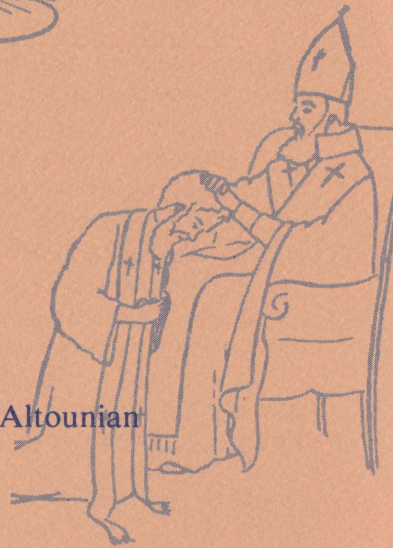
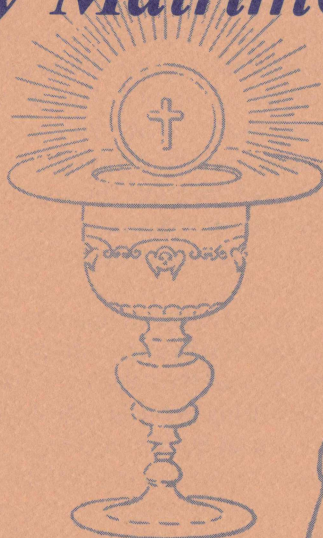
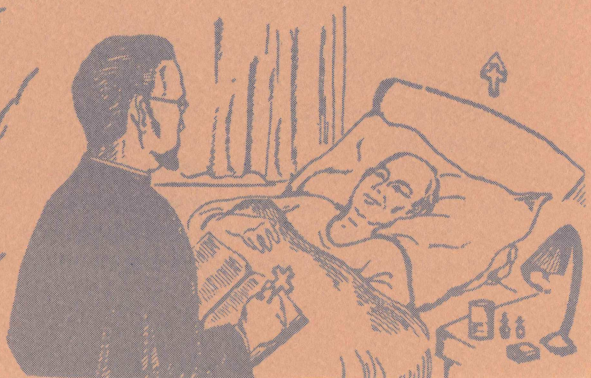
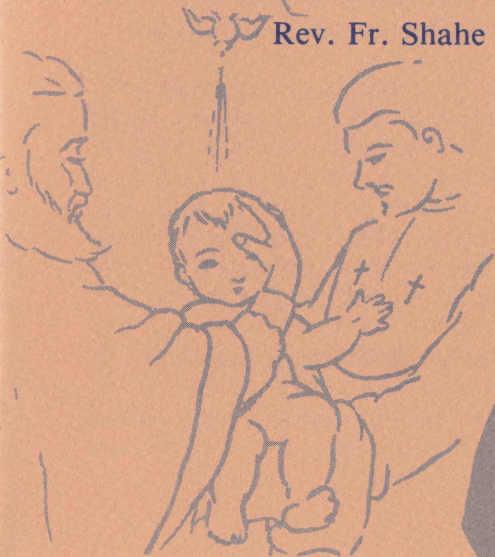


Holy Matrimony



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HOLY MATRIMONY

This is the Sacrament of the union of a man and a woman. The natural purpose of this union is to procreate and educate the children of their flesh.

St. Paul referring to it calls it the "great mystery" and defines it as the union of Christ to His church. A supreme union through which Christ became the God-man. As there is no division in this union so also there is none in marriage. The united man and woman are to be joyful together, the sorrows of the one are the sorrows of the other.

Christ took upon himself all our infirmities and bore our griefs, being rich He became poor for ever sake in order that by His poverty we might become rich. (II Cor. 8:9).

It is evident from the Bible that marriage was even before sin. The readings done during the performance of this Sacrament reflect that story. The Prayer repeats over and over the story of how God, after creating the man, found him lonely, and taking one of his ribs formed it into a woman, Adam's "help mate like unto himself". God blessed them, and said: "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth". Therefore, God not only created them, but gave them the purpose for their existence.

Therefore, we might call marriage the crown of all the work of God's creation, because it was the last act of God in His creation, and because, through it man and woman are still associated in the work of God and continue to create.

Marriage being a holy state, carries in it special blessings from God and therefore should be contracted religiously under the guidance of the church.

What about the legality and the validity of marriage? In order to obtain a lawful marriage the following are a few of the principle conditions.

1. The parties should be of marriageable age (the boy at least 20 and the girl 18), and fully sound in mind, and not afflicted with such bodily defects as may be impediments to the marriage.

2. The marriage should be contracted with the free consent of both the man and the woman. It should not be a marriage as a result of fear, error, violence, or abduction.

3. The rules of the church regarding the forbidden degrees of kinship should be observed, that is blood relationship should be considered. There should exist at least 5 degrees separating them, that is the 2 grandchildren of two brothers. There are as many degrees as persons in one line, excluding the common stock. The marriage that is consummated between one person to the blood relation of his or her partner is not permissible. The marriage between the Priest performing a baptism and the person baptized is not permissible. Also the marriage between god-parent and the god-child is not permissible.

4. The marriage should be solemnized by the orders of the bishop and by the ministry of a lawful priest.

5. It should be solemnized in the church on such days as the church has appointed for the administration of Holy Matrimony.

6. Because of its sacramental nature all things pertaining to it should be regulated by the church. Therefore, civil enactments which interfere with the substance of marriage i.e. divorce laws, are regarded by the church not only evil and unjust, but also an unwarranted interference with the rights of the church.

Once the couple have validly contracted, that is to say, have consented to live together as husband and wife, and have received the blessing of the church, the church alone can separate them.

When the state starts writing divorce laws, divorce cases automatically increase. The laws become less vigorous, the grounds of petition more fictitious and the elimination of collusion more difficult which at the end mean the gradual destruction of the institution of marriage altogether.

In contracting the marriage there are some other facts which should be considered.

The obligations of marriage. Marriage is a sacred union. All the obligations surrounding it are sacred. These stem out of the fact, first of all, it is a sacrament and secondly, it gives an indissoluble bond to the persons involved. These are reasons why people should contemplate on this married state very seriously.

On the other hand, the fact that marriage is based on love and affection, should not in any way let the couple come together until prudent reflection has shown that the proposed union is suitable.

Here again the obligations are serious and of a permanent nature. In other words, marriage is a vocation, therefore a sudden attraction should be resisted until a reasonable judgement has been made as to its suitability.

There are obligations toward the laws of the church and also towards parents. In the first place a just law is a friend and not an enemy to be circumvented and defeated. On the other hand, parental consent, even before the engagement, should be obtained, because whatever they say will be based on their own experiences and also on the knowledge of present circumstances. It needs to be admitted, however, that parents are unreasonable sometimes, but as a general rule their consent is necessary.

The church blesses the rings. She sees in it a symbol and a pledge of consent. The ring shall never leave the finger of the one who is married. Made of some precious metal, it is unchangeable.

What about civil marriages? The church does not recognize them as such. It is correct that the civil authorities should register the couple's intention of marriage, because in some instances the state or the city is also interested in them, when problems, such as property or inheritance, etc. arise. And it is necessary to go through these civil formalities before the Sacrament is administered. However, it should be the church who should give the blessing and announce the couple as man and wife, because marriage is a Sacrament. The duty of the state is to regulate civil contracts in a similar manner.

A few words on Engagement. The Engagement is not a Sacrament, but it has been a good custom to have the priest bless the engagement rings. This is a very important moment in the life of the young people who contemplate marriage. Proper attention and serious consideration should be given to the fact that this period presents a good chance for them to understand each other before binding their lives together for life. Here again the parish priest should be consulted, because this will give him an opportunity to examine the couple's baptismal records, their knowledge of religion, and if there are any impediments to the union. Then he will talk to them, among other things, about the important step they are about to take.

Summarizing the whole meaning of the Sacrament of Holy Matrimony it should be said that marriage is an image of heaven. In the New Testament you come across parables which compare the kingdom of God to a wedding feast. This is very significant. Married couples should always look for the transforming love which is so evident in young fiancées especially who see nothing wrong in each other but pleasing qualities. Life will not be long in disappointing them. And yet these lovers have a point, because of their love for each other they appear to each other in a manner transcending the present. They see each other in the way God wishes us all to be on the day when Love will triumph finally, and man will be transformed into a being of beauty for which God now is working.

Some marital problems:

1. Parents. A delicate problem indeed. The newly married couple is a nucleus in society, together with other married couples. It is always advisable that they are left alone in all their problems and arguments. It will be very wise on the part of the parents to acknowledge this fact and let the young solve and iron out their own troubles. This is one of the most effective ways to solidify the new family. However, if there are problems which cannot be solved by them, the priest should be the first person to be consulted.

2. Conferences. It is essential that the priest devote time to prepare the young couple for their new life together. In the long hours that he may spend with them explaining the service or their duties, etc. he forms a closer and better understanding and a precious friendship with them. But this is not enough. He should be able to find time and arrange conferences with them after the honeymoon is over. In most cases it is unfortunate that he does not see them until the time when they come to church to baptize their first child, and then disappear again. It is necessary to stress the point that it is every Christian's duty and obligation to attend church regularly. Teaching this elementary duty will not be easy. It will take a long time before the desired attitude fills the soul of the people.