APRIL 7, 1946

I greet you all, noble countrymen and countrywomen, with the words: Let Jesus Christ be praised.

As a preface to today’s talk, I will quote a few excerpts from a certain letter. Please listen: “I got engaged to a person with whom I was very much in love. Of this marriage, we have three grown children. After fifteen years a fourth child was born to us – a beautiful healthy baby boy. Currently he is five years old. In this lies the tragedy. The husband of this child did not want it. Immediately after its birth he counselled me to give it away or sell it, since he did not need it, and as he said, he had enough of the three that he already had. Since I did not want to agree to what he wanted, he began to bully me in the worst way. He stopped talking to me and giving me his wages. He began to mistreat the baby and threatened to kill us. He continued to harass me with his words. For what? For the reason that I was a good mother and housekeeper and a faithful wife? I didn’t smear his name and tried to be a good example to my children. Despite this he was always angry and dissatisfied and constantly ran around and gambled. I sat home with the children. During the depression I myself worked for the upkeep. Later when my husband found a job which brought him 70 dollars weekly, he didn’t give me a cent. Therefore, I had to take him to court because he didn’t understand any other kind of justice. The judge award me 16 dollars a week for my upkeep and my children’s. My husband sometimes did give me the money but more often did not. The children were frightened of him, and hid to avoid him. He was angered and cursed them. I feared that he would kill me and the child. I vowed that I and my children would take no more of it. In the meantime I begged him to turn a new leaf. Nothing helped. After 20 years of this kind of life with this fist and boot father and husband I was forced to go to court for a divorce. I need to underline the fact that I don’t believe in divorce but my husband was so merciless to me and by children that I was decided finally and went ahead with a civil divorce. He believes in nothing, sees no value in anything because he has plenty of money and can do anything he wants.” - After reading this heart-rendering account, I bring you to my talk for today, namely.

“FACTS AND FIGURES”

In Canon 1128 of Church Law, I read: “Married persons ought to mutually keep the commonality of married life, unless some urgency arises. The common life in marriage consists of: living the same home, at a common table and a common bed. That commonality can be broken for some serious reason because it is not part of the essence of the state of marriage but is part of its completeness. Marriage without common table and bed is a partial divorce or separation. A separation could for a time or for life. All reasons for a separation are not listed in Canon 1131: “If one of the spouses enrolled in an non-Catholic sect, that is, a heretical sect, if the newly born are not raised in the Catholic Faith; if one of the spouses leads a scandalous life; if body or soul suffers; if brutality serves for difficult living. These and similar conditions serve for separations in the eyes of the Ordinary. – Is it permissible for Catholics in any case to get a civil divorce? The answer is found in the dictates of the Sacred Penitentiary: On the strength of many dictates coming from this Congregation: 1. The Catholic party may strive to get a civil divorce, as far as the civil bond alone which the Church acknowledges as a valid marriage. 2. Such a Catholic may strive for a civil divorce, but never with the intention of taking on another marriage in Church. 3. If it is possible to reach a separation, it is not possible to strive for a civil divorce. 4. Under no circumstance, undertake another marriage. 5. The freedom is not there to agree to a divorce in order to marry again. In order that someone may judge that I teach some kind of new regulations, which do not agree with the teaching of the Church, I repeat again, that everything is based upon Canon Law by the Church and the dictates of the Sacred Penitentiary.

Now to facts and figures as generally known. It is profitable to be familiar with them. From 1940 to 1945 in the United States, there were 8 million, 700,000 marriages, and 1 million, 250,000 more than in normal times. That increase by professionals is attributed to war time, drafting procedures and the nervous disabilities of veterans at those times. In 1942, 20 couples were married every hour, one every 17 seconds. In 1944 the number fell to 165 per hour. Currently, it has dropped to a normal and prewar number, namely 157 marriages per hour. War and the conditions for war had a great bearing on marriages. It changed the entire concept of marriage. The number of youth under the age of 20 who rushed to the al tar increased threefold from 1939 to 1942. During that same period, the number of women past age 35 finding husbands increased to 75 per cent. And so, the war with its fat paydays fostered both. Men under the age of twenty changed the 350 year American tradition, as a partner for life they were won’t to take a girl older than themselves. But the true revolution came quietly, without any outward manifestations. In the middle of 1940, candidates for the state of marriage, the women candidates outnumbered the men candidates. Ostensibly here were more mice than cats. In 1943, in the United States there were one million, 700,000 men, between 20 and 34 and more or less 4 million, resulted in troubled and worried older ladies. These women had one question: “How long and how far and wide do I have to search for a partner in life? In the presence of the fact that our times permit a certain freedom among the young, the art of hunting, and setting the trap for a husband went out the window of forgetfulness. Women abandoned their age old method. They introduced a new method, a method needed: “Catch, as catch you can!” Please don’t come after me, let no one be angry with me, for I only repeat what a certain American woman author wrote!

The revolutionary change came in a very natural manner. Say what you may, the sterner sex, in other words, the masculine, is weaker than the beautiful sex, or the feminine. The man endures less than the woman. And again, I hear how some say: “So what?” – So what, much ado about nothing. It is true, the sincere and plain truth! Around 105 boys are born to 100 girls. From birth to the eighteenth year, .the number of boys lessens to such a degree that the sexes become equal: 100 to both. Add to this little known fact that to two men who do not marry, and you have the curious surprise – there is a lack of eligible men. In our times the group f 18 to 50 year old there is 1, 500,000 more ladies than men. Despite this fact that we have the motto “Hope springs eternal,” as well as the fact that 87 percent of women marry sooner or later; despite that on four or five unmarried women are certain and have to hope that they will find an eligible husband. The lack of men is not a national lack but a local one. The situation occurs mainly in the Eastern states. However that has always been the case. The outlook is not as dark as in the East – for example, in the case of California – where currently there are 113 men to 100 women. If the girl is truly ambitious and wishing to take the lead, she could possible go the less populated Alaska, for there, there are 145 men for 100 women. Fifty percent of men, who take on marriage, do so before they reached the age of 24. Half the women do this before the age of 22. After the age of 30, the possibility of entering the unsteady waters of matrimony lowers. Despite the prophets and the cynics, every woman before she reaches her 25 birthday, gets two or three proposals from heavy breathers. Those educated say that for every male, there are 1000 women whose relational underpinnings have the same bringing up and culture. Those statistics offer a realistic compatibility. The process of choosing a partner depends of such conditions as the place of residing, with whom you went to school, with whom you met at work, at recreation, etc. – Despite the fact that poets maintain that marriage is heavenly institution, on has to remember that in reality marriage is taken on earth and with people. Most likely, the girl probably meets her future husband in school according the statistics. Not too long ago, an American publication took, for whatever purpose, an interesting national poll. The editors offered the married readers a short question, namely, “Where did you meet?” From a million replies, the response was, one out of ten met in school. One in five, at home or with friends. One out of nine, at work. One out of ten, at Church functions, at shows, picnics, bazaars, or dances. The poll underscored the importance of personal contact. The partners of one out of six lived within the area of one block; one in four with two blocks and 50 percent within the area of one mile.

The greater part of people marry with the certainty of a stable and lasting future; in other words, security for life; through marriage they assume a certain quality of life. Others join to have a companion, to share the joys and sorrows of daily life. Others take on the rite of marriage because of the romance of it. They imagine marriage as poetry of life, full of emotion and fantasize utopian ideals. Almost 52 percent of marriages have a true, deep, heartfelt and noble love. To that end they learn everything about themselves.

The greater part of married people wishes to establish their personal nest, own their own home and have children. One third of marrieds promised themselves two children; a forth decide on three children, and a sixth, to have four children. There are those who wish to express their fatherly and motherly love on pets, dogs, cats, canaries or parrots. In what month do couples marry? In the northern, eastern and western States, the majorities of marriages are performed in spring and summer. The first month is June! Why? It seems to be a very romantic month. At least that is the opinion of all women. Women who are not in favor of June are women of the Southern States. Their month of choice is December.

The war changed many of the traditional forms to the times of proposals, readiness, and promises. Today, men claim to be less romantic of form and words than years ago. They most they agree at home or in a car. Three out of four marriages choose a religious rite in accordance with the prior religious status. Eighty percent of young men are wont to exchange two rings at the marriage ceremony. Four out of five women receive diamond rings. The day before the ceremony, the modern Millie spends the day at the beauty parlor. Nowadays it costs her about 10 dollars.

Marriage always has been under microscopic scrutiny of relatives and sociologists. They researched and continue to research and study it. The put forth the same question always: “What is it that contributes to the happiness and well-being of marriage?” They answer unanimously that “equality of upbringing, equality of education and agreement on life’s worth are the underpinning of every marriage.” Common goals and common living are the roads through which marriage grows and unfolds itself in peace. In other words, where both partners are of different persuasions and not compatible misunderstanding are inevitable. From the wife’s side they advance two questions: “What roll do nationality difference play?” Or “when the husband is different his look at life or religion but the wife is very much attached to her faith? Despite the fact that the Catholic Church does not stand in the way of a mixed marriage, personally I am not persuaded to accept it with much force. I have heard so many complaints and tears and curses as these marriages yield. – A word, nevertheless, about mixed marriages in regard to religion. The Church is not in favor of them since it stands in defense of the indissolubility of marriage and in defense of the Catholic believer and in defense of the children of the marriage. Take the case when the Catholic bonds with an unbeliever. She takes upon herself a marriage of a lifetime. Her husband has his own views of the indissolubility and worth of marriage and divorce. What is it that happens, sooner or later? Someday the husband packs his belongings and leaves home. He receives a divorce without much of a problem maybe even forgetting about its formality, changes his name and marriages another. And what about her? If she opts to hold on to her religion, she needs to remain alone neither capable of marriage, neither married, nor a widow.

Again, what if the husband happens to be a fanatic? How will things work out if he mocks her religious practices, namely her fasting, prayers, and devotions? And what happens when he will not permit the children to be brought up in the Catholic faith? Or perhaps he imposes his beliefs upon the children? A mixed marriage is a path strewn with hurt and humbling postures for the Catholic party. I should add that the multiplicity of beliefs distracts from the successful building of unity. – Normally the husband wishes to takes partnership with a girl that is three to five years younger from himself, and a bit less educated that’s he is. Usually he takes on a girl whose family life is normally happy and who lives in harmony with the rest of her family and who has goals and a style of life that he is interested in. Now a word about the age gap between them as the American aphorism calls “A marriage between May and December”, when his white headed majesty marries a young girl. At the beginning the pair coos with full voice. But it does not last long. She does not want to be regarded as a child or a toy. He is getting old. The wife begins to be ashamed to be at the side of an old man, when she is full of life and energy. Things grow sour, there are jealousies and it all ends in backtalk and eventually either two ruined lives or the young wife leaves the old man. Now let’s look at the reverse side of the coin, namely when the wife is a lot older than the husband. I really do not have in mind in which the wife came a bit earlier before the husband but, even then, there should be a red flag. I speak about marriages in which the woman is about 10 years older from the man. A fact is a fact and the inevitable outcome that a third person comes on the scene and in a dress. Nature says that the woman gets older sooner than a man. The man regrets that he married an older woman and that in public. Then much trouble. Those are only the major troubles in married life because there are still other differences in character and demeanor which aggravate situations. These are all sad hurts in the life of a marriage. There are also those little things in common living that could be a challenge breaking up the peace and joy of the daily living outside of the home. Someone once wrote about them: “Husband and wife and children will run away from too close living which can wear upon one’s living.

Again, let us look at the statistics. Neither men nor women, or at least they maintain, think that outlook on things have a bearing. Ninety percent of men and 80 percent of women claim that money had no part in marital decision making. Three men from 10 consider beauty only a secondary factor in their choice. Four out of five women do not consider looks important. It matters only that their choice is masculine. They consider gentleness; he must be civil, he must be considerate and gracious. The man demands of a woman that she be loving, cooperative, gentle, responsible and a bit more conservative and less garrulous. It is a proven fact that happy husbands and happy wives both come from peaceful families, that they have a physical examination before marriage, and that they attend church regularly and that they have a church wedding. It has been said that married people who take on marriage are happier, in better health, and live longer. “A good marriage is heaven on earth.” And “where couples live in harmony, God is with them. – Nevertheless, there exist the little daily troubles. The average housewife threatens the usual eight times in the span of marriage that she will return to live with her parents. Not unfrequently will the incensed man, in his heart, want her to fulfill her threat. The main reasons for such a threat are: a lack of sensitivity, selfishness on the part of the husband. A general opinion of the spouses is such: “the pants should be worn by the man, income should be earned by the man, but all house-hold decisions should be made mutually!” Wives generally agree, almost unanimously, that the behaviors of woman should less assertive as they are today. Too much loose speech and frivolity.

One out of five marriages break up and end in divorce. The greatest number of divorces, because one third of them happen before five years of duration. The fundamental reason for divorces as those you do so maintain, is the collective sum of small insignificant happening during a marriage. A candidate for divorce argues, “He is a great egotist, who shows me no sensitivity as he did before, he lies and deceives me, and he always complains.” A candidate for a divorce also maintains, “She always bugs me; from morning until night he tells me that I am not as loving and I walk about with hair disshevelled, that I am cold, and is suspicious and asks me about my out of home activities, etc.” Both spouses blame the other and don’t consider their own shortcomings. Sometimes just a quick “I’m sorry” of a smile, and that would do the trick. But no. He is as stubborn as an ox she is cantankerous as a goat. They treat each other with ugly words, sharp retorts, using hurtful phraseology and in the end come before a judge and seek divorce.

The courts deal with reasons such as - drunkenness, smoking, gambling, bad cooking, and snoring. It is no wonder that the cases of divorce increase. Today, our courts are filled and the future does not look too rosy. Those who divorce just seek another license and marry again. The statistics show that 94 percent of divorces and 96 percent of those who divorce marry again. Americans believe strongly in marriage. They marry early and at a younger age, divorce early and marry again more than in any of country on earth.

Some professor maintains readily that at the current time in the United States there is one million young women wishing to be married; useless their desired but there are not enough desirable partners.

Listen to what happened in the courts in 1945. In Los Angeles, California, Miss A. Harwood obtained a divorce because her husband had two favorites: a huge dog and a yellow cat. He took the dog with him to bed and said goodnight to it with a kiss. He threw the cat outside at night but left the window open. The cat went after the squirrels and brought them to the bedroom.

In Spokane, Washington, Judge C. W, Greenough, gave a divorce to a wife, because the husband used an ax on a turkey, but not because he used the ax because he did it at the dinner table. In Chicago received a divorce because her husband threw lit cigarettes at her. In Camden, N.J. Grace Wisner asked for a divorce, maintaining that her husband does not love her anymore. Why? Because he wanted to choke her. He grabbed her with two hands on her neck and shook her, like an apple tree; later he deliberately hit a telephone pole; the second time he drove the car over tracks and shook her so violently that she lost her false teeth. At another time when she was already in bed, he threatened to burn down the house. In the end, when she told him that she is going to go to her mother’s, he not only wanted to help her pack her bag, but wanted to take the valise to her family’s house. W. F. Russell, a 85 year-old man wanted a divorce maintaining that he didn’t mind when she threw kitchen utensils at him but when she came after him with a butcher knife and he lost his false teeth, she trashed them. That broke the camel’s back. W. F. Russell, an 85 year-old youngster sued for a divorce maintaining that he didn’t mind his wife throwing kitchen utensils at him but when she came after him with a butcher knife, and running away he lost his false teeth which she trashed he lost all joy in marriage and called it quits. The judge did not hesitate to grant him the divorce. S. F. Gugenheimer, just about 60 years old, gaining some wealth, found himself a girl partner. The honey moon was not yet over when the war household war began. His wife threatened to burn his remains and spread them over the lawn. He received the divorce. Thirty-eight year old Louis Ross complained in court that he lived at home in perpetual fear because his wife called down bad spirit upon him through some Hindu incantations. He was even more fearful when his wife called the spirit of his mother-in-law to live with them. Lorraine Davis, a 20 year old complained that her husband cared about his military rank than he did about her. When he had her walk several steps behind him because he wanted to be more noticed, that was a bit too much. Mrs. Hoover from Camden, N.J. complained that her husband sold her pressing iron, various kitchen utensils, her fur and watch, and what’s more, robbed the savings piggy bank of two dollars. Those examples should be enough. They point out to us the ridiculousness and some divorce complaints about trivial matters. I repeat that these bare facts should give enough thought before tying the knot without proper thought to avoid the pitfalls.