one sweet grape who will the vine destroy?

Or, what fond beggar, but to touch the crown, Would with the sceptre straight be stricken down?

(Rape of Lucrece, Stanza 31)

This is also what Saint Augustine has written in his own epigrammatic style: ‘momentaneum quod delectat, aeternum quod cruciat’. One instant of pleasure, an eternity of suffering...

Let me examine my own soul. Have I come to marriage entirely chaste? Chaste in body? Chaste in thought? Chaste in heart?

If my answer is 'Yes', then I must thank God. It is a choice grace.

If my answer is No, then what can I do to make reparation, to obtain from God the grace of entire fidelity to my duty, from now on?

BEFORE EMBARKING on Marriage. (2) – Prayer.

IN addition to the preservation of chastity, the person aspiring to marriage has a second great duty — to pray much.

An old proverb wisely states, “Before embarking on the sea, pray once. Before leaving for war, pray twice. Before marrying, pray three times.”

And this necessity of praying more before marriage than before a voyage or a battle is evident for several reasons. Consider the risk of associating oneself closely with a creature who has many limitations; with a creature about whom one knows very little, particularly in the matter of shortcomings, since during the period of courtship and betrothal one unconsciously does everything not to reveal himself; with a creature whom one loves with all one’s heart but who possesses not only lovable traits, but also faults which can cause suffering; with a creature who can bestow the greatest joy, but who can also unfortunately inflict the deepest pain.

Furthermore, in order to bear joys as well as possible trials, do we not need much help from God? And to obtain this help, must we not pray much?

Another reason for the necessity of such prayer when one desires to establish a home is that from a union once sanctioned by the Church and consummated there is no possible withdrawal. It is a choice which is definitely established. For two changeable human beings to dare to bind themselves to each other forever in a relationship so intimate as the realities of marriage, is not God’s sustaining help a prime requisite? And to obtain this help is it not necessary to pray much?

Has my life before marriage been one of sanctification and of prayer in preparation for my marriage? Or have I confided solely in the human merits existing on both sides and neglected to place under God’s protection the union I was about to contract?

If I have been neglectful, I must make up for it now. There is still time.

If, on the contrary, I prayed much before my marriage, I may not leave off earnest prayer now that I am married. The greater the place God holds in my life, the greater can be my assurance that my home shall be supernaturally happy and, without a doubt, humanly happy as well.

“To you, O Mary, my good Mother, I confide my marriage and my home. It seems that marriage is the means of sanctification destined for me by God as it is for the chosen soul whom you have given me.

“Together we shall do our best to glorify God — this is our firm resolution. Bless us, help us, strengthen us. Sailors call you Stella Maris. Be for us, too, the Star of the Sea and keep us safe throughout our crossing; we put under your care our vessel and its crew. You shall be the Queen on board ship.”

REQUISITES FOR A HAPPY MARRIAGE.

FOR a happy marriage, it is necessary, of course, that the engaged couple find each other congenial and enjoy each other’s company.

They must agree to share loyally the joys and the sorrows of wedded union and fulfill its obligations.

Each one must be bent on procuring for the other as much happiness as possible and oblige himself beforehand to a mode of life which will disturb his partner as little as possible.

The husband must love his profession, and his wife should share this love or at least neglect nothing in order to respect and facilitate it.

They should be able to make their decisions together, not certainly without sometimes having recourse to the counsels of competent authorities, but with a beautiful and joyful independence of any member of the family who may be too prone at times to attempt to domineer over the young couple. There should, of course, be no presumption, no narrow aloofness, but a serene and supple liberty of spirit; serene and supple humility.

In order to be able to practice the sanctity of their state in all the details of their life, they must understand their duty of leaning upon God. It will not be sufficient to link together their two wills; they must be determined to pray to obtain help from on High.

They must likewise have a certain concern, a legitimate concern, for physical charm, without, however, losing sight of the fact that beauty of soul is superior to beauty of body; so that if some day the physical attraction should diminish, they will not be less eager to remain together, but each will strive to find in the other the quality upon which profound union is established.

Both of them must love children. They must develop in themselves to the best of their ability the virtues necessary for parenthood, the courage to accept as many children as God wants them to have and the wisdom to rear them well — difficult virtues requiring strong souls.

Each must be possessed of a rich power of cordiality for the members of the other's family. Both must resolve to take their in-laws and their household as they find them, and adopt as a principle for their contacts with them, 'It was not to share hates but to share love that I entered into your family'. Consequently, they must refuse to be drawn into family quarrels, seeking rather in all their actions to promote charity, union, and peace.

Even before their marriage, the young couple should decide to keep their expenses at a minimum, according to their situation, not with avarice or niggardliness, but with the desire to live in the gospel spirit of detachment from the goods of earth. Such judicious economy, which should of course be devoid of even the appearance of stinginess, will enable them to set aside something useful and necessary for their children. It will also enable them to relieve the misery around them.

It is to be assumed that both individuals contemplating marriage have the requisite health, since marriage has been created not only for mutual support but also to transmit life.

It is further to be assumed that each of the two has kept nothing of his past life hidden from the other, and that in view of this entire loyalty which is so desirable a trait in married couples, each has kept himself pure and refrained from dangerous experiences.

A PROPOSAL.

LOUIS PASTEUR came from a family of modest means. When he was twenty-six years old, his astonishing discovery in regard to crystals drew upon him the attention of scientists.

In 1849, he was named assistant professor in the University of Strasbourg. The rector of the university, Mr. Laurent, had three daughters. Fifteen days after Pasteur's first visit, he asked for Marie in marriage. The young scientist felt that this young woman understood life as he did and wanted the same kind of life he sought — a life of simplicity, of work, and of goodness. He sent this letter to Mr. Laurent:

“Sir, a request of great significance for me and for your family will be addressed to you in a few days and I believe it my duty to give you the following information which can help to determine your acceptance or your refusal.

“My father is a tanner at Arbois, a little city in the Jura region. My sisters keep house for my father since we had the sorrow of losing our mother last May. My family is in comfortable circumstances, but not wealthy. I do not evaluate what we own at more than ten thousand dollars. As for me, I decided long ago to leave my whole share to my sisters. I, then, have no fortune. All I possess is good health, a kind heart, and my position in the university.

“Two years ago I was graduated from l'Ecole Normale with the degree of agrégé in the physical sciences. Eighteen months ago, I received my doctorate, and I have presented some of my works to the Academy of Science where they were very well received, especially my last one. I have the pleasure of forwarding to you with this letter a very favorable report about this particular work of mine.

“That describes my present status. As for the future, all I can say is that unless I should undergo a complete change in my tastes, I shall devote myself to chemical research. It is my ambition to return to Paris when I have acquired a reputation through my work. Monsieur Biot has spoken to me several times to persuade me seriously to consider the Institute. In ten or fifteen years, I shall perhaps be able to consider it seriously if I work assiduously. This dream is but wasted trouble; it is not that at all which makes me love science as science.”

Could a more modest, more completely sincere letter ever be sent by a young man in love?

And when he addressed himself to Marie he assured her with touching clumsiness that he was sure he could hardly be attractive for a young girl, but just let her have a little patience and she would learn his great love for her and he believed she would love him too, for “my memories tell me that when I have been very well known by persons, they have loved me.”

But great as was his love for Marie, his heart was divided:

Louis Pasteur loved science, he loved his crystals. He began to scruple about it, and finally wrote to his fiancée, asking her “not to be jealous if science took precedence over her in his life.”

She was not jealous. Madame Pasteur married not only the man but also his passion for science. Her love had that rare quality of knowing how to efface itself, and to manifest itself precisely by not manifesting itself at all at times. She was a worthy companion of this great man, of this great scientist, of this great heart.

THE END OF LOVE?

A CERTAIN essayist makes this appalling statement: “What a sad age this is in which one makes his First Holy Communion to be through with religion, receives his bachelor's degree to be through with studying, and marries to be through with love.”

Let us omit the first two statements from this consideration and take up the third.

Is it true that for some, marriage is the end of love?

That statement can be taken in different ways.

Some think that before marriage one can play at love. Then when the senses have been dulled, one shall try to find a companion for himself. "Youth must pass," people say condescendingly on observing the looseness of young men. There are even certain pseudo-moralists who advise young girls not to marry before "deliberately having their fling as well as the boys" — advice which unfortunately some of them do not fail to follow.

This is an odious concept of love and marriage or of preparation for it. I certainly want none of it.

Again, there are those who think that love is all well and good before marriage. As for marriage itself, it is first and foremost an investment. The problem is not so much to marry someone for whom one experiences a strong attraction, but rather to realize a good business deal. It is not the person one seeks, but the name, the status, the fortune. There is nothing of love in this. No, indeed, it is all a matter of interest: a concept equally as odious as the first, equally repellent.

What the author of the statement probably meant is that before marriage, the young man and woman are all fire and flame, and perhaps for a short time after marriage. Soon, or at least comparatively soon after marriage, they no longer speak of love. They have become two under the yoke — two bearing the necessary restraints of their united existences. Gone is the enchantment of betrothal days or of the early days of married life. There is nothing left but the grayish prose of humdrum existence with an individual of whom one has made a god or a goddess — a person who is after all only a poor creature.

A man, "a poor man who eats, drinks, wears shirts and drawers, and who loses his buttons," as someone jokingly described him. "A man who will never be able to find anything in a dresser or clothes closet; who will never appreciate the cooking or the menu; who at night throws his clothes in a heap on a chair and the next morning complains that the creases in his trousers are not pressed in well enough; a man who formerly seemed like a knight, a magician, a prince charming, and whose bold gestures so commanding yet so delicate thrilled the heart and stirred one's whole being, causing one's imagination to crown him with the aureola of perfection," and who now...

A woman, a poor creature indeed, perpetually thirsting for caresses even at the most inappropriate times; a woman who has foolish notions, headaches, fits of humor; who manifests a flare for spending which can never resist the appeal of any show window, particularly if there is an interesting clearance sale on; a woman who wants a wardrobe capable of ruining the most industrious man, the wealthiest husband — a poor sort of woman, indeed!

Is it not because of all these things, at least partially because of them, that Our Lord wanted to make marriage a rite giving divine graces — a sacrament?

Perhaps we have exaggerated the poetry of conjugal life; let us not now exaggerate the prose of life together.

As a preparation for this prose, which is always possible and often very real, even in the most successful marriages, I shall aim to sanctify myself in the practice of charity and patience.

ONE ONLY BEING.

“LOVE seeks to escape through a single being from the mediocrity of all others.” This is the definition one author gives of love.

It is not a matter of reviewing all human beings with whom one comes into contact as if they were on parade, so that with methodical, rational, and cold discernment one might pick out the chosen man or woman. It is not a selection; the object of one’s desire attracts at once; it is just he or she; all the rest do not exist. As one writer put it, “Love is monotheistic.” There is no need at all of overthrowing idols; one pedestal alone stands, bearing the holy representation that the eyes feast upon and toward which the heart turns with an irresistible impulse.

Oh, the incomprehensible power of the heart in love promptly to divinize the poor reality it has chosen! Nothing else exists for it any longer! In the play “Asmodee,” by Mauriac, the heroine Emmanuelle, who had thought of religious life until she met Harry with whom she fell deeply in love at first sight, goes so far as to declare:

“You know when I used to hear a person say of someone, “He is everything for me,” I did not know what that meant. I know now. Our pastor tells me that husbands and wives love each other in God. I can’t understand that. It seems to me that if Harry were some day to be everything for me, then there would no longer be any room in my heart or in my life for anyone, not even for God.”

Aside from this particular example of Emmanuelle, there is some truth in those words; they emphasize a well-known fact.

How many young girls during their engagement period, how many young wives in the months following upon their marriage, neglect the spiritual, overwhelmed as they are with human happiness! Previous to that time, all their love, all the need they felt for giving themselves was directed to divine realities. Their capacity for tenderness was showered upon Jesus and Mary; it was fed in Holy Communion.

Now another object engages all their concern. They must be vigilant that their piety does not diminish. Their needs have increased; it is not the time to decrease their cultivation of holiness. Doubtless, and above all in the case of a married woman, some spiritual exercises will not be possible; for example, daily Holy Mass and Holy Communion in certain cases will have to be sacrificed through fidelity to duty in their new state. But piety itself must not diminish as it so often does in a period of human happiness.

It is essential in the midst of marital joys, and above all in the joys preceding marriage or following immediately upon it, to strive to preserve a sense of balance and of true values. Love of God does not operate exactly as the attraction of creatures. In the one case, it is a question of an invisible reality; in the other, of a sensible reality. This last, even though closer and more accessible, never eclipses the first. Esteem as divine what is divine, and do not knowingly divinize or, more correctly speaking, transfigure to excess a creature, no matter how rich its gifts.

Remain if possible always in truth. Realize that God alone is God, and that every created being has its limitations. Strive to make your limitations and your mediocrity as little felt as possible and generously pardon the limitations and mediocrity of your companion for life.

The earth shall never be anything but the earth; it is untimely to try to make it heaven.

LOVE.

WHY does a woman desire a man? Why does a man desire a woman? What is the explanation of that mysterious attraction which draws the two sexes toward each other?

Will anyone ever be able to explain it? Will anyone be able to exhaust the subject?

One fact is certain: Even aside from the physiological aspect of the problem, the effeminate man does not attract a woman; she makes fun of him, finds him ridiculous. So too the masculine woman weakens her power of attraction for a man, and ends by losing it entirely.

The age-old spell which each sex casts upon the other is closely allied to the fidelity with which each exactly fulfills its role. If woman copies man and man copies woman, there can be comradeship but love does not develop. In reality, they are nothing more than two caricatures, the woman being degraded to the rank of a man and a second-rate man at that, and the man to the rank of a manikin in woman's disguise. The more feminine a woman's soul and bearing, the more pleasing she is to a man; the more masculine a man's soul and bearing, the more pleasing he is to a woman.

We do not mean to say that between two poor specimens of either sex there will never be any casual or even lasting sexual appeal and experience. But we can hardly, if ever, call it love. If men and woman are no more than two varieties of the same sex, a sort of neuter sex, the force which creates love disappears. Normally, as we say in electrical theory, opposite charges must exist before any sparks will shoot forth. Bring into contact two identical charges and there will be no effect; electricity of opposite polarities must be used; then and then only will there be reaction.

In the realm of love, the general rule is the same. In fact, man and woman are two different worlds. And that is as it should be, so that the eternal secret which each of them encloses may become the object of the other's desire and stimulate thirst for a captivating exploration.

That is love's strange power. It brings two secrets face to face, two closed worlds, two mysteries. And just because it involves a mystery, it gives rise to limitless fantasies of the imagination, to embellishments in advance of the reality. So that

One finally loves all toward which one rows.

Whether that toward which one rows is an enchanted island or one merely believes it is, what ecstasy!

Comes the meeting, the consecration of the union by marriage; each brings to the other what the other does not possess. In the one, delicate modesty and appealing reserve; in the other, conquering bravery. A couple has been born. Love has accomplished its prodigy.

Yet, how true it is, that having said all this, we have said nothing. The reality of love is unfathomable.

Could it be perhaps because it is the most beautiful masterpiece of God?

THE PALACE OF CHANCE.

A MODERN writer describes marriage as "having an appointment with happiness in the palace of chance."

Two persons are complete strangers to each other. One day they meet. They think they appreciate each other, understand each other. They encounter no serious obstacles; their social position is just

about the same; their financial status similar; their health seems sufficient; their parents offer no objections; they become engaged. They exchange loving commonplaces wherein nothing of the depths of their souls is revealed. The days pass; the time comes — it is their wedding day.

They are married. In the beginning of their acquaintance, they did not know each other at all. They do not know each other much better now, or at least, they do not know each other intimately. They are bound together; possible mishaps matter little to them; they are going to make happiness for themselves together. It is a risk they decided to run.

That this procedure is the method followed by many can scarcely be denied.

Let us hope that we personally proceed with more prudence.

Upon the essential phases of life together, the engaged couple should hold loyal and sincere discussion. And in these discussions and exchange of ideas, each one should reveal himself as he really is, and let us hope that this revelation is one of true richness of soul.

To make a lover of a young man or young woman is not such a difficult achievement. But to discover in a young man before marriage the possibility, or better still, the assurance of a good husband who will become a father of the highest type, and in a young woman, the certain promise of the most desirable type of wife who has in her the makings of a real mother and a worthy educator — that is a masterpiece of achievement!

“To love each other before marriage! Gracious, that is simple,” exclaims a character in a play, “they do not know each other! The test will be to love each other when they really do get acquainted.” And he is not wrong.

In keeping with his thought is the witty answer given by a young married man to an old friend who came to visit him.

“I am an old friend of the family,” explained the visitor. “I knew your wife before you married her.”

“And I, unfortunately, did not know her until after I married her!”

But even when a man and woman do know each other deeply and truly before marriage, how many occasions they will still have for mutual forbearance. It is necessary for them to have daily association with each other in order to understand each other; for the woman, to understand what the masculine temperament is; for the man to understand what the feminine temperament is. That may seem like a trifling thing; yet it goes a long way toward a happy marriage. To understand each other not only as being on his part a man and on her part a woman, but as being just such a man or just such a woman, that is to say, persons who in addition to the general characteristics of their species possess particular virtues and particular faults as a result of their individual temperaments — that requires rare penetration!

A home is not drawn by lot, blindly. A palace of chance! No, indeed. If we want to turn it into a palace of happiness as far as that is possible here below, we must above all things refuse to have anything to do with chance. We must know what we are doing and where we are going.

INFINITY PROMISED.

“ONE of the duties of husband and wife is to pardon each other mutually for not giving infinity after practically promising it.”

How much each of them expects from the other, from this union hoped for, guessed, discovered, known and loved!

“Is it true, then, that the mystery of infinity is written upon this little forehead, which is all mine,” sighs the man with the Hindu poet Tagore. “You are half woman and half dream.”

And what a seraphim, what a dream prince and legendary hero she believes to be marrying, she whose imagination is livelier and more powerful in evoking imagery?

Ah, the sweetness of loving, the sweetness of being two to know. The ineffable depths of the heart and its burning love’s glow,... To know all that a soul holds of power to feel, To understand the eyes’ great force magnetic, fair, To sob softly — my forehead pressed against your hair Because I feel so small before Love which passes.

But even in the very moment of the embrace, how difficult — impossible even — to arrive at perfect unity; physical union can be achieved, but how delicate an attainment is union of souls! As an English novelist expresses it:

“The anguish of those who love is caused by their powerlessness to surmount the barrier of their individuality. Even in love, we cannot escape from the eternal solitude of ourselves. We embrace without being able to be fused into one... We yearn to be but one and we are always two... We are frustrated as two birds would be who sought to be united through a pane of glass.”

Thus it is even when the two understand each other. In vain do they try to transfigure poor reality, seek to keep their idol more clearly before their vision, by closing their eyes, and by renewing marks of affection compensate for the infirmity of nature present in their very efforts at mutual tenderness; it still remains true that they always desire more than they possess; of what import is it that their substances intermingle if their consciences remain separated?

And what about those who only half understand each other or do not understand each other at all? Not only is their intimacy no mutual exchange, but their very cohabitation accentuates their isolation all the more. The poet, Anna de Noailles, who was unhappy in her married life, expressed this idea when she said, “I am alone with someone.”

It is a suffering for two who do not love each other to be together; it is a suffering to be together if they do love each other, because they never know if they embrace all they really believe they embrace. Berdyaev, the author of “The Destiny of Man,” expresses this suffering of love when he says, “If unreciprocated love is tragic, reciprocated love is perhaps even more so.”

How incorrect to think that there is no matter for renunciation in marriage!

THE NUPTIAL LITURGY.

ORDINARILY there is very little recollection manifested at a wedding ceremony. It is just as if the congregation had no idea of the sanctity of the place or the grandeur of the event.

Yet, all is holy.

The priest begins “In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” and prays that God may bless the two about to be married so that all may redound to the glory of His Name.

[Naturally, given the date of composition, all references are to the Liturgy of Saint Pius V, but the same pattern is present in the Liturgy of Pope Paul VI.]

Then follows the exchange of consent accompanied by the rite of joining hands.

“The Lord be with you,” says the priest before blessing the ring...

And later, “Be unto them, O Lord, a tower of strength.” Can anything less than this Almighty protection suffice for the work of sanctification in their life together?

The Gradual (or Entrance Chant or Antiphon) of the Nuptial Mass invokes the blessing of fecundity upon the marriage. “Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine on the sides of your house. Your children as olive plants about your table.”

Marriage is not a union founded on chance or pure caprice; reason must control the glow of passion, and the union effected by marriage must be of such a nature that death alone can break it. The Gospel of Saint Matthew gives us Our Savior’s own words on this subject. In answer to the question, “Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause,” Christ answered very definitely, No, and quoted the Scripture text, “They shall be two in one flesh.” Then He made it more emphatic by adding, “What therefore God has joined together, let no man put asunder.”

At the Pater Noster (Our Father) of the Nuptial Mass, the priest does something he never does in any other Mass. He interrupts the Sacrifice, permits the Body and Blood of Christ to lie upon the altar, and turning, calls down a new benediction of God upon the bride and the groom. He recalls how the Most High God has watched over the sacred institution of marriage from the beginning of the world, to keep it intact in spite of the frailty of humanity. The rest of the prayer besides referring to the examples of faithful wives of the Old Testament — Rachel, Rebecca, Sarah — implores rich graces for the bride.

“O God, by whom woman is joined to man, and that fellowship which You did ordain from the beginning is endowed with a blessing which alone was not taken away either by the punishment for the first sin or by the sentence of the flood; look in Your mercy upon this Your handmaid;

True and chaste let her wed in Christ...

Let the father of sin work none of his evil deeds within her... Let her be true to one wedlock and preserve inviolable fidelity;

Let her fortify her weakness by strong discipline;

Let her be grave in demeanor and honored for her modesty.

Let her be well taught in heavenly love;

Let her be fruitful in offspring.”

The priest continues the Mass and receives Holy Communion. The bride and groom should also receive the Body and Blood of Christ during this Nuptial Mass. The rubrics of the missal call for it expressly. The ideal then is to communicate not at an earlier Mass but during the Nuptial Mass itself, which nothing, not even the early hour of the day, can prevent from being solemn.

Before the Last Blessing, the priest speaks once more to the newly married couple as if he could not tire of blessing them before their great departure:

“May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfill His blessing in you:

that you may see your children's children even to the third and fourth generation, and afterwards may you have life everlasting, by the grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ: who with the Father and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns forever."

THE WEDDING DAY.

WHAT a marvel of grandeur and of poetry is the nuptial liturgy! The Church, full of solicitude for the two daring young souls ready to launch out on the voyage of life, is eager to prepare them as seriously and as solidly as possible, to put before them essential principles, and to petition God to take this holy couple under His especial care, and conduct it to the great eternal family after their life of reciprocal love and confiding generosity.

Is it any wonder that such a noble and meaningful ceremony should bring to mind the First Mass of a newly-ordained priest?

Unfortunately, the worldly trappings that often accompany the marriage celebration detract considerably from the sacred atmosphere of the event. Particularly true is this of the banquet which is generally a part of the celebration.

The Church has nothing against wholesome joys, particularly family feasts to commemorate an outstanding occasion in life; but she certainly does not approve of the carousings for which wedding banquets are so frequently the excuse, or the tone of certain parties held in connection with weddings. Could anyone imagine an ordination to the priesthood celebrated in such a fashion?

After the Nuptial Mass, the world takes over, there are the congratulations, the general stir to get into the line of march in order to see and be seen; there is not a minute for prayer, for recollection, for thanksgiving. The world, even during the Mass as well as after it, assumes control of the couple and their family. Events following the marriage ceremony do nothing to correct these concessions to the world. Does it not seem reasonable that when the fundamental interests of the family are impeded by the worldly spirit, the family should do everything in its power to escape from it?

There are those who understand this: Sodalists, the Jocists (members of the Young Christian Workers and other Catholic Youth groups), members of Catholic Action groups or similar organizations, even previous to the war, wanted to break away from these pagan practices. It is not a matter of seeing in the holy place only the Church vestibule or the Church lobby. No, no, the church is the house of God. Let everything there be holy and all that is done there be done holily, the founding of the family more than anything else!

Those groups who recognize the sanctity of the marriage ceremony have set the example of communicating at their Nuptial Mass, receiving Holy Communion most worthily; they have suppressed boisterous and giddy celebrations. In the same spirit they decided to delay their departure for their honeymoon and postpone the distractions it entails; so beneficial is it to remain in prolonged recollection during their first days together. They remember to make their union of souls predominate. Therefore, together they restrain themselves and by mutual accord embrace sacrifice.

Saint Paulinus, a renowned lawyer of Bordeaux, who renounced a worldly life when he was at the height of success, and with his wife retired into the city of Nola in Campania, wrote these significant lines:

Concordes animae casto sociantur amore;

Virgo puer Christi, virgo puella Dei.

which mean: "Let these souls who are one heart and soul be united in a chaste love; he, a virgin, a son of God; she, a virgin, a daughter of God."

Why not secure for these two splendid baptized souls, these two virgin souls, whom marriage has united forever, a departure worthy of them?

TOTAL UNION.

IN "Les Vergers humains," Louis Lefebvre has this charming verse in which the poet addresses his wife:

I speak to God most often in my verse;

I speak to my own destiny;

I speak to my own son;

With every living being, I converse

But I speak not to you; you are myself; we are but one.

There are other exquisite examples of such perfect union between husband and wife realized not only in poetry but in the prose of everyday life.

See this husband and wife seated before the fireplace watching the play of the flames.

"What are you thinking about?" queries the wife.

"And you?"

"The same thing you're thinking of."

Idyllic, some will say. And why not, just as truly, an exact description?

Then there is the example of another couple so completely in accord at all times that the husband one day playfully petitioned his wife, "Contradict me sometimes, so that we can be two." These two fulfilled to the very letter the statement of the Bible, "They shall be two in one flesh." They were one, not only in their flesh, but one in a communion of thought and opinion. They had become so thoroughly one that they forget to be two.

This could be an evil if it meant the weakening of one of the two personalities to the point of absorption by the other. Some women when first married are in such adoration before their husbands or the husbands are so infatuated with their wives that unity is effected, but it is a unity through suppression and narrowness. God grant, however, that such a unanimity never be replaced by the less happy state wherein each one clings tenaciously to self-assertion. What should be sought is unity through mutual enrichment in mutual understanding.

In some marriages, this unity becomes so complete that not even death can break it. Such, for example, was the union between Queen Astrid and King Leopold III of Belgium, or between Mireille Dupouey and her husband, a naval officer killed in 1915. During the seventeen years Mireille Dupouey lived after her husband's death, she continued to write letters to him as if he were still living, and to set a place at table between herself and her son for her dear departed who was forever present to her, forever one with her.

In contrast to these families where union is complete, how many there are in which dispute rages permanently; or, if not dispute, at least misunderstanding, constant bitterness.

It has been said and truly said that it is not easy for a man and woman, two poor human beings, finite, limited, and possessed of individual faults, to spend cloudless days together. "A woman must take much upon herself, to live with a man, whoever he may be," writes a moralist. "A man must take much upon himself to live with a woman even though she be most loving. How many perplexities between them, how many veiled enmities even in their most evident caresses! How many half-consented-to abdications on both sides!"

But live together they must. How can they achieve as perfect a harmony as possible?

Day after day, they must seek it, study, meditate, resolve and act!

THE FOUR BONDS OF CONJUGAL UNION.

THE four bonds of conjugal union are the bond of consciences, the bond of intellects, the bond of souls, and the bond of hearts.

The bond of consciences: This means that husband and wife must have the same norms for judging between right and wrong. Is it not only too clear that if they do not have an identical point of view in their appreciation of God's law, a fundamental disunity will be introduced into the very foundation of their unity? If one, for example, holds to the principle of free love while the other advocates the principle of unity in marriage, can there be complete communion? Or if one is determined to abide by the demands of the moral law in the difficult duty of procreation while the other has no intention of abstaining from the latest practices of birth control or from onanism, will there not be constant struggle in their home, and that in regard to their most intimate relations? If both are not in agreement on the question of their children's education, one will insist on secular education, the other on Catholic education, and again conflict will ensue.

The bond of intellect: This bond is not so essential as the first — it is in the realm not of strict requirement, but of the desirable. There is much to be gained from shared reading experiences, from a mutual exchange of artistic impressions and psychological observations.

For this, it is not necessary that the wife share her husband's work. It is enough if she is able to be interested in his profession. Nor is it necessary that they have the same tastes, the same outlook; a certain diversity in mentality, on the contrary, is desirable on condition that there are possibilities for mutual exchange of ideas which will lead to mutual enrichment.

That evidently supposes great simplicity in both husband and wife, a loving liberty in their communication of ideas, a very humble recognition of any superior quality in each other, an entire good faith which makes each one willing to yield to the ideas of the other when they are better.

The bond of souls: It is not sufficient to enjoy an exchange of ideas in profane matters only. It is very desirable that there be harmony of action in the domain of the spiritual, the supernatural... prayer together... meditation in common... reception of Holy Communion together.

Father Doncoeur and several others go so far as to advise making the examination of conscience together with mutual admonition and mutual resolves. This would surely call for extreme delicacy and could not be so generally recommended as the suggestions given previously. But how beautiful it is when husband and wife are as an open book to each other!

Is it good to tell each other the graces received from God, the aspirations of the soul to become holy, to become a saint? Yes, certainly, on condition that all be done with simplicity, with mutual spontaneity, with nothing of constraint, exaggeration or artificiality. Why should one hide perpetually from one's life companion the best of oneself? Some individuals remain much too reticent and it is a hindrance to great depths of intimacy.

The bond of hearts: How many in marriage love each other selfishly, show themselves demanding, moody, eager to receive, but never generous in giving. There is so much selfishness in certain families even when they are very closely united.

The remedy is to supernaturalize the affections; to pass as quickly as possible from passionate love to virtuous love and to make conjugal love a permanent exercise of the theological virtue of charity.

LIFE TOGETHER IS DIFFICULT.

MARRIAGE is not an easy vocation. It requires great virtue of husbands and wives.

Personal experience reveals how true that is; those who cannot claim this personal experience can, in any case, accept the statement of psychologists who observe, "Marriage is the most difficult of all human relations, because it is the most intimate and the most constant. To live so close to another person — who in spite of everything remains another person — to be thus drawn together, to associate so intimately with another personality without a wound or without any shock to one's feelings is a difficult thing."

According to an old saying, "There are two moments in life when a man discovers that his wife is his dearest possession in the world — when he carries her across the threshold of his home, and when he accompanies her body to the cemetery."

But in the interval between these two moments, they must live together, dwell together, persevere together. "To die for the woman one loves is easier than to live with her," claim those who ought to know. And how many women could claim similarly, "To die for the man one loves is easier than to live with him."

They must bear with each other.

A French journalist while visiting Canada stopped for a time at Quebec. "You have no law permitting a divorce in the case of husbands and wives who do not understand each other?" he questioned.

"No."

"But what do those married persons do whose discontent is continual and whose characters are in no way compatible?"

"They endure each other."

How expressive an answer! How rich in meaning! How expressive of virtue which is perhaps heroic! They endure each other.

This is not an attempt to deny the delights of married life, but to show that more than a little generosity is required to bear its difficulties.

In "The New Jerusalem" by Chesterton, a young girl is sought in marriage. She opposes the proposal in view of differences in temperament between herself and the young man. The marriage would certainly be a risk; it would be imprudent.

Michel, the suitor, retorted to this objection in his own style:

"Imprudent! Do you mean to tell me that there are any prudent marriages? You might just as well speak of prudent suicides... A young girl never knows her husband before marrying him. Unhappy? Of course, you will be unhappy. Who are you anyway to escape being unhappy, just as well as the mother who brought you into the world! Deceived? Of course you shall be deceived!"

Who proves too much, proves very little. We can, however, through the exaggeration find the strain of truth. "Michel" is a little too pessimistic. He makes a good counterpart to those who enter into marriage as if in a dream. "Marriage," wisely wrote Paul Claudel — and he gives the true idea — "is not pleasure; it is the sacrifice of pleasure; it is the study of two souls who throughout their future, for an end outside of themselves, shall have to be satisfied with each other always."

LOVING EACH OTHER IN GOD.

WE HAVE already seen that it is essential to advance as quickly as possible from a purely natural love to a supernatural love, from a passionate love to a virtuous love.

That is clear. No matter how perfect the partners in marriage may be, each has limitations; we can foresee immediately that at the point where the limitations of the one contact the limitations of the other, sparks will easily fly; misunderstandings, oppositions, and disagreements will arise.

No matter how much effort one puts forth to manifest only virtues, one does not have only virtues. And when one lives in constant contact with another, his faults appear quickly; "No man is great to his valet," says the proverb. Sometimes it is the very virtue of an individual which seems to annoy another. One would have liked more discretion; one is, as it were, eclipsed. Two find their self-love irritated, in conflict.

Or perhaps virtues no longer appear as virtues by reason of being so constantly manifested. Others become accustomed to seeing them and look upon them as merely natural traits. "There is nothing more than that missing for him or her to be different." It is like the sun or the light; people no longer notice them. Bread by reason of its being daily bread loses its character of "good bread."

Daily intercourse which was a joy in the beginning no longer seems such a special delight; it becomes monotonous. Husband and wife remain together by habit, common interests, honor, even a certain attachment of will, but do they continue to be bound together by love in the deepest sense of the word?

If things go on in this way, they will soon cease to be much concerned about each other; they may preserve a mutual dry esteem which habit will render still drier. Where formerly there existed a mutual ardor, nothing more remains than proper form; where formerly there was never anything more than a delicate remonstrance, there now exists depressing wrangling or a still more depressing coldness.

Married persons must come to the help of weak human nature and try to understand what supernatural love is in order to infuse it into their lives as soon as possible.

Is not the doctrine of the Church on marriage too often forgotten? How many ever reread the epistle of the Nuptial Mass? Meditate on it? In any case, how many husbands and wives read it together? Meditate on it together? That would forearm them against the invasion of worrisome misunderstandings. Why not have recourse to the well-springs of wisdom?

There are not only the epistles. There is the whole gospel.

The example of Joseph and Mary at Nazareth is enlightening. What obedience and cordial simplicity in Mary! What deference and exquisite charity in Saint Joseph! And between the two what openness of heart, what elevated dealings! Jesus was the bond between Mary, the Mother, and Joseph, the foster-father.

In Christian marriage, Jesus is still the unbreakable bond — prayer together, Holy Mass and Holy Communion together.

Not only should there be prayer with each other, beside each other, but prayer for each other.

SUPERNATURAL LOVE.

SOME persons imagine that the endeavor to transform their natural love into supernatural love will make them awkward, make them lose their spontaneity, their naturalness.

Indeed, nothing is farther from the truth, if supernatural love is rightly understood.

What does it really require?

First of all, does it not require us to fulfill the perfections of natural love? Supernatural love, far from suppressing natural love, makes it more tender, more attentive, more generous; it intensifies the sentiments of affection, esteem, admiration, gratitude, respect, and devotion which constitute the essence of true love.

Supernatural love takes away one thing only from natural and spontaneous love — selfishness, the arch-enemy of love. It demands that everything, from the greatest obligation to the simplest, be done as perfectly as possible. Then by elevating simple human love to the level of true charity, it ennoble the greatest powers of that love. It suppresses nothing. It enriches everything. Better still, it provides in advance against the danger of a diminution in human love. It pardons weaknesses, deficiencies, faults. Not that it is blind to them, but it does not become agitated by them. It bears with them, handles them tactfully, helps to overcome them. It is capable of bestowing love where all is not lovable. Penetrating beyond the exterior, it can peer into the soul and see the image of God behind a silhouette which has become less pleasing.

That is the whole secret. Supernatural love in us seeks to love in the manner and according to the desire of God; it requires us therefore to love God in those we love and then to love the good qualities He has given them and bear with the absence of those He has not given or with the characteristics He has permitted them to acquire.

Loving without any advertence to self, supernatural love is patient and constant in spite of the faults of those it loves. The Little Sister of the Poor loves her old folk despite their coughing, their unpleasant mannerisms, their varying moods. The Missionaries who care for the lepers love them in spite of their loathsome sores.

Unselfish as it is, supernatural love inspires the one who is animated by it to seek the temporal and above all the spiritual good of the one he loves before his own. Delicately it calls the attention of the

loved one to his faults, not to reproach him, but to help him correct them. It does not give in to irritability or moodiness; it is quick humbly to beg pardon and to make reparation, should it ever fail. And when there has been a little outburst, how comforting it is, in the intimate converse of the evening, to acknowledge one's failings, to express sorrow, and to promise to do better in the future with the other's help!

But all this presupposes prayer and a true desire for union with God.

UNITED STRIVING FOR SANCTITY.

A BEAUTIFUL work which husband and wife can pursue together is the mutual effort to correct their faults. Maurice Retour, an industrialist and one of the youngest captains of World War I of which he was a victim, suggested this to the woman he loved even during their engagement. He wrote to her, "I must confess something to you... I became aware of your imperfections and I thought how pained I should have been if I had not been able to see clearly into your soul... You see how frank I want to be with you. We are just engaged and yet instead of paying you compliments, I do not fear to speak to you of your imperfections which my love for you cannot hide... Tell me you will pardon me."

Another time he wrote, "In general, engaged persons strive to shine in each other's eyes. We, on the contrary, began by showing each other all our faults... You have acknowledged all your faults to me; I confessed to you all my weakness... Thank you for your great confidence in me. But never forget that if I permit myself to give you advice which seems good to me, I can always be mistaken and you ought to discuss it with me. Otherwise I shall never dare to give you my opinions."

In a later letter, he said to her, "I have already abused the liberty you gave me. I have told you frankly all I thought about you, nor was I afraid to recognize before you what you call your great faults. It was, I must confess, most difficult for me to tell you because I love you so much that I dread causing you the least pain." He added, "The interior life is what we need to correct our failings and we shall work from now on, if you wish, to grow in it."

This mutual effort of husband and wife to correct themselves of their faults may be much, but it is not enough. Something more beautiful remains — to strive positively for sanctity through mutual instruction, loving encouragement and a united and confiding zeal for each other's perfection.

"Why should we not live a saintly life?" asked Maurice Retour of his bride-to-be. And they decided upon some very definite principles for themselves.

"Let us put no faith in fortune, in pleasures, even in our self-love which always increases and makes us run the risk of becoming blind... The one who receives the most grace will make the other profit by it. What do we care what the world says! It will say what it pleases, but it never will be able to say that we are not true Catholics... Our life will be holy and simple."

"As far as jewels are concerned," commented Maurice, "I understand you perfectly. If you had loved them, I should never have opposed your tastes, but I tell you frankly, I should have suffered. We shall not fail by excesses on this score. We can do so much good with money that it would be wrong, in spite of my desire to spoil you, to spend it only on you. We shall save all we can to enable us to give more to charity. We shall always go straight to our goal and make no concessions to worldliness."

There is however, nothing admirable in a gloomy life. "Our interior life must be so intense that it remains alive in all our exterior actions, our pleasures, our work, our joys and our sorrows. I do not mean an interior life which makes us withdraw into ourselves and become bores for other people. On the contrary, we ought to spread our gaiety generously about us and spend all the activity of our youth to attract those who meet us. But, in order to be saints, we must be able to conserve in the midst of the most captivating pleasures and the most intense activity an interior calm which enables us to remain self-possessed always..."

A saint who is sad is sadly in need of sanctity!

A truly inspiring program!

IDEALS FOR MARRIAGE.

ON ONE occasion when Maurice Retour was talking with some comrades about his ideals of marriage, he saw some of them smile skeptically. He who had written, "Love has always been sacred to me. In its name I desired to remain faithful to my fiancée even before knowing her," was to discover that all his companions did not share his noble sentiments, his desire for a chaste marriage.

That did not cause him to lower his standards. He simply tried to lead his companions to a more Christian understanding of married life and if he could not do that, he at least showed his displeasure and withdrew from the discussion.

Writing to his future wife, he said, "I have heard some comments about our future, each one more offensive than the other. But I pity these unfortunate individuals who have never known how to love truly, who have never experienced real intimacy with their wife, and who have sought nothing more than appearance or the satisfaction of their caprice. They can say what they wish, they can tell me that I am young or even a little simple but I shall never change my idea. They can never destroy my confidence — first of all, my confidence in you because of God who has certainly protected me in order to find you... secondly, my confidence in myself, because I know that I am different from certain individuals about me and I am not ashamed to say so even if it does sound like pride on my part."

If that is pride, it is permissible pride! Rather is it an expression of perfect mastery! It is the magnificent dignity of the Christian who knows, of course, that he is weak but who refuses to justify in advance his failings and cowardices, and who counts not upon himself but upon God for strength to persevere.

"Pay no attention to those who tell you I shall change," he wrote. "Do not listen to those who say that men who marry young will become unfaithful later. No, I do not want anyone to believe such a monstrous thing of me."

Who was to give him the strength to resist temptations which were always possible?

"The sacrament of our marriage will impart to us the graces necessary to keep our good resolutions. How few understand this sacrament! How few prepare themselves for it and expect to receive from it the graces it can give to those who seek them worthily."

Noble and irresistible pleading! It recalls the words of Lacordaire, "When a person has not taken the trouble to overcome his passions and when the revelation of chaste joys has not come to him, he

consoles himself with vices, declaring them necessary, and clothes in the mantle of pseudo-science the testimony of a corrupted heart.”

Surely, marriage is a sacrament, but it is not a miracle. He who has prepared for it only by youthful escapades will possibly fail to remain steadfast. But can not he who has prepared himself by the chastity of celibacy for the chastity of marriage be trusted to preserve with the help of God, a chaste marriage?

ONE HEART, ONE SOUL.

HOW happy are married persons who can say as Maurice Retour to his wife, “We love each other for our ideas. We see only God and we have become united in order to serve Him better.” Such is Christian love.

“We shall ask Christ, who sanctified marriage, to give us all the graces necessary for us. We pray with force but also with joy because we have great confidence in the future since both of us expect our happiness from God alone.”

And after Holy Communion which they both received on their wedding day, they begged God “to make their mutual love always effect their personal sanctification, to bless their home by sending them many children, to keep in His grace themselves, their little ones and all who would ever live under their roof.”

Sometimes we hear it said that there are no examples of married persons living effectively the holy law of marriage as God prescribed it and Christ ratified it.

There are many. More than one might think. And, thanks be to God, there have been some in all ages.

In the time of the early Church, Tertullian, believing his death to be approaching, wrote two books entitled *Ad Uxorem*, “To My Wife.” In the last chapter of the second book, he gives an unforgettable picture of marriage. One cannot meditate on it too often.

He extols the happiness of marriage “which the Church approves, the Holy Sacrifice confirms, the Blessing seals, the Angels witness, and God ratifies. What an alliance is that of two faithful souls united in a single hope, under a single discipline, under a similar dependence. Both are servants of the same Master. There is no distinction of mind or of body. Both are in truth one flesh; where there is but one body, there is but one mind. They kneel in prayer together; they teach each other, support each other. They are together in church, together at the Banquet of God, together in trials, in joy. They are incapable of hiding anything from each other, of deserting each other, of annoying each other. In complete liberty, they visit the sick and help the poor. Without anxiety about each other, they give alms freely, assist at Holy Mass and without any embarrassment manifest their fervor daily. They do not know what it means to make a furtive sign of the Cross, to mumble trembling greetings, to invoke silent blessings. They sing hymns and psalms vying with each other to give God the most praise. Christ rejoices to see and hear them and gives them His peace. Wherever they are, Christ is with them.”

“That is marriage as the Apostle speaks of it to us... The faithful cannot be otherwise in their marriage.”

Oh, that we might fulfill this ideal in our marriage!

We must pray for it and really want it.
