CONJUGAL LOVE

Athos Carrara Pontedera, 29 July 1949

THIRD CLASS COMPARTMENT

In a third-class compartment I was in the company of seven workmen returning from work. The train had not yet started when they had already realized that they were dealing with a Christian, and being seven of them, they felt strong enough to test my resistance. Henceforth, even before boarding the train, the Christian who travels in third class, that is, in the midst of the upright people, must prepare to fight battle: it is difficult to escape, and one must prepare oneself in all tones, according to the number of the adversaries, since their strength almost always depends on their number and not on quality. For my own part, I have learned to take the initiative at once to carry the discussion to the subject that seems to me most suitable, according to the climate and circumstances.

That evening I brought the discussion on conjugal love, and I felt that against poor wives it would make anyone lose their desire to marry, but I know my people, and I am sure that in each of these seven families things are going better than their respective leaders would have me understand: among the people there is a habit of boasting that they do not believe in the government or in their wives, that they treat them equally badly, that they despise them in equal measure, that they complain of the council of ministers and of marriage, but I am sure that if they met the head of the government, these contemptuous citizens would become docile and obedient, and would greet him with deference, as if they did not find their wives waiting for them with steaming soup, these swaggering husbands would immediately lower their ears. Leaving the government alone to govern, the truth is that all these people would probably not know how to live a day without their wives, because conjugal love is the greatest good that exists on the face of the earth. Unfortunately, being the most beautiful, it is also the most subject to pitfalls and detours.

There is too much noise on the wedding day: here the noise lasts three days. We gorge ourselves until we become tender as lambs with emotion due to the effect of too much food ingested and too much wine gulped: the evangelical wedding at Cana, with that good wine at the end of the banquet, has come a long way, perhaps too far.

That happy wedding feast recounted by St. John stimulates us to be cheerful on the wedding day, because a great event has taken place, but we should not go beyond limits: it is an event full of responsibility and the feast should be followed by the anxious awareness of this responsibility.

Instead, too many people remain for too long with that noise in their ears and with the memory of good wine on their palate, and then the encounter with the first difficulties is always unwelcome, it is something that comes to disturb the eye diminished by the bliss of the satisfied palate, and the first rebellions and the first tears are born, no longer of emotion, but of sorrow.

One then goes, if there is not sufficient criterion to recognize one's wrongs, in search of consolations, and it does not seem true to meet those who promise to restore and last the bodily bliss of the past, the satisfaction of the palate and of every other sensible region, turning a blind eye to conjugal duties, which begin to be seen, from that moment, as a burdensome chain rather than as an incomparable consolation.

At other times, with these dear people, on the train, we have talked about reconstruction, and I have had to observe that each one has his own infallible plan, as an admirable universal architect, but I have not found anyone who has told me that it is necessary to begin by rebuilding conjugal love, which is the seed, the root and the trunk of that beautiful tree which is society, and therefore the foundation of social life.

When we speak of social life, we look at what is most conspicuous even to a layman: the foliage and the fruits of the tree. If the leaves crumple, that is, the works fail, and the fruits do not ripen, that is, the social sense is lacking in men, we recognize that social life must be restored, and we continue to look melancholy upwards.

We do not realize that evil comes from the roots, from the family and therefore from conjugal love.

Husband and wife put back on track, each in his proper place and with the duties that suit him, the family is put back on track, and from there the family of families, which is to say all the third-class compartments of Italy and every contact between men.

Before speaking of peace, one must begin by restoring peace between husband and wife, before speaking of well-being as a social conquest, one must rediscover that of the soul by returning to the walls of the house in the evening.

PAUSE FOR A BALANCE

We go for the fifteen years of marriage: our eldest son goes for the fourteen. It will not be much, and it will perhaps be a little early to be able to draw a balance, but at least a certain reflection of the stage can be made, and if in fifteen years it can be said, both my wife and I, that we have never regretted for a minute of having married, it seems to me that in comparison with what we hear around, we can be happy.

This is not to say that we are two angels with wings hidden under their shirts, but we have had the good fortune to understand from the beginning that love is like faith: they are flames that cannot act like the night lamp, which is there forever to be extinguished and never goes out; these flames are either luxuriant or they are extinguished: either they feed on them to make them grow or they are consumed.

And we have understood another thing, which could not be done by us. Love is a delicate matter and one never knows which way to take it: if one plays the careless to show that it is a peaceful understanding, that it must go on by itself, without the need to asphyxiate it with too much care, there is the danger that in one or the other the suspicion of negligence will really arise and then there is trouble: when a suspicion is born it is much easier to see it grow than to die.

If, on the other hand, this love is nourished with tender morsels, with all delicacy, there is really the other danger of making it suffocating and thus of taking away its vigor in another way.

We have had the good fortune to entrust him to the Lord: we have loved each other and we love each other in Him. And the flame, thanks be to God, has been growing: it has become brighter as it has gradually lost the glow of youth and has taken on that beautiful quiet and limpid color of maturity.

In much of our sickening literature there is nothing but talk of the third person who becomes part of marriage, to make it brighter and more attractive: it brings us movement, palpitation, adventure. It prevents it from languishing, it armors it, it strengthens it: it supplies what the husband or wife lacked, because it must be known that according to this literature and many dazzling films, when a man and a woman have married they lose many human qualities that have remained on those who have not married on purpose to supply the married with them again, going to replace the husband or wife in a part of the conjugal duties. A wonderful thing, a providential institution, to prevent the torch of love from running out.

And there is more: it is enough for four married persons to make some momentary and reciprocal substitution for all four of them to suddenly end up shining with all the most shining human capacities that they had lost in regular marriage.

Here the word "lover" has a charm not to be described, with its flavor of conquest and sin. If there were no lovers, it would be useless to get married.

And perhaps many good wives and husbands adapt themselves to do without the lover, because adventure always has its risky side and even, let us say it, expensive, not to mention that it requires a certain effort of will with that double life that obliges one to lead, and therefore it may be convenient to do without it. But in the secret of their hearts these good wives and husbands furtively taste betrayal by substituting themselves for the characters of novels and films.

They are wives and husbands who betray each other in fantasy, while remaining faithful to all social and perhaps moral and religious effects: they are the most subtle perverts of conjugal love, the wretched jugglers of the double game, with themselves, with their neighbor and with God, as if they could also deceive God.

These are things on which those who feel confident make their smile of superiority, but there is little to smile about. There is nothing that should not make us meditate. Why the discredit on marriage? Why do they always hammer in our heads that getting married is for mamluks?

Yet only in the case of having to serve God in higher things, and there are few, is it permitted for man not to marry without betraying the purpose for which he came into the world.

Precisely because, as has been said, marriage is the most serious commitment for man, those who do not accept it for lack of will, lash out against it and try to demolish it because they have not had the courage to face it.

Every marriage that is celebrated is a condemnation for the renegades; every marriage, then, that turns out badly is their victory, and in a world that does not cease to rebel against

God and His law, the attack on marriage has the grandeur and cunning we have lamented: all weapons are good, and literature is always a weapon of good effect.

Another consideration: man, if he does not build with God, dissolves. In short, between wife and husband either there is God who keeps them together or there is an emptiness that at any moment can be filled in the way that has been said, or at least it will always make them suffer, because what is empty is empty and is never consolation.

We have never tried to do it alone from day one and from day one. By this I do not mean that we are always in prayer: God's presence is never intrusive: it is a continuous, discreet and sweet presence that we have through the life of grace and the common desire to please him in our every act, to serve him in the humble daily life of the family.

DEFENSE OF PEACE

To get along in two, says a proverb, the good will of one is enough. Between us, in fifteen years, there has not been a quarrel: there have been differences, and perhaps not a day has passed without running into a divergence, but we have never reached a quarrel, one of those quarrels that leave a bitter taste for the whole day and sometimes for several days.

Whose good will was it? It was a bit of both: the principle of being one in two guides us to the point of making us give up any personal stance as soon as we realize that this stance threatens to crack our unity.

Let us try to be vigilant defenders of our peace, which is all our wealth, and which in many, in very many cases spouses jeopardize or even forgive for nonsense such as those about the taste of clothing or eating: they are spouses who do not know how to love each other.

Each of them puts himself before the other: self-love is more powerful than conjugal love. They are two creatures who do not form a unity: it is an ill-assorted marriage, but the fault lies with the two of them and there are no extenuating circumstances: they must convince themselves that they cannot go and look for the fault outside the two of them and perhaps by convincing themselves of this truth it may be that they become more humble and find the right way to understand each other.

It may be that one of the two has to bend to the whims of the other. I have a friend who has been eating capellini since he got married: she has a kind of fixation on capellini and there has been no way: either eat capellini or lose his peace, and my friend eats capellini.

Perhaps he could have used the strong way and imposed the firm hail, but he should have clarified the matter before the wedding or imposed himself on the first day, but on matters of taste one can give in by enduring the little sacrifice that it entails: the trouble is that the evil is more serious, it is an indication that conjugal love limps, if between the complacency of the husband and the hair, the wife chooses the hair.

We defend our peace with all our strength and for now we have always succeeded, but we are always there: if we had appealed only to our good will, who knows how it would have gone. Instead, the need for peace is an interior need, in both of us that comes to us from the love of God before from conjugal love, and so conjugal love is anchored to us and does not fear storms.

But even if we do not fear them, we do not cease vigilance, which keeps us in humility. Woe, we think, if we should feel the desire to give ourselves some air because we have never made a storm: our boat is not stronger than the others and at any moment we could find ourselves in a catastrophe if we were to fail for a moment this sure anchorage of love and trust in God.

To keep us better secure, the Lord makes us know the direction of the winds. Anchoring has been mentioned, but not to give an idea of the port, because marriage is a continuous navigation without stopping: if it were not a navigation it would not be subject to shipwrecks.

The contrary winds are of two kinds: the hot winds of human passions, of serious trials to be endured, such as that of the war that has reduced us to poverty, of illnesses, such as we have had long and exhausting ones, all winds that bring storm with the danger that the heart will not withstand the test, will become exasperated, and pour out its bitterness on the spouse, who is the closest victim. It can happen that conjugal love must be content for years to be spiritual love and that the earthly part of man claims its rights: then it is easy to let oneself go to outbursts, very inopportune and sometimes bad, if not even to let oneself be tempted to betrayal. They are hot winds that blow over our demanding and suffering nature, and woe betide us if conjugal love is not firmly established, if it is not anchored in the love of God.

The cold winds come to us from the environment. It is wonderful how easy it is to find people who, in the most innocent but foolish intent of doing you good, turn you against your wife, or she against you.

It starts with those at home: if you have parents at home, or brothers or sisters, they will be saints if they never tell you what your wife has done wrong in their eyes, nor do they advise you to take measures that would crumble the conjugal union.

Even children do get into it, but they with more malice, because they do it when they hope to gain some advantage from it: boys are in certain things of an impressive sensitivity and shrewdness.

If they realize that mom has done something that displeases you, they come to tell you with a sly air of people broken by deception. Thank goodness that in our house both my wife and I adopt the same system that immediately crushes the initiative: "Mom did very well." And she: "What dad does is always well done."

And they beat a retreat. However, the winds that come from further away, from friends and acquaintances, are more dangerous, but the Lord is a good meteorologist and makes us smell them before they bring damage.

It is a matter of establishing that the wife completes us: she is a part of ourselves. Therefore whoever sets himself against the wife, or she against the husband, sets himself against himself. From now on, without the agreement with one's spouse, no one is complete after the wedding. I challenge anyone who disagrees with his spouse to feel happy: he can also be animalistically satisfied, never humanly happy. Therefore, he who speaks ill of his wife or husband, speaks ill of himself and lays bare his most pitiful miseries.

TO EACH HIS OWN

"I," said one of the seven workers in the compartment, "am not able to stay half an hour with my wife: she is so gloomy, poor thing, that not even a saint would resist it."

"I would gladly stay with mine," said another, the younger, "and she always tells me to take her for a walk, but I can't make a bad impression: I don't want people to tell me that I'm always attached to my wife's skirts."

The former, evidently, has married a beautiful girl and has been content with that: he has taken her according to his taste, as one might do with an object that pleases us. It did not seem to him the truth to get hold of it and enjoy it, but then he clashed with St. Francis de Sales, who reminds us that carnal love first gives desire then nausea, while spiritual love first gives nausea, and once tasted it gives the desire to taste it more and more.

That travelling companion of mine probably when he fell in love with his girlfriend let himself be led by the first desire and closed his eyes to what could have been impediments to that desire: he looked at her and desired her: the desire gave him hope and hope sent him into ecstasy, into that kind of low ecstasy.

He married her, he enjoyed her, and since his love was only carnal, nausea came, and then all the defects came out with the arrogance of brambles in a field harvested and left uncultivated.

This poor worker does not know what conjugal love is: he took it as instinct handed it to him, without reason and will taking part in it. Love, in short, has something to do with it up to a certain point: it is a love of possession, not of delight. It is a love that stops at the senses, it does not enlighten the soul. And in this case it is true that marriage is the tomb of love, but because true love has never existed.

To this unfortunate travel companion of mine, in the short time we were together, I could not say anything important.

He is now a certain age and it is clear that no one has ever worked his soul: to be able to do him a little good it would take patient work, starting from scratch, as is done for other things with children.

Instead, I tried to say something to the second, who is younger and has a different sensibility. It is clear that this young husband really loves his wife, and not because he cannot yet have reached nausea, but because he really loves her with his soul, as I had understood from some of his naïve and clear confidences.

I told him that conjugal love is the most complete and the most consoling because it includes the whole being loved, body and soul: it is always sympathy, it is always the sensible attraction that gives the first desire, although this too can be chaste and perfumed, because God has made nothing less noble and this attraction, too, in His law, is most noble: even the conjugal union, in marriage and in a state of grace, becomes holy.

The first desire comes from sensible attraction, but then it must be completed in the attraction of the soul, and then love is firm, tranquil, joyful, saved.

We love each other because we like each other and enjoy liking each other, and we love each other because we understand each other, help each other, complete each other, each giving to the other what he or she lacked for his or her own completeness and consolation.

And nausea never comes: where the first desire ceases, the second enters resplendently, and the latter always remains, indeed it always increases with the passing of age, even when the first gradually disappears with the earthly parable of the mortal body. Then he enjoys the presence of his wife even when time and fatigue and illness have deprived her of the gift that was the reason for our first meeting.

You, young friend, want to deprive yourself of the company of your wife, who rightly consoles you because the wife must always be the first and best friend, by a foolish convention: you are not with her because they tell you that she degrades you. And who tells you that? Perhaps the one who tells you is worth more than you and is your teacher? Think about it for a while: why should the company of your wife degrade you? Why is she a woman? And you, excuse me, were you not born of a woman? And are you not ashamed of it? Have you never beaten your mother because she did not give birth to you of your father?

The woman, therefore, in the conception of your friends, is an instrument, an inferior being, a shame of man. Then be ashamed also to wear the marriage ring, to say that you are married, and be ashamed to present yourself in the evening before her whom you have so ignobly betrayed by making her your companion in the wedding and considering her instead your slave and your instrument.

Shame on you that you have placed yourself below the level of the beasts that not only feel no shame of the union, but often the male gives his life to defend the female.

Don't you remember that God said, "It is not good for man to be alone"? And God said it because He knew what man lacked, and do you want Him in His love for man to have given him a gift that would bring him back to mortification and shame? Listen to me, love your wife above all creatures and all things, and be proud and glad to take her with you: give her glory and joy, showing her as your support and your consolation.

You are her strength, she is your sweetness: do not spoil the gift that God has given you, but enjoy it fully and with mutual gratitude, and at the same time with gratitude to God.

When that young worker got off the train he said thank you, and he told me in the presence of his companions: I could not have wished for a more beautiful gift.

THE LONG PATIENCE

Enrico Pea in his novel "Zitina" says that women become beautiful or ugly several times a day, for nothing, at least the so-called sensitive or capricious ones. And it is a bit true, in a broader sense, for almost all women: a smile is enough to illuminate and make the ugly beautiful, a grimace of spite is enough to make the beautiful become very ugly and unpleasant.

A friend of mine, who has a "sensitive" wife, one day stopped her in a joke: in a moment of grimaces he managed to take a snapshot of her. He had it developed and showed it to her. He told her: "Look at how ugly you are when you get upset". She was upset, but she didn't say anything: she didn't even try to tear up the photograph, as he had imagined. Instead, she harbored his retaliation, and one fine day, without him noticing anything, she suddenly showed him a snapshot of her: "Look how unpleasant you are when you're serious".

They were two spouses in spirit and laughed together, and together they decided to amend themselves, which they continue to do with good will and praiseworthy results. The fact is that we have to put up with the mutability of the wife's mind, which can always be a March weather, and remains heavy and sometimes makes us burst out, but perhaps we do not think enough that in our turn we force the wife to put up with our musonery or at least our thoughts and our continuous distraction.

Here too there is a journey to be made together: it is a matter of acquiring that gift that seems easy but is instead difficult because it is the sign of the victory obtained by the will over all the changeable moods of the soul: the gift of gentleness. This too is acquired with patient exercise and God's help. One must succeed in remaining smiling in the midst of all the non-dangerous but certainly tumultuous events of children and family life. To get there both, however difficult it may be to get there together. It takes patience and mutual help, helping the spouse who is left behind.

It is interesting to see how by helping the other with gentleness (never with reproach!) one acquires new sweetness: it is an exercise that at first remains painful, then becomes pleasing and cheering. But here, I am told, authority has to do with it: the man is the boss and must act as the boss. If he submits too gently, I bid farewell to his prestige. I answer that I have not yet found a husband who wants to say that he is the boss and who really behaves like a boss: we are faced with an interpretation of authority in a coercive sense, and since, as a popular proverb says, one does not necessarily even make vinegar, then one does not necessarily obtain obedience, nor does one make a good wife.

One of these husbands told me one day that after the first night of marriage in the morning he got up first and while he was getting dressed he woke his wife and showed her that he was putting on his trousers, so as to warn her that if she had any ambition of supremacy or independence she would take it out of her head. Since that first morning this good husband has always continued to get up first, he heats the coffee and brings it to his wife: an extremely kind act, which does not seem to harm authority and which may not harm her, but he kills himself with fatigue and she lets herself be lulled: a beautiful way to exercise authority!

There are other husbands who are even brutal for fear of losing authority: they are jailers and not husbands. The President of Catholic Men, Luigi Gedda, once said to me about the wonderful Union he directs: "Just think that the whole Organization is based on love: there is no code that prescribes duties and establishes penalties for those who do not comply: there is no one who works under the goad of compensation. Don't you see that all this is a miracle of love?"

The authority of the head of the family rests securely when it rests on the same miracle of love. If there is love, everything is already in place: the husband commands gently and firmly at the same time, not for his own satisfaction but in the interest of the family, and the wife with the same gentleness and promptness obeys. Since he has received her from God as a companion and helper, and esteems her and prefers her to any other creature, he does not despise his wife but rather accepts the advice with benevolence; he follows her whenever he can do so without his reason opposing it. If his reason opposes it, he does not reject it with bad grace, but discusses it with her and tries to convince her of the error with me. If there is love, the wife ends by saying: "Surely you are right: I cannot see where you can see." If, on the other

hand, the wife persists in her husband's views, in the common interest, then he decides by authority, which will always be a gentle authority, which suffers in contrasts while accepting them. But once he has accepted the wife's advice, after it has been deemed good, the husband makes it his own and becomes responsible for it, so that then, succeeding in its wrong application and counting it to the common interests, he cannot reproach the wife who gave it to him, but humiliate himself as if he were wrong.

AVOID SURPRISES

When a woman marries, St. Paul warns her that she loses her freedom and is subject in all things to her husband, even with her body, as the Church is subject to Christ, so she cannot reasonably refuse in anything.

St. Paul commands the husband not to take advantage of it, but to love his wife "as Christ loved the Church and gave himself for her."

If these terms were observed in marriage, there would be few unhappy marriages. If a man approached his woman with trepidation and gratitude, and did not ask her more than is reasonably right, and in the manner which ought to be used between human creatures, marriage would always be happy, as it is by nature exceedingly beautiful, and there would not arise those unhappy rejections and antipathies which lead to physical reluctance to union, where the woman becomes a prey pitilessly snatched away, and contact with her husband is transformed into a silent martyrdom.

A poor woman vented to my wife and speaking of her husband came out in these most disconcerting expressions: "He is a brute. He looks for me several times a day and has no compassion either for my tiredness or at the time of monthly recurrences: even when I have a fever he does not want to leave me quiet. I can't take it anymore."

It is evident that she respects the commandment of the Church beyond all reason, because at a certain point she could even say enough, but the husband takes no account of the duty to love his wife "as Christ loved the Church".

There are men who, as soon as they were married, threw themselves with such eagerness on their poor prey that from the first day they forever jeopardized conjugal happiness: from the first day they provoked in the chaste wife a sense of nausea in conjugal relations and they also devastated her soul by the violence of the contrast between what she believed to be good and holy and found violent and disgust and a kind of rebellion also came out of her against God who in his blameless way considers guilty of the animalistic nature of man. These inconveniences arise from a very wrong vision of marriage.

They are sensually corrupt or impatient people who believe that in marriage they will find the solution to their needs: people who think of marrying in order to give themselves free rein to the senses. One of these people told me that he had had to interrupt his honeymoon and had made the bride get off at any place because he no longer had the patience to wait for the end of the journey, that is, another two hours by train. And he told me this with bravado, as a sign of overbearing virility and therefore of strength and daring, but then, poor thing, he regretted it: his wife is sick and her behavior is not unrelated to illness.

These people see in the wife first an ordinary woman and then their own wife. They are people who from the first moment lower the woman to an instrument and then are amazed to find her next to her, lowered even in the soul, without realizing that they are the cause of so much ruin.

Marriage is not a solution to sensuality, which is a disease, since in sexual beings the senses are exasperated and no longer respond to their proper function. Marriage is only, if anything, a remedy for concupiscence, which, however, must arise at the right time, as a result of love and to complete it for the ends that this love proposes, which is procreation or at least, when this is involuntarily lacking, the complete union of two creatures who love each other and therefore tend to union.

Sensuality is a disease that can be cured only by abstinence: with use it gets worse and worse until it takes forms that it is useless to treat. He who is a victim of the greed of the senses must cure himself before marriage: he must arrive at marriage already healed if he wants to hope not to make an unhappy experiment, an experiment that he can no longer renew. If there is a duty of chastity before marriage, which is a duty recommended by science as well as by religion, there is a duty of continence in marriage which is much more tiring, although with the grace of the Lord there is no longer anything tiring.

A man, in marrying, must see in his woman first of all a creature of God, endowed with sensitivity and worthy of respect, a creature like him, endowed with a soul as well as a body, but more delicate than him and more in need of protection: a creature who has given herself up to him so that he can protect and help her, while she helps him on the journey to be made together. By marrying her, he must first of all give her the certainty that with him she will feel protected and at ease. He must take her in his arms because he feels as secure as in a port, not because he feels passion and greed there.

The conjugal union is arrived at gradually, as a logical consequence of love, with full and trusting consent to a need born spontaneously and simultaneously in both, without premeditation: it must not be an aggression, but a joyful dedication. In short, the union of the body is arrived at through the union of the soul.

This is the only condition of a fruitful and happy life of conjugal love, and there will be no nasty surprises. The Church does not set a limit to the conjugal union, but it is evident that it cannot be a food to be taken several times a day but not even for every day, since this is not necessary for the purpose that is proposed and there is the danger that it will take over spiritual love, with certainly not happy consequences.

Continence has been mentioned, which can reach entire years, for various causes, such as advanced pregnancy and then postpartum, illness, distance, etc. The Lord always helps the man of good will and does not make him feel too much this sacrifice which he compensates with other sweetness.

Conjugal love must be generous and then it is not afraid of anything: it is only afraid of not being delicate and attentive enough, and for this the wife retains infinite gratitude and the husband feels an incomparable consolation. This generosity will also overcome any disappointment due to physical imperfections or contrasts of character.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE WIFE

Speaking of his wife's advice, a friend one day was offended because I mentioned to him certain pressures that I intended his wife to put on him to convince him to come to a course of Spiritual Exercises. "I don't let myself be influenced by my wife," he told me with an energy that seemed to me to be wasted because he spoke quickly, like someone who is anxious to cover up something he wants to hide.

If there is a man who does not allow himself to be influenced by anyone, let him come forward and I will tell him that he is unhappy, because one would have to be no child of Adam to feel so sure of our actions that we would never need anyone's advice. We all allow ourselves to be influenced, although in different degrees, and even in social life we see very well that in general we think as they make us think, and moreover everything is in accordance with our nature, which obliges us to complete each other, while leaving us freedom of judgment and decision: it is enough that the one who directs us enjoys our trust and is certain that it is true. Even the wife, of course, must enjoy our trust, otherwise we would love a creature whom we do not consider worthy of our love, and it would no longer be conjugal love, it would be love of protection, that love which we feel towards all inferior beings.

God said, looking at Adam and thinking of Eve, "Let us make him a helper like him." If he thought of giving him help, it means that man needed it, and therefore it is useless to pretend that he could do without it, and if he made him like him, it means that man can trust him.

Male intelligence is more vigorous and rightly the man is the head of the woman and he has the responsibility of the decision, but the female intelligence is more delicate and reaches where the strong male intelligence often cannot reach: on the terrain of sensitivity, which is able to perceive the smallest need, the woman will always beat us, and it is good that it is so, once we have come together to complete ourselves, as God, who loves us more than we are capable of knowing, has commanded us.

Between husband and wife everything that serves to unite is beautiful, that is, if the end is not lost sight of. For my part, I am happy every time I can listen to my wife's advice and accept it: this glorifies her and consoles me. It may be that we are both wrong, but we honestly recognize the mistake together and do not cross it. I cannot say whether it is right for the woman to come to enjoy all the civil rights of man: it may be, but looking at the Church, which for me is always and in everything the teacher of life, I see that the woman cannot ascend the steps of the altar.

The Church glorifies woman like no other institution in the world: Mary is the mother of God. No human mind can think of a higher glory. The great saints are enthroned in glory next to the great saints. And yet in the Church the woman is subject to the man: she does not have the same rights. She is always a learner, a disciple, never a teacher, a teacher. The woman is created to help the man: she cannot go so far as to command him. A woman who commands in principle is an obvious disorder, and it does not matter if there are many women in the world who rule, even from the throne. The woman is subject to the man and whenever possible she is comfortable at home, where her true kingdom is. And it is not for nothing that there has been talk of the kingdom: the woman has always exercised a great influence and a loving dominion

over the soul of man, from Mary who forces Jesus to perform the first miracle, to Cana, against her will, to the thousands of examples of history, in addition to the incessant examples that history cannot record. A good woman makes good society even without leaving the house. The confidence between husband and wife must be complete: the slightest reservation would obscure the clarity of relations. We come to the point of not feeling obliged to secrecy, when a secret is entrusted to us, with regard to our spouse: we undertake to keep quiet with everyone, except between the two of us, and this in consideration of feeling that we are one: it would be as if we were asked to be silent with ourselves, which is impossible.

If someone commands us to keep quiet with his spouse, we send him to peace with his secret. It would seem to us that we are doing ourselves a grave offense by not considering ourselves mutually worthy of the maintenance of a secret that must remain in us. This, of course, does not mean that we should start telling each other everything: each has his own commitments, his own tastes, his own particular aspirations, and the other spouse must respect this inner freedom, but when it happens to us we willingly talk about it to each other and a few hints are enough to put us in communication or rather in communion and enjoy it mutually.

UNARMED LOVE

We have never had weapons or keys at home: we want the house to be governed by a serene trust. Sometimes we have suffered thefts, indeed we can say that we are continually robbed of something, but our quiet poverty does not receive strong shocks: they are a kind of furtive alms that some poor people come to make of themselves, certainly making reparation for our injustices or ungenerosity. We have never used, as has been said, violence among ourselves, but knowing that the human creature, man or woman, is indivisible, and cannot propose to adopt a system at home and one outside the home, one with husband or wife, and a different one with neighbor, to guarantee this sweetness that is among us we have had to extend it to all relations with our neighbor: better to be robbed than to live with apprehension and spoil the serenity of the soul.

It is better to be deceived sometimes than to live on suspicion. Those who marvel at our smile and say to us: "Blessed are you, O blessed are you, who always smiles!", do not know that it is an effect of conjugal love, always assisted by the love of God and the awareness of our nothingness before God. They do not know that it is a continuous exercise for the love of God, disadvantaged and stimulated by the love of the spouse: it is the smile that pleases God and pleases the husband or wife: it is this love that led us to marriage and we cannot betray it without something irreparable being extinguished in us.

We have banned violence with the conviction that violence is useless, and we would like all those husbands who want to be loved in their own way, all those wives who by dint of scenes of jealousy end up really losing their husband's love, to be convinced of this. They are husbands and wives who live armed, or at least in a state of alarm, even if they do not have a revolver in their hands. They are hunters of love and like all hunters they can have no other fate than that of finding themselves with dead prey in their hands: they end up killing love.

This blessed conjugal love is the most tenacious but also the most delicate: nothing disturbs and threatens him, but we must not forget that at the base of this love there is complacency: one must like oneself. An oppressive husband is no longer liked: it is useless for this husband to threaten, it is useless for him to be worried. The only thing left for him to do is to return to being pleasant, flattening his forehead and becoming cordial and perhaps chivalrous. An unleashed and acidic wife can no longer please: she may have a thousand reasons, but they are not enough for her to regain her husband's love, if he does not like it again, and women know the art of pleasing when they want to: as long as they do not let themselves be overcome by the instinct of rebellion, which leads them to ruin. And if all the precautions are not enough? I replied to this husband: "Do you love your wife, even if she no longer loves you or loves you less, or does it seem to you that she does not love you?" If he says yes, I tell him: "Continue to love her, as you have a duty, even if to your misfortune she does not reciprocate you as you would like. Love her, and pray for her, continuing to hope.

Love is also pain: offer it to God and do not lose your serenity." If, on the other hand, he replies that he too feels that he no longer loves his wife as before, I warn him that no fault and not even the betrayal of his wife exempts us from the obligation to love her, therefore he is always guilty who has ceased to love the woman he has freely chosen as a companion and who must love as part of himself, a sick self in case of her wretched behavior.

He must love it and care for it in the best possible way, with the hope of recovery: he must always wait with confidence for this healing and forget the disease. To our proud nature it may seem a hard law, but instead it is a most loving and sweet law, like all the laws that flow from the most loving and sweet mercy of God. The same is to be said of the woman who complains of the same things as her husband: suffer with a smile on your face, hope in the Lord, remove from you every reason to displease your husband, and trust to win him back.

However, we must not give reasons for jealousy. We know that life brings us both into continuous contact with other men and women, and woe betide us if we do not trust each other: we would always live with a pounding heart. But even in these inevitable relationships we must be delicate: the wife must be sure that we do not have excessive sympathies, not even intellectual or sentimental, for other women. She must remain the woman of our hearts, the best of all. Therefore we cannot praise her exaggerated other women, as if we regretted not having married them. So she must do to her husband.

Speaking of other men, it may happen that she finds herself praising some virtues, but she will do so in such a way as to make her husband understand that after all no man is worth to her as much as he is worth. These are delicacy that conjugal love requires by its chosen nature and we cannot do without them. On the contrary, it must be sweet for us to make use of them to keep them in the integrity they deserve.

THE CONJUGAL ORGANISM

Man is intelligence, woman is the heart of the conjugal organism. Like all organisms, it may be that this too is defective, either in the brain or in the heart, and then, of course, it works badly. But there is a remedy for everything except death, say the people, and there is also a

remedy for this malfunctioning, if we adapt ourselves to take it as it is, recognizing the wrong where it is. If anything, the difficulty is in recognizing the wrong: since it is a question of the human organism there is the doctor, and when the doctor has given the sentence, we believe it and obey him. We obey him even when we are told in a beautiful way that our worm is really in the brain, although he disguises it with beautiful formulas and orders us medicines to which medical science itself has given little credence as yet.

But between wife and husband don't put the finger, the people still say cleverly: between wife and husband go a little to persuade the man that the wrong of the bad functioning of the marriage is his because he is a little short of cerebral phosphorus and demands absurd things from his wife and in any case beyond his possibilities. Go and tell him that he is responsible for certain whims of his wife, for certain rebellions, for certain sloppiness, for certain inconsistencies.

Blessed is the friend who has the courage to warn the bridegroom so frankly, even if politely, that the defect is in him and not in her: blessed is he who feels this courage to do so at the cost of losing friendship, because it can be a great act of charity. If he succeeds in persuading the bridegroom of his wrong, he has obtained a victory that will have as its reward the peace restored in a family. This work is still more difficult for the woman, and naturally it must be another woman, another wife, who enlightens that unwise wife.

The woman is the heart of the family. When she has a heart she has everything: she is humble, affectionate, far-sighted and far-sighted: she senses her husband's needs before he himself has felt them, and the sooner she perceives them, the sooner she satisfies them. The heart, in the woman, supplies every other gift: it does not matter whether she has the height of genius, culture and education. In her simplicity she shines in the house like a light that rests and consoles.

The husband next to her feels that he is in the place of his rest and his consolation: he no longer needs anything and lingers there as long as he can, he is not satisfied with the sweetness that his wife transmits to him, he goes away from it each time invigorated and renewed, better, more generous, more courageous.

The woman's heart is the precious vessel that holds man's riches in reserve, and knows how to offer it at the right place and time, in inexhaustible abundance. The man who has found a woman's heart must not cease for a moment to thank God for it, because one cannot think of finding on earth a wealth of higher value. But she too is a daughter of Eve and can be lacking in the heart: better, much better if she were lacking in something else, because it is repeated that the heart supplies everything.

On the other hand, it may happen that she is a wonderfully beautiful creature and marvellously endowed with genius: if she has no heart, the rest is a painful mockery for her husband: if he has allowed himself to be seduced by other gifts, he now pays for his error. Conjugal life is a continuous, subtle, tiring suffering: it is a continuous effort to repair or conceal the deficiency of heart, which cannot but be translated into a deficiency of love. The wife will very often put herself before her husband, and will not be able to enjoy anything truly worthy, nor make her man enjoy anything serene and restful: it will be a continuous clash of interests

that will seldom and with great difficulty come to harmonize, if it is not the husband who resigns himself to follow her, for the sake of peace, where she wants.

Who can persuade this restless wife that the wrong is hers, and that it would be enough for her to know how to discover the wound, or rather the hardness that is in her heart? Who can persuade her that she has condemned herself to misery once she has put herself and not others in the midst of her heart? What is the value of a woman who does not know how to step aside to fill the heart of the person she has chosen to love?

And yet many women unfortunately fall into this deception. Always attracted by the dazzling and false light of ambition, luxury and adventure, in the footsteps of films and books, they come to call blessed the film artists who pass from one husband to another, always growing in wealth and fame. They are not blessed, or dear dreamers, they are unfortunate, because they have never loved but themselves, they are incapable of love and therefore they are incapable of true, solid, indestructible happiness: they live on the dazzle of the moment, which always leaves them restless, dissatisfied, embittered.

Rather envy the woman of heart who in the humility of a workers' room spends night after night at the bedside of her sick husband, anxious for him, caresses him and prays, smiles at him to comfort him, without tiredness and without a complaint, while her heart is oppressed by pain: envy this woman who is happy even while she is broken by pain because she loves, and only by loving and giving herself unsparingly can the woman be happy, because for this reason God created her and this is her true and incomparable demand.

A woman may have married ten times and never given herself to any of her ten husbands, except as a poor instrument, while the gift that the woman gives of herself in love is much higher and happier: it is a complete gift, which comes from the heart. And it is the only gift that makes her happy.

THE DOWRY AND THE TALENTS

The dowry that can be translated into figures that the woman brings with her into marriage is more often a reason for snag than an effective help, and this not because it is an evil in itself — wealth can be misused, it is not an evil — but because from a means we make it become, in one way or another, an end. The state that the Church advises us is that of serene poverty, and in this counsel too we have always found so much wisdom, and we pray to the Lord with equal conviction to free us from extreme misery as well as from the danger of enrichment.

We are so comfortable in this state of light budget, which never quite balances although the expenses are thrifty, but which allows us to have the bare necessities that we do not cease to thank the Lord and do not know how to repay it. We married by taking the furniture in debt and then with good will we managed to pay it (now the war has taken it away and we must start again).

It is a competition of generosity and a means of keeping us united: poverty is truly a great wealth. Therefore it seems to us that the ideal condition for those who marry is to arrive at marriage without class differences: both poor and happy.

But wealth, if it is not accumulated badly, is a gift of God, and should not be despised: on the contrary, we must hold ourselves responsible for good administration for the purpose for which God has given it to us, so that it may serve our use and the good of our neighbor, in whose neighbor it is understood that children come in the first rank, who are always the most demanding neighbor.

Then come their employees, and so on. The wife's dowry can be very useful to start a profession or a company or in any case to improve one's condition, which is always legitimate and indeed necessary to do whenever possible.

It is only necessary that husband and wife should always be superior to this dowry: that he should not have taken it into account in the choice of his partner, except as a last and not indispensable requirement: that she should not be disturbed and consumed in doubt that he married her for the dowry and not for her dowries. In short, let them accept it as a gift of Providence and with gratitude to God, in all simplicity, without her feeling proud of it, nor him attracted or mortified.

She may feel satisfied with this, because conjugal love is an altar on which every gift has perfume, but she cannot believe that she has the right to buy the birthright with money, in the sense of wanting to dictate laws, instead of advice, to her husband. In this case it would be out of the way and good for her if her husband rebelled, because if he did not rebel against this oppression he would be a very unpraiseworthy husband. In marrying her, he brings her himself as a dowry, with all the value that the human creature always has, with the particular gifts of strength, intelligence, decision, will, which every man has over the woman, and which cannot be compensated for by money or other numerical wealth.

The woman who possesses the heart of a man is richer than the richest woman on earth, and her dowry is a very poor thing in comparison: let her be glad to be able to offer it, and let her intervene in its use with moderation and humility, as is due to a good wife, and as if it were no longer a matter of her own, but of the common, not to be squandered precisely because it is common, and neither of them can have the right to squander it. But money can play tricks on you, against which it is good to be on guard.

I know a wife who, having brought a certain sum as a dowry, which is not even a large sum, has never allowed her husband to get his hands on it, not even when they have found themselves starving as a result of misadventures: this woman preferred that he pawn the marriage ring rather than affect her dowry. And do not think that this husband is a waster: he is a gentleman.

Nor must it be believed that this wife does it out of avarice: she does it because she believes that the dowry gives her greater prestige in front of her husband: it seems to her that if she no longer had this dowry her husband might look at her with less respect. It is a suggestion that has sprung up, like an evil mushroom, about money.

Another woman made the opposite mistake: for fear of losing her husband's love, she forced him to squander the dowry, or rather she squandered it herself by dint of gifts, attentions, superfluity, with which she ended up spoiling him, and they found themselves poor, demanding and discontented.

I could not say that she ended up really losing, together with the money, the love of her husband, but certainly even this one has remained dry and no longer finds its good course. It is a matter of being worth more than our wealth and of treating it as masters, not as slaves: it is a matter of using it well, with good agreement, while it lasts, knowing how to do without it when it fails.

It is not good for man to feel attracted to it because it could be a bad sign: it could be a dangerous ambition, or a sign of laziness, a renunciation of making use of one's personal gifts to make one's place in the world, finding it more convenient to anchor oneself to an already formed wealth.

In this case he would not have the possibility of earning the dignity of independence, nor would he know how to administer that wealth well.

Nor should he feel mortified by it, since it is an unasked gift, and the Christian cannot refuse what is offered as a means of proving his abilities and of serving God in the best possible way.

AN IMPOSSIBLE REPLACEMENT

A barber has returned from the sanatorium. He came back healed, according to the medical statement, and he came back with the desire to get back to work, because he has a wife and two children.

But he found what he did not expect: no one wanted to hire him in their service for fear that knowing he was back from the sanatorium that customers would melt away. Seeing him disheartened, we tried to help him set up his own shop, but he couldn't because he couldn't find customers.

Who knows how many times we go to have our beard cut by a tuberculosis patient, or even worse to drink at the bar from his badly rinsed cup, but it is one thing to grope and another to be sure.

This family was hungry and desperate. So the wife bravely offered to work in some way in place of her husband, and insisted so much that we had to help her find a job. She insisted until we managed to get her hired in a mechanical industry. It is heavy work for a woman who was used only to household chores, which are many and even tiring, but not always and not all tiring.

Yet we must see how she shines with joy in the evening, in her weariness, because with her work she has consoled her husband and put the family back on track.

She tells me that her joy is stronger than tiredness and she does not know how to thank God for allowing her to enjoy these joys of conjugal and maternal love, but especially of conjugal love, because it is her convalescent husband that she thinks most tenderly.

And this is the happiness of marriage that need does not obscure but makes shine more vividly in dedication and sacrifice. And how many wives are there who, fortunately for them, know how to experience it!

But it was not to his wife that we wanted to speak. With her permission, we want to say a few words to her husband.

This man at first felt relieved by his wife's occupation because it was the spectre of hunger that was leaving the family, then he began to reflect on his cases and although he is not entirely idle because some of us go to be shaved by him, he felt humiliated by the reversal of the parts: he feels sadness to stay at home to dress and wash the children and then to clean the rooms, while his wife leaves early in the morning for work in the factory.

With the passage of time a strange mentality has been formed: it seems to him that he has become his wife and no longer makes any decision, which he leaves to her. He always replies to the children: "Ask your mother", even for the most common things, as mothers use to do out of respect for their husband: "Ask your father". His wife has noticed this and even in this she does everything, as we have said, to convince him that he is always the head of the house, even if involuntarily and hopefully temporarily he is forced to make the help of his helper. We want to tell him the same thing.

The man does not cease to be the head of the woman, at least as long as this head can function, that is, as long as he has the use of reason. Therefore he does not lose his authority, nor can his wife override him, even if by misfortune he is confined by evil to a bed.

Authority is only lost, in fact if not in law, when it is misused, but the loss of physical strength is not a loss of aptitude for command.

Therefore the man must not feel mortified by immobility or other involuntary impairments: a family can be well guided even from the bottom of the bed. Loving gratitude must go to the wife who replaces us in tasks that we can no longer carry out directly, but without feeling impaired in the dignity and duty of authority.

Dear barber friend, even if in the morning it is your wife who goes to work and you stay at home, the terms of conjugal love have not changed: get out of your head the obediences of mortified self-love.

A man is strong and must be strong even when he no longer has the breath to scold a child: his strength lies in the spirit, which no misfortune must weaken. One can and must be strong even against misfortune. If you really want to be grateful to your wife, show her that in spite of everything you still feel like a husband. You will then see her, in the morning, going to work with a more confident step.

FOLLOWING THE HUSBAND

Once a prisoner confided this to me: "You see, there are four of us in this cell: the other three are quiet because they have been imprisoned entirely; I, on the other hand, am in agony because I have been taken and imprisoned for half: my other half has remained outside and it is as if they had cut me: the two stumps make blood".

The other three were bachelors, he was married. I had never felt such a vivid expression of conjugal love: I had never imagined such a continuous and bitter pain.

The wife must follow her husband, wherever he goes: she should be able to follow him even in prison. Or at least they should reduce her husband's sentence in half, because there are two who suffer it: indeed, they should reduce it to a quarter, because both suffer twice.
The wife should be able to go with her husband even to war. When the bombs began to rain down on our industrial town, we immediately thought of saving the children, but there was no way between the two of us to separate. "Where are you, I want to be too," and together we went to sleep, or rather shivered with cold, in the pits. And everything remained light and sweet to us, even when suddenly, after so much running, we were miraculously unharmed under the rubble of our house, because we were together.

Conjugal love is the love of union and suffers from every opposition to unity and cohabitation. The good wife must take due account of this and it must not seem tiring to her duty to follow her husband wherever he, not on a whim but by reasonable decision, thinks it opportune to fix his abode, as the paternal civil code commands.

There are already too many forced separations for reasons of work or for other multiple and often unfortunate reasons (infamy of concentration camps!). No one voluntarily increases the number, for any pretext. No wife can stay to enjoy it in the city, while her husband is working in the countryside or perhaps thousands of kilometers away: let her leave the city, let her leave her comforts, let her other loves leave even if they are compatible with conjugal love, such as love for art, literature, science, and follow the most demanding love, follow the husband.

A lady friend of ours, cultured, daughter of a good musician, and very fond of music, had to follow her husband to the country, where he devoted himself to the breeding of the Angora rabbit. They live in an isolated house, a kind of villa, where there is no electricity and drinking water.

They fetch water from a small fountain on the edge of a forest, not far away. They illuminate it with candles and acetylene lamps, the kind they had for miners, which they had at a lignite mine.

As a music lover and connoisseur, this lady does not even have the consolation of listening to the radio, and then she would not have the time because all day, from early morning to night, she has to keep the house in order, cook, wash and sew, and follow her husband in the chores of the rabbit hutches.

She is an intelligent and very good lady, and not without humour. She loves her husband very much, and listens to him for whole hours, with real pleasure, when on Sundays, taking a little rest, she talks to him about her rabbits.

She confessed to us that by dint of hearing about them, she began to really love them, although, she told us laughing, we are quite stupid beasts, who spend hours and hours hanging our heads and being afraid of nothing, without ever learning to recognize the master.

It is clear that she does not do it for rabbits: she cares little about the selection of the breed, the length of the hair, the color of the eyes of those dear and not very fragrant animals. She cares that her husband is satisfied to have her close and to feel like a friend.

Sometimes it is he who feels taken by some scruples and asks her: "Aren't you bored?" "I really like being here," he replies, and she is sincere, because what he likes more than anything else and the reward for everything he has had to leave.

If it were possible to make, and indeed it could be done, a statistic of spouses who more or less live apart, one would certainly have melancholy and indicative figures: one would come to know one of the causes of discomfort in modern life.

Whoever can remedy it, let him remedy it. Husbands should not allow themselves to be too easily softened by feminine dialectics (even the studies of children that force their mother to follow them to the city are not always a determining cause). Wives should try to reflect on the dangers to which they expose the completeness of conjugal love by forcing it to the prolonged sacrifice of distance.

The lady friend told us that she manages to stop the bobbing of the rabbits' heads by singing them beautiful songs. Indeed, while they have not learned to recognize the owner, they recognize her and stand still as soon as they see her, waiting for her to sing: such a great success, she tells us with happy conviction, she would never have hoped for.

The husband is certainly a lucky man, and moreover he fills her with attention. If anything, it is to this that a man who marries and takes away his young wife must be careful, forcing her to change her environment and habits abruptly; he must be careful to make the passage sweet for her, with those delicacy that the woman always appreciates and also with a pinch of humor, which sometimes works miracles and transforms into enjoyment what at the first meeting had appeared as a tragedy.

THE TABLECLOTH ON THE TABLE

Icilio Felici, among the forty books he has written, has written one about his father, "The nobleman my father", and recently one about his mother, "The mystery of those eyes".
He speaks well, of course, of both, with the respect, devotion and love that the priest son has for those who came up from nothing, with the tenacity of country people, raised him and led him to the priesthood.
But she does not hide, with that frankness that makes us love him nicely, that her father had a character that was anything but malleable, and to her mother, to those who ask her in old age how she managed to resist all her life with that man without ever losing her smile, she makes her answer with a fragrant candor: "For me it was very simple; I have always been silent and obeyed".

We also know families in which the wife knows how to be silent and obey, but speaking at the right time, especially when it is a question of the spiritual good of her husband, and speaking with that gentleness and humility which cannot irritate anyone, not even the most shady and difficult characters.

On the other hand, we know of other families where married life sails in stormy seas: in these families both spouses are strong in their reasons and do not want to give in. It is known that right and wrong cannot be divisible with a knife, let alone in the complex relationships between spouses: it is very difficult for all the wrong to be on one side and all the right on the other, so that seeing only his own reason, they are unable to agree.

If we advise these spouses to turn their gaze towards their own wrongs rather than towards the presumed or true reasons, there is the case of being told "I was foolish" or "I was foolish", or, with the air of not wanting to bother, "I can't".

They do not want to put a shred of good will into it. They care more about punctiliousness than peace: I am like those boys who, wanting to sing together and not agreeing on the reason for the song, remain mute and sulky, and the song does not come out: they had put themselves together to give joy to the soul and instead find it embittered by a punctiliousness, until if fortunately one of them, better and wiser, gives in to punctiliousness, and says first: "I am singing what you want", the others also give in by magic and the agreement is reached.

Even between spouses it is enough that one fine day one of the two, better and wiser, gives in to punctiliousness, says: "We will do as you wish," but if by chance even then the other spouse does not give himself peace, there is nothing but to bear it. In this case I would like to say that conjugal love no longer exists even for exhibition, that is, to make it understood by others, but I have found women who persist in assuring me that they love their husbands deeply, although they do not let a day fall without raising a storm. Then I shrug my shoulders: it means that conjugal love has many forms and that I am not allowed to know them all.

In one of these families, for example, the storm invariably arises at noon, every single day, on account of the tablecloth on the table. The husband returns from the office and would like to find the table set: mind you, it is not that he would like to find the soup on the plate, he would be content to find it set: this would give him a sense of his wife's solicitude and consolation, and would prepare him better to wait, in case the soup was not yet ready.

Is this an excessive demand? It seems not. And yet there is no way that this holy wife wants to please him: she persists in repeating to him that he cannot do it any sooner and that if he is not happy he should look for another cook (he does not say another wife, says another cook, but perhaps he would deserve that the husband, if he were not the upright person he is, would understand the warning in an extensive sense). Things could go just as smoothly if the husband resigned himself to entering the house and finding the table banished, as he will end up resigning himself, but what most justly worries him is not the table, it is the doubt that his wife does not go down well with him and the doubt that his wife does not love him.

A doubt that, frankly, although it is not convenient for us to express it to the person concerned, also takes hold of us. But we understand that it would be useless to go and tell the wife: she would feel offended in the depths of her soul, and it means that it is one of those forms of conjugal love that advises, as a delicate act of love, to go against the wishes of the spouse. These are mysteries of the female soul.

THE ROOF THAT DOES NOT COLLAPSE

The Lord, as a wedding gift, gave us trust in His providence. These fifteen years of marriage of ours are all a song of praise to Providence. In her we are and we go, serene, secure and happy: she has never deceived us a day, not even when she had to become brilliant (according to our way of speaking) to help us, and not even when she had to do violence to

make us understand that we were wrong. She gave us the consolation of showing us how she knows how to break the assaults of the enemy, when cornered we turned to her, full of trust.

It therefore costs us nothing to remain serene, not to bear grudges, not to be envious, not to worry about tomorrow: we have not struggled to welcome with joy the children that the Lord in full freedom has given us, although three children already seem to us too many in relation to our merits but a little few according to our desire; however, an ideal number because it is established precisely by the Providence of God.

We have not struggled to welcome them with joy because children are too beautiful a gift and because we knew that we would not have to worry about feeding them, nor for that matter educating them, because even in this there is nothing to do but obediently obey Providence, which sends the means at the right time: if anything, we must not let them slip away. We do not know what the results will be: each child has his own temperament and his own path. Parents must always humble themselves in the face of so much responsibility, but remain serene and confident, certain that they have done everything possible to fulfill their duty.

This trust in Providence is like an enlargement of the space in which the family lives, a kind of safety zone, where there is no danger. Therefore it gives a broad tone to the whole of conjugal and family life. We see how much anxiety and anxiety there is in families, even in those who are much, much better off economically than we are, if this abandonment in Providence is lacking.

How many evils arise from this lack of trust, and they are truly families abandoned by God to themselves, even if they are formally Christian families: Providence cannot assist those who reject it, not believing it, and want to do it themselves. And we see well what we are capable of doing: we are only capable of living badly and of making those around us live badly.

We, thank God, have no confidence in ourselves: we know very well that if we were to detach ourselves from trust in Providence we would go to the bottom as if we had a stone tied to our necks: we are both convinced that if anything it would be done to those who get there sooner.

Instead, by the goodness of God, we believe in the Pater Noster. Once we have recited the Pater with faith and gratitude, speaking to God in the name of Father and asking God the Father for bread for the whole day and for the whole family, taking care to impress on our minds the other commandments and other supplications of this sublime prayer, we set to work with joy and every work gives us joy, without distinction: with joy and without trouble.

Let us do everything we can as if everything depended on us, but without crossing the limit that would give us weariness and restlessness, and would put conjugal love and the peace of the family to too hard a test, knowing that everything, really everything, is given to us by God, who is Father. Every time we think we have a Father so omnipotent and so loving, we feel a joy that cannot be told.

If there is a concern in us, it is the fear of not doing God's will, but I repeat that at each of our deviations, Providence gives us a turn, perhaps through someone who intends to hurt us, and we must end up being grateful to everyone, first to the Lord, then even to those who thought they were harming us. Certainly we must be ready for anything, even to live on alms, but without

losing the certainty that perhaps at the last moment God's providence intervenes as a savior. Often it intervenes at the very last moment to give us the consolation of earning it with our effort and our tenacious trust: there is nothing, we believe, that consoles God as much as our tenacity in the trust of His loving presence, even when everything is put in such a way as to make us think in His abandonment. Conjugal love rests well in the trust of Providence as in its legitimate and safe nest.

LIFE OF IDEAS

To find out if she understood what charity is, I asked a little girl this question: "Mother commands you to go to the spring to get a bucket of water. You obey promptly: do you do an act of charity or not?" The little girl replied to me with surprising promptness: "If I obey for the love of God, I am doing an act of charity, because charity is love of God. If, on the other hand, I obey only out of love for my mother or for fear of being punished, I am not doing an act of charity."

I was reminded of this episode when I had to talk about the way of thinking of spouses, of their ideas and opinions, even political ones, which unfortunately can diverge and even come into conflict. Must the wife obey her husband and bend in everything to his will, even in ideas? We have already said that love is not necessarily aroused, nor is it revived, and we are equally convinced that it does not necessarily change anyone's mind, not even the wife.

But is the wife obliged, out of duty, to renounce her own ideas and embrace those of her husband, just because they are her husband's and she must consider them right and better than her own? Must she follow him "wherever he thinks fit to fix his abode," even with regard to his way of thinking?

The Church, in the most serious decisions, asks for the consent of the husband (for example, to admit the wife to a third order), and this with a view to respect for order and peace in families, and therefore it is recommended that for the love of the husband the wife should voluntarily set out in his path, even if the husband evidently cannot make it an obligation to her.

This is as long as these ideas are not contrary to the law of God. Spouses are bound to love each other above all else and therefore also above their own convictions, except for God.

First comes the love of God, then conjugal love. If conjugal love is charity, that is, if it rests in the love of God, no differences will arise in them and their inner world will enjoy a consoling harmony. If, on the other hand, the love of God does not circulate on one side and there is no life-giving breath of charity between the spouses, differences of ideas can arise: everything can intervene to disturb conjugal love when it is not the Lord who builds his dwelling. Then it may be that the spouse who is not in charity sets himself against it, consciously or not: the other spouse, not even the wife, is obliged to follow him in error: indeed, it is forbidden to him.

The love of man cannot set any woman against the love of God. She will have to suffer from this discomfort, pray and not cease to hope, but she cannot bend to deny the principles of her faith. If her husband forces her violently (but what kind of conjugal love would that be?), she will not be able to oppose his violence, but no one will be able to rape her conscience,

which will remain intact if the will does not participate in what her husband obliges her to do, and moreover there is always the confessor who can restore peace to those who have lost her because of these adversities.

Marriage is a sacrament and gives the grace of the state: it would be enough if it were contracted with awareness of the commitment one assumes, both towards the spouse and towards God, and there would be no surprises.

Catholic marriage is a sublime act of charity, sufficient to produce the charity that will be needed along the way for it to be harmonious and happy. But Catholic marriage is too often a mixed marriage, and not because it is made between two spouses of different religions: it is mixed because it is concluded between spouses of a different degree of faith, which can even be null and void in one of the two. And so it is useless to hope that charity will circulate in it: it becomes a poor formal act that does not give life to conjugal love, does not give oxygen to the family.

He who marries in charity can be calm. On the other hand, he who marries because he loves the creature more than the creator, will have to bear the consequences and be content to receive from the creature what the creature can give. Many marry in this way, as best they can, hoping that things will improve later. It is a game of chance: sometimes it succeeds, sometimes it does not. When it does not succeed, let us not become bad for it, and be content with what we had put in the possibilities on the wedding day, for the rest recommending ourselves to the mercy of God.

THE TEMPLE OF LOVE

Our house was bombed six years ago (*). For six years we have been living wanderers in the houses of others, more camped than housed, forcing others to live in camps in turn. But we hope to be at the end of this long concentration (because they call us displaced persons) and we trust that the Lord will allow us this year, with the help of friends, to have our home again: it is a need that we feel almost as overwhelming as that of bread.

One cannot speak of marriage without thinking of the house. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother, and they shall be two in one flesh."

There is precisely the need to enter one's own home and close the door behind one's back, leaving the world outside: conjugal love is a modest and jealous love. It does not want witnesses, it does not want publicity: it does not want to communicate itself to others: it is complete in itself, it wants to enjoy its completeness, isolating itself and contemplating itself. Because we must not believe that this need for solitude and isolation is a simple need for modesty: it is much higher, it is a need for contemplation. They are two souls that merge, that form their own heaven, although immersed in the wider heaven of the love of God.

The two spouses need to be alone. But that's not enough: their isolation must be comfortable. The house can be small and simple, but it cannot be old and ugly. The furniture may be very poor, but it must smell of paint: it must be fresh, new, cheering.

The home is the temple of conjugal love and must all smell of freshness, because it is also a symbol and a manifestation of the freshness of love.

Entering a home you can immediately, from the first glance, judge of the freshness of conjugal love, even when the spouses are elderly. If, in spite of poverty, they have been able to keep the house welcoming, clean and fresh, you can be sure that they love each other very much.

As long as the woman loves her husband, she loves the cleanliness of the house: she likes to stay at home and the household chores give her joy. As soon as her love for the home decreases, one can be sure that she loses love for her spouse. It is a bit like what happens with churches: if you enter a church and find it tidy and clean, you immediately feel a wave of sympathy for the priest and rejoice in the fruitfulness of his work; when, on the other hand, you come to a shabby church, you immediately think of a miserable and neglected parish life, since there is a close relationship, in the priest, of love for the house of God with love for souls.

Hence it is explained how the husband feels comforted by the welcoming house, and how he is saddened by the unkempt house. Even if he does not realize it with perfect conscience, something in him warns him that his wife's diligence is the diligence of love and that equally his laziness is a worm of conjugal love. He believes that he loves the house for the sake of the house and rejoices in the order and cleanliness referring to the house, but the house is the thermometer of the female soul: he rejoices in the house because he rejoices in the love of his wife. She too keeps the house in order to please herself, because "she likes it that way", but then she remains bitter if it seems to her that her husband does not notice it and does not praise her. A "thank you" from her husband rewards her for a thousand efforts, precisely because that thank you means "I love you".

Speaking of "I love you", there is no need to say it often, although it must be said when the opportunity arises and it suits us. There are many ways to say it without saying it and when love is there, it runs away from every gesture, from every look, from every smile. And from every attention, not only for the house, but also for cleanliness and personal order.

The woman and the man who pay great attention to their cleanliness and their toilet when they have to leave the house, and are unkempt in the house, are against the living senses: if we love our wife or husband, it is precisely for the wife or husband that we must take care to be appreciated, pleasant, and appreciated. The others will come later, if they want to come, and moreover even outside the house we must be ordained to give glory to our spouse, not to receive praise and compliments.

Some time ago, visiting a brick kiln during the summer, I approached some women who were lining up the raw bricks in a herringbone pattern on the square, in the sun, to dry. Those poor women, although they were protected by large straw hats, were dripping with sweat. Evidently the sweat mixed on the skin with the dust of the clay and a smell came out that was anything but pleasant.

Seeing that some of those women were married, I asked them if they used to bathe on their way home. The smartest ones said yes, others were silent, some said no, saying that they did not have the time.

If I had enjoyed their confidence, I would have said to them all: "Do not bring the smell of the furnace into your house. Present yourselves to your husbands fresh and clean, so that

you can affectionately demand that they do the same, and everything will be perfumed in the house, body and soul.

Don't age before your time: often it's not the age that makes the woman young or old, it's her way of life. And it doesn't matter if you resort to cosmetics: be clean, tidy, simple, smiling. You won't be able to give a more beautiful gift to your groom.

(*) The writing is from 1949, therefore four years after the end of the Second World War.

THE NAME OF THE HUSBAND

When, before getting married, the woman has achieved a certain notoriety, either as a sense or as a social position, she reluctantly adapts to follow her husband, in second place. To do this she needs a special sensitivity and a great love.

Thus we see that she tends to keep her surname in evidence rather than that of her husband: either she continues to be called by hers, by which she has earned fame and esteem, as newspapers are jealous of their title even if they change ownership and the companies of their trademark, or she uses both, one after the other, provided that her own does not disappear.

These are understandable psychological reasons: a woman who has a remarkable personality, especially if she marries at a certain age, has taken on a strong attitude of independence, and it will not be easy for her to change herself. But she must do so. It may be that the husband does not demand it, either because he really and humbly feels inferior to his wife, or because he, endowed with his personality, does not care too much about the hierarchical position of marriage. The wife must not wait for her husband to demand it: she must be the one, voluntarily and willingly, to put herself in second place.

She must feel happy to assume the new name, which always represents to her a gain over the old, even if it is more modest than her own, otherwise, if she had thought she was making a loss, she would have committed an unreasonable act by marrying. Since she has married, it is no longer in her name that she acts, it is in the name of her husband, whose companion and helper she is. It means that she will help her husband, but without pride, to make the modest name shine.

In the house the woman is queen, she is not mistress. She cannot put her name tag at the entrance, she cannot be intrusive: she must not fill her house, so as to give her husband awe and humiliation, as if he were a guest endured rather than the expected lord.

In a play there is a scene in which we see two engaged couples doing their accounts before the wedding: they have a certain amount in their hands and he chivalrously invites his girlfriend to formulate her wishes first.

She begins to enumerate them, he translates them into figures and writes on a piece of paper. When the girl finally takes a breath, the future groom stops her with a gesture of his hand and tells her: "Let's do the sum in the meantime".

He sums up and finds that even stopping at that point, there are only a thousand lire left for him. He tells him: "For me there are a thousand lire left" (*). She is unperturbed: she thinks about it for a while and calmly finds the right solution: "You will buy a tie".

There are houses in which everything is arranged in such a way, from the furniture to the smallest trinkets, that we go and look in a corner for the hanging tie to convince ourselves that it is a married woman and therefore there must necessarily be, in some corner, also the sign of the presence of her husband.

The woman is the queen of the house, but she must be a discreet queen: a queen who knows how to step aside at the right moment so that the groom really feels at home, breathes well, and is invited to stay there as long as possible.

Between spouses we use to give each other gifts. This of the welcoming house is certainly the most beautiful gift that the bride can give to the groom as the groom certainly reciprocates it in a worthy way by leaving the frown outside the door and presenting himself at home serene and smiling.

However, we also use to give each other gifts: they are small things, for poor people, but we make them for each other, and not on our birthday: we do them to each other on our wedding anniversary, because that is the day of our birth, compared to conjugal love.

They are small attentions that do not go nor can we exaggerate them, both in number and in value, because married life must never slip into sentimental romanticism, which takes away the vigor of love and is full of dangers, but small attentions, within their limits, are drops of good perfume and a guarantee of youth of the soul, even if the years go by and we begin to look at early youth goes with them.

(*) Today it is 50 cents, but at that time, one thousand lire, it was an interesting figure so much so that there was the song: "If I could have a thousand lire a month" is the refrain of the famous song by Gilberto Mazzi from 1938, a symbol of the desire for economic security and simple happiness.

THE ACTION OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Carlo Carretto in his latest and happy book on ideal marriage, "Family, Little Church", recommends that the young man of Catholic Action choose the fiancée of the same vocation. We have had this good fortune and therefore we do not reproach each other for the time that we respectively steal from the family to devote it to the apostolate. But in many families it does not happen like this: in many families there is a conflict over the right that one of the two spouses feels he has to serve his faith outside the family environment.

And we ourselves, moreover, often remain doubtful about the limit of the sacrifices to be imposed on the family as such, in order to go and work in the Lord's field outside the door of the house. Certainly there is a limit and we must respect it: the first field of action is the family and we cannot neglect this in order to work outside. We cannot neglect the internal order in order to go and establish it outside the homeland. First come the children, with all their overwhelming demands, then the others.

But there is nothing that goes against conjugal love, nor against the family. We are always in each other, even without the goad of charity that leads us to momentary separations and distinctions of work. There is no moment in which we feel detached from the family: if we go to

work further away, if we slip into the door of the house and separate, after having secured the children, we have the compelling and encouraging feeling of working for them too, so that as they grow up they may find a more favorable environment, a better world.

Not everyone, however, has this luck. When we are together, in our associations, we do not know what the sum of sacrifices and sufferings certain presences cost and how certain absences burn with pain.

How many friends confide to me that their wife limits them in their work and must sometimes satisfy her, they must feel divided between conjugal love, which has its indestructible duties, and love for the apostolate.

How many women reveal to my wife the stratagems they have to devise to obtain permission from their husbands to attend a meeting, to wrest a few hours of the day from conjugal duties and devote them to those of the apostolate.

Marriage undoubtedly binds us greatly, but it must not bind us too much. Once conjugal duties, in all their complexity, are respected, no spouse must refuse the right of the other spouse to devote the rest of his or her time to his or her sanctification in the apostolate.

In fact, the apostolate, if it has the vigor and breadth of charity, is sanctified, and therefore works for the benefit of married life in two distinct directions: by preparing a better external environment for it and by improving the spouse interiorly.

The spouse who persists in not wanting to allow the other to live the life of the apostolate on the pretext that "If you really loved me you would be with me", has allowed himself to be enveloped by selfishness and confused his sight.

There is a wife, here next to us, who under this pretext has never wanted to allow her husband to participate in a Conference of Religious Studies. She says to him, with real and abundant tears: "Would you have the courage to leave me alone for four days? It means that you don't love me." She does not understand, poor wife, that if her husband wants to leave her alone for those four days it is precisely because he loves her, and he would not really love her if he did not feel any need to become better.

But it is so, and against certain obstinacy there is little to hope. But it cannot be hidden that it is a sad thing, and certainly the best remedy is to understand each other first from marriage. But this is not always possible, also because the spiritual journey of the spouses continues even after marriage and what was convergent at the beginning can diverge later.

There is only one thing to do in the best way, enduring what there is to endure, without ever ceasing to pray even when the obstinacy of the spouse gives little hope, and without ceasing to use the respect and delicacy that conjugal love suggests to the spouse.

Kindness is not weakness, while the most heated violence can be, and since more flies are taken with honey than with vinegar, it is more likely that in doing so the wife will win her husband to his vocation or vice versa.

FIRST LOVE

The ranks of collegiate young girls pass along the tree-lined hills, and it is a happy vision of spring. They are lively and playful, although discipline and natural education keep their

movements and voices within limits that the will controls. They are not like those working women who pass them on an exam singing at the top of their voices, and when, further on, they meet a column of soldiers, they greet them and allow themselves to be greeted with free joy.

But there is equally, in the depths of the souls of the collegiate and the working women, a veil of nostalgia for something that calls them and disturbs them, makes them melancholy or cheers them up, in moments of solitude or intimate confidence. It is there in them as there is in those soldiers. A crowd of only women and a crowd of only men, when they are young or young, can only be understood among young people: later it becomes unnatural, as are the armies during the war and the masses of women torn from their homes and led far away to labor camps.

At a certain point, if we want to obey the high and provident laws of our nature, man must detach himself from his companions and call upon the one he chooses to be his companion to detach himself from his companions. They will be "two in one" happy.

All the literature that places marriage at the summit of the aspirations of the woman is wise literature provided that it has breadth of vision, catholicity of breadth: provided that the will of God is fulfilled, without which it is a vain construction. But it is also at the summit of the aspirations of the healthy and upright man for the woman. It is true that marriage can be everything for the woman, and it cannot be so for the man, because the man has other goals to achieve, but it is equally true that he is disconsolately alone, in the highest goals, if he is not accompanied by the vigilant love of his woman. And a woman whom no one chooses as a bride becomes the loving companion of the man, although not conjugally, dedicating herself to the works of God and to social works: not all women are granted conjugal love, for the high ends that God proposes in creation: the silent virgins complete the human family in places of splendid dedication, and intimate and chaste and fragrant will be the joy of their sacrifice, and great merits. But the conjugal love to which the young girl and the young man aspire does not veil the perfume of their purity, if they do not deform and plunder it, corrupting and corrupting it.

Conjugal love is the first love experienced by man, the first in order of time, because Adam had not been a son or brother when he met Eve and loved her with all the enthusiasm of which he was capable in the integrity of the first uncorrupted nature. First also in the order of importance because from conjugal love came the other loves, paternal or maternal, fraternal, filial.

Conjugal love is and remains the foundation of human society: insofar as it is sensible love, it presides over the maintenance of the species, and insofar as it is spiritual love, it presides over its education and elevation.

It is said that the love of the mother is the strongest: no love equals that, it is said, which the mother has for her children. I have already said elsewhere that the love of the father in some cases surpasses it in potentiality, because of the difference of the two natures, but here I affirm that conjugal love surpasses in completeness, power, consolation, and dedication, maternal and paternal love.

I know that many people rebel against this idea, but unfortunately it is because they have mistaken tenderness for power, or because their conjugal love is unfortunately imperfect.

The love of parents for their children is love from co-creator to creature: a love for something that belongs to us and that we must defend at the cost of our lives; it is a love of protection and tenderness, a love that belongs more to the area of feeling than of the will: a love that is easier, in short, and in fact more universally felt.

However, it is a sublime love, which overshadows the paternal love of God for all His creatures, and the maternal love of Mary for the adored Son. But when we want to speak of high love, even in a mystical sense, which even foreshadows, as far as we can express it, the intimate life of the Most Holy Trinity, we speak of marriage: mystical marriage.

At a certain point, however much we may venerate the mother and honor the father, impelled by something greater, we leave them and unite ourselves to the beloved woman or to the beloved man: conjugal love potentially overcomes filial love. And never have we been so united with our parents, I will not say conjugally, what is absurd, but not even spiritually, as we become with the wife, if conjugal love is not a mockery of the flesh: we have never experienced with father and mother the consolation we feel in the company of our wife or husband.

Then come the children, the blessed fruit of this love. And now I ask why when the children come we should love each other less: if anything, we will continue to love each other in them and our conjugal love will be strengthened, not mortified by love for the children: I cannot love my children without loving my wife in them, and so it is for her.

At a certain point the children in turn will leave us, and we will let them go. We will certainly suffer, but we will let them go: we will push them ourselves, if it is for their good, and we will return alone. Only the two of us will never be separated, until death divides us, and our vow, which is the vow of all spouses, is to die on the same day. But love for children is more generous, a friend tells me, because we love them without asking for anything in return, while we have a reciprocation from the wife. But from children, by nature, we can detach ourselves without bleeding, from the wife we cannot.

No child is "mine" as much as my wife, no child "his" as much as her husband. This is if the papers are in order with the law of God, which is the most beautiful wish that can be made.

MUTUAL AID

Marriage is perfect even if no children come, when there is no obstacle of will to their coming.

Conjugal love remains the first and complete love, reciprocal, superabundant, consoling.

They are two creatures who come together to complete each other and help each other on the tiring journey of life; they are two beings who, loving each other, support each other, merge, transport each other, so that their happiness is full and the fatigue of the journey is easy and sweet.

God asks of each of us the same thing, which each one then reaches on his own path: his own sanctification.

If we ask ourselves what we are doing here on earth, we must answer that we are here to sanctify ourselves.

This being the will of God, everything that happens to us must be accepted by us as a means to this end.
The goal is high and therefore God has granted man help, and then each of the two spouses only needs to propose the sanctification of his spouse to obtain his own as well.
In marriage there is nothing that goes against this end, there is no unholy moment. We must therefore free ourselves from foolish malice, from disordered concupiscence, from impure fantasies: we must drive out of the house all that the corrupt world has introduced into it, through deviations of our education: we must return simple and innocent, what can and must be obtained in marriage, while making licit and holy use of it, which has its function of union, of completeness, of encouragement, of giving: it is a continuous and perfect gift that spouses give each other, without subdivisions and distinctions.
In the morning their day can begin, and it is good, when possible, that it should be so, with Eucharistic Communion: both are nourished by the Bread of the Angels and their day can and must be a continuous Eucharist.
They can meditate together on the truths of the faith. They can take refuge together, as my wife says, under the Mantle of Our Lady. And then conjugal love is holy and leads to holiness.
If we listened to books and films, we could be discouraged. It is true that conjugal love is very much undermined, but by God's grace there are still many healthy families and each of us knows many of them.
We must help ourselves to call restless and disoriented people back to the sources of genuine well-being and sincere happiness. Everything around us is shaken by the telluric movement of passions and selfishness, which bear fruit of misery and rebellion, but the family is still the safe refuge, the hinge to be defended and strengthened.
Sometimes it seems to us that we have all become enemies of one another: the difficulty of obtaining our daily bread makes us suspicious and snarling, but the family rests us, calls us back to the right path which is still that of universal love and universal understanding.
The family is a perennial source of love and goodness: woe to those who cannot rest and renew themselves in the family, woe to those who despise conjugal love or to those who deform and waste it.
The man must respect the woman, always and everywhere. Respect her even when she is not respectable, for the love of his woman, of the one he has or of the one he will have to have. And the woman becomes simple again: she becomes a bride again and she becomes a mother again.
May marriage become the most beautiful adventure of life: let us not look elsewhere for ephemeral, stunning, and demolishing emotions. In marriage are all the marvellous elements of the human and divine adventure: all the noblest aspirations of man can be satisfied, all the glory attained, all the heroism consummated.
Marriage is often mortified by bypassing it to carry out other undertakings that appear more risky and more heroic, and it is nothing but a reckless illusion. The happiness and glory that man seeks far away is in the eyes of his bride, she has it in his eyes: one glance is enough to give life a course of sublime commitment, for oneself and for one's people. Together, to conquer the

world. And humble conquest is not always the least important. God watches over and judges with infallible determination.

TO THE YOUNG SPOUSES

Enjoy: in a Christian way, enjoy. Do not spare, do not waste, do not mortify the enjoyment of your union. God wants you to enjoy yourself: by enjoying you will give glory to God, joy to Paradise, light to the earth.

Let your enjoyment be without interruption and without weariness: let it be constantly rising with the passage of time.

Banish from yourselves every reason for dissension and uncertainty: you are a gift that God has given to one another. You cannot despise this gift. Have an anxious respect for your love, which you must keep safe from every rebellion of the soul. Each one of you should give to the other the chosen part of himself, the one that shines with the reflections of grace: spare the other his own anxieties.

Do not tie love to the freshness of the body: enjoy this too chastely, while it lasts, and consider that providentially it is met in the early days of love because love is still tender and needs it. You rest in the freshness of the body, which has the function of passage: free love from this bond, bind it to the freshness of the soul, which grace renews every day.

Be new every day. Look into each other's eyes with the wonder and joy of the first day: be, as on the first day, generous, anxious, eager to please one another and communicate to each other the fullness of life.

Every day something improves in you. The secret to being new and looking at yourself with new amazement is in the discovery of finding yourself better.
It is like a new and happy knowledge: it is a joy that no other work of man can give.

Love is a flame that wants nourishment: every day it feeds on this new discovery.

It is a journey towards a more aware, fuller, more secure youth; a journey without regrets and without nostalgia because every day what you find is much better than what you leave.

Every day there is a new invasion of heaven in the soul: what is earthly yields to the heavenly invasion. We go together towards the contemplative life: every day we become more capable of enjoyment, more sure of ourselves, more immortal.

In the beginning it is the strong arm that gives vigor to the man, it is the looseness of the gesture that gives security to the woman: it is the glory of the body, the power of the earth, this too a glory of God, who has made and loves every youth, even earthly youth. He made us there for heaven and matures us for heaven: together we must let ourselves be matured by God for heaven.

And the vigor of the spirit and the looseness of the soul will be infinitely better. The "two in one flesh" will become "two in one spirit," and the construction will be perfect.

Walk, therefore, young spouses, in full joy: you are destined for happiness. Know how to want it with all your strength: do not resist it, do not delay it, do not humiliate it.

It depends on you: no human event, no opposition can prevent it. In the designs of Providence everything will be to the advantage of your happiness: know how to know them and grasp them.

You are the rulers of the universe, you are free, you are rich in all riches: you lack nothing to achieve your incomparable end.

Strive to fulfill in its fullness the will of God for you, which is that of never ceasing to be happy, beyond all the trial that will be required of you for the free conquest of your happiness.