

the cultural pressures of the community in which they lived. This was not necessarily a bad system though it may seem, to American youth, to have been a pretty cold affair.

It did what it was supposed to do. It prevented hurried and thoughtless unions contracted in the heat of sexual passion or emotional involvement. The old adage, "Marry in haste, repent at leisure," had little application. Nor did it preclude love or freedom. Real love frequently grew within marriage. Living within the culture, the young couple *chose* the system. The Church has always insisted that every person has the right to full freedom of choice for a state in life or a particular marriage partner.

The New Way. In recent centuries, on the western European and American scenes, we have discarded parental choice of a marriage partner. We have given absolute freedom to young people to choose any state in life and to choose any partner. This system has its advantages. It allows maximum mingling of the sexes in the community to find a partner to match one's hopes and dreams. It places full responsibility upon the young person to choose wisely since no one else assumes any responsibility for his choice. It gives the greatest possible opportunity for the development of a deep emotional love. It preserves our ideals of freedom, romance, and love.

However, the modern system also has great disadvantages. It provides no checks upon childish behavior on the part of our young people. Since it reduces social supervision to a minimum, premarital unchastity is a more serious risk. Full freedom permits hasty choices. A sudden "crush," a rebellious desire to be free from parents, a childish wish to "be like the other kids," can easily push a young person into a supposedly permanent marital union with little mature experience about the heartache involved in mistakes. Our American scene is full of the marital wrecks left by disillusionment, mutual distaste, discord, and divorce.

American Dating System. In self-defense against the disadvantages of freedom, and yet to defend fully the value of free choice, American young people have developed our modern dating and courtship pattern. This pattern is designed to promote contact between the sexes, to enhance the maximum freedom of choice, and yet to protect against rash impetuosity. The American dating and courtship system progresses through group meetings of the sexes, random dating, serious or steady dating, courtship, en-

Courtship

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 number of married couples in the United States is growing at the rate of a million-and-a-half per year. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2. The American dating system was designed by E. E. LeMasters in 1957 to help young people get married. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 3. The steps in the American dating system begin with random dating and end with courtship. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 4. The random dating stage is also known as the period of "window-shopping." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 5. Courtship begins when a young man and woman become engaged to be married. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 6. The Catholic Church has always opposed marriages between Catholics and persons of other faiths. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 7. Emotional maturity is more important than the ages of a boy and girl contemplating marriage. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 8. During courtship the couple should discuss all aspects of marriage in order to reach a mutual understanding. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 9. It is a good thing for young lovers during courtship to confess their entire lives to each other. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10. The material preparation for marriage is the most important part of the engagement period. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 11. Engagement is a serious preparation, a real novitiate for the Sacrament of Matrimony. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 12. Marriage is primarily designed to provide companionship for man and woman during their life on this earth. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 13. Neither partner should enter marriage while any notable debts are outstanding. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 14. The greatest drawback to our dating and courtship system is the temptation of premarital unchastity. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | 15. A solemn engagement made before a priest can be dissolved by mutual consent. |

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

POSSIBLE SCORE

45

NAME _____

MINUS

ERRORS X 3 _____

ADDRESS _____

SUB-SCORE 1 _____

CITY _____ STATE _____

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. Marriage partners in the old world's more traditional cultures are selected by the _____.
parish priest granduncle parents local mayor
- 2. Steady dating before one is ready to prepare seriously for marriage is considered psychologically and sociologically _____.
customary sinful beneficial harmful
- 3. Only a person who has developed strong _____ habits can pronounce a meaningful vow on the wedding day.
moral drinking saving personal
- 4. Most of the qualifications of a good partner in marriage should have been ascertained during _____.
random dating engagement courtship group dating
- 5. When a couple breaks up during the courtship period both should return to the "American system" and enter _____.
random dating a quick marriage the convent steady dating
- 6. Young men and women are expected to bring to their marriage a well-developed _____ character.
physical financial social moral
- 7. _____ means that many people, without denying God, practically live their lives without recognizing this as God's world.
courtship marriage secularism communism
- 8. Remote preparation for marriage actually begins with a person's _____.
first kiss family engagement first date
- 9. Since marriage is truly a _____ vocation, your most intense preparation should be spiritual.
life-long dual worldly religious
- 10. The _____ engagement is a formal promise to marry and binds the partners in conscience to carry out the contract.
solemn simple hasty religious
- 11. In the foregoing pages a great stress has been placed on the necessity of _____ for marriage.
love preparation maturity money

CUT ON DOTTED LINE

How to Get Married

SO YOU want to join the ranks of the thirty-nine million married couples in the United States? You have plenty of company in your ambition, because marriage is our most popular institution. In fact, another million-and-a-half couples will join you in celebrating the same wedding anniversary. The majority of boys and girls in our nation grow up, get acquainted, start dating, fall in love, get engaged, enter marriage, and start their families. They do this so universally in our society that we tend to take the whole process pretty much for granted.

Perhaps this is as it should be. By the time you are old enough to marry, you ought to have arrived at a fair idea about what marriage and the family are all about. You have been living in a family all of your life. More or less consciously, you have watched your own mother, father, and other couples work together as partners and parents. Some of you may even have taken formal courses in marriage while at school. Whether you have thought very much about it or not, all of you have formed a general idea of what family life ought to be and how you want to live your marriage.

It should be helpful to know how you have come to choose matrimony as your state in life and how you have selected the particular partner you have chosen.

The Old Way. In many other cultures throughout the world and, indeed, even in our own culture up to recent times, your marriage and your particular married partner were not selected as you have done. Traditionally, marriages have been arranged by parents. The customs of many peoples suggest that mature people who have already reared a family should select their children's vocation and should enter into a contract with other parents for a suitable partner. These cultures agree that, since parents are more mature, love their children very much, have developed a lifetime sense of responsibility for them, they will choose marriage partners more wisely than their immature children. In this, parents have been reinforced by tribal customs, religious convictions, and

POSSIBLE SCORE **55**

MINUS ERRORS X 5 _____

SUB-SCORE I _____

SUB-SCORE II _____

SUB-SCORE II _____

TOTAL SCORE _____

Can I hold up my end of a boy-girl conversation? What kind of a girl am I? Do boys like me? Do I like the fun that boys and girls have together?

Many students of boy-girl relationships insist that mutual enjoyment is the only purpose of such get-togethers. However, other studies indicate that, even in this earliest of relationships, there is an unconscious preparation for marriage. As the sexes mingled, you developed your own personality as man or woman, and began to observe and sort out the traits desired in a future mate.

During this time (unless you were quite unwise or with little parental supervision) you did not "go steady." You may have boasted of having a "steady," but often this was just to gain prestige with the group, or to protest subtly your desire to be grown-up. Perhaps you developed a "crush" on one person and sighed with the pangs of love but you soon grew out of this. Really, you did not know how to give or receive love. You were anxious to discover and develop a self to give!

RANDOM DATING

While still mingling with the group, you started to date, now one, now another person. You ventured out "on your own." You developed a little self-confidence in "how to act with a boy." You wanted the prestige of a date. You liked to be popular. You enjoyed the fun of dating. You liked the full attention your partner gave you. You discovered you could be interesting as a person, and not as a mere member of your sex.

As you gradually discovered what kind of a man or woman you were becoming, your attention began to focus on the temperament, characteristics, and interests of the other sex. Your dating became a kind of window-shopping for a mate. The young man began to ask himself: "How would I fare in life with this kind of a young woman? How would this trait of feminine personality do in a wife?" The young woman asked herself: "Does this observable quality of masculinity make a good husband? Would that quality make a good father?"

Generally, you dated the boys or girls who lived near you, went to the same school, attended the same social functions, or worked with you. You looked for similar tastes and ideals, similar religious and educational background, equivalent physical and emotional maturity in your date. On the other hand, you noticed that

Nuptial Mass. If possible, arrange for a Nuptial Mass. If two people are to live the union of Christ and His Church, they should start their marriage at the source of all graces, the Mass. At the moment of Holy Communion, you are one together with Christ. At that moment, you will be closer to each other than at any other moment in life. This is your day—similar to the Ordination day of a priest. Why not a solemn, or at least, a sung Mass? If neither is possible, a dialogue Mass is strongly urged. You can obtain beautiful little booklets of the Nuptial Mass which will enable the entire congregation to participate. Your non-Catholic friends will become aware of the deep meaning of your religious life simply by observing this stirring drama of the Nuptial Mass. By all means, invite your friends to receive Holy Communion with and for you on that day. With our modern fasting laws which permit solids and alcoholic beverages until three hours before, and liquids until one hour before, the reception of Holy Communion, there really is no longer any excuse for not doing so. Since marriage is also a public thing which involves, for good or ill, the community itself, how wonderful to know that your friends are seconding your vocational choice by their active participation in the Mass and the reception of Holy Communion!

The Little Things. In working out the marriage ceremony, do not forget to arrange for altar boys and organist, choir or singers. Perhaps you would like to buy a little bell which will be used at the Mass and which you will keep in your home as a memory. By all means, center your wedding invitations, the decorations on your wedding cake, your place cards and napkins, upon liturgical and spiritual symbols. Invite the priest to your wedding breakfast or reception, if only to stop by and bless the wine. You will see in him the presence of Christ at your own Cana wedding feast!

Within your means, make your wedding as beautiful as possible. You will not regret the expense as you look back upon it. On the other hand, do not get in over your head. A survey disclosed that many couples spend as much as \$1,500 on engagement ring and wedding ceremony. If this is universal, many will start out in debt! Thrillingly lovely weddings can be arranged for far less with careful planning.

Etiquette. The etiquette involved depends entirely upon social customs of your place and state in life. You can find these in any bride's book.

Conclusion

IN THIS first lesson, we have described various stages of development toward marriage. We have pointed out an early general dating, a period of window shopping, an intense courtship, and a formal engagement. We have given you a few hints on wedding arrangements. Young couples do not always go through these four steps. Some are not conscious of their progress through them until they actually receive an engagement ring. However, it seems important to have gone through all four stages. In the American culture, the method of choosing a mate is only indirectly controlled by the community. Parents have, at most, but an indirect control over the weddings of their children. Our tremendous accent on freedom makes choice of a partner an individual decision. In "self-defense," our American culture has built up the progressive courtship pattern we have described. If properly used, it can bring great benefits to marriage. Research studies have indicated that, if the couple has not gone through wide dating, intense dating, serious courtship, and a period of engagement, their chances for married happiness are notably lowered. You might possibly be an exception, but you should not too easily presume that you are. Research seems to show that only older, more mature, couples may safely skip any step in the process.

We have insisted on the necessity of preparation, and have pointed out areas in which you should prepare. In so doing, we hope we have made you eager to go through the rest of TOGETHER IN CHRIST.

Cases for Discussion

How can one tell if a boy will be a good marriage partner?

Everyone keeps telling us how important a good marriage partner is, but how can you recognize one before marriage? Like most other girls, I want a happy marriage. I'd like to have children, a home, and a loving husband. What should one look for in a future mate? I've dated quite a few boys and like most of them. How can I tell which one would make a good husband?

Is there an ideal length for the engagement period?

Rose and I have been engaged for one year, and we're not sure when we'll be able to get married. We've been told that the Church discourages long engagements. What is considered to be a long engagement, and what does a couple do if conditions do not permit marriage for the time being?

agement, and ends in marriage. It is not a perfect system. Not all our young people go through every stage mentioned. Imperfect as it is, however, it is the system which our society has devised and into which, as members of our American community, you must enter. The system is basically sound only if used properly. You can obtain its maximum benefits if you have not skipped any of its stages, and have used each stage for its true goal. (LeMasters, E. E., *Modern Courtship and Marriage*. The Macmillan Company, New York. 1957. Page 171 and passim.)

Dating

WHEN YOU were a child, boys and girls mingled with each other in school or at home with little awareness of sexual differences. When you noticed any difference, they exasperated rather than attracted. Your awareness was on the level of—

Snips and snails and puppy-dogs' tails,
That's what little boys are made of;
Sugar and spice and everything nice,
That's what little girls are made of.

And yet, during this time you were already entering the "American System." You were discovering that boys are generally more muscular and aggressive, that girls prefer jump-rope and dolls to baseball. You gradually accepted your own masculinity or femininity, and your differences, even though you may have complained: "Boys can do anything they want," or "Girls get away with murder!"

GROUP DATING

At puberty, you became shyly aware that the other sex was not only different, but attractive! Though you still enjoyed your old "gang," you began joking with the other sex. Your "gang" gradually became a mixture of boys and girls, which, without pairing off too evenly, went everywhere together. Only on occasion would you go on a "date," to a Sunday afternoon movie, or a skating party. Perhaps you shared your homework problems or a coke. Why? Were you looking for a husband or wife? Your only concern, of course, was to discover companionship between the sexes. More basically, you wanted to discover yourself by contrast. Unconsciously, you were questioning: What kind of a boy am I?

Arrangements for the Wedding

AS THE time for marriage approaches, you will be caught in a flurry of activity. No matter how busy, save time for each other. An engaged girl once paused in her bustling to cry to her bored fiancé: "Dear, pardon my rushing about, but we must not forget the most insignificant detail." He looked bitterly at her and remarked: "Don't worry about me, I'll be there!" Remember, the little details that take time are only the frosting on the cake. Make certain you have more cake than frosting.

It is regrettably true that many young couples are at swords' point the night before the wedding. Nervous tension and preparations have keyed them up so highly that the slightest difference creates a major irritation. Many a wedding rehearsal has been conducted in tears—and not merely the tears of the bride's mother at losing her baby!

Showers. Your friends will want to celebrate your marriage with "showers" or stag parties. By all means, accept their congratulations gracefully and enter into the spirit of the occasion. But do not permit such parties to degenerate into ribaldries or drunken obscenities.

Since Saturday seems the most popular day for marrying, to make certain of your date, you probably have already arranged for your wedding. If not, you should approach your pastor at least a month, and preferably six weeks, before your chosen day—beware, many ember days fall on Saturday. Generally, you must see the bride's pastor who has the right, as spiritual "Father of the Bride," to perform the ceremony. If you wish your wedding at any other parish, or performed by any special priest, you must seek the pastor's permission. No date should be announced until you have arranged with him, and all necessary dispensations have been obtained (cf. LAW GUIDES LOVE). Ask about any regulations for decorations or photographers, etc., which your pastor may have.

Banns. When the banns are published in your home parishes, go and hear them. Be proud of your love! They are announced to make certain your marriage will be valid, and to show the interest of the entire Mystical Body (the Church) in your miniature union in Christ (cf. MARRIAGE IN CHRIST and MARRIED LOVE).

opposites attract. The quiet, even-tempered person might have dated an emotional enthusiast, a clown might have dated a serious person, a more plodding person often sought out a spark plug of activity. In other words, you began to experience and judge the qualities that would make a good partner. (Cf. p. 8.)

In our culture, where parents are permitted to do little if anything to help their children select marriage partners (there is a trend in the opposite direction in some suburban areas), entering into the group and random dating pattern is very important. Since, in our country, the only possibility of meeting a future marriage partner is through the dating process, the young person must enter into this complex in order ultimately to achieve matrimony. However, great popularity in early dating is not essential for the future success of marriage. It is enough to have dated a number of people. Nor does frequency of dating have much effect on later success. It is enough to have been in the dating pattern. Lastly, it is not necessary to have entered the dating community at all costs! Some adolescents have been overly anxious for dating success. To win approval of the other sex, they have been willing to pay almost any price, including that of serious physical intimacy. They bitterly discover that, at a high price, they have purchased nothing.

RISKS IN DATING

Random dating involves a number of risks. The first is "too soon" emotional involvement. Occasionally, a young girl "falls for" a man greatly her senior; a boy is "knocked off his feet" by a very pretty face. They then leave random dating and begin "going steady." Others foolishly start off with steady dating for "social security" reasons—they are certain of having a date for every dance! "If I don't have a steady, I must be a drip!" Steady dating sooner or later brings emotional involvement and often *forces* adolescents into serious courtship before they are ready.

Steady dating before one is ready to prepare seriously for marriage is harmful. It arrests one's own growth. It prevents development of self-confidence with many members of the other sex, since it accustoms a person to only one date. It binds the two with a sense of obligation before they really are able to commit themselves so exclusively. It makes one feel guilty if he "wants out." When the relationship does break up, it is hard to enter the

random dating pattern and find other contacts since the couple has been set apart as belonging exclusively to each other.

The second risk is exploitation for selfish reasons. A girl might use her attractiveness to empty a boy's wallet or cruelly put him "through the hoop." A boy might bargain his dating rating for a girl's time, adulation, and even physical responsiveness, only to "throw her over" when he satisfies his desires. Selfishness cannot be love!

A third risk is extravagance. To impress a date, a girl might splurge on clothing, cosmetics, beauty treatments. A boy might spend a week's earnings on a lavish date. Neither gives an honest picture of himself or herself to the other. It is not only sinful, but emotionally harmful to live a lie. "Truth will out" with resultant disillusionment and embarrassment.

A constant danger in modern dating is overemphasis on the physical. In our culture, mature self-control is achieved later than maturity of the body and its appetites. Physical attraction between the sexes is strong and is independent of personal attraction. Often dating becomes fixed on this blinding passionate level which prevents the growth of real love and hides even repelling incompatibilities.

Finally, American dating often fails in not being carefully selective of a dating partner. Dating, whether consciously or unconsciously, is a remote preparation for marriage. Almost any date could possibly lead to marriage. A physical spark, a romantic attachment, mere mutual enjoyment, could rush the couple into an unwise marriage. A wiser advance selection provides a "look" before the "leap."

Courtship

AS YOU went through the casual "window shopping" of random dating, most of you gradually found your interest in the other sex narrowing down. You began dating one person more than the others. Without any conscious decision, you began shopping seriously for a mate. You entered courtship. Yet, if you were wise, you did not go very deeply into serious courtship without some certainty that you were mature enough for marriage. A boy still completing his education, a girl not really willing to

not legally. Such group engagements also make the engagement a religious thing.

Other couples simply pick an opportune time, such as Christmas or a birthday, for the giving and receiving of the engagement ring. Select a place and time fitting for the beginning of this spiritual novitiate for marriage. A night club or a darkened car is hardly the correct atmosphere for entering an engagement! If possible, have your engagement ring blessed by a priest on some opportunity either before or after the moment of actual promise.

Meaning of the Engagement Ring. The engagement ring is very significant. Since it is a circle it signifies the unbroken love to be exercised and developed by the young couple. It is gold, which signifies the nobility and durability of your love. Usually it is crested with a diamond which indicates both the purity and the fire of the love which is pledged. It is placed on the fourth finger of the left hand where, early in medical myth, the vein leading directly from the heart was believed to be.

As people discover the spirituality of marriage and the seriousness of preparing for it, they begin choosing rings designed with various Christian symbols for marriage. If you cannot obtain one of these, at least have an ordinary engagement ring inscribed with such a phrase as "Promised in Christ."

Though the ring should be valuable in token of real love for the future bride, it certainly should not be ostentatious or beyond the means of the future husband. A one-carat diamond will be cold comfort should you lack milk for the first baby.

The engagement ring makes public your intention to marry. It is frequently accompanied by a formal announcement in the social pages of the newspaper.

Breaking the Engagement. Since an engagement is a serious promise to marry, do not enter one without that serious intention. You should not break an engagement without an adequate reason. However, engagement is not so binding that it should force you unwillingly into marriage! If you break your promise to marry, both of you return any gifts made *only in view of the forthcoming marriage*. The one who breaks the promise must also make good to the other any expenses he may have made for the wedding (e.g. printing orders, deposit on reception hall, etc.).

“kid” him: “Back on the reservation, Sitting Bull!” A young man might suggest with a twinkle that he play “chauffeur” tonight while she sits in the back seat. You can subtly suggest that you are not rejecting your partner, that you very much desire his caress, and more, but only in marriage.

By all means approach the sacraments often. Go to Holy Communion, preferably together, at least every Sunday, or more often. Begin the custom of frequent confession. The graces of Penance will preclude serious sin, give positive helps for virtue, and provide an opportunity for spiritual direction which you will need, not only now, but in your vocation to holiness in Christian marriage.

Daily prayer is also very helpful. Every young person should have learned to pray, morning and night, for purity. It should be quite natural to start and end every date with a simple, unaffected prayer together that God may bless your courtship, engagement, and marriage.

HOW TO GET ENGAGED

Though you may have been explicitly engaged for some time, you will want to make the fact public by a formal engagement. There are a number of ways to do this.

Solemn Engagement. In earlier days, Catholics became engaged by a contract between the two families which was signed and sealed by the pastor. As courting customs changed, this custom faded. Fortunately, it is now returning to vogue.

The modern solemn engagement is a religious act which usually takes place before the parish altar or in a chapel. The pastor or his delegated assistant, or two witnesses are present. There is no prescribed form for this betrothal, but several are suggested in the reading list at the end of this chapter. The solemn engagement is a formal promise to marry and binds the partners in conscience to carry out this contract unless the promise is dissolved by mutual consent or for a serious reason. The whole contract and its possible dissolution are governed by Church Law (cf. Canon 1017).

Simple Engagement. In some areas in the United States, couples enter into engagements in groups while attending pre-Cana or a pre-marriage course. Such group engagements are not formal contracts though they still have the nature of a promise which binds—but

settle down, should have remained in the window-shopping state. It would not have been fair to yourself or your dating partner to begin serious courting with no allowance for the possibility of marriage.

Courtship is the preference for frequent dates with one person to the exclusion of others in order to know that person deeply enough to choose him or her as a marriage partner. Casual dating was on a superficial level. You talked about surface things which were interesting, but you rarely got to know your date deeply. Courtship is designed to discover more of the person. So, in courting, you began to explore what each other really is—your loves and fears, hopes and dreams, family relationships, religious faith, attitudes toward money, ideas about rearing children, ideas of right and wrong, awareness of obligations to the community, etc. Courtship is concerned with the most important decision of a lifetime—the selection of a marriage partner.

Pope Pius XI explains the function of courtship when he says:

To the proximate preparation for a good married life belongs very specially the care in choosing a partner; on that depends a great deal whether the forthcoming marriage will be happy or not, since one may be to the other either a good help in leading a Christian life, or on the other hand, a great danger and hindrance. And, so that they will not deplore the rest of their lives the sorrows arising from an indiscreet marriage, those about to enter wedlock should carefully deliberate in choosing the person with whom henceforward they must live continually. (Pius XI, *On Christian Marriage*. New York. The America Press, 1931, pp. 59-60.)

Getting Advice. Since marriage is a true vocation in which two people are called to serve God by serving each other; since eternal salvation might be at stake, a sensible man and woman should have asked advice on their choice. No reasonable person chooses a car, a house, or a job without seeking advice. How foolish to enter marriage without advice!

From earliest youth, a young person should have become accustomed to pray daily that he may follow God’s will in the choice of a vocation. God does not usually show his will in visions. You have discovered His design by examining your natural inclinations, abilities, circumstances. Once you had chosen marriage rather than celibacy, you should have doubled your prayers that you might wisely choose a marriage partner. Again, God did not send an angel to point out a suitable partner. He wanted you to look at

each other with clear vision, evaluating as deeply as you can the character traits of each other. After asking God for advice, you should have gone to your parents, confessor, and closest friends. These people were not “in love” and saw him or her with a vision, which, if not clearer than yours, was at least objective. Unless your parents were overly possessive or utterly unreasonable, their desire for your happiness urged them to evaluate your own readiness and that of your partner with very careful eyes. Your confessor, particularly if he was your regular confessor, saw you and your “steady” with even clearer vision. We hope you also consulted your closest friends. Friends could easily prevent foolish mistakes—if only approached. Studies of marriages show that close friends had predicted with remarkable accuracy both happiness and unhappiness.

QUALITIES OF A PARTNER

In getting to know one another during courtship, what qualities did you look for? We hope you have asked the same questions of yourself. It certainly would not be fair to demand emotional stability in one’s partner and to take your own touchiness for granted! It should have been as important to understand your own strengths and weaknesses as it was to understand those of your partner. You should have ascertained your own and your partner’s determination to increase every positive quality and to work at the elimination of every defect.

Religion. Since marriage is a true calling to save your soul through dedication to partner and children, then a real and deep religious spirit should characterize those who hope to become good husbands and wives, mothers and fathers. As an active, practical Catholic, then, you naturally should have a complete knowledge of the Catholic faith. Since knowledge should lead to action, a practical Catholic life is necessary, one which observes all Christian duties and is even apostolic in its zeal. If the goals of marriage were only pleasure, sexual satisfaction, mutual companionship, then marriages and families could disintegrate (as they are doing) whenever these are not reached. It would be a strange married couple to whom the thought of separation or divorce would not occur at least fleetingly as an immediate solution to disunity. Only self-discipline in pursuit of real values can hold a marriage together.

ready to assume responsibility. All of these bring personal unhappiness and social evils.

Principles for Premarital Chastity. Deliberately to produce complete or incomplete sexual pleasure in oneself or another, or to enjoy it if it rises unbidden, is obviously a serious sin. (Note: joy is in the will, pleasure in the senses. Unbidden sexual stirring cannot but be sensed as pleasant and attractive, but only a *willing* “yes” to it can be called sinful.) Also, to desire such pleasure outside of marriage or to take pleasure in representing oneself as personally enjoying it, is equally a mortal sin. Sexual pleasure is reserved for marriage. However, a young couple approaching marriage, who naturally desires this gift of self *within marriage*, is not culpable of any moral wrong. Again, in the process of learning the details of marriage (as presented in this course, for example), there is a necessary minimum of imaginative picturing which cannot be avoided. As a result, there might be some unbidden stirrings of temptation. There is no sin in the necessary picturing or unwilling temptations.

To do anything which might arouse unwilling sexual pleasure in oneself or partner is a mortal sin, a venial sin, or no sin at all depending upon how stimulating the action is, as compared to the reason for so acting. For example, intimate petting is seriously stimulating and is really a part of preparation for bodily union. There can be no justifying reason for this activity before marriage. Such actions would be seriously sinful. For the same reason passionate kissing, such as the tongue kiss, would be equally sinful. On the other hand, however, the young couple may wish to express mutual affection. This might cause unwilling sexual stirring. Couples may legitimately give and receive affection (not *marital* affection!) without committing sin. Therefore, reasonable kissing and embracing, dancing, walking, arm in arm, etc., are perfectly legitimate for the courting couple, even if some stirring should arise against their wills.

How to Remain Chaste. Use every reasonable safeguard so you can bring to your marriage a chaste and total gift of self. Do not be so alone that you cannot be interrupted! Have your mother bring coffee into the sitting room, unannounced. Group dating or dating in public places also helps.

Sometimes a sense of humor will save the situation. A girl who feels that her fiancé’s kisses are becoming too passionate might

activity according to God's law. It precludes the gift of self, wholly or partially, before marriage; it regulates the gift of self within marriage according to God's will. Therefore, chastity is to be exercised both before marriage and in marriage. True, this virtue has two different sets of practical applications, but it is the same virtue. Obviously then, you will find it difficult to live in marriage with chastity—involving mutual fidelity, the avoidance of contraception, and the absence of selfish lust—if you have refused to develop the habit of premarital chastity.

Premarital unchastity endangers your future marital happiness. Mutual sexual fixation often slows development of real conjugal love which makes higher demands on spiritual, cultural, and intellectual levels. (Cf. MARRIED LOVE.) Sexual intimacy is often sought for unconsciously selfish satisfaction under the guise of "love." Yet, selfishness and love are contradictory. No amount of rationalization will ever persuade a person that physical intimacy is perfectly acceptable outside of marriage. Hence, guilt, furtiveness, secrecy, fear of discovery, loss of self-respect, distrust of the partner, mutual lowering of esteem follow. Habitual emotions of this kind will carry over into marriage and make adjustment very difficult. (Cf. Clemens, Alphonse H., *Marriage and the Family*. Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1957. p. 109.)

Socially, physical intimacy so engrosses the faculties that the partners find themselves incapable of growing, either in personal or social competence. Ask any college student how well he can study when so involved! Secondly, the growing numbers who sin against chastity lower the general moral tone of the community and pave the way for unhappy marriages which bring unhappy homes that often end in divorce.

Thirdly, a physical intimacy such as petting is not an isolated action. It is the beginning of a chain reaction whose natural result is sexual union. It is extremely difficult to stop the process. None of the "solutions" to a premarital pregnancy is without its individual and social repercussions. The "solution" of abortion, illegitimate birth, and "forced" marriage, all bring with them a train of disaster quite aside from the moral problems involved. Abortion is simply murder. Illegitimacy brings the problem of rearing a child properly or the complication of adoption. A quick marriage is an unwilling marriage entered into before the young couple is

Only the grace of God and the deep awareness of one's religious vocation in Christian marriage can build such self-control.

Realistically, however, you have not set your norms too high either for yourself or your partner. No matter how religious, you have been on the road to perfection a long time and will never fully reach it. The questions you should have asked yourselves are: "Are our religious principles clear and strong? Are we working toward the religious goal of our vocation? Are our lapses due more to our human weaknesses than to indifference or lack of conviction?"

Because the Church teaches such high ideals of marriage as a vocation and sacrament, She has always opposed mixed religion marriages. In mixed marriages, the Church has experienced the lack of shared religious enthusiasm, disunities in custom and practice, and disagreement on moral rights and wrongs. She reluctantly consents to a mixed union only for serious reasons, with proper guarantees, and with moral certainty that they will be carried out. The reasonableness of Her sadness and the handicaps of such unions will be presented in another chapter. (Cf. MIXING YOUR MARRIAGE.)

Morality. You have certainly expected to bring to your marriage and have looked for in your partner a well-developed moral character. Individuals who are striving toward the noblest of ideals and have practiced sound moral principles make more desirable marriage partners than those with low standards and erratic, sinful behavior.

Have you frequently discussed the principles of right and wrong? Have you agreed that divorce is immoral, not only for your own love, but also as a solution to the problems reported in the newspapers and magazines? How has your future husband expressed himself on graft in politics, honesty in business? Has he questioned his own honesty by envious remarks about the success of the dishonest? What has your future wife said about bearing children and contraception, discipline of children, truthfulness? Has she evinced real admiration for Christian family virtues? In realms of chastity, have you both prized virginity and avoided physical intimacy? Have you shown real abhorrence for adultery wherever you noticed it? In realms of purity, has there been constant argument about whether: "This really isn't too wrong; after all we love one another." A slip due to human weakness could be

understood and forgiven; a disagreement on principle should have been seriously questioned.

On the other hand, it is not enough to have had high principles and ideals without good practice. A person who protested the value of sobriety without demonstrating self-control in drinking; a boy who insisted on the importance of purity while being constantly out of line; a girl who talked of the ideal of truthfulness without being able to speak a truthful sentence, should have been discarded as a poor marriage risk. Practice must at least approximate principle!

You have heard of morally dissolute persons who have entirely reformed their lives under the drive of a really deep love. Thank God, such conversions do happen. But such a "conversion" should have been tested in every possible way before being accepted as deep and permanent. In an effort to win approval, love, and eventual marriage union, people have been capable of fantastic sacrifices. After the conquest has been achieved and the marriage vows have been pronounced, many have all too frequently returned to the same old vices. Marriage makes a poor reform school.

On your wedding morning you will vow your lives to each other until death parts you. Only a person who has developed strong moral habits can pronounce a meaningful vow. He has made resolutions and kept them. He has carried out promises. An erratic character with few good habits, or a vicious character whose habits are evil, cannot make a trustworthy promise, contract, or vow. Good moral principles, approximated by practice, are the only guarantee for a permanent union.

Health. Obviously, it is important to have brought to marriage a heredity and a body adequate for the burdens of married life. Early in your courtship, you should have asked yourselves: "Is there any hereditary taint in our families which might show up in our children? Will my future husband be physically able to support a family? Will my future wife bear and rear children without great difficulty?"

If you found yourselves less than perfectly healthy, this need not have precluded marriage, but it should have led to much discussion about the mutual sacrifices entailed. Surely, you should not take a wife with a bad heart unless you are willing to practice prolonged or—eventually, perhaps—permanent continence. You should not marry a physically handicapped man unless you are

bride pitch in at home? Does she treat her parents with disdain, demand services, keep a slovenly room; or is she an effective and enthusiastic member of a happy household? Observe each other in your natural "habitat," not only in artificial situations.

Adjustments. It is impossible to imagine all the little adaptations which will be demanded of you in marriage. But anticipate as many as you can. What types of recreation will you take together or apart? What division of labor will you develop in the household? What outside interests are reasonable for each person to continue after they become one? What is "your department" and "my department?" What are your duties and my rights, my duties and your rights?

As marriage comes nearer, it is not sinful or indelicate to discuss physical adjustment in marriage (cf. YOUR BODY AND YOU). True, your discussion should not be too vivid because of mental and physical temptations. But you should discuss your anticipations. God himself designed sexual pleasure. The Sacrament of Matrimony raises the contract of marriage to supernatural heights. It would be a sad mistake for a man to dissemble his very real appetite in this area, or for a woman to gloss over any anxieties or distaste. The contract involves the right to the marital union.

PREMARITAL CHASTITY

Our society has long since abandoned the chaperone. As a result of this and our growing secularism, surveys indicate an increase in premarital intimacy all the way from petting to premarital intercourse. Sexual self-control is a serious personal problem for most people from puberty on through life. A boy and girl cannot be alone together night after night without being strongly tempted to "step out of line." This is the greatest drawback to our dating, courtship, and engagement system.

Theologically, philosophically, morally, psychologically, and sociologically, sex is for the married. Marriage is the total gift of self to one person of the other sex for a lifetime. And this total gift is both symbolized and to some extent achieved in the marital act. Therefore, the fullness of the marital embrace or any intimacies which are the normal preliminary to it are reserved exclusively for those who are married. (For the sacred values of the marriage act, cf. YOUR BODY AND YOU.) Chastity is the virtue which guards this sacred reality. It is the virtue which regulates bodily sex

Now is the time to discuss money management. How are your personal finances at the moment. If they are confused now, they will be confused later. How will you handle money? Separately? Jointly? Husband? Wife? Will the wife work? (Cf. OF CABBAGES AND THINGS.)

Where to Live. Some engaged couples immediately set out to buy a home. They are sure that payments on a home are not greater than rent, and that they are making a solid investment. Unfortunately, they often do not consider repair costs or the relatively irreversible commitment. Others prefer apartment living, particularly those with heat, light, air conditioning, secretarial service, etc. This easy living is often expensive. Still others hold to the middle of the road. They intend to rent in several different locations until they get the "feel" of home size, quality, and neighborhood. Whatever you do, it is important to discuss the possibilities and to seek advice from more experienced people.

Shall We Live with Mother? Many young couples thriftily look at the empty rooms in their parents' homes and decide to live with their parents "just for a while." Others notice that their parents are all alone, or need care. A number of solutions are possible for these considerations. Some couples set a limit to living with parents, and then move out. Others live apart during the time they are making early adjustments and then return if their parents need them. Some live with parents in need of care. Others take their parents into the new home. Since modern medical science has extended longevity, without doubt many couples getting married today will need to live with their parents for some time at least. Talk out your preferences now. Of course, you cannot make final decisions because circumstances may change. However, your attitudes should be thoroughly explored now so future recriminations will not arise.

Should you live in your parents' home for a time, here are a few suggestions: First, it is still your parents' home, do not try to take it over. Second, see to it that you have adequate privacy—for affection or for storms! Third, if you enjoy its benefits, contribute to its upkeep by money and work.

All during engagement, the young couple should spend time in each other's homes and observe how the two families live. How does the future groom treat his mother, brothers and sisters? He will act much the same in the home he heads. How does the eager

willing to be his eyes, hands, or legs, and to live within lessened income.

To prevent the spread of disease and safeguard future children, most states require, before marriage, a Wasserman test for the "social" diseases. The presence of such a disease does not *necessarily* indicate previous unchastity. Some such diseases can be contracted innocently.

The courting couple has already felt some physical desire for each other and this is to be expected. Since marriage, by definition, involves complete bodily intimacy, a girl who shrinks from any caress, or a boy who thinks his fiance repulsive, certainly should not marry! However, strong passion, great beauty, or handsome physique are not imperative. Normal people easily develop passion within marriage. Beauty could even be a handicap if it made a person seem desirable but unattainable. Beauty is an asset since it attracts, but after the initial impact other factors are more important. (For more complete presentation of the body in marriage cf. YOUR BODY AND YOU.)

Maturity. Marriage is for adults. A couple should not have started serious courting until each was old enough to marry. How old is old enough? In some countries, boys and girls in their middle and late teens are considered mature enough. In others, teenagers are still dependent on their parents, are unable to earn a living, and are too immature to make adult decisions. Generally, young people in the United States should have completed their formal education and have demonstrated their ability to obtain and hold a job before considering marriage. How high an education or how remunerative a job should depend on the intelligence and skill of the person to be judged.

More important than age is emotional maturity, which is the ability to respond properly in each situation. Inability to express an emotion is just as immature as erratic or childish emotionality. A cold, distant, phlegmatic personality is not a good risk for marriage. On the other hand, a jealous, moody, touchy person is equally immature. Emotional immaturity can be reduced to childishness. If a person is selfish, throws temper tantrums, is petty and nagging; if he is excessively dependent upon parents, and needs them to make his decisions or approve them; if his values all center on fun or pleasure, he has not yet grown up.

Since mental illness seems to be increasing rapidly in the United

States—or at least is discovered more frequently—someone has suggested that every young couple contemplating marriage should have a test for mental health! It is true that even slight mental upsets can cause marital unhappiness. Whether you should have sought mental checkups or not depends on whether there is some history of emotional upset in either family and on the availability of really competent psychological testing services. Unfortunately, not everyone who calls himself a psychologist is competent!

Similarity. An apparent contradiction in human personality gives rise to two different sayings: “Birds of a feather flock together,” and “Opposites attract.” Love is a craving for union between two personalities. Two persons can never *become* one person, but they can *act* as one. A couple can act as one only if there is some similarity between them. You have already been drawn together because you have the same principles, attitudes, viewpoints, and sense of values on all important matters. You ought to be roughly similar in degree of intelligence and cultural background so you can converse easily and have the same expectations for the roles you are to play in marriage.

Since love demands a unity of wills, the couple must have similar ambitions, determinations, and goals in life. If one partner wants to amass wealth or achieve power, he will have little in common with his wife whose all-consuming aim is more education, or religion. You ought, finally, to be similar in age. A difference of one to five years is common in our country, but rarely do marriages work out well where the age difference is greater.

In less important matters, similarity is helpful but not absolutely necessary. A person who likes symphonies might find it difficult to live with a person who is tone deaf. A fanatically clean and orderly person might find it difficult to live with someone who is careless.

You have also been attracted to each other by your differences! Your masculinity and femininity have provided your fundamental polar attraction. Perhaps, too, you have been attracted to a complementary temperament. A plodding, quiet man might seek a wife who bubbles with enthusiasm. An aggressive, ambitious person might be most happy with a docile and encouraging spouse. A volatile temperament might need an even-tempered companion. To check your future compatibility, you should have asked yourselves two questions: “Do we really agree on all that really

bridges now, but you can discover your attitude toward crossing them! Make sure you discuss at great length the areas upon which there is no immediate agreement.

Children. The primary purpose and end of marriage is the procreation-education of children. Notice that we have not said *purposes*, but *purpose*, because education is merely a continuation of conception. God planned that adults should people the world, not children. He gives to married people the challenge of both begetting and educating *His* children. Yet children are implicitly, not necessarily explicitly, involved in married love. We would be surprised to hear a man propose: “I notice that the birth rate is falling. Let’s you and I get together and do something about it!”

During engagement, it is presumptuous to *decide* how many children you are going to have. You cannot know whether you are fertile or sterile. You build heartache if you yearn for a large family only to discover absolute or relative sterility. You create guilt and anxiety if you want to stop at one or two without good reason.

Be Christian in your approach to family size. Determine that your family size will be according to God’s will. This does not preclude human decisions in terms of your economic, social, and physical condition. It merely demands that you will decide on Christian principles and implement your decision by Christian means.

Nevertheless, you have an undeveloped image of how your future family will look, and how you will discipline your children. However different this image will be developed in time, it should form an intimate part of your discussion together. (Cf. PARENTHOOD.)

Finances. By this time you should have a deeply ingrained habit of saving. If not, the engagement period should involve intensive saving for both of you. You cannot tell how soon an emergency might strike you after your marriage. Certainly neither partner should enter marriage while any *notable* debts are outstanding. Unfortunately, we no longer have the customs of a dowry, but a self-earned “dowry” should be brought to marriage by both partners. The bride is usually expected to bring to marriage a complete trousseau of household linen’s and personal clothing. The groom, too, should bring at least a year’s supply of personal clothing and a nest egg of savings.

of praying and receiving the sacraments. If possible, attend a pre-marriage retreat. Many dioceses have retreat houses, where you may spend a week end under spiritual direction and alone with God. Sometimes these retreats are designed specifically for engaged persons. Spend a meditative holy hour before the Blessed Sacrament to beg God's blessing on your union.

Spiritual writers suggest that a general confession should precede a change in one's state in life. A general confession is imperative if you have deliberately concealed a serious sin in a previous confession, if you have received sacraments sacrilegiously, if you did not have true sorrow or purpose of amendment in past confessions. If, fortunately, none of these conditions apply, it is a good idea to make a general review of your entire life so that, from this point on, you need never look back.

A general confession is not difficult. Simply spend some time (usually with a printed examination of conscience) examining your life for the faults in it. When you have a pretty clear picture, enter the confessional and tell the priest that you wish to make a general confession because you are soon to be married. Ask him to help you by asking questions. Within a few minutes he will be able to bring out all of the serious sins of your past life and send you out to enter marriage with a clean slate.

Spend at least some time on the evening before your marriage, and before you go to the church in the morning, in prayerful awareness of the great religious step you are taking. To do this, you will have to complete your last minute material preparations early, and shoo out your twittering friends!

Finally, you will spend much of your engagement in material preparations for life together and for a memorable ceremony and reception. Do not despise these preparations since they are very helpful for a good start. But remember that "Not by bread alone shall man live." (Luke 4:4.)

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You should have no difficulty in finding things to do and things to discuss during your engagement. Every problem solved before marriage is an adjustment made unnecessary after marriage. Therefore, be completely frank and honest before marriage. Bring up all the problems you can possibly foresee. Do not say, "We'll cross that bridge when we come to it." True, you cannot cross any

matters? Can I live with, and promote, my partner's qualities which are different from mine?" (For a full understanding of adjustment Cf. MAN AND WIFE.)

Domesticity. Have you both demonstrated your willingness to settle down to mature family life? Have you been anxious to be proud of your home, content to stay in it, eager to beget and rear children? If your whole "living" has been out of the home in night clubs, restaurants, taverns, bowling alleys, and amusement centers, you are not ready for marriage! Have you observed your partner in his or her natural *habitat*? How "natural" has he looked with his parents and family? How comfortable has she shown herself in the kitchen?

Income. It is not true that two (or more) can live as cheaply as one. Serious courting should not have gone far without an adequate income for family support in the offing. Ordinarily, the only income the family can hope for is the salary or wages that a husband earns. Therefore, a secure position with some hope for advancement is a minimum requirement for "serious intentions." All debts should have been cleared up long before marriage is considered. The bill collector should not be a member of the family at the start.

Neither partner should have continued courtship with a spend-thrift or excessive gambler. True, it is foolish to "marry money" or marry a miser, but a certain minimum of income and ability to manage it is necessary for a secure family life. (Family economics is discussed in OF CABBAGES AND THINGS.)

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True Love. All the qualifications of a good partner in marriage should have been ascertained during courtship by direct and indirect discussion. Most have been discovered in an oblique fashion while talking about other things. Few people make these qualities mechanical yardsticks for cold impersonal examination.

Have you discussed your love for each other? Sexual attraction, romantic thrills, enjoyment of each other's company, are wonderful, but not good enough for love. Have you developed complete trust in each other? Have you grown willing, indeed anxious, to spend your life with this person, build a family with him? Have you wanted to do this with him more than with any other person you have met? Have you become automatically conscious of your

partner's wishes, or have you merely exploited the courtship for your own gratification? When you have disagreed, have you forced agreement, or have you learned to admit being wrong without being crushed or right without gloating? Courtship is the time to discover and to grow toward real conjugal love. (For full awareness of conjugal love cf. MARRIED LOVE.)

Disagreements. As you have proceeded through courtship, you discovered, even against your will, defects of character and training, and many matters upon which you have disagreed, and will probably continue to disagree. You have talked these over frequently. If the question were serious—such as habitual deceit, disagreement on basic religious practice, unwillingness to face the care of children—certainly the courtship should have been abandoned. On the other hand, if the disagreement were minor, you have probably learned that no one is perfect and that it is impossible to agree on all issues.

Revelations of the Past. You have a serious obligation to have told your partner everything which would possibly make marriage notably difficult or harmful for him. A person who has a contagious disease, who is a fugitive from justice or on probation, or who is bankrupt should certainly have warned his partner before entering marriage. Known sterility, whether due to congenital defect or to an operation or disease, should also have been revealed. Finally, earlier sexual misconduct or an illegitimate child should be confessed if, *and only if*, the fact is likely to haunt the marriage. However, no one is obliged to bring up serious failings or sins from one's past life which will not harm the marriage. Sometimes young lovers feel compelled to confess their entire lives to each other. This is very dangerous. It is foolish to risk loss of respect, plant seeds of distrust, provide ammunition for future battles!

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qualities resemble those which you have seen in your mother, sisters, and women who visited your family. As a girl, you have long since developed the skills in personal living and motherly virtue which you learned at your mother's knee. You have compared all of the men you have met against the yardstick established by the masculine models you have observed in your own home. You have both learned what conjugal love is by observing and experiencing it in action. You have learned to live comfortably with yourself and others because your family has lived comfortably with you.

Though a good home life is the most important preparation for a good marriage, with God's grace, you can correct the bad influence of an unhappy home life. But there is danger that you will either repeat your parents' errors, or over-react in the opposite direction. If you came from a rigid and rejecting home, you might become the cold, demanding person your parents were. Or, on the other hand, determined that your children and spouse are going to receive love, you might over-react to become a sentimental overly permissive person. Luckily, though it is hard to steer a middle course, it is possible.

Proximate Preparation. During your engagement, your immediate preparation for marriage should be most intense. First, this involves a clear understanding of marriage in its various facets. This can be done best by attending a series of lectures like the pre-Cana conference or this premarriage course. There is a certain value in hearing the truth expressed by someone who is really convinced of it. Good reading is also valuable. Many suggestions will be found at the end of each chapter. As you read, it is a good idea to gather a little "trousseau" of books and pamphlets which you can take into your family for reference. You do not need all the answers now, but you should know where to find them.

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you stand as Christians. You can hope to do this only if you study clearly and take deeply into your hearts the Christian principles of marriage and family life.

Finally, the statements of two recent Popes need no commentary as they beg for more intense marriage preparation:

We wish to call your attention in a special manner to the present-day lamentable decline in family education. The offices and professions of a transitory and earthly life, which are certainly of far less importance, are prepared for by long and careful study; whereas for the fundamental duty and obligation of educating their children, many parents have little or no preparation, immersed as they are in temporal cares. (Pius XI, *Christian Education of Youth*. New York. The America Press, 1936. p. 24.)

. . . Whereas no one would dream of suddenly becoming a mechanic or an engineer, a doctor or a lawyer, without an apprenticeship or preparation, yet every day there are numbers of young men and women who marry without having given an instant's thought to preparing themselves for the arduous work of educating their children which awaits them. (Pius XII, "Davanti a Questa," *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, Vol. XXXIII. 1941. p. 451.)

Remote Preparation. You have been preparing for your marriage in an informal manner from the moment of your conception. You were conceived, born, and reared in a family. You met a doctor only when you were ill; a carpenter, when the family needed a new window frame; the teacher, for a few hours in school. You have always been in contact with the family. Even those who chose religious life should have been prepared for marriage since qualities which make good marriage partners also make good religious, and most religious work among those who are married or will marry. Since the fullness of masculinity is paternity and the fullness of femininity is maternity, whether in physical fact or in spirit, a fully developed person should be able to make a good marriage whether he actually chooses marriage as his vocation or not. (Cf. MAN AND WIFE.)

The best possible preparation for marriage is to have come from a happy home, led by a truly virile father and warmed by the love of a fully womanly mother. The most adequate personalities come from homes where there is real love and firm discipline: a love neither possessive nor rejecting, a discipline neither rigid nor lax. If you come from such a home, you have already learned about masculine and feminine roles in marriage. As a boy, you have learned to identify yourself with the sterling qualities of a manly father, virile brothers, and the relatives and friends to whom they wisely introduced you. You are choosing your bride because her

should have been a definite agreement on a ban from dating others. As you grew more in love and discussed your life together, you decided to become formally engaged, with some definite date, or at least season, in mind. To their sorrow, many people have presumed they were engaged only to discover that the other person did not know it! You were wise if you made your engagement explicit, even if you did not use a ring.

LENGTH OF COURTSHIP

Generally speaking, your courtship should have lasted not less than six months nor more than a year. Less than six months is too short a time for "getting to know you." A courtship of a year or longer risks more seriously all the dangers indicated for dating. Further, it could become exploitive and offer less and less hope of marriage. It is not fair to your partner or yourself to have prolonged courtship without coming to a definite agreement about marriage. Since courtship narrows to exclusive dating between two people, you stopped meeting others. If your courtship lasted longer than a year, you would have lost contact with other potential marriage partners. Whenever either of the partners has decided that marriage would not be possible in the reasonable future or that he or she has decided not to marry the other, the courtship should have been terminated.

Circumstances might have dictated a longer courtship. A boy had eighteen months to go to complete his education; a girl who would like to get her mother settled into a small apartment; a young man who had some notable financial obligations to meet or a stretch to serve in the armed forces; a girl who had some home obligations which she could not easily solve, might have decided on a longer courtship. However, this should have been very clear on both sides.

Breaking Off Courtship. If engagement and marriage have been eliminated, the courtship should have been broken off sharply. Since the two probably have become emotionally involved, a broken courtship may have brought shock and disappointment. Sometimes young people try to soften the break by continuing occasional phone calls and dates. How foolish! Like removing soiled adhesive tape, a short, sharp rip is better than a slow, agonizing pull.

The emotional wound should have been "medicated" promptly. A wise person determines to "wash that man right out of my hair." He removes keepsakes, mementoes, and pictures from sight. He refuses to indulge in self-pity, moping, or withdrawing into himself. The best thing is to develop new interests and new friends. However, being "jilted" would never be a good reason for rushing into marriage with someone else. The whole pattern of dating and courtship starts all over again!

Engagement

WHETHER YOU have reached the engagement ring stage or not, you now have proceeded through the stages of dating and courtship. You have agreed to marry and probably have set at least a tentative date. Engagement is different from courtship. It is a serious preparation, a real novitiate for marriage. Just as an aspirant to religious life spends a novitiate year before being admitted to his vows as a Religious, so you should feel that your engagement is a very solemn trial period before entering into the vocation of Christian Matrimony. The very fact that you have begun this special premarriage course shows you realize that engagement is a time of special preparation.

Value of the Engagement. A successful engagement period begins what will eventually be a good marital adjustment. The *success* of the engagement means the ability of a couple to go through a time of formal preparation without serious and unresolved conflicts. They will not agree on everything, but the way in which they resolve their disagreements or their failure to do so will probably show the manner in which they will face conflict later within marriage.

WHY A SPECIAL PREPARATION?

Why do you need a special preparation at this busy time in your life? Perhaps you have had a fine course on marriage in high school or college, and it might appear to you that further preparation would be a waste of time. But, how much did you absorb from your course? When you took the formal presentation, the teaching of marriage seemed very remote. Much that was said

seemed impractical at the time. It is only common sense to take a "refresher" so that even those things that you know about marriage will be sharpened, and your Christian attitudes deepened.

Every year, over 700,000 men and women, who once protested their undying love, enter our divorce courts and tell the judge that it was all a mistake. They, too, thought they were prepared to make a success of marriage, and yet, after a few tragic years, they admitted failure and defeat. Could it be that more preparation might have helped them overcome the stresses and strains of family life? Surely, you want to take every step to make your marriage a success.

You do not want just any kind of married life, you want the best. Perhaps you have observed how many marriages never achieve much more than boredom. Is it not a good idea to prepare carefully so that your marriage will triumph and not merely exist?

As Christians who share in the divine life of grace, you probably realize that Catholic beliefs on marriage and family life differ from those current in American society. In all cultures, marriage has been considered sacred, even when these cultures became superstitious or degraded. All religious bodies professing to be in any way Christian have been united in declaring that marriage and family life come from God. Recently, however, a subtle secularism has destroyed this idea. Secularism means that many people, without denying God, practically live their lives without recognizing that this is God's world. They live their marriages in the same way.

In 1947, the American Bishops described the impact of secularism on the family:

Secularism has debased the marriage contract by robbing it of its relation to God and, therefore, of its sacred character. It has set the will and convenience of husband and wife in the place that Christian thought gives to the Will of God and the good of society. . . . Secularism has completely undermined the stability of the family as a divine institution and has given our country the greatest divorce problem in the Western World. In taking God out of family life, it has deprived society's basic educational institution of its most powerful means in molding the soul of the child.

You have been living among people who are unconsciously secularistic and are confused about the nature and purpose of marriage. You know that you must reject many contemporary attitudes and practices related to sex and marriage. Nevertheless, this secular atmosphere can gradually affect your views unless you clearly and consciously appreciate the marriage values for which