

OF CABBAGES AND THINGS

Economic Preparation for Marriage

7

ECONOMIC REALITIES are part and parcel of family life. The Church emphasizes the spiritual basis of marriage, but She is also fully aware of the material considerations. While money cannot buy happiness, its proper use can promote marital unity and love while misuse can cause disunity, quarrels, and injustice. Therefore, the young couple planning marriage should talk out all the economic aspects of family life openly and freely during the engagement.

In this section we will present some typical economic problems and suggest some general principles for guidance. But, since income, spending, and personal circumstances vary so widely, it will be necessary for each couple to supply its own facts, figures, and conclusions. You may find it difficult to be certain about many points of policy. Your ideas may vary from those of the author, and the two of you may have ideas different from each other. Such is to be expected, since observations about economic policy are not dogma or canon law. Rather, they are decisions of practical prudence. Your particular circumstances may suggest variations. However, many of us tend to act without sufficient reflection or out of mere habit or prejudice. Here, then, you will find several points of view so that you may see material things from all angles and arrive at your own prudential decisions.

CHRISTIAN VALUES IN ECONOMIC LIFE

It is true that any one of several economic policies may be morally right. Yet this does not mean that everyday economic judgments are outside the guidance of spiritual principles. In fact, the economic side of family living cannot be separated from the Christian principles which give direction to all of life. Man is a person with both a body and a soul, and all choices about man's physical needs must be measured also in terms of their effects on his total personality. Economic security is not an end or a goal in itself, it is a *means* to happiness here, and eternity hereafter.

In the Christian view of family life there are several principles which have direct bearing on economic decisions. We can learn them by considering the famous lesson of Our Lord:

"Therefore I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat; nor yet for your body, what you shall put on. The life is a greater thing than the food, and the body than the clothing. . . .

"See how the lilies grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass which today is alive in the field and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more you, O you of little faith!

"And as for you, do not seek what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; and do not exalt yourselves (for after all these things the nations of the world seek); but your Father knows that you need these things. But seek the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be given you besides." (Luke 12: 22-24, 27-31.)

From this discourse of Christ we can learn certain universal principles to guide all of our family decisions:

God's Providence. More than anything else, we must recognize the Providence of God. Everything we have—our minds, our abilities, our property—is from God, who watches over all and takes care that His will is ultimately achieved. It is up to us to help achieve His goal by our own human planning, while leaving the final result to Him. Because God gave man free will and because some men abuse this gift, there is injustice in the world. Economic selfishness is all too common, and sometimes economic activity seems to be a battle of greedy men seeking power and wealth. We must not imitate such men, but neither should we despair of keeping our own family economically sound and just. God will provide if we do our part.

Faith. Our family life must, therefore, be based on an act of faith in God's Providence. We remember that Christ's words are just as true today. If God takes care of the birds of the air and the lilies of the field, He will also take care of us. Our new family will surely have its daily problems and drudgery; there will be economic hazards and psychological difficulties, worry about unemployment, the national economy, international war. Despite all these hazards and a hundred more, the Christian family has faith that there will be grace sufficient to meet each problem if its members live according to God's law.

We Americans must not overstress the economic hardships of family life. Some will be called upon to make heroic sacrifices.

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.

1. The wife's role in keeping a healthy Christian attitude toward the economic condition of the family is _____ important.
 occasionally most seldom not
2. Each married couple should approach the economic aspects of family living _____.
 as a unit once a month faithfully as unimportant
3. Economic security is _____ to happiness here, and eternity hereafter.
 essential an end unimportant a means
4. Despite all hazards, the Christian family has faith that there will be sufficient _____ to meet life's problems.
 money grace credit charity
5. The Christian family must learn to _____ the material things given by God.
 renounce acquire reverence destroy
6. The standard of living for the Christian family should be modeled on justice and _____.
 property income temperance charity
7. It is a fundamental teaching of the Church that the first requirement for a wage is that it must be _____.
 a living wage paid monthly hourly taxable
8. One of the first duties of a new wife will be to _____.
 get a job buy furniture learn homemaking give a party
9. The best source of financing household items is through _____.
 savings a rich uncle borrowing a wife's job
10. Although the father is chief _____ in the home, both husband and wife should share in discussing economic decisions.
 spender wage-earner problem authority
11. A _____ is most helpful for keeping the family finances in order.
 big salary checking account budget working wife

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

If so, God will give them grace and courage and we must be ready to help. Yet, we must be honest with ourselves; never before in history have so many families had so much economic security and so many aids for easy living as today's American families. You will be founding your family with the knowledge that you and your children will probably be better fed, clothed, housed, doctored, and educated than the children of any other nation in history. We should live by faith, but we should also count our blessings. The *material* aids to family living are in relative abundance. This should help us to see our obligations to help less fortunate families here and in other countries.

Kingdom of God Is First. The above parable makes clear that there is a right order to life. Both economic goods and spiritual values are necessary for man, but the spiritual principles are "first." This does not mean that temporal goals cannot be second or third. The final test of every economic choice is whether that which is done is right and just, not whether it will yield profit or comfort. This may seem like a very simple proposition, but it is most difficult to achieve.

Reverence. Material things must be revered or respected. Our universe, and everything in it, is a gift from God, given to us to *use* wisely for our own good and to help us serve Him. No matter how rich we are we cannot despise His gifts by wasting or destroying them. The person who is careless of his clothing, puts more on his plate than he can eat, destroys furniture, marks up public property, or returns borrowed articles ruined by abuse is as much a vandal as the delinquent who wrecks the school building. It is only a matter of degree. A family, husband, wife, and children, must learn to treasure—not hoard—the things that God has given them to make their lives healthy, convenient, and pleasant.

TEMPTATIONS

Temptations to Selfishness. Children are the primary blessing of marriage. Mutual love and security are a second blessing which helps achieve the first. But the modern temptation in the United States is to reverse these purposes. The economic burdens of children are not excuses for postponing indefinitely the beginning of one's family, nor are they automatically excuses for "rhythm."

POSSIBLE SCORE	55		SUB-SCORE I _____
MINUS <input style="width: 20px; height: 20px; border: 1px solid black;" type="text"/>	ERRORS X 5 _____		SUB-SCORE II _____
SUB-SCORE II _____			TOTAL SCORE _____

EXAMINATION

The Catholic couple must resist the arguments which make marriage primarily an institution to obtain a more comfortable and work-free existence. Marriage and family life are not for self, but primarily for children and God.

Temptation to Pagan Materialism. For a majority of young couples, the strongest temptation will be to go along with the crowd and live according to the current standards of materialism. The American "ideal," promoted so attractively in our imagination, is that of a vacation atmosphere, a sensual existence, bolstered by all types of food, drink, clothes, furnishings, amusements, comforts, and luxuries. These may not be wrong in themselves, but when pursuing them begins to dominate our lives we are more pagan than Christian. Christ called this kind of living *pagan*: "for after all these things the nations of the world seek." The Christian family must have the "kingdom of God" as its chief concern.

The Christian ideal, however, does not call for destitution. A destitute family is deprived of even the minimum of goods necessary for a decent life! Destitution is a social evil, an insult to the dignity of the person and a severe handicap to fulfilling family obligations, a danger to Christian virtue and eternal salvation. The Christian approach is found in the virtue of temperance. The Christian family practices *moderation* toward material goods. It seeks to develop a "poverty of spirit" which means that economic goods are not sought at the expense of the spiritual. We may not become so attached to any of the things that make up our standard of living that we become enslaved by them; that is, we must be prepared to sacrifice them if doing God's will requires it. It is not easy to identify particular things and customs which lead to pagan materialism. Rather, it is the dominant attitude ruling our time, energy, and desires which must be examined for a possible materialistic spirit.

Temptations to Seek Social, Economic Standing. The Christian family will model its standard of living on justice and charity. Yet, that family will be tempted to adopt secularistic neighborhood standards and to seek higher economic success while neglecting Christian virtues. Thus, a husband may become so intent on achieving professional recognition or financial success that he neglects his wife, children, and his proper authority in the home. Even worse, he may be tempted to use unethical business practices and violate justice toward his employer or his employees. The

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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
↓ | FALSE
↓ | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 1. The Church emphasizes the spiritual basis of marriage but She also is fully aware of material considerations. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. Christian family life must be based on an act of faith in the Providence of God. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. If a husband is still in school, a couple should have a reasonable income until he graduates. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. The most necessary item a young married couple will need is a new automobile. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. The Christian approach to material family living is found in the virtue of temperance. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. When applying economic principles to the Christian family only one policy can be morally right. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Both economic goods and spiritual values are necessary for man, but the economic principles are "first." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. A family's offertory gift at Mass represents the entire gift of self and family to God. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. Regular recreation is a genuine need for the family's physical and mental health. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. It is a safe rule for young couples to avoid going into debt at all during the first months of marriage. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Pope Pius XI spoke out strongly against those who criticized the working mother. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. The principle form of family security is steady employment at a living wage. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. A proper evaluation of the economic factors of family living is achieved automatically. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. It is sound policy to carry enough insurance, even if the family budget must be overbalanced. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. It is a good idea for a husband and wife to make out a will soon after marriage. |

CUT ON THIS LINE

POSSIBLE SCORE

45

NAME _____

MINUS ERRORS X 3

ADDRESS _____

SUB-SCORE I

CITY _____ STATE _____

United States. These include wise buymanship practices, budgeting, saving, insurance, and (only with great caution!) such credit facilities as are within one's means.

Cases for Discussion

May a bride continue working until the babies come?

George and I were married right after he finished school, so we and the apartment pretty well, so far, and we do need the money. had no money saved up. I've been managing to handle my job. However, we're very anxious to make a success of our marriage, too. Am I endangering our future happiness by continuing to work?

My husband's work requires so much travel that we lack a normal family life.

My husband's work takes him from home most of the week. I don't have much trouble keeping busy because we have three children aged six, five, and three, but it does get lonesome and at times I miss his companionship. He tells me it is the work he can do best, and that perhaps, within a few years he can get a position in the home office. I'm worried about our lack of normal family life. Don't you think we're missing something valuable?

Should a family move to another city just to get a better job?

Jim and I have been married nearly ten years and have five wonderful children and a home of our own. In the beginning, we had to make some real sacrifices, but that didn't matter because we knew what we wanted. Now, just as we are settling down to enjoy things, Jim is offered a big job in another city. He wants to take it, but I tell him that we have everything we need and want right here—friends, a home, and sufficient income. Don't you think I'm right?

wife may aspire to higher social standing. She may run her husband and children ragged by competing in parties, entertaining, and social contacts that are inconsistent with peaceful family life. She may give the home a tense atmosphere by complaining that they do not have the possessions and comforts of others.

The wife's role in keeping a healthy Christian attitude toward the economic condition of the family is most important. She must daily keep first things first. It is very easy in this nation to be caught in the whirl of things in which her clothes and those of her children become more important than religious training; where immaculate housekeeping and a "better homes and gardens" appearance are more important than making the house a delight for the family; where status with socially important women is more important than status as the queen of the home; where Sunday is more a day of recreation than it is a holy day; where women's magazines are more important than the Bible.

Our Lord certainly had our own generation in mind, too, when He told the parable of the rich man who multiplied his wealth and then said to himself:

"... 'And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast many good things laid up for many years; take thy ease, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'Thou fool, this night do they demand thy soul of thee; and the things that thou hast provided, whose will they be?' So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich as regards God." (Luke 12: 19-21.)

Family Income

ANY DISCUSSION of the economic aspects of family life must begin with the yearly income. This will vary widely from family to family in proportion to the degree of training, responsibility, skill, experience, and ambition possessed by the breadwinner. Even so, it is a fundamental teaching of the Church that the first requirement of a wage is that it must be a "living wage." This means that it must be enough to support a worker and his family in frugal comfort. Often, it is not the fault of the individual worker if his income falls below this standard and there is little he can do about it by himself. For this reason, all Christian citizens of good will should be concerned with supporting those laws and organizations which aim, by just means, to provide all workers

with a minimum family income. It is interesting to note that in Canada and several other nations the government pays a family allowance for each child to assist the parents in their obligations to rear their children.

THE HUSBAND'S INCOME

Normally, the primary source for a family is the husband's employment. And it is steady employment upon which the new family must build its financial security. Marriage thus implies an obligation for the man to be more steady and conscientious in his work. It gives him an added incentive for advancement.

A few words are needed here about the growing tendency of young couples to marry before the man has completed school or secured steady employment. There is no universal solution for this problem, but this fundamental rule applies: because rights and duties are inseparably united, the exercise of the right to marry implies the ability to fulfill the duties which accompany wedlock. Therefore, the couple should have a reasonable prospect of income until the husband is in a position to provide one. Ordinarily, a minimum which the bride could expect would be that her bridegroom have some employment which would provide a modest income. She could also expect her "man" to have proven his maturity by having a reasonable amount of savings.

THE WIFE'S CONTRIBUTION

Probably most American husbands need a greater awareness of the wife's contribution to the family's economic welfare. The economist defines real income as money or gain that one receives from labor, *services*, or property. In the sense of *services*, the wife contributes a large share to the family income. The money equivalent of all her cooking, cleaning, sewing, and myriad other tasks might well be greater than the cash her husband earns at his work. Thus, it is wise to begin marriage with the realization that both the husband and wife contribute to the family's *real* income. As a dowry, the young bride should bring at least a trousseau of household linens and personal clothing. Any "bride's book" will list the minimum requirements.

Unfortunately, many a bride enters marriage without a dowry of domestic skills, though she may be well trained for commercial

are very expensive. Arrange for hospitalization insurance immediately after marriage since maternity benefits do not usually go into effect until nine or ten months following the issuance of the policy.

Fire, Theft, Wind, and Liability Insurance. Policies of this type are a prudent protection for one's house, furnishings, and auto. They will be required in most instances if one has a mortgage on the property.

Legal Advice. Modern economy is so specialized that expert advice is required for many of the family's economic transactions. The services of a lawyer or some other licensed professional should be sought when you are involved in complex transactions. You should always know your rights and obligations before signing a legally binding paper, and in many cases only a lawyer can enlighten you. This certainly holds true for buying and selling property.

Though it may seem a bit humorous right after marriage, both the husband and wife should make a will. Failure to do so would cause a heavy additional burden on a bereaved partner. A will is imperative for the husband once there are children. It is best to have wills drafted by attorneys.

Conclusions

IN SUMMARY the following principles are a guide to the economic aspects of Christian family life. The engaged couple should discuss them one by one.

1. The economic decisions of the family cannot be completely separated from the spiritual values by which the family lives.

2. Although the father is chief in authority in the home, both the husband and wife should share in discussing the economic decisions.

3. A proper evaluation of the economic factors of family living are not achieved automatically. Each couple must plan, adapt, and decide for its own unique circumstances. Economic decisions should be the result of a reasoning process, not determined by emotions or feelings.

4. Prudence dictates that the family make use of those instruments which are a normal part of our economic system in the

Term Insurance. The rates of this type of life insurance are usually minimal when compared to life and annuities. It provides temporary protection for only a specified period—usually five or 10 years. Some term insurance can be renewed. Of course, after the period of protection, the policy-holder has no equity left. Term insurance is useful in covering the amount of indebtedness on a real estate mortgage, but it can also be taken out to give added protection while the children are young. A combination of life and term insurance is called family income or family protection insurance. It costs less than if the two were purchased separately, provides higher coverage while the children are young and continues to give life insurance protection when the term insurance expires.

Social Security. This federal savings plan is commonly thought of as providing income for old age and also temporarily during unemployment. But its most attractive feature for family security is the Survivors Insurance. A surviving widow with one child under 18 receives up to \$160 per month, and up to \$200 per month if there are two or more children under 18. The amount depends on her husband's income while he was employed. There are obviously great disadvantages in taking employment in a field that is not covered by Social Security.

Company Policies. Many corporations pay half or more of the cost of a comprehensive policy on all employees. This usually includes term life insurance, accident insurance, hospitalization and medical benefits. The hospitalization and medical benefits may also cover all the dependents of the wage-earner.

Health Insurance. Illness often imposes a double burden, for it may bring unexpected expense together with incapacity for a productive household member—mother or breadwinner. Therefore, a top item in the budget should be a hospitalization, surgical, and medical care insurance policy.

The non-profit plans are highly recommended—Blue Cross hospitalization and Blue Shield medical insurance—where the family policy covers additional dependents without increased rates. There are also numerous private companies offering policies. Often, comprehensive hospitalization and medical insurance may be secured for less than comprehensive auto insurance. Check carefully into the costs of your plan. Some medical care plans

work. If so, one of her first duties will be to learn the various household arts. Local agencies usually provide facilities for learning more about cooking and sewing. The U. S. Department of Agriculture publishes dozens of pamphlets which will be useful for the homemaker. Send a postcard to the Extension division of your state college of agriculture and ask for a list of the available household bulletins, or write to the Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., for a list of the numerous pamphlets on the home and household arts.

Since World War II a new threat to family integrity has developed. This is the practice of wives working full time outside the home. By 1957, almost one-third of the American working force was composed of women, and three out of five of them were married. About 40 per cent of all the mothers in the nation with children under 18 were in the labor force. This is a serious violation of the right order of things. This pattern of working wives may undermine family life and victimize innocent children. These children may be deprived of the physical, psychological, and spiritual heritage which is rightfully theirs.

The position of the Church is clear: the work of the mother in the home is a full time occupation; it is her chief honor and dignity, and only extraordinary circumstances permit her to delegate this responsibility. The formation of the personalities of her children and the making of the home into a vital cell of society is a precious vocation. To delegate this task to hired help in order to make extra cash for luxury items is an unworthy motive. Even more tragic is the current attitude that homemaking is boring work; this tempts the mother to seek outside employment to escape from her home duties. Here the husband may be also at fault, since he may withhold recognition of the tremendous dignity and importance of his wife's work in the home, adding to her dissatisfaction. Nothing is more wholesome and Christian than the husband's tender appreciation for the heroic work performed by his wife for himself and their children.

These observations about working wives are not meant to censure those women who are *driven* to employment outside the home by the sheer necessity of providing sufficient income to keep the family at the bare minimum of physical existence. Such a situation is rather a criticism of a society which permits such conditions. In

his encyclical, *On Chaste Wedlock*, Pope Pius XI spoke strongly against this abuse:

... Intolerable and to be opposed with all our strength is the abuse whereby mothers of families, because of the insufficiency of the father's salary, are forced to engage in gainful occupation outside the domestic walls to the neglect of their own proper cares and duties, particularly the education of their children.

It is a psychological fact that while it is easy to increase the amount one spends, it is almost impossible to cut it down. Many couples enter marriage with the idea that the wife will work until she is well along in pregnancy. Enjoying a double income during the first months of marriage creates the real danger of unconscious resentment of the child who not only cuts down the income but brings many expenses. If the wife works during this early period of marriage, it would be a good idea to set a portion of her income aside as savings or as a down payment on a home. It should not be used for weekly living expenses, thus forcing the family suddenly to get along with half of the former income. And, of course, if the husband permits his wife to work an eight-hour day, like himself, away from home, he must be prepared to share in the household tasks when they both arrive home.

THE CHILDREN'S CONTRIBUTION

It sometimes seems that rearing children is nothing but a never-ending expense. Yet children, from an early age, can make a contribution to the family's total income by their work in the home. Their efforts relieve the family of the need for expensive equipment and the hiring of various services. Children naturally want to help, and wise parents will train and commend them for performing their share of the work required to make the home more productive. It is also psychologically good for the personalities of growing children to make them feel essential in making a better home. Washing dishes, mowing lawns, cleaning their own rooms, helping at mealtime, painting, waxing, and sewing are all valuable services which children should be trained to contribute without payment.

PUBLIC SERVICES

Counted as sources of family income should be the public and charitable services available to it. After all, you contribute to these

gently is a wife's best security. And a wife, even though income is not what she might like it to be, should never fail to show her appreciation to a husband who works conscientiously and steadily to provide the family income.

Productive Home. In the broadest sense, buying a house is a form of saving. It is a form of security that can be used for borrowing in case of emergency. Insofar as a home provides enough space for the family to supply some of its own needs—garden, shop, recreation—it supplements the family income even more.

Saving. Your family is building on a firm financial foundation if you establish the habit of regular saving, no matter how meager the amount. Saving provides a cash reserve against emergencies. It is the best source of financing family property. The very habit of saving encourages the virtue of thrift. Certainly this habit should be firmly entrenched in the will long before marriage. At the latest, saving should have started from the moment the couple came to a mutual understanding regarding future marriage.

The trick to saving is to save *regularly* and to deposit the money in a financial institution where it will be safe, yield a modest interest, and not be accessible to whims. Banks, credit unions and government bonds are all types of "protected" savings.

INSURANCE

In our modern economic system, insurance is practically a "must" for a growing family. But, there are dangers in carrying so much insurance that the family budget is unbalanced. It is far more likely, however, that the family will not have sufficient insurance to provide adequate protection. Have a reputable agent or broker help you plan your insurance program.

Life Insurance. Obviously, rates will vary with the age of the insured person, so a minimum of life insurance should be taken out right away. The proper approach to life insurance is not the policy's face value—\$5,000, \$10,000, or \$20,000. Rather, it is a matter of what will be an adequate income for the family should the breadwinner be taken from it before the children are grown. In case of his death, the widow is given a period for adjustment. Fraternal orders such as the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Order of Foresters offer a very desirable insurance of this type. However, beware of the overly expensive endowment policies.

INSTALLMENTS VERSUS CASH

The following example gives a fairly simple illustration of the advantages of purchasing large items with cash.

John and Mary Smith knew they would need another auto within two years. By then, their present car's value would be only \$600. After contacting several banks and acceptance corporations they learned that it usually takes two years to pay for a new car. Thus, they decided that two years from now they could spend \$2,400 on a new auto. With their present car worth \$600 as a trade-in, they would need \$1,800 for the new machine.

Immediately they began putting \$75 per month in a savings and loan institution where the interest rate was four per cent per year, paid quarterly. At the end of two years they had \$1,864.25, and paid cash for their new car.

Had they purchased the car on the installment plan with a loan from the bank at three per cent interest per year, they would have had to pay \$79.50 per month for two years—installment plan costs would have been \$108. Had they used an acceptance corporation plan, the cost per month would have been \$90, or \$360 more than the actual cost of the auto—an interest rate of about 10 per cent per year.

However, by saving in advance they were able to make smaller monthly payments—\$75 as opposed to \$79.50 or \$90—and were able to pocket \$64.25 from interest *paid to them!*

It is wise to look ahead toward major expenses and make your installment payments to your savings account rather than to a lending institution.

Family Security

A CATHOLIC COUPLE can and should have faith in God's Providence if it lives in accord with its religious principles. Such principles, however, do not justify improvident living. Modern economy provides many ways for protecting the family's welfare, and part of the economics of family life is to secure some of these aids.

Steady Employment. The principle form of family security is steady employment at a living wage. A husband who works dili-

by paying taxes and making voluntary contributions. Why not use them? Local, state, and national governments provide many services either free or at a nominal charge. Your parks, museums, art galleries, public health services, clinics, hospitals, camps, schools, adult education courses, are yours to support, care for, and use. Your local Red Feather agencies, Catholic Charities, and fraternal organizations provide many services not only for the destitute, but for all citizens. Take a few minutes to discover all services in your area and make a list of them. You will be amazed to discover how *rich* you are!

Expenditures

MODERATION IS always difficult to achieve and most of us tend toward one of the two extremes in spending money. One extreme is the miserly approach. The miser begrudges every dollar that is spent. He has a fierce determination to save. He cuts corners and neglects to spend for items like dentistry, which are not immediately needed. The family may even lack the simple things which make a pleasant home.

At the other extreme is the spendthrift. He is carefree, spends freely and rarely bothers to compare income and expenditures. He not only spends beyond his means, but he spends more than he should on luxury items, on flashy clothing, and expensive recreations. Debts are someone else's worry.

You are probably at neither extreme, but you should examine your past habits, attitudes, and inclinations to discover in what direction you tend. Strive to approach the golden mean, because if you are either a miser or a spendthrift your happy home can be turned into a nightmare of discontent and worry. Perhaps the husband will have one tendency and the bride another. It is imperative that facts and attitudes be discussed frankly during the engagement. Love grows on knowledge; it founders on misunderstandings.

Values. Everyone has a set of conscious or unconscious material values. What each considers important to his life should be discussed. Otherwise, what a man thinks important may appear silly to his wife, or vice versa. In general, it is wise to divide your discussion of valuable material things into necessary, useful, and

luxury categories. Housing, food, and fundamental furniture are *necessary* for life. You can never safely chip away at necessities in order to spend money in other ways. *Useful* items would be those which make life easier—a roomy house, automatic appliances, etc. These we can do without, but they are helpful. Useful things can also be called conditioned necessities. They are necessary on condition that they are reasonable in our social, financial, or business situation.

The judgment of usefulness varies from person to person. One man might consider a little workshop more useful than a power lawnmower. One wife might prefer a telephone to an automatic dishwasher. So also with pleasant things. A wife may prefer a ticket to the ballet, her husband a ticket to a ball game. One may be bored with television, the other pleasantly relaxed by it. Talk out your values!

Luxury or pleasant items are those which minister only to our enjoyment or pleasure. Such items are luxury furniture, fancy clothing, radios, television sets, expensive rugs and draperies, liquors, expensive entertainment. We may enjoy these things, but we can do without them, and indeed we must if they get in the way of our real necessities or our spiritual growth.

In general we can say: you *must* have the necessities of life; you also need *some* useful things and *some* pleasant things, but the order of necessary, useful, and pleasant must always govern your value system, and in that order!

Agreement on a System. Each family needs some orderly system for handling ordinary expenditures. Perhaps you will agree that the wife or husband will pay most of the bills. More likely, you will agree that the husband will take care of items like rent and utilities, while the wife will take care of food and clothing. Will the wife receive a stipulated sum which she can use at her discretion to make household purchases? Will there be a joint checking account? Will there be a modest allowance for each to spend as he or she pleases without having to account for it? Family counselors know all too well how a partner's spending for tobacco, cosmetics, bowling, hats, fishing tackle, or jewelry can cause resentment. Ideally, you will have a joint budget-session once a month and reach agreement on expenses. The spending is not so important as the agreement!

not always) the cheapest and most attractive source of small loans for consumer purchases. In some areas credit unions may also make real estate loans.

Small Loan Companies. Interest rates here may run from 24 to 42 per cent per year! Some states have laws fixing the maximum at *three per cent on the unpaid balance*. Some such companies attempt to “bury” the interest rate and to focus your attention on the amount to be paid back each month. Loans are easier to get than at a bank, the companies' risk is greater, and thus the higher interest rates. This is obviously a very expensive form of credit.

Insurance Companies. Sometimes it is possible to secure a loan against your insurance policy. Details may be obtained from your insurance agent.

Installment Buying. Two-thirds of the cars and about 50 per cent of all refrigerators, television sets, and furniture are purchased on the installment plan. Typically, the rates charged are quoted as a percentage of the original balance. The *true rate* on unpaid balances is about double the stated rate. Here also the rate of interest is “hidden” in the “simple” monthly payment. When calculated, rates will be found to run from 12 to 36 per cent *and up*. Sometimes no advantage is to be gained by repaying more rapidly. It should also be noted that although a purchaser has use of the product, the seller has the right to repossess it in case of default of payment and the consumer would thus have nothing to show for his investment. At times, a final large “balloon” payment is in the contract to make repossession more likely! Often one has to pay the “marked up” price in addition and cannot obtain the more attractive price which can be secured with cash. This is one argument for building up one's own cash saving.

In deciding whether the cost of the credit is worth the value of having the product now, you should make a distinction between productive items and luxury goods. Buying a home or a washing machine is productive in the sense that payments are now made for the property instead of for rent. Also, a sewing machine—if used—will pay for itself in short order. But too many installment purchases add nothing to the income of the home. It is these, especially, which should be minimized.

present the tendency is in the opposite direction. Credit may make it too easy to have the use of all the good things you want for your family and, suddenly, you are hopelessly in debt. It is a safe rule for young couples to avoid going into debt at all during the first few months of marriage. After you have a realistic view of your finances, you can wisely determine the amount of payments the budget can take each month, but be cautious! More families flounder on the rock of credit than on any other single external problem.

Undoubtedly, most couples will make some use of credit, and here it is important to know about the various types of costs involved. This is particularly true where the interest rate is "hidden" as it is in installment buying. Interest rates vary tremendously from one type of credit agency to the other. Always learn what the true rate of interest is and do not sign until you are satisfied that it is both fair and within your budget. The following is a list of typical agencies which may be available. Since state laws vary widely, it will be necessary to check the laws in your specific state.

Banks. Generally, banks are the most regulated and conservative of the financial institutions. Interest rate maximums are set by law in most cases. Banks are a reliable source for real estate loans, but are not always interested in ordinary consumer credit. On consumer loans, rates are quoted as a percentage of the original amount loaned. The *true rate* of interest on unpaid balances is about double the quoted rate. However, a young couple might well discuss its credit problems with a bank official and discover that a great saving in interest payments can be made by consolidating debts and making one substantial loan to pay them off.

Building and Loan Associations. This is a popular source of credit for home purchasers. Such institutions are not found in many rural areas. They specialize in real estate loans and generally will loan a higher proportion of the cost than will a bank. But the rates of interest are usually higher than a bank charges.

Credit Unions. There are over 23,000 of these non-profit organizations, many of them organized on a parish basis. One must be a member to qualify for a loan. The maximum rate of interest is one per cent per month on the unpaid balance. This is often (but

The Church clearly teaches that the husband is first in authority in the home. It is normally his responsibility to see that all goes well. At the same time, Pope Pius XI reminds the husband:

This subjection (of the wife), however, does not deny or take away the liberty which fully belongs to the woman both in view of her dignity as a human person, and in view of her most noble office as wife and mother and companion; nor does it bid her obey her husband's every request if not in harmony with right reason or with the dignity due to wife; nor, in fine, does it imply that the wife should be put on a level with those persons who in law are called minors. . . .

Each couple should approach the economic aspects of the family as a unit. They should develop the habit of looking upon their problems and property as theirs together. It is not "my car" or "my stove," but "ours"—our home, our furniture, our bills, our income, and, of course, our children! Working together for economic security can be a powerful means for welding the couple into a deeper love and mutual appreciation.

WISE BUYMANSHIP

Develop efficient buying habits for successful family finance! This is a real skill and only by practice can it be acquired. The following suggestions may help you obtain this skill:

Is There a Real Need? Almost all middle class families begin marriage "overloaded" with items they do not really need, and they are frequently overloaded with debt, too! In general, it is better to purchase only a few items at a time. For one thing, it is more fun to plan each addition, make the purchase together, and see your home *grow*. Secondly, you will choose more wisely with one mistake at a time instead of perhaps a houseful of bad purchases that cannot be returned.

Consult With Each Other. It takes time to realize that you are no longer as free as before to make any purchase that happens to please you. For example, if the husband suddenly announces that "We have a new car" or a new washing machine, he may bring dismay instead of delight. The wife may have better ideas on how to divide the income or she may reasonably prefer a different type of washer to his "bargain" brand. The same applies to her happy announcement of her luck in getting a complete spring outfit! In any case, consulting before making a major expenditure means a

delay, and just putting off a decision for a day may prevent a foolish purchase.

Consult With Others. This advice applies to major purchases of household equipment and similar economic decisions. Too often, young couples want to demonstrate that they are “completely independent of their in-laws.” This is likely to be an expensive exercise of freedom. Actually, no one is better qualified to advise us than our parents, and no one is more willing to do so. There is a great deal of difference between being too dependent on in-laws, or having them “run our lives,” and consulting them for advice. We do not have to accept their advice if we think it unwise. The important thing is for the couple to *agree* on following it or not. Similarly, there are always friendly couples who will be happy to assist you in making a major decision. We expect to be trained for the job in our professional work. It takes training to spend several thousand dollars a year wisely enough to keep the home business solvent!

Know Your Materials. Many books are available to guide the homemaker. Advertisements and booklet columns in women’s magazines frequently list free booklets which can be obtained for “do it yourself” projects. In rural areas, the home demonstration agent of the county extension service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture will provide both personal and written assistance. Learning about the different cuts of meat, for instance, can mean savings without loss of nutritional value. Get to know the various fabrics and their uses. Sewing at home can be an area of major saving. If you like woodworking and are a good craftsman, re-making and refinishing old furniture can be a source of distinctive items at a great saving. Canning and freezing foods when they are in surplus will give the family the highest quality at lowest costs. Do not be discouraged because it takes a long time to gather all the knowledge of materials that a skillful husband and housewife should have.

Quality and Price. Remember that quality and durability are as important as price. A moderately priced item may be a better buy than a cheaper item of inferior quality, while the “best” may be superior in cost only; moreover, we do not need the best.

Two magazines, *Consumers’ Bulletin* and *Consumers’ Research*, make monthly evaluations of all kinds of home items. These

particular need and right to some recreation away from the home. Recreation should never be eliminated entirely from the budget.

On the other hand, it is true that budgeting works best with recreation. If you decide on a given amount for recreation each month, you are free to choose one big occasion or spread your spending over several movies or other events. When it is spent, commercial recreation for the month is ended. That’s that. Then you will be forced to invent your own fun.

Experience will show that the best recreation costs little or nothing. Recreation is a matter of attitude—doing something pleasantly different from regular work. Setting aside an evening to listen to records, watch television, or visit friends is recreation in the best sense of the word. Public parks and municipal programs may provide much cost-free recreation. There are public libraries, museums, concerts, and historical monuments available in most areas without cost. A picnic can be as economical as a meal at home.

Cutting down on commercial recreation is something difficult for young married couples. As a single person you spend much on recreation with little thought. The early thrills of married life will compensate for awhile, but later old habits of single life may be felt. Face this fact with maturity, develop new habits of joint recreation and avoid falling into the practice of going out alone for (usually expensive) recreation.

The pattern for recreation is partly set by the “crowd” in which a couple moves. If keeping up with a social group involves frequent cocktail parties, dinner, and theater expenses, the budget may be broken. Recreational companionship is easy to find at your own economic level. In most instances, you can contact agreeable couples through the parish and parish societies. Can clubs, Christian Family Movement, Family Guild, and similar married couples’ groups are ideal sources of social as well as religious activity. The truly Christian way of making friends and friendships (the best recreational activities) is through the parish.

CREDIT

Credit is a wonderful device for helping the family get started. It can also enslave the family! There have been times in our national history when credit was cruelly denied to people, but at

Someone has suggested that every wage earner give the first hour of the week as a token of the entire week's dedication of the family.

Medical Care. Expenses of this nature are quite unpredictable, but the normal family must anticipate considerable medical and dental care. Fortunately, various types of insurance now exist which remove most of the risks that haunted families of past generations. If your employer provides health insurance, check into the cost of a family plan immediately.

Household Equipment. Equipment of this nature is taking a larger and larger bite of family expenditures. Many items conserve the strength of the wife and free her for more time with the children. They also replace the former costs of hired help. However, go slow! Do not get saddled with debt in order to have all the items at once. Secondhand purchases might be temporarily satisfactory, to be replaced by new and better products as needed. The prices of furniture, stoves, refrigerators, washing machines, driers, etc., fluctuate greatly. "Bargain sales" seem to be standard which suggests high mark-ups at other times. Wisdom suggests shopping for cash discounts.

The Automobile. For most families the auto has become almost a necessary item. However, the car takes a far larger bite from the family budget than most families care to admit. Remember, there are more expenses than gasoline and oil—more expensive than these are repairs, insurance, license, taxes, and tires. It costs more than \$1000 a year to own and operate a two-year-old model of one of the "low-priced" three! Unfortunately, many families are more willing to go into debt for an auto than for any other item. This is questionable judgment since furniture, household equipment, and the house itself contribute more to family stability and harmony than a car. For newly married couples who are budget conscious, this is the best place to exercise caution. It is better not to get too heavily involved in auto expenses until family income and the important family expenditures are well balanced.

Recreation. Regular recreation is a genuine need for the family's physical and mental health. Because the direct need for it is less apparent, it is often the first expense eliminated from the budget; but it should be remembered that the wife, who does not get out of the house during her work day, like the husband, has a

magazines are for sale on the newsstands and copies are usually available at the public library.

Deal With Reputable Firms. In the long run, it will be most profitable to deal with stores and firms which have a reputation for honesty and good consumer service. In the field of mechanical equipment the cost and reliability of service are sometimes more important than the price differences on the original item. On major items, make sure you understand the nature of the guarantee.

Shopping Knowledge. In buying groceries, clothing, and smaller items, wise buymanship involves a knowledge of the time of the day, week, and month to get the best prices and service. If shopping is done in less crowded hours there will be more opportunity for examining merchandise. Shopping trips can be planned to coincide with bargain days. (But avoid Sunday shopping, both to show proper respect for the day and to put pressure against an unwholesome trend.) Remnants, broken lots, and surplus stock sales can mean savings if you need the items. Whenever possible, provided you have storage space and need the items, it pays to buy in bulk lot rather than a few items at a time. Unless you are a very strong-willed person, a shopping list is almost a necessity in order to eliminate impulse buying of items that catch your fancy but are not really necessary. Cash and carry is often more economical and provides an incentive for staying within the budget. Also, remember that last year's model may be as serviceable as this year's—and cheaper!

BUDGETING

A budget is most helpful for keeping the family finances in order. In simple terms, a budget is a plan arrived at in advance for dividing the given family income into expenditures and savings. Budgeting helps you to reach a division based on fact instead of guesses or impulses. If you agree to spend not more than a certain percentage of your monthly income on food, then you will be motivated to shop carefully in order to stay within your budget. If the budget cannot be squeezed to include the monthly payments for a new television receiver, then you must delay purchasing one until it is economically feasible.

Account Book. An ordinary wide notebook will serve as a budget book, though you might prefer a dime store book which has been ruled especially for the purpose. Divide your page into 11 columns and put the following headings at the top of each column: income, food, clothing, church, education, medical, auto, household, taxes and insurance, recreation and miscellaneous, and savings. (You can add more columns, or change the headings to suit your needs.) Total the columns at the end of every month. Within a few months you will have an accurate picture of expenditures and from this knowledge you will be able to develop a workable budget. However, merely keeping a record will do no good. The record is only kept to help you plan your spending wisely. In planning, list first the absolutely essential expenses—like rent or mortgage, taxes, gas and electricity, debt payments—then you can form estimates on the variable items—food, clothing, recreation, savings. Of course, revisions will be made in the light of experience or, happily, increased income.

The following items will appear in your budget.

Food. This is commonly the largest single item. After you see how much is required for food, you may well decide how to reduce the cost by substitutes; in-season vegetables and fruits, the ingenious use of left-overs, and quantity buying are a few ways to trim costs. Using time and effort in preparing foods at home instead of depending on “mixes” and partially prepared foods can sizably reduce your food budget.

Clothing. This item has a minimum, but it can be expanded indefinitely! Also, the same item, a coat, may vary in cost from cloth to mink. Here, the housewife can prove her skill. More and more women are sewing for themselves and for their children and are discovering that it is satisfying, creative work, as well as economical.

Housing. The typical young married couple begins its family life in rented quarters, smaller and less expensive than they will need later on. The advantages and disadvantages of buying a home should be considered carefully. Buying a home will probably be the largest single investment in your lifetime. It should never be hurried. Many couples regret choosing a home before they realize just how much space a growing family requires. The quality of the house and its cost are primary factors in making a

decision, but do not overlook the size, its age, its location, its availability to school, church, and transportation, heating facilities, taxes, and the size of the lot. Look over the neighborhood, too. Will you and your children fit into this atmosphere, in education, ideals, finances?

Home ownership involves factors other than a mere comparison of rent costs with home payment costs. Home owners have a sense of independence and security. Their attitude toward the house changes. It is theirs. All improvements and plans for remodeling become exciting adventures. It is healthy to have one's roots down in a community, a parish, a school district. The family is more likely to participate in community affairs and fulfill its civic duties. These considerations are more important in the long run than the mere economic aspects of home ownership. On the other hand, remember that not only home payments, but upkeep, repairs, and taxes must be figured into your costs.

Locating your home is among your more important decisions. Ideally, the location should provide “space, light, and air.” It should give the family privacy and yet provide a sense of community with the neighbors. Is it not worth more, for instance, to have a pleasant home than a better job which would force the family to live in crowded, impersonal quarters?

Church and Charity. Love of God and neighbor is the supreme test of the Christian. Because the Christian married couple has the precious blessing of the Sacrament of Matrimony—a special gift of God's love—its gratitude will naturally express itself in gifts of prayers and alms. This properly takes the form of support of the parish and the various religious, educational, and charitable services of the Church. Some parishes have a standard formula for determining the minimum contribution expected from each family. If you begin your new family with the practice of giving as much as possible beyond the minimum you will find that your sacrifices return as blessings in the form of a deeper unity and love. It develops that spirit of unselfishness which enables one to face problems with courage and faith. Your offertory gift at Mass represents your gift of your entire self and family to God. How do you value that gift? In the Old Testament and down through the ages people have tithed, that is, they gave 10 per cent of their income. Many still do. (Cf. *Catholic Digest*, Dec. 1958.)