April 23, 1950

Dear fellow countrymen and countrywomen, I greet you with the words: Praised is Jesus Christ.

I translate portions of a letter sent to me from Chicago. Listen please, especially young people, and benefit from the experience of others, who, not paying attention to the warnings and advice given them, acted too swiftly with the beat of their young heart and today are broken in spirit, and look at the future without any betterment of their lives. – “Two years ago I married a non-Catholic. My parents did not give me their blessing. A year and a half later, my husband divorced me. He perjured himself in civil court. He accused me of things that I didn’t even dream of. I ended up alone and for gotten. Often I fall into despair when I see so many young happy persons who could let them be entrapped and betrayed as I was. Fr. Justin, would you speak on the topic of mixed marriages and warn young people about such undertakings!” This letter speaks for itself. Other comments seem unnecessary. Permit me, however, to mention to our young people the following fact: According to Catholic teaching marriage is indissoluble, and faith obliges us till death. Other faiths do not recognize this teaching or have this conviction. In other faiths and sects outside of the Catholic faith divorces are allowed and that not for only serious causes but laughable ones as well. The reasons to obtain an easier divorce figure in the non-Catholic world vary. The non-Catholic woman should know that she is regarded differently than the husband in regard to premarital promises and divorce. She should prepare herself to the eventuality that her husband who has different beliefs does not love her on moral grounds in regard to the promises made before marriage and on the coldness of the love does not commit himself to the promise while she is bound to it in regard to “until death do us part.” And then what? Then there is a wide open door for him; he can get rid of her in court and find a new love. The capability of divorce in itself weakens the faithfulness of marriage and in a moment or rather the first capability of divorce comes betrayal. And when he, the non-Catholic obtains the legal ability to take on ties of marriage, she, the Catholic is bound by her wedding vows until death. So, now she is neither a single woman nor a widow, she must lead a single life, with sadness and despair looks upon her marriage as a used woman. That sort of turn of events is at least a unique event. It is a history of thousands of mixed marriages and no assurance, no premarital promise, no degree of love can predict. If you do not believe, read the court chronicles. Then you will believe. From this introduction, on to our talk, under the title of:

THE MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE IS NOT ENOUGH

In the previous two radio talks, I heatedly and strongly warned against concerning friends, before going into intimacy and before entering into mixed marriages, or marriages with non-Catholics. However, I also want to clearly confirm that by the previous statement, I do not wish to maintain that the name of a Catholic youth contains with it the absolute certainty or guarantee of good fortune and happiness in marriage. That happiness and good fortune depends on and is built on qualities of soul, which involve the intellect and heart and inner consciousness and not on a Catholic baptismal certificate. Further, I should like to mention, before we go on, several types of young men or those even more advanced in age, whom a young lady should be careful of before saying “yes” to them. Otherwise, she exposes herself not only to tears but the gnashing of teeth. The entire talk will touch on a theme of counsels and the experience of knowing people and the human condition; from letters, hundreds of letters, in which victims passionately lament about their fate, and, with long-term personal observations. All of this, taken into consideration should suffice to make a deep impression on those who under the pretext of love, blind love, without thinking of the future, tie the knot of marriage. The first type of young man is one who, although a Catholic from birth, and even one from a good Catholic home, cares little about faith or has abandoned it completely, not practicing his faith but has liberalized it; I repeat: for a good Catholic young woman, such a type never was and never will be a good husband. Who knows; perhaps that type of a Catholic with a baptismal certificate is even more unacceptable than a non-Catholic. Indifferent and liberal minded, he is a mole, who undermines and erodes religious rules and overall morality. The dangers are basically the same as exist in mixed marriages: a misunderstanding between souls, that same lack of agreement on issues which as a result create a distance between the spouses. – That same false tone in the beginning of a song or hymn! The progressive and liberal religious fiance, does go to confession, true, but sincerity is lacking and the Communion which confirms his entrance into marriage is sacrilegious. Besides, one cannot seek a deep seated outlook on life; not acknowledging any kind of responsibility before God; such a person lowers the moral posture in life and life’s responsibilities toward God. This is the kind of marriage which is similar to a marriage with a non-Catholic. The woman injures self by failure to practice the dictates of her religion and with time, completely loses her faith. The non-believer husband must at least go through the motions crimping his beliefs in the beginning with his premarital agreement to go with his prenuptial agreements. He begins to joke about the religion of his wife and makes fun of her practices, is cynical in his views: Why pray? Why go to church? Why confess to a priest? Why fast? And slowly, after these “why’s” the wife goes along. The rearing of children in such a careless atmosphere, and in these kind of unyielding conditions, religion cannot exist. The father soon becomes irritable. The wife is frustrated; for her it is not the same as a marriage in which she can find peace, a marriage where the husband kneels with her with the children, where he attends church and goes to Communion with the children, and breathes with conviction, the same ideas as the family. As in other undertakings so to in religious life both spouses should go arm in arm, mutually loving and always beginning and ending all things with God. Religious and spiritual independence of a believing wife side by side with an unbelieving husband produces isolation which tortures, weakens and hurts. The truth of these somber words proves the tearful existence of wives who are married to non-believing and non-practicing Catholic husbands.

Another type of married husband is shallow of not firmly grounded mind that does not possess a Christian outlook in regard to marriage. Such a man is a “user.” Someone once gave him this characteristic name: “modern satyr: One who looks at her with a purely sensual eye. Treats her as an object after which he shoves her on the side in a corner. To associate with such a man is shameful and putting one’s self into shame. Such a man, despite his external qualities, is no gift for the feminine sex. The senses play a major roll. Such a localized love rarely is significant in the life of a Christian. First love achieved by the blink of an eye ends quickly like lightning, thunder, and a storm. Sad is the state of a girl who believes such a lightning competitor and seals such a future for herself.

The third type, perhaps the least suited to be a husband is a man who praises himself a man who has “lived” through a lot. It means that he is schooled in the art of “loving” and is a master of conquering and adopting the hearts of women. A moral Catholic wrote: “It is less important how his life has gone and what kind of crib he experience his life; how he acted in this or that way, a lion of the pubs, associating with loose women; his real worth at all times is the same: A man who has spent his worth in useless ways, brings to marriage an empty soul and a worn heart. An honest woman, putting her poetic and undefiled feelings has the right to seek the same of the man she seeks to marry. Burned out cigarette stub of the heart, she should shun. Otherwise, if she caught such a lion and delighted in it, bodes the fact that she herself is of questionable moral merit. It is a characteristic of pathological sentimentalism and bad education. It is also the arrogance with often deserves punishment. The so-called tamer of the lion becomes one of his victims.” Despite today’s indulgence, morality is one quality that obligates both sexes. So it is apropos to pose this question: Are women to a greater extent responsible for looking through their fingers and giving their heart s and hand to despoiled men? In addition I bring to mind the outlook for future children: Will an honest woman dare to give her child a father that is no valid conscientiously moral father. What will a bad father project with his blood for the child’s future life? That which we have already spoken, we can attribute other bad propensities; one could not wish to pass on the life of a conscienceless man, a drunkard, a gambler and the like. One cannot gamble with a future life nor do so with his children. The old aphorism is apropos: “When one marries, that one changes.” Often the wife says, “I will work him over for the better.” Or: “He will change for me.” And such litanies subsist forever. More than one closes her eyes on the future of the suitor as if she had some magic recipe, some secret, only known to her – the means to transform the worst man. More than one woman thinks that marriage is the best and only way to lay to rest that the end of a playful, worthless, no good man, a man counting for nothing who throughout the years bummed his way through life would be moralized through marriage in short time. Often the parents of such a vagabond and rascal try to fix up their son with this or that woman, keeping a secret his badly spent years. Was he in some kind of correctional institution? Is a wife supposed to be some kind of missionary for the conversion of the recalcitrant? After all, marriage by itself cannot make a man moral! The fallen can help himself up, brush himself off from the dirt, return to moral living but that renewal can only occur by internal means. Living in the marital states cannot do this unless it occurs within a man. The rascal youth will be brutal and disloyal husband. Please keep in mind that I speak of the reality, what actually is with certain glorious exceptions. – Like when a sickly woman should obtain from marriage as is too with a sickly husband. Faithful doctors maintain: “When known that fathers should abstain because of the possibility of infecting their children. Such is the case of contracting epilepsy, consumption, mental illness, and many other conditions. Marriage to a man with such debilitating condition would lead to grave difficulties, which lead to despair, deficiency to dedicating life to the wife. I would add certain “secret illnesses” or “social illnesses,” etc. In short, and understandably “venereal” diseases of which there is a reticence to speak of. It is the most debilitating face of humanity. Even non-believing parents in that hellish position, do not wish to talk about it to their children and especially to their daughters. They are reticent to teach their children so as not to disquiet not only their intellect and soul. The reasons and results for the disease bespeaks of hospitals and clinics. Although I did not want to talk about this issue, I felt it a responsibility to bring it forth. I must admit that is not a theme for the pulpit but it is a responsible theme for the radio. Although it is not a subject to dwell on from the pulpit, many of our women need it to contribute to their knowledge in order that they avoid tears and a broken life. Especially in our present world war times and the results in the social order, brought about effects of the war especially with our grown up daughters so that they are more cognizant of the red lights. The sad state of affairs with students of higher educational schools is the prevalence of “secret” diseases. The sad part is that of the breaking, without thought, of the sixth commandment. There are plenty pamphlets which cover the delicate subject is exposed and detailed as to the dangers involved. It is sad also that the authors, lecturers and psychiatrists treat it from the point of health, and only the physical aspect and neglect the moral and religious one. Hence, rather than act against fraud, instead of openly fight against the vices of the moral order – they give half-hearted measures to avoid its consequences - and these methods are sinful, so they are bad and so, obscene as those actions that cause suffering and they bring secret suffering. Now I draw something from moral theology. – Their first feature they are very contagious. The transfer of this venom from one person to another, often enough it is the contact with some item the infected person used, for example, his clothing, laundry, glasses or spoons. Thus it is easy to understand why it is so important for a woman to understand to what degree a woman may be imperiled, if a husband has this disease. Is this not a grave tragedy to have a woman go out with a man who has been infected? Exercising her duties toward her husband, she is exposed to suffering with him. Is this not a sorrowful tragedy to go out with such a man before considering marriage? The measure of suffering of which we speak is greater when we consider the difficulty to heal this condition for which, at times, there is no remedy. What a tragic gift the infected man would give to his bride. Lasting for many years there are disabilities and if the brain I infected there is danger of death. Accompanying this illness is weakness and depression of the soul and at times it bodes the infection of the infant in pregnancy and puts the wife in the danger of having a child. Even when the child is born healthy it may develop, but it may later die early or develop a non-treatable eye problem ending in blindness. The status of this disease is devastating and seems to indicate a punishment for breaking a moral law. As if God called out to the guilty: “Since you did not honor my law, I cast you aside in order that you would not serve to harm your future progeny.” Many engaged for marriage, do not pay attention to the result of their actions. And that kind of lackadaisical appraisal of one’s situation compels one to be aware of the threatened calamity and the innocent women, who would have to undergo a needless punishment for a deed not done. The moralist, Urban, comments on this situation: “Should not the lady going out for a man have the extreme caution to avoid the situation by having it in mind.” How so? IN the same moment and act, when the greatest trust is needed in the giving of self when she uses the word “love,” when the kiss of love is on her lips, in that same moment accept the deadly poison which is going to be with her all of her life which will make her and her children vulnerable to disaster? Isn’t that a significant irony based on love, isn’t that Judas kiss, isn’t that something unimaginably terrible. What can one do to avoid this tragedy? Before we speak a word of agreement from experience of a competitor, we must be absolutely sure he is free of the situation we are talking about. That type of certainty is lightly held by lovers who are not always free to make the judgement. The young man is not very willing to confess sins in front of the girl, whom he is courting, and if had to go against God's law costing more than the forbidden fruit, he probably will not hesitate to lie and be critical before young, gullible and inexperienced girls. He will know how to play the role of an angel but an angel in order to accomplish his goals. Besides, such men worry themselves judging their selves healthy, when the poison lay deep within their blood. Such certainty of the competitor can only be diagnosed by the testimony of a physician, a physician with a conscience who would not let himself be duped. But like in every profession and occupation as in the doctor’s there are exceptions that are conscience-less ready to deceive for the sake of bribery or from acquaintances and perform traitorous acts. Another plague which consistently attacks humanity and which in marriage is fatal us alcoholism. I only have in mind and speak only of alcoholics especially of the husband father or the head of the family, who is the bane of the family. First of all, it ruins the family life. What suffering for the wife to be married to a drunkard, to endure the atmosphere of alcoholic, looking at the destruction of her man whom she married out of love and to whom she is an object of brutal maltreatment, brushing her aside. She is married to a man who is constantly present to her and brings her emotional dread; a man who finds his love in the bottle or the glass and will never find his love in his family or care for it. Whenever he is not a home he, he finds his joy in his buddies who are suited to his friendship at a bar. At a heavy drinker is followed by cheating, gambling, card-playing, lying, and romancing and the like. And there are no surprises! Alcoholism in the drunkard destroys all feelings of worthiness, honor and responsibility. I wipe out the will power and distort the character. It very often ends up with murder, suicide, mental disability, shameful acts and hinders recovery. It deadens moral consciousness and weakens the will, and on the other hand, it operates on the exciting realm of the sensual. This leads to abuse so blatant and degrading to a human being. The wife and mother are sacrificed. I direct you to American daily newspapers. The drunk leaves a sad legacy for his heirs. Not speaking of the cost of money that could be used for the upkeep of the family, or the shame that it brings with it for the children, the results are numerous. I won’t bore you with cold statistics which show the percent of children harmed in their health, psychologically burdened and demoralized from observing a drunken father. What a legacy for a wife and mother to receive from a drunken husband. His wife, having someone to entrust all their future, has the right to look in his past. Was he already an alcoholic, subject to drunkenness, before she met him? Does he come from a family in which drunkenness is prevalent? How about his parents? A short period of abstinence from drinking alcohol is the question? In any case, it does not hurt to take caution, because here the issue is about considerations in regard to morality and health !!