

V4_2nd_after_Epiphany= The Course to Be Adopted by Those Who Intend Embracing the Married State

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U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love You, save souls

O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

Volume 4 - THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE
SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

The Course to Be Adopted by Those Who Intend Embracing the Married State



“And Jesus also was invited, and his disciples, to the marriage.” John 2: 2

Happy people, who had the honor of having Jesus at their marriage feast! What a blessing must follow the presence of such a guest! All married people can have the same honor and happiness, if they only invite Jesus. He is willing to be present at every marriage, but he will not come uninvited. If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must be really present at it. If the marriage is to be happy, Jesus must remain with the married couple during their lives. The subject being too extensive as to be treated of in one sermon, we shall consider only the first point:

“If the marriage is to be a happy one, Jesus must be invited to the wedding.”

When one is invited by a stranger to dine, the invitation is not generally given on the day of the banquet, and much less when the meal is on the point of commencing. No; for such an invitation would be an insult, instead of an honor. Christian sons and daughters, if any of you here present intend entering the holy state of matrimony, is it not your wish to have a marriage feast? Without doubt you do. Do you not wish to have Jesus, your God, from whom all blessings must come, as your chief guest? You do not wish to exclude him from your wedding? I am quite sure you do not. And when must the invitation be given? When

the bridal-dress is ready, when you are about to go to church, or when the marriage feast is already prepared? Oh, no; he must be invited long beforehand.

What do I mean by this? As soon as the first thought of marriage comes, Jesus must be invited first of all, by frequent, constant, humble, and fervent prayer, and by the practice of virtue. He must be asked for light and grace to know if that is the state in which God wishes you to be; whether it is the state in which, according to his will, you can best serve him, and save your souls, which is your only business in this world. Jesus must be consulted to know whether the partner you have chosen is the one that he, in his inscrutable decrees, has determined for you from all eternity.

This prayer and deliberation with God is most necessary for all, in the choice of a state of life, no matter what it may be; because, generally speaking, our eternal happiness or misery depends thereon. It is true that one may save his soul in any state; but it is not true that each one may save his soul in every state; and it is an undoubted fact that one cannot save his soul in a state to which he is not called by God, unless with great difficulty. God, and God alone, knows what our state should be. He has reserved to himself the right of determining what state is the best for the spiritual welfare of each one of us. It is to God alone that men ought to appeal for guidance in this matter, and therefore his advice must be asked first of all.

If this is necessary in the choice of religious vocations, it is still more imperative in the choice of the married state, *on account of the many obligations* imposed on married people, which cannot be fulfilled without a special assistance from God; *on account of the many difficulties* of this state, which cannot be borne without a special grace from God; and *on account of the many dangers* of this state, which cannot be overcome without the special help of God. Generally speaking, young people think that when their wedding day comes, they are about to enter into a paradise of joy and pleasure. Listen to what St. Paul says to you: "If thou take a wife, thou hast not sinned. And if a virgin marry, she hath not sinned; nevertheless, such shall have tribulation of the flesh" (1 Cor. 7: 28). For what is the married state, which is, in the Christian law, the indissoluble union of husband and wife, but a servitude in which one party deliberately gives up all personal freedom for life to the other! Once the word is spoken, you have given yourself over to another till death, without knowing how he will behave to you in the future; you have given yourself to one who, before, had no right whatever over you, and who will now have an incontestable right over your person forever. You, by the marriage tie, have given up the right and authority you had over yourself to another person, to a stranger, who is in one mood to-day and in another tomorrow, and is as changeable as the moon in disposition, inclination, and bodily health. Him you are now bound to obey in many things, not always as you will, but as he wills. By the sacramental contract, you are always bound to obey the one person, as long as both of you live. If that person is exactly suited to your disposition, temperament, and inclination, and always remains so, that is indeed a great but rare happiness. You must certainly have taken counsel from God. But if, as frequently happens, the husband, after a

time, begins to dislike his wife, or the wife her husband, what is then to be done? Ah, poor souls! There is no help for you; you are not less bound to each other on that account.

If you had only known that beforehand! But that could not be. What a great thing it would be, if there was a novitiate for the married life! There are many who would not wait to finish the year of trial, but would leave at the expiration of a day or a month. But there can be no such thing; the final step must be taken at once; if things go well, so much the better; if not, it cannot be helped. Once the marriage knot is tied you belong to another, with whom you must live always; and no matter how bitterly you may afterwards repent the step you have taken, you cannot recall your words or free yourself. You have given yourself over to another, without knowing much about him, or his disposition. At first, when he was seeking your hand, he was all amiability, good-humor, and friendliness. You thought that you were about to wed an angel of modesty, mildness, and love. But afterwards, when the first love was somewhat cooled down, and you learned to know each other better in the daily intimacy of your lives, you may have found an obstinate, passionate, and jealous man, in him whom you first looked upon as so amiable; or a peevish, disagreeable, and headstrong woman in her whom you used to consider an angel of modesty and amiability. If that is the case, what are you to do? You did not think of that before, and now you must remain as you are, whether you like or not. There is no novitiate for you.

What a trial, what a martyrdom it is for married people to have to live together, when their dispositions, opinions, and habits are not suited to each other! When an intelligent, prudent, and quiet man has to live with a vain, conceited, and frivolous woman; or a modest, pious, and virtuous wife, with a wicked and quarrelsome husband; or a sparing, industrious, and diligent husband, who works day and night for his family, with a luxurious, indolent, and extravagant wife, who wastes her husband's hard-earned money in idleness, frivolity, amusements, and unnecessary luxury in dress! Would to God that such unhappy marriages were rare in the world! And if such a marriage has been contracted, what is to be done? Ah, poor souls, I repeat that you must bear your burden; the knot is tied, and cannot be loosed. Any vow made to God, even the vows of Religion, may be dispensed with by the Catholic Church, when circumstances require; but not even the Church can interfere with the bond of marriage; there is no dispensation from that. Such is the command of Christ regarding marriage: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder" (Matth. 19: 6). This bond seemed such a hard thing to the Apostles, that they all determined that it was better for a man to remain unmarried. Then his disciples said to him: "If the case of a man with his wife be so, it is not expedient to marry" (Ibid. 10). Christ, foreseeing that the burden would be too great for the majority of them, said: "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given" (Ibid. 11).

Why have I given such a long description of these trials? Is it to make married people sorry for having chosen that state, or to make single people loathe it? God forbid! The state is a holy one, and when one lives therein as becomes a Christian, it is a meritorious one; therefore I say with the apostle:

“Let her marry to whom she will, only in the Lord.” I wish every one of you happiness in that state. My only object in speaking to you of the difficulties of married life is to show you how necessary it is to have the grace of a special vocation to this state, and to pray for God’s help to surmount its difficulties. Hence, I say, it is necessary to invite Jesus to the marriage feast a long time beforehand, to pray to him and seek counsel from him. Is it Jesus who advised you to marry? Is it Jesus who called you to that state of life? Is it after long and earnest prayer, and through divine inspiration, that you have chosen that person as your companion through life? Oh, if that is the case, be comforted! No matter how things may go with you, your marriage will be a happy one as far as your salvation is concerned. Divine Providence will always accompany you and arrange everything for the best, as long as you are not unfaithful to God. The grace of vocation will influence your words and actions and your whole conduct, so that you can, little by little, overcome the bad temper of your husband or wife, and win his or her affections! The grace of vocation will lighten your burden, so that you can bear it; it will give you strength to overcome difficulties, and to bear patiently with crosses and trials, no matter how numerous they may be, and it will teach you to be resigned to the will of God, to heap up merits for your soul, and to gain a great reward in heaven.

But, alas! How few there are who look at the matter in this light! How few Christians, even, who invite Jesus a long time beforehand to their wedding! How few who first ask advice from God by prayer! They ask advice, but from whom? From their own animal appetites: Can I satisfy my inclinations in a lawful manner by marriage? Very well, then, I will marry; I need not deliberate any longer about it. They ask for advice from their outward senses: Is that young man or that young woman beautiful enough? If so, I require no more; I will marry. They ask advice, too, from the covetous and transitory world: Is that young man or woman rich and well off? Has he or she any hopes of inheriting property? Is that person of a high family? Can I, by such a marriage, obtain a high office or a good appointment? Such are the things people seek after. They ask advice from whom? From their parents, and rightly, too; but they must not ask their parents alone, nor first of all: “Houses and riches are given by parents,” says the Wise Man, “but a prudent wife is properly from the Lord” (Prov. 19: 14). Meanwhile, whatever their thoughts, desires, or deliberations may be, they seldom or never think of God beforehand; they concern themselves little about his will or vocation. Sometimes, indeed, they practice certain devotions to obtain happiness in the married state, but when? When the matter is already settled, and the engagement entered on. What wonder is it, then, that continual happiness in the married state is such a rare thing in the world? What wonder is it that unhappy marriages are the rule? Unhappy is the marriage to which Jesus is not first invited!

Unmarried sons and daughters, to you especially do I address these words of warning, for you can still prevent future misery and useless repentance; think well before you undertake a matter on which principally depend your whole future life, your temporal happiness, the salvation of your soul, your eternity in heaven or in hell. Remember that your only business in this world is to serve God and to save your souls, and that you must therefore

choose that state of life in which you will best be able, according to the divine will, to accomplish this one important business. But first of all, invite Jesus to assist you in your deliberation; ask him for advice, since he knows best what is most suited for your temporal and eternal welfare. Pray, and pray daily, to the Most High to show you in what state he wishes you to serve him and save your souls. Amen.

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