

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements carefully, then place an "X" in the box following the word or phrase which best completes the statement. Mark only one box for each statement. Each correct answer is worth five points.

# MAN AND WIFE

## 5

### Adjustment in Marriage

AS COMMONLY used, the term "marriage adjustment" implies a satisfactory adaptation to each other on the part of husband and wife. It indicates that there should be a spirit of cooperation and teamwork—a cordial and harmonious relationship. Negatively, it implies the absence of clash and conflict between the partners.

*Similar Tastes.* Modern books on marriage give marital adjustment a big play. Most chapters on the subject discuss the development of similar tastes and the necessity for a common educational background and a common cultural inheritance. Numerous tests have been developed to predict success on the basis of the number of common traits found in marriage partners. There have even been several attempts to match young people for successful marriage with IBM machines.

*Common Denominator.* A more modern scheme of things seems concerned that unity should be founded on the elimination of differences. To some, marital adjustment would be a simple matter of discovering a common denominator into which the differences of man and woman might be divided. Thus, adjustment becomes a matter of moderating individual tastes and strengths, a matter of constant, mutual compromise. Doubtless, many compromises will be necessary for adjustment, but adjustment is more than mere compromise.

*Companionship.* Marriage is not just a state in which two people enjoy a delightful camaraderie, read the same books, share the same entertainment, and smoke the same brand of cigarettes. To achieve this kind of companionship it is not necessary to marry. Two men or two women could find it with equal ease. To say that marriage is *merely* a companionship or *merely* a matter of discovering "our tastes are one," is the same kind of a lie as saying that Christ was a good man. Christ, indeed, has a human nature, but to dismiss Him as *only* a man, however good, is to dismiss the entire mystery of the Incarnation. Marriage is, indeed, a companionship, but to dismiss marriage as *only* a companionship is to

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

- Habitual love in action toward a particular object is known as \_\_\_\_\_  
 concupiscence     virtue     sin     sensuality
- It is important that a couple \_\_\_\_\_ family customs.  
 build its own     follow the man's     copy their friends'     follow the wife's
- \_\_\_\_\_ is the root, the foundation of marital love.  
 love-making     a child     the home     justice
- St. Thomas says that \_\_\_\_\_ is the proper method of knowledge for angels and not for human beings.  
 logic     intuition     sensuality     observation
- Men and women have the following gifts in common: body, soul, personality, \_\_\_\_\_, original sin, and supernatural merit.  
 citizenship     right to vote     supernatural destiny     natural abilities
- A satisfactory adjustment in marriage can best be achieved by cultivating \_\_\_\_\_  
 differences     identical tastes     in-laws     a spirit of team work
- A person is formed by his environment, family, culture, his dreams and experience, and by his \_\_\_\_\_ all of them.  
 reactions to     attachment to     rejection of     misuse of
- Psychologists tell us that the emotions of a man and a woman \_\_\_\_\_  
 are similar     are unimportant     differ     are the same
- True love is primarily an act of \_\_\_\_\_  
 the will     the emotions     the body     the mind
- The word *adjustment* comes from two Latin words, *ad* and *juste* meaning \_\_\_\_\_  
 don't cheat     toward justice     living with     justice toward
- Marriage partners should take their more difficult problems of adjustment to \_\_\_\_\_ for help.  
 the confessor     a neighbor     a marriage counselor     the in-laws

POSSIBLE SCORE	55	SUB-SCORE I	_____
MINUS <input type="checkbox"/>	ERRORS X 5	SUB-SCORE II	_____
SUB-SCORE II	_____	TOTAL SCORE	_____

dismiss the entire vocational concept of man and woman united to form one principle of activity, cooperation, generation, and education, supernaturalized by the Sacrament of Matrimony.

*Common Interests Make Life Easy.* No doubt a great number of common interests would make "getting along" easy. A married couple with the same tastes will have little difficulty in anticipating and meeting the needs of the beloved. There will be fewer conflicts, fewer differences of opinion, and, hence, little need to compromise. But such ease could possibly indicate stagnation in growth and little new learning.

People with the same tastes and backgrounds may well go through life without difficulty or opposition, but they might also find that their character has frozen. All their qualities, good and bad, may simply have doubled. Prejudices could be deepened, frictions reinforced, defective character traits diabolically implemented and made impossible of correction.

*True Community.* Marital adjustment does demand something in common between a man and a woman, but all that *must* be common to a married couple is human nature, a *common goal in God, common sense, a common bed and board, and common children.* Beyond these, the only other common interests that might help cement the marriage bond would be those which are usually common to any man and woman independent of their function as husband or wife, father or mother.

*Making Do.* In facing "adjustment," many young couples have another idea. They suppose that marriage adjustments will be a series of "making do." They expect that it will be the duty of one or the other to remain patient, while the other partner violates the laws of good behavior or even those of justice and love. To them, "adjustment" always involves "giving in," even when the giving in would be wrong or sinful. No doubt there are many times in marriage when it is necessary to give in when the other partner is not what he or she ought to be, but this is *sacrifice* in the service of love, with hope for growth and development. It is not true adjustment. Such mere giving in could become a very hollow thing and might lead to bitterness, resentment, and physical or mental flight from the partner.

*Absence of Tension.* Many modern experts want to eliminate marital tensions. The word *tension* means a stretching or a stretched condition. It also means a mental strain, an emotional

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

Man and Wife

INSTRUCTIONS: Read each of the following statements carefully. If a statement is true, mark an "X" in the box at the left labelled "true." If it is false, mark an "X" in the box at the left labelled "false." Each correct answer is worth three points.

- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| TRUE<br>→                | FALSE<br>→               |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. A person's will to learn from experience is weakened or strengthened by his physical and emotional health.                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Marriage expectations are fashioned primarily by our hopes and dreams.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The supernatural gifts of sanctifying and actual grace are the same for both sexes.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. Marital adjustment is simply a matter of discovering a common denominator for dividing the differences of husband and wife.     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Man and woman are designed to complement each other.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. A person's culture has little or no effect on his life pattern or outlook on life.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. The sign of maturity is the ability to repress emotions.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. All that must be common to a married couple is human nature, a common goal in God, a common bed and board, and common children. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Education of children, to be complete, must involve guiding their development into masculine men and feminine women.            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. The gift of self in marriage is not just a free gift, but a contractual obligation.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Personality is in no way related to a person's sex.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Sex is not merely a bodily function for the begetting of children, but it is also an educational function.                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Virtue in marriage means that a woman must avoid joyous abandon in the physical expression of love.                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. Absence of tension is essential in order to achieve happiness in marriage.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. A husband and wife must not only adjust to themselves, but also to the plan which God has for their unique union.              |

POSSIBLE SCORE	<b>45</b>	NAME _____
MINUS <input type="checkbox"/> ERRORS X 3		ADDRESS _____
SUB-SCORE I		CITY _____ STATE _____

In some cases, the priest, himself, will be an adequate counselor. In others, he will usually be able to recommend a competent person for referral, e.g., a physician or budget expert. There are usually good family counselors in our Catholic Charity organizations. Local universities often have counseling services. At times, should personality disturbances of serious nature complicate the problem, one or both partners should consult a psychiatrist.

In seeking advice, married partners should avoid the extremes. They should not run off for help at the very first sign of difficulty. This is hardly an adult reaction to a problem. On the other hand, they should not feel that they are automatically qualified to work out all problems, no matter how serious, without help. This would be false pride.

Again, we must choose our advisors carefully. A neighbor, friend, or relation might provide a sympathetic or understanding ear, but can hardly be expected to provide expert counseling. Just as you do not run to a doctor with a headache, nor do you take a serious illness to your neighbor's medicine chest, so you should not take every little difficulty to a professional counselor, nor bring big problems to a casual friend.

## Some Cases for Discussion

My husband could earn more if he just had more drive.

I know money isn't everything, but you can't do much without it. We managed all right when we first married. I was working and we had less expense. Now, with four children to take care of, the bills just keep piling up. My husband doesn't have enough drive. I feel he could get a better job if he tried. He claims that he's doing his best. What can I do?

How should husbands and wives divide authority in the home?

How much authority should the husband exercise in the home? My wife and I work things out together well as a team. She runs the home and does much of the buying, while I earn the money. We agree fairly well in handling the children. This seems to work out all right, but lately I've read a lot of statements to the effect that modern man has made a mistake in giving women so much authority. What does it mean to be the head of the home?

upheaval, strained relations with another, a nervous condition due to continued frustration and prolonged worry. Certainly, as good Christians, we agree with the marriage experts in wishing to eliminate marital tensions in the second sense. Mental anxiety and frustration are not good indications of marital happiness. However, in its primary sense of a stretching, tension is very valuable to a marriage! A child shows tense concentration when he tries to take his first step; an athlete tenses every muscle, nerve fibre, and brain cell in order to leap over the seven-foot bar, and, study involves tension which makes it the most exhaustive kind of work. Likewise, the stretching involved in constant mutual growth in marriage is very important. Marriage should be a life-long striving together, and family living should be a constant kaleidoscope of new experiences and new growths, new sharing of points of view, new visions of possible achievement, and fresh change of attitude. All these involve the tense effort to grow.

### TRUE ADJUSTMENT

The word *adjustment* comes from two Latin words *ad* and *juste*, which mean "justice toward." Adjustment, therefore, means full willingness to recognize, accept, and promote the unique personal potential of one's spouse as a truly masculine or feminine person. It implies both an ability to complement that person's weaknesses with one's own strength, and a humble acceptance of the spouse's offer to complement one's own weaknesses. It indicates that this determination and ability will be exercised, if possible, with enthusiasm, but surely with a clear sense of duty and justice. It suggests that a wife will be willing to help her husband to become more manly, more fatherly, more concerned with masculine pursuits. It demands that a husband be determined to help his wife become more feminine, more motherly, more "like a woman." Whether it be easy or difficult to do this is beside the point.

Adjustment does not, necessarily, mean that a man will be interested in that which interests his wife, but it does mean that he will be interested in and promote her interest! A woman is more naturally interested in babies. Each and every detail of their growth will invoke her loving awareness. Though a man should also be interested in his children's development, he need not show the same thrill for each gurgle and burp that his wife does. It is,

however, imperative for him to encourage and show pride in his wife's development as a mother. On her side, a woman might find it difficult to be as interested in the labor movement as her worker husband. It is *not* important that she should desire a joint position with her husband as steward in his union! But, it *is* important that she show pride, concern, and enthusiasm in his growth and development as a labor leader.

Adjustment is not a mere matter of "living with" the different interests of husband or wife; it is a matter of discovering and loving the differences, and, in the loving, to promote them. Love desires the fullest perfection of the beloved; love, therefore, demands of the lover that he promote every potential strength of the partner in the unique manner in which he or she possesses those strengths.

#### MARITAL EXPECTATIONS

This necessity for marital partners to help one another in developing their masculine or feminine traits is somewhat complicated by what the marriage experts call "marital expectations." Every person has a "self-image" of how he expects to act in a given situation. Also, he has a vague picture of how he expects his spouse to act in various marital situations. It is because of these preconceived notions that we react with surprise to actions which seem perfectly reasonable to others.

*Hopes and Dreams.* Marriage expectations are fashioned, primarily, by our hopes and dreams. From earliest childhood to the end of life, we look to the future imaginatively. A little boy imagines himself speeding down the street as a fireman; the little girl looks forward to her first party dress. The young man in his teens begins worrying about his vocation, discarding picture after picture of his future; the teenage girl dreams of her first formal, first date, possible religious vocation, a dreamlike courtship, her own home, and the thrill of her first baby.

None of these images will harm future happiness as long as such dreams have a reasonable possibility of achievement. Maturity demands that we be willing to tailor the ethereal substance of dreams to the realities of our daily encounters. The dream of becoming a "big leaguer" might have to be scaled down to being a catcher on the high school team. A girl's ten-room dream home

However, change is not good *in itself*. It is good only if it is a *change for the better*. We do not change what is perfect. Try to change a single word of a poetic masterpiece. You will destroy the poem! Spouses sometimes rebel against the monotony of a deep and intense love. They are bored with its perfection. Beware of destroying unity in an attempt to change it simply for the sake of change.

Seemingly monotonous things can be the greatest source of pleasure. We drink water every day, and though we tire of it at times and seek to tempt our taste with a variety of other drinks, there is nothing which slakes our thirst like a glass of cold water.

*Change.* Many spouses are fearful of monotony while others are fearful of change. Numberless married couples make themselves unhappy because they insist on taking love in terms of yesterday or last year. The gift of self is here and now; it meets this need with this particular answer; it is forever purging out the old so that the new may have life. Often, this particularly true for a woman. She must learn that, no matter how much she loves or tries to hold onto the moments when she is everything to her beloved, those moments can never stand still. There is always a leaving—the actual and figurative desertion—that follow her moments of power. These desertions she fears, but she is helpless to stop them.

#### COUNSELING

Sometimes, no matter how much insight, acceptance, and motivation is possessed by the spouses, difficulties arise between them which seem insuperable. Perhaps it is a blind spot which makes it impossible to see all the facets of masculinity or femininity, or an emotional block arising from earlier environment. Then, too, it may be a sensitive spot which has become so chafed that it is almost cancerous, or maybe the very struggle for unity has only churned up the dust and clouded the issues. In such cases, it may be advisable to approach someone who is an expert in the field of marriage.

Sometimes solutions to such problems are discovered by simply "talking it out" with an objective, experienced person. In other cases, a trained and unbiased advisor may be able to analyze the points of stress and indicate the hidden problem.

Marriage is, above all, a contract which binds the partners in justice to fulfill certain obligations. The terms of this contract are not decided by the parties who agree to it; they are established by God and the spouses merely consent to them. This divinely established contract specifies a double debt: a religious debt to God Himself to carry out the goals of marriage, and a conjugal debt to one's partner.

It is inspiring to recall that marriage is a type and symbol of the *covenant* which Christ has made with His Church. A covenant is a treaty or kind of contract. Though Christ could have dispensed His graces to His Church at will, He binds Himself in strict justice to fulfill His promises. As a result, we have a *right* in strict justice to the essential graces of Christian life. Under this contract, our good acts are meritorious and we can earn the kingdom of heaven as the rightful return for our just acts. If the graces of Christ do not merely depend upon His generosity but upon the contract in justice which He has really entered with us, so the gifts of self in marriage and the acceptance of one's spouse in marriage are not just a free gift, but are contractual obligations.

Perfect human love is not merely spontaneous, it is something which can be learned and which grows. The root from which it grows is justice. It is the teaching of psychology and the experience of the Church that actions willingly repeated lead to the development of the habit or virtue corresponding to the action.

This psychology works in monasteries and convents. Monks and nuns follow a strict rule. They repeat daily external acts and they pursue a rigid practice of poverty, chastity, and obedience. In meeting their daily obligation, they learn to love God above all things. This same psychology works in marriage. Though, as Pope Pius XI says, love holds "pride of place" in marriage, justice must be acquired before one can have true love. Where you find husband and wife faithfully fulfilling their responsibilities together, you will find two persons deeply in love or in the process of achieving love. And it is never too late, no matter how difficult or even repulsive a spouse may seem. When justice is practiced, love can be found.

*Monotony.* Justice in marriage may seem monotonous and we often suspect that monotony is deadly. Because we are finite and must change in order to grow, variety seems important in itself.

with carport may need trimming to a four-room bungalow with mortgage. So it is with self-images and images of one's spouse. We can have hopes for our future development, yet we must be ready to accept the reality of our potential and spend a lifetime working to develop it. We must willingly accept the actual personality we love, with all his or her weakness and strength.

*Unconscious Expectations.* Expectations are built unconsciously, too. A bride and groom do not come to their marriage as infants. Having lived many years in their own families, they have seen their parents agree and disagree; they have seen their mothers and fathers accept or reject various duties and play out their own role-pattern as husband and wife. If they come from happy homes, they will unconsciously act and expect to be treated as their parents acted and treated each other. Yet, since no human love or family is absolutely perfect, the bride and groom will have developed reflex criticisms and reactions against the defects they have observed. If either comes from a very unhappy home, he or she may tend to imitate the very things that caused the unhappiness. Or, they might react violently to the point of going too far in the opposite direction.

*Cultural Background.* Each person's culture also affects his entire life pattern and outlook on life. People of different national backgrounds have characteristically different ways of looking at things. This is particularly true if one person is a native and the other foreign-born, and is sometimes true even to the second and third generation. For example, a boy from an Italian family may have quite a different idea of the husband-father role from that which his Irish-descended wife may have. So it is with all the national groupings.

Culture not only stems from one's national background, but also from racial, recreational, educational, and religious customs. A formally educated man has ideas different from those of a woman whose education ended early in high school. A girl from a well-to-do family may discover her economic expectations unrealistic if she marries a poor boy. Aside from deeper differences in life goals, the various religious customs of Protestant and Catholic will color the picture of expected family life. (This whole problem is discussed in MIXING YOUR MARRIAGE.) Even two people of the Catholic faith may have different religious expectations for their marriage, since there are numerous Catholic cus-

toms throughout the world and even our own nation. Finally, the intensity of religious experience of the two may be quite different.

*Experience in Growing Up.* In addition to his family and cultural background, each person has reacted to the experience of growing up. A man's reactions to his friendship, customary reading, and his recreational contacts have sculptured his anticipation of the future. A woman's frightening or warming experiences, the treatment she has received, and her reactions in learning or refusing to learn from experience all paint a picture of how she expects to act in marriage and her expectations for her partner. A person is formed, not only by his environment, family, and culture, his dreams and experience, but also by his reactions to all of them.

*Health and Temperament.* Reactions to situations and experiences are governed chiefly by a person's will to learn from the experience. This will, however, is weakened or strengthened by the degree of physical and emotional health of the person. A headache or a gnawing anxiety can utterly change an experience.

Temperament, too, enters into the learning process. One person is placid and easy going, another excitable and impulsive, a third will be erratic, a fourth stable to the point of stubbornness, a fifth will have a keen sense of justice, a sixth will tend to be indulgent.

*Matching Expectations.* If one partner's marriage intentions match perfectly the other partner's expectations, getting along together should be very easy. But, again, an easy life is not necessarily a better or more happy life. In work, the easiest job does not necessarily bring the greatest satisfaction and sense of achievement. The writer who versifies easily sometimes produces indifferent poetry; the brilliant student who learns with ease may be overtaken by the apparently dull plodder. The point here is that common hopes, national background, cultural growth, identical experiences and personality traits may produce smoothly matched expectations of marital partners, but this does not guarantee marital happiness. Nor does the opposite indicate that a couple with widely divergent anticipations cannot achieve a triumphant happiness. However, in order to succeed in marriage, people who have greatly divergent ideas on marriage and family life must be well aware of these differences in expectations, and must

A third obstacle to reverence is an arrogant refusal to meet obligations which were not freely assumed. Some men and women will perform only the duties they have agreed to beforehand. Anything imposed upon them by circumstances is refused because "it wasn't in the contract." Since they did not foresee the obligation when they pledged their love, they complain that the burden is unfair. Comparing his own difficulties to the apparently easy life of a neighbor, a husband will grumble that he never thought his life would turn out this way. A wife who entered marriage desiring a certain number of children will develop an air of injury if she finds her marriage sterile. Or she will object that she did not bargain for "a family this large" when blessed with a more fertile union.

#### LOVE

It goes without saying that mutual love and affection are the most important ways to achieve adjustment, to develop masculinity and femininity, to achieve triumphant success, and to meet the plan of God. (Cf. MARRIED LOVE.)

The story is told of a debate in the French Chamber of Deputies on giving women the right to vote. An impassioned speaker concluded, "Women should vote because, for all practical purposes, there is no difference between the sexes." A wise, elder statesman retorted, "Vive la difference!" Only love between such different creatures as a man and woman can continue for a lifetime together to cry, "Long live the difference!"

#### JUSTICE

However important love is to married oneness, and for the fulfillment of your vocation, human love is a weak, vacillating thing. Too often it is confused with emotional enthusiasm, too often it waxes hot and cold with the mood of the moment. Justice is the root, the foundation of marital love. Without justice love is a hothouse plant that withers at the first change in emotional climate. Without justice love will not answer the call to heroism and sacrifice so often demanded in family life.

Justice is an habitual approach of the will which determines to give another his rights, not as a whim or favor, but simply because they are rights. Justice involves a strong sense of duty to partner, to family, to society, and to God.

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you."

Christ also gave Himself up to following the Divine plan. All through His life He spoke of being sent to accomplish the will of His Father. And when His natural feelings shrank from difficulties, He prayed: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done." Although we, like Christ, may shrink from the physical, emotional, and mental difficulties of each day, we must live this acceptance of Christ. Our reward will be the rewards of Christ: ultimate success in our calling, happiness in fulfilling God's will, final triumph in Heaven.

### REVERENCE

Reverence flows from a combination of intimate, concrete knowledge and a full acceptance of reality. Independent of any arbitrary subjective mood, reverence leads a person to stand in awe and wonder at the mystery of one's own and another's being. Reverence assigns to both things and persons a proper place in the hierarchy of values.

It is with an attitude of reverence, wonder, and awe that we ought to approach our own personality, that of our beloved, our place in God's plan, and the plan of God Himself.

To understand the attitude of reverence necessary in marriage, let us look at what wedlock would be without it. If reverence is missing a man will approach his wife with arrogant superiority; a woman will tactlessly accept a man's gift with smug familiarity. Both will be guilty of the prime sin against human love—mutually taking each other for granted.

*Obstacles to Reverence.* An adolescent sense of independence is the first obstacle to reverence. In an effort to prove that we have grown up, we insist that we are no longer children in need of others. It takes adult humility to recognize how much we are dependent upon other human beings and upon God.

Closely related to this adolescent independence is a refusal to admit our finiteness and our need to have our emptiness filled. For example, some people find it extremely difficult to accept nursing when they are ill. They become irritable patients because they refuse to admit that they cannot care for themselves!

try to understand fully these various views, and must be willing both to learn new ways and to teach new ways.

No matter how similar the background of a husband and wife, it is relatively impossible for two people to come to marriage with complete similarity of expectations. Each person is unique. Even a set of identical twins are not truly identical since, despite their similar appearance, they develop different tastes, make different friends, frequently choose different vocations, have different experiences, and achieve different temporal—and, perhaps, even eternal—goals. Two such simply unique people, one a man, the other a woman, are thrown together by apparently blind circumstance and finally choose each other in love for a lifetime. Coming from two distinctive family patterns, they start off together to build their own unique family. Though traces may be found in their family of the family and cultural values from which they came, *it is their thrilling challenge to build their own unique family customs.*

Lovers are frequently impatient of critics who wonder what they can possibly see in each other. They can only stammer: "But he's different!" or "She's special!" Basically, all that is necessary for successful marital adjustment in its deepest of senses is the love and promotion of these differences. Both husband and wife bring to marriage the gift of their entire selves. Their first duty, then, is to give without holding anything back. They must give themselves with all the developed strengths, with all the undeveloped potential—yes, and even with their weaknesses. The second duty is to accept and love the complete gift brought by the other. Any proud, selfish, "independence" which pretends that the receiver needs no gift and is sufficient unto himself will kill love, will kill the self-development of the other, and will finally kill the marriage unity itself. Even worse would be the attempt to make over the other to one's own image and likeness. This is "looking the gift-horse in the mouth" so condemned by an ancient aphorism. The only thing you can do with a gift, especially the gift of self, is accept it.

### ADJUSTMENT TO GOD'S PLAN

One further kind of adjustment is necessary in marriage. Spouses must be *just toward* the plan which God has for their

unique union. They will encounter challenges which their own families never had to face. Living in an unfamiliar location, in a different economic medium, in changing historical and political crises, with a yet untested fecundity, newly married couples will need to adapt themselves in justice toward God's precise plan for them. This plan will not be revealed at once; indeed, it will not be fully known until the day of general judgment. But looking into their own potentialities, making their plans as wisely as they can, scrapping those plans as contingencies arise, adapting themselves to circumstances they could not have foreseen, this couple must learn their own way of saying to God, "Thy will be done." Adjustment is not only acceptance of a partner's gift of love, nor only the gift of self to that partner. It also involves giving this union and the family which flows from it to God and, in return, accepting the gift of God's Providence and Government which disposes and directs all events, even the apparently accidental.

## The Gift of Self

**A**LTHOUGH BOOKS on marriage accentuate the differences between men and women—and it is important that the differences be recognized and loved—it is most important to realize that men and women have in common their status as human beings. With all their differences, in their fundamental nature they are equal before God.

### GIFTS IN COMMON

*Body.* The catechism defines man as a creature composed of body and soul and made to the image and likeness of God. Every human being is given a body with its strengths and weaknesses. (cf. YOUR BODY AND YOU.) Every human being has senses with which he can perceive the outside world and emotional appetites which urge him toward good and away from harm.

*Soul.* However, the human being possesses not only a body, but also a spiritual soul which will never die. Both men and women have intellectual capabilities—the ability to *perceive*, the ability to relate knowledge to God, which is *wisdom*, and the ability to gather knowledge in orderly bodies, called *science*. Both sexes are well able to use their intellects to put order into their

gift which each partner proffers. There is nothing to do with a gift but receive it. It is rude and unmannerly to make it over, to wish it were another kind of giving, to dream it is another kind of gift. To reject the gift is to reject the giver. To make it over according to one's own ideas is to play God. To pretend the gift is something else is utterly unrealistic. To dream of another kind of gift is to live your life in the clouds and not in love.

*God's Plan.* This mutual giving of self in marriage must be done, not according to the whims of the givers, but according to the direction of God. We must consent to receive with favor and approval the will of God which is exercised through the needs of the partner, the duties of marriage, and the demands presented by the kaleidoscope of everyday circumstances. Acceptance involves a heart open to the will of God.

However young you are, look back over your life. Recall some of the rebellious moments when you refused the duty clearly imposed. How many of those difficulties now seem trivial and hardly worth all the emotional turmoil? How many more do you discover which make you happy that they happened, even though you fought them at the time? These experiences should teach you to look for, and agree to, the will of God in your married life, for only in finding and following His plan for you, can you discover happiness.

*Christ's Acceptance.* When Our Lord came into the world to bring the gift of divinity to mankind, His gift was not even received! Says St. John, pathetically: "He came unto His own and His own received Him not." And yet, Christ accepted humanity by uniting it to His own divinity. He bore the sins of mankind by taking the guilt upon His own head. He agreed to the weak potential of men when He said, "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Though He pointed out, "Without Me, you can do nothing," He also inspired St. Paul to say, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." This full acceptance by Christ of mankind with all its potential and all its weakness, is the norm for the loving acceptance of the matter how much she is exasperated with the child, sees his faults, and all its weakness, is the norm for the loving acceptance of the mutual gift of self in marriage. However strong may be *natural* love and acceptance, it is not enough for a Christian marriage. Christ has set a divine measure for Christian love when He said,



that we must make friends with our faults. This is not to say we can let them go uncorrected, rather we must smile—wryly, perhaps—and say: “There you are again. I thought you were conquered. But, we’ll try again.”

Our talents were given us so they could be developed to the full. Thus, we must work to develop our potential. Here the Sacrament of Penance is particularly valuable to a married person. An examination of conscience focusing on our duties to our partner, family, and to God, will make us aware of our own mistakes. The sacramental absolution will wipe the slate clean. A strong purpose of amendment will renew our efforts. A daily examination of conscience and an Act of Contrition at the end of each day will “close the books” and open a new page for the morrow.

Self-examination and self-acceptance should not stop at faults, but should also stress the development of strengths. Finding happiness in the successful acts of wifely virtue or fatherly discipline gives foundations for further growth. Positive as well as negative observations are important in self-acceptance.

When we accept ourselves as unique, we must be careful also to accept our masculinity or femininity with all it entails. The irresponsible man may find himself *male* but not *masculine*; he is not saying “yes” to full masculinity. The niggardly and rejecting woman may be attractively female but hardly feminine. She is not agreeing to her God-given femininity.

*Acceptance of the Partner.* Each husband and wife must receive the true gift of his or her beloved. It must be accepted as it is, not as you dreamed it might be, with all its actual perfection, potential development, failures, and faults. The lover may see the faults of the beloved, and the help and encouragement needed by the beloved to overcome them, but the beloved is received with overall approval nevertheless. A real lover might be compared to the mother of a two-year-old child. She does not say her child is perfect, yet she does not reject him as impossible. No matter how much she is exasperated with the child, sees his faults, and alternates hugs and spankings, it is her child. She accepts him. She *consents* to his being; she says “yes” to his growth; she welcomes his gift of love.

*Open Heart.* Acceptance is not achieved in a single act, it is a lifetime of repetitions. A clear sign of human personality is the ability to choose. Each day a married couple must choose the

lives and make prudential decisions. They have the ability to perform the practical and fine arts, to reduce the material surroundings of their lives to a beautiful and serviceable order.

A human being, precisely because he is human, also has a free will. Men and women have equal ability to choose good and avoid evil. He can resolve to do better and sorrow for past mistakes, and can both love and be loved.

*Personality.* The crowning perfection which all mankind has in common is personality. This means that all the actions and all faculties of body and soul are one’s own and are not to be referred to anybody else. The human being may *use* the material universe about him—and even the plants and animals; he may not *be used*, justly, by anyone. He may never be reduced to a means, a thing, a service, an instrument. He cannot be communicated to anyone; he may not be taken over by anyone. At the level at which he achieves full responsibility by the development of all his talents, and, therefore, becomes fully free, he is answerable to the Creator for himself. But no one can or may answer for him. Both men and women have personality in equal fullness.

*Same Natural Goals.* The natural goal for every reality can be discovered by examining its obvious purpose. A knife is made for cutting; fruits are made for eating, and animals are clearly put in the service of mankind. Since man is a spiritual being with a personality, whose characteristic actions are thinking and loving, he is obviously made to know and to love. His desire for knowledge is essentially insatiable even though he might give up study because of its difficulty. His pursuit of the good is indeterminate to the point of infinity. Now, since God is, by definition, all true and all good, a human being is made to know and to love God.

*Supernatural Destiny.* Man could know and love God to a certain degree by merely human efforts. However, mankind has not been placed in the world with a merely *human* destiny of knowing and loving. From divine revelation we know that God has called him to know and love Himself by sharing the very kind of knowing and loving which divinity has of itself. His supernatural destiny, then, without destroying his natural abilities, is to share, by the gift of grace, in divine living.

*Original Sin.* The supernatural destiny of man to know and love God as He is in Himself has been hampered by the sin of Adam and Eve, called original sin. Though man was called to fly

to the very heart of God, he has lost his supernatural wings. He finds himself with a supernatural destiny and only his natural abilities to achieve it. To give mankind the ability, once again, to reach His heart, God sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to take up human flesh. By living a human life and ascending the cross to die for mankind, Christ won back for man sanctifying grace which once again gives to man the ability to achieve divine knowing and loving.

*Supernatural Merit.* Before the fall, Adam and Eve were able to achieve their supernatural destiny with comparative ease. After the fall, they had a supernatural destiny without the supernatural ability to achieve it. Since the death and resurrection of Christ, though man has been given the means to achieve his supernatural destiny through grace, Divine Wisdom has planned that, though the merits of achievement are those of Christ, they are given only in seed to the human being. Only by prayer, work, and struggle is the human being truly able to merit and to carve out his own spiritual destiny which is the unity with God for all eternity.

#### GIFTS OF SEXUAL DIFFERENCES

All mankind, therefore, has a common human nature and a common destiny which is eternal happiness. However, human personalities are divided into two groups; they are colored by masculinity or femininity. These sexual differences extend, not only to the bodies of men and women, but also to their emotions, reasoning powers, strength of will, and even to their religious experience. It will be the task of this chapter to unfold the basic differences between the sexes. This is exceedingly difficult, because the fundamental substrata of masculinity and femininity, which were determined at the moment of conception, have been complicated by the development of characteristically masculine or feminine traits during the learning process. Each person's experience is somewhat different, and the culture in which each has been educated largely determines what will be considered characteristically masculine or feminine.

*Unique Sexuality.* Each human person has his human nature as a fundamentally equal possession, yet no two human beings are alike. How boring it would be if each human being were stamped identically, resembling an assembly line product. But, God loves each human being in a unique fashion. He gives to each one

the cosmos, a mere stream of consciousness, he does not see himself at all, since he exists only as God sees and loves him.

In the same way, we must see others as God sees them, for this is the only way in which they exist. So, also, must you see your marriage, your partner, and the unique things that will happen in the way God sees them. You cannot project a preconceived picture of how you might like things to be, upon the reality as it is.

This light which shines on all of us is not so brilliant that we can always see clearly, without doubt or hesitation. Our vision is prone to error. We can throw false lights on the subject. Many prefer not to take the trouble, or go through the anguish, of learning. It takes courage and care to learn anew every day. For this care and courage we must pray daily. The blind man heard Christ's approaching footsteps and kind voice when He asked: "What wouldst thou have me do for thee?" (Luke 18:41.) He cried: "Lord, that I may see!" Perhaps, if you struggle hard enough and cry loud enough, you, too, may hear the words: "Receive thy sight," and experience with the blind man true, mutual vision.

#### ACCEPTANCE

Once the spouses begin to know life, marriage, each other, and God's plan, the next step is to accept them. Acceptance does not so much mean to put up with or barely tolerate, as it does to receive with favor, approve, agree or consent to, take as true or satisfactory.

*Self-Acceptance.* First of all, we must accept ourselves. Each one of us is a unique combination of masculine or feminine traits, having a special role to play within society according to the plan of God. In order to consent to our own self, we must be honest in seeing our own strength and weakness, faults, and sins. We must cherish the gifts which we have from God, even when they involve inherent weaknesses. We must bear with the weaknesses and sins which have been caused by our own ineptness, our own deliberate evil choices, and the confusions of original sin. And yet, we must accept this self with favor. No matter how much we berate ourselves for a fault or do penance for it, we can never be despairing over it. We must accept ourselves as we are and use a bit of humor to help us over the rough places. Someone once said

other in his own family setting, have asked each other what they like and dislike about things and people. Unfortunately, (or perhaps fortunately for a lifetime of growth together) they really know very little. Dating took place under controlled circumstances and pleasant surroundings. Family introductions were artificial with all skeletons carefully stored in the closet: Besides, fiances are not always exactly honest with each other. They are too anxious to please. Finally, though it is not really true that "love is blind," it is true that romantic love wants to see only good in the beloved and even finds faults understandable and acceptable.

*Attention.* When we were in school we were constantly admonished to "pay attention." This admonition is absolutely imperative for the young married couple. They must constantly pay attention to, and be aware of, their own gifts and weaknesses and those of the other. We do not mean here the romantic attentiveness which the young engaged couple shows. This is a mere enthusiastic preparation for the real attention that goes with living together. Two people in marriage must learn to *see* each other, to *see* their union, and to *see* God's plan working out each day.

Many couples never grow in knowledge of each other, their union, and God. They exist (it cannot be called living) together; their words, their gestures, and even their love unions reveal nothing, express nothing, teach nothing. They become deaf to each other's moods and thoughts, needs, desires, dreams, hopes, and failures. They see none of God's design in their daily work. They are not really aware of their children though they may feed, clothe, and educate them.

The attitude of attention one has for one's self, his partner, their union, and God can also be described as an attitude of "listening." It is a kind of alertness which discovers one's own natural "bent," the "bent" of the partner, the direction of their unity in marriage, and the direction in which the will of God is pointing *today*.

*Light.* The accuracy of sight depends not only upon the viewer's sharpness of vision or concentration, but also upon the availability of light on the subject. The only light in which a person may be truly seen is the light of God. Each one of us is the kind of person he is because God sees him in a certain way. If a man sees himself only as a high-class animal, a mere conglomeration of atoms, a mechanical-chemical structure, a chance happening of

slightly different gifts and combines myriads of possible traits in an infinite variety of ways.

God loves each human in a manner similar to the love shown by an artist for each tile which goes into a mosaic—each part has to contribute to the beauty of the whole. So each human must fill out the pattern of humanity in general. However, there is a notable difference between the love of God for a human and the love of an artist for a small part of the mosaic. For the artist, any other tile of equal consistency or color will fit, and he can easily discard one piece for another. But God loves each human and his precise potential so that no other individual would fit into His plan precisely as this person. He loves all of mankind in each individual human person and each individual human person in all mankind.

Since no human beings are exactly alike—even so-called identical twins—no individual has the exact kind of masculinity or femininity as anyone else. The precise challenge, therefore, for each and every marriage is for a husband to offer his particular *expression* of masculinity to his wife with all its potentialities and to discover and accept in all her potentiality the unique manifestation of femininity possessed by his wife. Each brings to marriage his or her unique masculine or feminine gift, each must accept the unique gift of the other.

*Generation.* The purpose of marriage is the procreation-education of children. Notice, we have said purpose, not purposes. God does not want a world filled with immature infants. He wants it filled with mature adults. So, He gives to a man and woman united in marriage the function, not only the begetting of the child, but the grooming of that child to maturity. Sex is, therefore, not merely a bodily function which calls a new child into existence, but it is also an educational function. A child needs both a mother and a father to complete his growth as well as to begin his existence. For a new life, three are necessary: God, man, and woman. For the maturing of new life, three are also necessary: God, mother, and father. The fullness of sex—masculinity and femininity—is paternity and maternity.

*Paternity.* A man is made by God for paternity. He is given a physical composition with emotional, intellectual, and spiritual gifts which enable him to achieve this fullness. This body-soul unit is designed to know, love, and serve God as a man, giving

back to God the gift of fatherhood in the generation, love, and development of new human beings within marriage or in a spiritual yet real fatherhood as a religious or in the single life.

A man's physical fatherhood is achieved in a brief time. Once he has given his gift of life, his parenthood becomes externalized. He must now concern himself with the necessities of existence. He becomes a breadwinner who goes out into the world to wrest from it a living for his family. He surrounds his wife with care, concern, and protection. He must develop the qualities of directiveness and leadership. He learns to take the long view, to plan, to provide, and to pursue long-range goals aggressively. It is for these reasons that he is given his characteristically muscular body, his emotional drives to forge success and competence, his theoretical logic, his will to succeed.

As so often happens, a man's very strengths frequently offer the occasion for his greatest weaknesses. His strength of will can easily deteriorate into pride and stubbornness. His natural willingness to work may degenerate into avarice and neglect of the deeper needs of his loved ones. His aggressiveness on the physical level can often permit lust to get in the way of love.

*Maternity.* A woman is made for motherhood. God gives her the gifts of body, emotions, mind, and spirituality which will fit her for motherhood. This motherhood is to be achieved physically and emotionally within marriage or spiritually, but no less truly, in the religious state or in single life.

A mother's physical involvement in motherhood does not terminate, but begins at conception. It is prolonged through nine months of pregnancy, the years in which her child is a helpless infant, and the period of the child's formation to maturity. It is for this reason that a woman has received from God her supple, soft body, her emotional concern with affection, her personalized reasoning, and her ability to love, regardless of her children's worthiness of love.

To fulfill her maternal role, a woman needs strength, but it is a strength of flexibility. Because of her nature and the needs of the children, she may never stand rigid in righteousness or domination. She must be flexible and open-hearted; she must express her maternity through tenderness. A woman is also called to work, but she seldom fulfills herself in creative efforts with *things* and *ideas*. Her creative work is with *personalities*.

Secondly, the young spouses must have some idea of the unity which their love can achieve. As explained elsewhere (cf. MARRIED LOVE), the mutual gift of self in marriage produces a special kind of unity which becomes one principle of action, development, generation, and education. Not only must one know the difference between the key and the lock, one must also have some concept of how they might look together!

Finally, the young couple must know the plan which God has for it. The *general* outlines of this plan can be discovered by examining the nature of marriage (cf. MARRIAGE IN CHRIST), the masculine and feminine natures of the spouses, and the laws which govern love (cf. LAW GUIDES LOVE and CHASTITY IN MARRIAGE).

The *particular* blueprint which God has planned for your marriage unfolds only in daily living. Although human beings are all *similar* to each other, they are each unique. When two unique people marry, have individual children, and experience the varying circumstances of every day, they develop a family pattern at least different from every other family. As its members discover their abilities, develop desires and hopes, experience success or failure, meet the challenges of each day, your family will discover the special plan which God has for it alone.

*Scientism.* It is not sufficient to *know about* marriage and family life, although such knowledge is helpful in opening up areas for happy experience. Valuable as it is in itself, intellectual knowledge, carefully worked out in a science, is not enough for living. Many highly educated people know all about things but often their lives come to grief. Great theologians have become heretics; excellent psychologists have failed in marriage; child psychologists sometimes cannot manage their own children. A scientist may know all about an apple in the laboratory, and his knowledge helps us produce better apples, but it may not help him to taste, savor, or digest the apple in his lunch. For successful marriage, it is not necessary to have a vast amount of scientific knowledge about marriage; but it is important to know deeply your self, your spouse, your union, and God's plan for your family.

*Early Knowledge.* During courtship, it is very easy for the young couple to believe that each knows all about the other. They have dated for a long period of time, they have evaluated each

separate religious experiences to each other in a full, rich, spiritual life will find that other areas of giving and receiving are affected.

A husband and wife who are not living deeply their gifts of love on all levels may find that a kiss can be merely an erotic stimulus or an emotional thrill. But if they are living their manifold gift fully, a kiss will help them to see and know each other clearly, to grow in the virtues which are the expression of love, and will be the seal of their spiritual growth in Christ.

## How to Give the Gift of Self

FOR ANY couple, the "how to" must always depend upon the partners' unique love relationship. After all, the ways of giving a gift are only the *means*. It is the *end*, the gift of self, which is important. Moderns often lose themselves in technique. They want to know how to make friends, how to be attractive, how to make money, and even how to spank a child. They expect concrete answers like how to remember names, what cosmetics to use, stock market tips, the thickness of the switch! The only way to *make* a friend is to *be* a friend; remembering his name will follow. The only way to be attractive is to accentuate your beauty points; one cosmetic will do as well as another. The Christian way to make money is to give some needed service to the community; the job is relatively unimportant. The punishment of a child must be loving, just, and corrective; the amount of pain is unimportant. If only we could pursue true goals with all our hearts, we would quickly select the right means!

### KNOWLEDGE

In order for spouses to give and receive their respective gifts, they must know what they are giving and receiving. You cannot put two things together unless you know their characteristic difference. You must recognize the differences between key and lock before you can open a door! A man must understand his own masculinity and his wife's femininity. A woman must know what it is to be a woman and she must see clearly the masculinity exemplified in her husband.

As with the man, a woman's very strengths may lead her into weakness. Her ideal of flexibility might become indecision to the point of indifference or caprice. Her work may become an escape from people instead of a devotion to people. Her love-making may be a thing of duty rather than a gift.

*Complementarity.* Man and woman are designed to complement each other, to bring their own strengths to fill out the weaknesses of the partner, and to have their own weaknesses filled out by the strengths of the partner.

In the efforts of marriage partners to fulfill each other's needs, there are two opposite possibilities of error. One possibility is to expect the partner to have one's own reactions, feelings, and experiences. One might insist that his own scheme of relative values is alone true and objective, and he may refuse to recognize the value scheme of the other. A wife might not understand why sports are so important to her husband, since she has no need for competition. She must understand the need of a man to test his strength and spirit of competition, either actually or vicariously. A man might resent his wife's desire for a new hat or a new dress, since he is so content with the same attire. He must learn that she needs to express her dissatisfaction with herself, her physical and emotional fluctuations, and her individuality as a person. She cannot be content to be merely a series of biological or functional mechanisms.

The opposite mistake is to expect masculine or feminine persons to be so different as to be placed in stereotype categories. Men will say, "That's the way of a woman!" Women will exclaim, "How like a man!" Actions so described will be written off as predetermined by sex. With such attitudes, mutual understanding will not even be attempted. No man is "just like a man." He has a unique combination of masculine qualities similar to those of other men but also quite different. No woman is just another member of her mysterious sex. She has personalized feminine characteristics similar to those of her sisters, but, nevertheless, quite different.

*Cultural Confusions.* Each culture develops its own patterns of masculinity and femininity which color the individual's growth. Each man and woman tends to play his or her role as seen in the community. Since our country is a "melting pot" of European cultures, a nation of rapid change, and, finally, the scene of a

most vociferous "battle of the sexes," we are often confused over how we should act as men and women. Only a recognition of basic differences, mutual patience, and endless communication will help the young couple build their own pattern as husband and wife, mother and father.

### GIFTS OF BODY

Every cell in the body of a man or woman is marked male or female. A good pathologist can take a sliver of flesh and determine whether it came from the body of a man or a woman.

*Man's Bodily Gift.* A man brings to marriage the gift of a body which is aggressively muscular. By actual measurement, he can burn up more physical energy in a day than a woman possesses. Because he burns up more energy, he needs longer periods of recuperative rest. A man is more naturally inclined to athletics because of his strength and the way his muscular and skeletal structure is put together. He can run faster and further, throw a ball better, and is generally more graceful in the more gross body movements than is a woman.

A man is more keenly aware of the coarser bodily pleasures. Sexual reactions are strong and definitive; food and drink are enjoyed in large quantity and with intense physical pleasure. Further, a man's body, unless disturbed by illness, finds itself more consistently able to work and far less dependent upon seasonal changes and the ebb and flow of hormones. His years of potential physical fatherhood are much longer than the years of a woman's fertility.

*Woman's Bodily Gift.* A woman brings to marriage a gift of body far different. However great her strength, her musculature is soft and rounded. Though incapable of the huge output of energy, she seems capable of longer ranges of effort and a more rapid recuperation of her energy. She does not need the huge intake of food and seems to work best with many recuperative pauses and rests.

A woman is much more sensitive to nuances of pleasure than is a man. Her physical response to bodily sexuality is often less intense and more diffuse; the sense of taste is much more refined than the more gross satisfactions of her husband. She seems to respond much more accurately to shades of color, tonality

order. In their human contacts, men tend to be gregarious, prefer larger groups, and call "friends" all those whom they "like" in even casual surface fashion. Such friendships are made quickly and forgotten easily.

Though women may be less aware of community in the abstract, they generally are deeply aware of personal community. Their devotion to the common good may be in such areas as police presence at school crossings, adequate playgrounds, and well operated schools. Women have little "herd" instinct, and do not generally like "crowds." They make fewer but deeper friendships. These friendships are more difficult to form and are usually maintained over long periods and even great distances.

The social differences between men and women are easily seen if you observe how they read a newspaper. A man will read the political and international news, the editorial and sports pages, etc. A woman will read the human interest stories, the society page, the personal advice columns, the child-care hints, etc.

Since a man has so many adult contacts during his work day, he will frequently be content to stay at home in the evening. Since a woman has so few during her workday she will urge a man to partake in evening social life. Yet, when they do go out together, each must be careful not to foist his own gregarious or personalized social nature upon the other. Each must understand and even promote the sociality of the other.

### GIFT OF PERSON

The varying gifts of body, emotions, mind, heart, religious and social nature are all integrated in the gift of self which involves one's entire personality. We cannot safely compartmentalize our lives. We do not truly have a sex life, an emotional life, a thinking life, a willing life, a religious and a social life. We have only a human life. Only for purposes of study and personal awareness may we examine these distinctions as though they were separate!

Not only are these varying gifts not separate, but, since a human being is an interpenetrating body and soul, these various gifts affect each other! A couple which is not thinking together with mutual understanding will find it difficult to achieve bodily unity. If their emotional life is not full and satisfying, their will to love might be weakened. Spouses who are not bringing their

of the doctrine of the Mystical Body. A woman's devotion veers rather toward personal love. In the Mass, she centers her attention upon the personal union with Christ in Holy Communion rather than upon the sacrificial nature of the Mass. More easily than does a man, she focuses upon the persons of Christ, Our Lady, and specific saints. The details of worship such as special prayers, incense, beautiful vestments, impress her more than they impress a man.

It is impossible to have enough faith, hope, or charity. We pray for an increase of these virtues every time we begin the rosary. Yet, there is a difference in the psychological ease or difficulty with which a man or woman practices these virtues.

The man finds it difficult to believe to the point of loss of faith; the woman finds it easy to the point of credulity. It has been suggested that many ecstatic mystics have a difficult time with the Church not only because ecclesiastical authority must be very certain before making a judgment but also because of the natural hesitance of masculine bishops and priests to accept revelations easily.

Depending so much upon his own masculine competence, a man might ignore the virtue of hope or, when he fails, lose this virtue in despair. A woman, with her vivid awareness of God, can depend upon Him with such hope as to be almost presumptuous, perhaps ignoring the fact that we must pray as though all depended upon God and work as though all depended upon us.

We must love God above all things. However, a man may make a god of things, money, power, or "isms." At the other extreme, he often finds excuses for skipping spiritual obligations because he is too busy. On the other hand, a woman often feels that love of God is so important that she may forget about *things*. She might rush off to daily morning Mass and neglect a primary duty of getting breakfast for her husband and children.

### SOCIAL GIFTS

Men and women are social creatures and need social activities and interests. And yet, their social interests are different. Men seem more aware of *community* as an abstraction. They understand such concepts as *common good*, and their obligation to it in terms of taxation, political activity, national and international

of voice, nuances of sound. She is more graceful in detailed movement.

Throughout her life a woman is deeply affected by the ebb and flow of her body chemistry. With the onset of menstruation in puberty until its permanent cessation at menopause, the physical life of a woman takes on a cyclical nature. Exterior changes signify the interior changes as each month she experiences the involvement in the life-potential that exists within her.

*The Body and Union.* The giving and receiving of bodily gifts is symbolized and achieved in the marital act. A man must learn that his bodily strength, his aggressions and urge for physical union, together with his more gross physical satisfactions—though good in themselves—can easily degenerate into seeing his partner only as an object of desire rather than a person to be loved. He must use his strength in tenderness, lest it become mere domination and a shallow self-seeking.

On her side, a woman must see in her body not something to care for and with which to attract or bargain, but more as something to give and to use. Very often her education has implied that virtue is a denial of physical expression of love. At the same time, she has learned all the tricks of physical attraction designed to show her desirability as a marriage partner. In marriage, she must learn a direct reversal of attitude. Virtue now demands a joyous abandon in physical expressions of love. Slender attractiveness must be lost, at least temporarily, to permit another body to develop according to the will of God and nature. Personal care must frequently yield to the service of husband and demanding children.

In order to give one's gift and to accept the gift of another, man and wife must expect to live many forms of contradiction. Masculine strength must be given with tenderness; feminine tenderness must yield to masculine possessiveness. Masculine energies must be refined by feminine sensitivity; feminine vacillations must depend upon the more even consistency of the male. (Cf. YOUR BODY AND YOU.)

### THE GIFT OF EMOTIONS

Our culture generally concedes that women are more emotional than men. Scientific tests, using blood pressure and heart-beat, indicate that a woman responds emotionally with more

rapidity and intensity to a given stimulus than does a man. Our culture tends to reinforce this by expecting a man to be more even in his emotional expression. Our customs regard the expression of the "softer" emotions such as affection, tears, sympathy, etc., as "unmanly!" Man has been educated to suppress or hide his tears of sorrow and to dissipate his fears and angers in the trivialities of life. On the other hand, our culture approves and takes for granted these softer emotions in a woman. A woman is not considered feminine unless she is emotional and expresses these emotions in their fullness.

Because of these expectations, men have difficulty in understanding women, and women have difficulty in understanding men in the emotional area. Also, in his attempt to measure up to cultural expectations, there is a danger that a man unconsciously develops a cold, hard exterior and a woman allows her emotions to run riot to the point of sheer sentimentality.

*Emotional Control.* The sign of maturity is emotional control and direction, rather than emotional repression. If a man refuses to express any feelings he does his family an injustice; a woman is also guilty of injustice if she gives in to emotional weakness and lives only on the surface of emotional fluctuations. Though she must learn that her cyclic physical life may influence her emotional response—her husband also must learn to live with these glandularly affected emotional responses—constant effort must be exerted to control such changes. While the woman usually sets the emotional climate of the home, that climate can remain healthy only when a man learns to place his stability and strength at the service of her flexibility.

*Characteristic Emotions.* It is more important to understand the cause of characteristic masculine and feminine emotions than to understand the varying intensity of those emotions. A man tends to express both those positive and negative emotions which center around his creative leadership in fatherhood. A woman will tend to express those positive and negative emotions which surround her function of creative formation in motherhood.

*A Man's Emotions.* A man's feelings will center about his sense of success or failure as a man. He naturally wishes to be a leader in public affairs among his fellows and in his home. He wants to be successful as a breadwinner and in changing the community for the better. He wants to be an effective lover, a man who can

practice long-range courage, confident that someday "his ship will come in." However, he finds the difficulties and failures of each day almost unbearable. A woman has a natural short-range courage, is able to face the difficulties of any day but fearful of the distant future. A man's temperance will focus on emotional control; a woman's temperance will focus upon the more physical appetites of hunger, thirst, and sex.

*Vices.* Even vices tend to be more characteristically masculine or feminine. A man's natural aggressiveness might lead him to derision, cursing, boasting, truculent anger, prodigal waste. His courage will sometimes become foolhardy adventurousness or stubbornness. His temperance in emotions might lead him to emotional insensibility, and his attraction to physical pleasure to drunkenness or lust.

A woman's more flexible nature and concern with personalities might engender detraction, back-biting, hypocrisy. Instead of aggressiveness, she might use flattery and be devious instead of stubborn in gaining her way. Her peculiar courage could become cowardice over the long haul or finicky concern with present detail which is perhaps unimportant. If intemperate, her emotionality might verge upon sentimentality; her easy control of bodily appetites could lead to deliberate insensibility.

## SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The supernatural gifts of sanctifying and actual grace are the same for both sexes as are the virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. The infused virtues, which transform the natural virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, are also given equally to both sexes. Again, both men and women can receive all the sacraments except Holy Orders. Yet, although husband and wife can both fully participate in the life of grace and the liturgy of the Church, they receive these supernatural gifts in their own characteristic masculine or feminine fashion. St. Thomas says, "Whatever is received is received according to the capacity and manner of the receiver."

Devotion is the prime spiritual act of religion. A man seems devoted to the ideal potential of religion. Once fully aware, he becomes greatly impressed with the concept of sacrifice, the idea of redemption, the potential of sanctifying grace, the social impact



fail. On her side, a woman might easily become so lost in personal pros and cons that her concept of the right or the just might be perverted.

### GIFTS OF WILL

*Love.* One of the greatest poets of love, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in characteristically feminine fashion, asks herself, "How do I love thee? Let me count the ways." A man loves in quite a different fashion. He asks, not so poetically, "Why do I love thee? Let me count the *whys*, or the reasons." A man will give himself reasons for entering a business partnership, joining a club, marrying a wife, or loving his children. A woman will love, not for any reason but simply "because you are you."

Because of his "reasons" for love, a man tends to love an ideal. He idealizes his future wife and refuses to admit that she has any faults. Because of her personalized love, a woman sees the faults of her beloved very clearly but loves him all the same. She sees in him a tremendous potential since she really marries what he could be if he tried! Both are doomed somewhat to disappointment since, in living with a woman, a man will discover that she is human and cannot be idealized; and a woman, in living with a man, will discover that no man ever realizes all his potential.

*Virtue.* Habitual love in action toward a particular object is called virtue. Love devoted to the good of others is justice, which gives to each person his or her rights. Love devoted to choosing means toward a goal is prudence. Love which faces difficulties is fortitude or courage. Love which restrains one's own selfishness is temperance.

Various aspects of these virtues are more naturally practiced by a man or woman. Frequently, one partner feels that the other lacks a particular virtue simply because the other's approach is different. For example, a man can practice strict justice in fitting the punishment to the *crime*. A woman tends to practice distributive justice in fitting the punishment to the *criminal*. In prudence, a man will make long range plans, using the characteristic masculine phrase, "I am at the policy making level; don't bother me with the details." A woman tends to do detailed and personalized planning and she is particularly interested in that part of prudence called counsel or advice. In fortitude, a man will

satisfy all the reasonable expectations of his wife and children. When he begins to discover how seldom he is truly successful, how often he fails, how seldom his opinion is respected, he finds himself a prey to emotional fatigue, discouragement, frustration, depression, and despair.

A wife must learn to give her husband a great deal of encouragement when he is weak and approval when he is strong. Yet, in many ways this is difficult. Since his parenthood is exteriorized in providing for his family, a man tends to live his greatness when he is away from his wife. It is to her that he brings his less desirable self and it is to these weaknesses that she must minister. Never can she belittle or cheapen him, especially in front of others. Always she must look to him for leadership and final decisions. In so doing, she will find herself deserving of the fullest responsibility for his successes. It is her loving awareness of his emotional needs which will send him out afresh each day to wrest security and success from the world about him.

*A Woman's Emotions.* A woman's emotional life revolves about her feminine role as a wife and mother. She is a loving matrix which forms those personalities that come in contact with her, whether they be husband, children, or personal friends. Her hope and desire, happiness and fear, anger and shame revolve entirely about her strong devotion. Her negative emotional moods center about her fears of being unloved or even unlovable. Should she feel particularly unloved at a particular moment, she will be lonely and depressed. Her positive moods will all center around her strong affection and personal conquests.

A woman, too, lives much of her greatness away from her husband, since he is often not there to observe her successes. She wishes to bring to him her personal joys for approval because her love faces inward and centers in her husband. However, she, too, will bring him her unlovely weaknesses, her personal failures, gnawing sense of loneliness, and her fear of being unattractive. And he, too, must learn to give her affectionate love just as she must learn to give him encouragement.

As in all spheres of unity, if each will be concerned about the other, each will find his own needs met. It is easy for a man to be affectionate to a woman who has a calm confidence in his abilities and who gives him constant encouragement. It is easy for a woman to encourage a husband who is warmly affectionate.

*Emotional Escape.* When emotional needs are not met by the wife or husband there is a danger that they will be sought elsewhere. A man, who finds himself inept in front of his wife, tends to look for his approval among his fellows. A woman who meets no emotional response in her husband will "marry the children" who cannot help but respond to her love.

It is a strange anomaly that husbands and wives who do not know how to serve the emotional needs of their spouses, uncannily know how to hurt each other emotionally. When they want to punish each other, a woman will point out to her husband how great a failure in life he seems, and a man will subtly suggest to his wife that she is an unlovable shrew.

*Atmosphere.* It may be valuable to mention here that many women are extremely sensitive to the atmosphere or esthetics of affection. The very carefully thought out gift, the smoothly phrased compliment, the choice of the propitious moment and romantic surroundings, are naturally quite pleasing to the sensitive nature of a woman. The thoughtful man will take at least some care to meet these natural interests of his wife. On the other hand, a wife must understand and treasure the apparently crude and inept efforts of her husband to express affection. The reality of love may well be present even though finesse is missing!

#### GIFTS OF MIND

A cynic once remarked: "To get along with a man, love him a little and understand him a lot. To get along with a woman, love her a lot and don't try to understand her at all!" People often accept the explanation that men are logical and women are intuitive. As a result, a man often boasts that he is a logical, clear-headed, and objective thinker, even when his reasoning is disturbed by family traditions, prejudices, narrow perceptions, or fears. A woman may agree that she must be "intuitive" and emotional, though she may have had a fine education and have used her intelligence with success in pursuit of a career before marriage. Once she chooses homemaking and motherhood, she might suppose she can leave her intelligence at the door. The popular myth of masculine logic and feminine intuition probably indicates that neither sex is willing to understand the reasoning of the other.

St. Thomas says that intuition is the proper method of knowledge for angels and not for human beings. So women are not intuitive, however poetically we might call them "angels." As human beings, both men and women have intellects, and reason logically, but their intelligence and logic are colored by their masculinity and femininity.

*Masculine and Feminine Reasoning.* A man's logic is abstract because he concerns himself with broad general principles. He speaks of justice, peace, order. A woman's logic is personal because her reasoning always revolves around the personal involvements. They both reason equally well, but their different interests provide them with different raw materials for the process.

When a man reasons about childhood discipline, he proceeds in this fashion: child, violation of the law, necessity of justice, punishment. A woman reasons thusly: Joseph, long nap, boring day, forgetful, did not really mean it, no punishment. Or she might also reason conversely: Joseph, teasing, hateful, deliberately defied me, needs severe punishment. A father can see the violation of the law; a mother sees the rejection of love. A father tends to judge the action; a mother tends to judge the intention.

*Objectivity.* It is not true that a man is objective and a woman subjective; they are both objective in a different way! A man is objective in an abstract manner; he learns by study and adding abstraction to abstraction. A woman is objective in a personal way and she learns by observation and by adding detail to detail.

*Words.* Because words are signs of ideas, the language of a man and a woman is different. A man wants his words taken literally. A woman will introduce all possible hidden nuances of meaning. To understand a man, someone suggests, listen to what he *says*; to understand a woman, listen to what she *means*!

When Our Lady at the wedding feast of Cana said to Jesus, "They have no wine," she did not so much inform Him of a fact, as request a miracle. When Our Lord responded, "My hour (for miracles) has not come," He simply stated that His public ministry had not yet begun. He did not subtly refuse her, as the event proved.

It is most important that husband and wife respect each other's words and logic. They are complementary approaches. A man can easily draw up theoretical plans and forget who may be harmed by them, or what personal difficulties might make them