December 6, 1936

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

Just about a year ago, a young couple came to me about their marriage. They were married seven months ago. He was an average Joe, well-meaning and good spirited. He spoke of a loss he had encountered. Because he worked hard for years in the factory, he was financially secure. He didn’t drink and he wasn’t much of a party goer. His neighbor had a single daughter who was giving her mother a hard time. She noticed the young man next door. She felt that she could bring them together to alleviate her concerns. Her daughter as a modern Millie and felt she needed some experience. She set before the young man’s mother, the virtues of her daughter, and portrayed her as the epitome of virtue, an angel in human form. The young man heard only wonderful things from both mothers. And ultimately he was convinced that Providence brought them together destined for life long relationship. A solemn wedding and later a raucous celebration. Then ended the promised happiness. She suggested that they both go back to their mothers. She would not agree that her place was by the side of her husband, and that it would be better if they separated. It was after this circumstance that they came to me. It was a curious circumstance. The daughter sat with me in a determined way, crossed legged, Chewing gum as if it were a reward; her face powdered, lips painted, eye brows fixed, short fat fingers, painted with some odd mixture. She looked cold of disposition. The husband stood broken and worried. Tears in his eyes. She was oblivious to it. She listened to his objections and complaints as if she never saw him before. He just about finished. I turned to her to get her side of the story, to why they didn’t want to live together. I spoke to her in Polish. She replied in English. “This is surely not a modern wedding, but one that our parents believed in. We modern women are not that naïve. Such fools. I wish to stay with my mother because I have more freedom to which I had been used to. I do not want to be the mother of his children. Here she used the phrase “his brats.” Here she jumped from her chair, opened the door and ran out after slamming the door. Her husband went slowly after her with heavy heart. ‘Til this day I cannot fathom why this stubborn, contemporary dame entered marriage. She did not want to live with her husband, and had no intention to be a wife and still wed. But, at any rate listen to today’s talk, it will give you a lot to think about because it relates to everyday life.

**“YOURS – TO YOU – YOU” (WORDS FROM MARRIAGE OATH)**

The state of marriage is not the human institution. It has its origins with God. It comes from God and is meant for people and their happiness. “And God created man, in his own image he created him; man and woman he created them. I God blessed them and said: “Go and multiply and fill the earth and dominate it. We read these words in the first book of the Old Testament. The New Testament tells us about the meeting between the Pharisees and Christ: “And they came to him trying to tempt him asking: is it lawful for a man to leave his wife in whatever reason? He answered them: “Did you not read that in the beginning he created them man and woman? He said further: “It is for this reason that a man leaves his father and mother and is united with his wife and the two shall become one flesh. What God has put together let no man put asunder.” Who does not understand that in these words is holiness – unity –the meaning that marriage is a permanent state. This is the teaching of Christ our Savior. From scripture to the altar to the vows of the marital couple. The priest asks the young couple, kneeling in front of the altar: “ Adam, do you have free will to take Eve whom you see before you as your wife?” The young man says freely and without force: I do! The priest turns to the young lady: “And you too, Eve, do you freely take Adam who stands before you as your lawfully wedded husband. She says, “I do.” Then the priest says, “May Almighty God grant you the grace in order that what your lips have said be a promise for the rest of your lives. Through Christ our Lord. Then there is an exchange of rings as a sign of faithfulness. Finally the young pair accept each other with the marital oath: I take you for my wedded wife and promise love, faith and faithfulness to keep thee til death do us part. Almighty trinity and all the saints, so help me God. While these words still echo in our minds let us go to some letters which illustrate the difficulty in some marriages which occur as the couple live together. I read them as written:

“Fourteen years ago I married a girl four years younger than me. I was acquainted with her for a few years. It seemed that we would be happy together. I owned a home and had some a bit of money. Before we married we shopped for furniture for our home. The marriage took place at my wife’s parents. After that my wife wanted to go to her own home. She wanted to stay with her mother. I was surprised because outfitted our intended home cost about a thousand dollars. I begged my wife that since we married she should agree with me. She did not listen. I worked hard until late at night. I gave my wife my wages regularly in an envelope. I could not come to any agreement with my wife and her mother. We lived together with a large family. There were 14 people living together in one home. They looked upon me as some kind of a thief. After seven months of such a life, one evening at supper, I begged my wife to come to live with me at my house. My angry wife said she would never come with me and would never leave her mother; that I should leave and she would stay with her mother. I became angry and left her. When God gave us a child, they did not even invite me to the christening. Not only that, but my wife sued me. My wife and her parents painted me as an ogre. During this time I had to pay alimony and five dollars a week for the child’s support. My daughter came to me several times a week. She often asks why mom and dad do not live together and why we do not have a home ourselves. At times I feel despondent. My wife did not want to have anything to do with me. She wrote me several letters, always repeating that she didn’t want to have anything to do with me. I have no idea what to do. I do not think I am sinning because I wanted to live with my wife in our own home. After all, she did not marry her mother; neither did I, we should live with each other.

The next letter is no less interesting:

“For a long period of time I listened to the Rosary Hour and I have to admit that the talks and the teaching on the program was worthy of praise and support. The last couple of times I heard the talk about mixed marriages, and about marriages of the same nationality. It is very useful for the young as well as the old. In our house there is plenty of worry about one of our son’s state of marriage with a Polish girl and a Catholic only by title. Our son marries about five months ago and they do not live together. They wed in the Catholic Church and both worked and lived with her parents; for two and a half months, they worked in the same factory where a large number of workers were fired and eventually the husband was fired. That result with a lot of misunderstanding between the couple and her parents. However the husband was rehired often being laid off for a short time. He went back to work and has steady work. When he wasn’t working, her mother cursed him and blamed him for not working. At times he came to us, the parents, crying because they offered no assistance to him. His wife would not give him any money even for cigarettes. While he was working he was giving his wife his paycheck. Now that he was working, he told his wife that he wished to live in his own place and that he would pay for his living quarters. His wife refused to go with him and said she is comfortable living with her parents. He told her that he found it uncomfortable with her parents. She told him that he could go but she would not go with him. He took his belongings and came to live with us because he said that she does as her mother wishes her to do. Later she was undecided whether to come live with him. The next evening he asked her what she thought of the idea of coming to live with him. He received the reply: “Don’t worry about me because I will never come to live with you.” Now the son said that he will sue for a divorce. We do not admit to doing that. He said that he wouldn’t live for the rest of his life being alone. My wife has ruined the rest of my life. We asked Fr. Justin to have another talk about marriage. If another talk will not settle the marriage then all is lost.

The third letter is from a young wife:

Father, don’t think that I am looking for sympathy. I understand that it is too late to undo what has happened. I have to complain to you father, because my parents have not been alive for quite a while. Five years ago I was married. God gave us two children who died early. My husband blamed me for their deaths. I have had enough worry and tears. My husband right from the beginning wanted us to live at her home in one room. I didn’t want that. We found a place to live. I outfitted the place with my own money which I earned while I was single. From the beginning, my wife stopped at her mother’s while coming home from work. After he washed, he went to his mother’s for supper. I asked him to be with me in the evenings, but he explained that there is a lot of work to be done at his mother’s place. Even with our first and second child was born and was sick he preferred to go to his mother instead of helping me out. Sometimes when I cried he said: “I only have one mother; there are enough women in the world, I could always choose another wife. I thought that after the death of our second child, he would change. He changed for the worse. Now he doesn’t even talk to me. When he talks to me it is like a dog not his wife. Please father, talk to such men as my husband. Please tell them that we wives are important and should be treated with respect.

One more letter:

I am a wife by name but not in reality.I was only 18 years old when my parents talked me into marriage because the gentleman came from a wealthy family and drove a large automobile. After our marriage we went to live at his parent’s home because his parents did not wish us to live alone. I agreed because I believed that the wife should be where her husband is. After a few days, his mother began to work me over that I should be like this or like that. I said nothing for a few months. When I complained about her, he, instead of supporting me began to defend her and put borders on my behaviors. Father, I understand that I am young and don’t understand everything, but I don’t thing that I am worth nothing and stupid. My husband said that I should bow to his mother’s wishes and be grateful to her. That hurt my feelings. I told her that I’d rather live in a hut and have a good husband and a peaceful existence. He answered me: “If you don’t like it, go back to your parents; maybe you’ll find it better there. From that time on I feel that I am walking in a dream. I can no longer live with his parents because they will just not let me alone. I wish not to return to my own parents because I know what will await me there. I don’t know what to do. I don’t wish to remain any longer with his parents. My husband goes out of the house every evenings. He likes to play cards and plays the horses. He still thinks he’s hot stuff. His parents praise him to the hilt as the best son in the world. They see that I suffer and to seem pleased at that.

These four letters will suffice for today. They demonstrate conclusively that not ever marriage is successful and not every marriage is preparatory of heaven. There are many reasons for that. One reason is that while courting the young couple looks at everything through rose-colored glasses. She is perfect in his eyes and has no faults but is an angel in human form. He is a knight in shining armor: gracious, good, thoughtful, smart and noble. Soon after the wedding there is disillusionment and disappointment. Day after day this angel begins to see in her beloved knight the usual faults and lacks. The knight begins to see the defects and weaknesses in the angel’s character which were hidden or not noticed before marriage. Now, he and she are changing their glasses; instead of rosy the glasses are dark and with thick glass; now they begin to see the faults in each other. What was praise and admiration becomes resentment, coldness, neglect, satiety; now she is the personification of evil, without any good qualities; now he becomes only a boor, a yokel and a savage. No wonder that she moves to daddy; he tightens his hat on his head, with a curse returns to the doorstep of his mother. Whose fault is it: his or hers? However one should not look through rose colored glasses or with thick, black glasses. One has to take off one’s glasses. Marriage is neither a paradise nor a purgatory, only a mixture of the two. Marriage consists of a man and a woman, neither angels nor devils but two separate individuals with different characters with different habits who need to work together. A happy marriage is not built on the ego of the male nor or the ego of the female. The word to use is “our”. It is not permissible for the husband to pull the wagon one way and the wife to pull it the other way. Both sides have to have the good will and desire to make it “for better” or “for worse” and to work for common goals together. One must use good judgment instead of romanticism, myopia, or blindness. Otherwise the marriage wagon will be dashed against the rocks of life which are many or fall into a ditch which will break a wheel. That not only bodes nothing good or brings disappointment tears and unhappiness. Without unity the no marriage will last. Someone once wrote: “Unity comes not with a wedding band; rather it comes with great and consistent effort.” To maintain it, the couple must work as a team as in with artistic abilities or with a spiritual energy. Not being vigilant marriage could be weakened or even totally lost, although at first that was not the case. In a happy marriage, it is not necessary that the man called the shots and the wife listen, because when “one walks hand in hand with measured step, ordering and listening is not the norm like in the flight of a bird one does not see which of the wings create the flight.” In the case when dictates are needed, one must remember that they be done with kindness and gentleness and with good judgment. A certain Church writer advised: “How nature protects the weakest members, so it is that a woman, as the weaker party in a marriage has every right to be treated with understanding.” St. Ambrose, in admonishing careless men state: “You are not single man but a married man and you don’t have a slave, you have a wife. God wishes that you don’t show her you power.” With a slight change of word, on may say to women who want to control men: “you are not a slave driver but a wife. God does not wish you to give him the sense of his power. Another reason for a troubled marriage is due to the parents of young married people. The parents should remember that their children did not marry them. The parents have the right to be advisers and to help them along, but not tell them what to do. This does not mean that the parents continually nag the newlyweds to live and their home because it would be easier to visit them. They should let the newly-weds determine their living space and furnishings. That way they learn thrift, cooperation and handling their affairs mutually. The mother, who insists that her son tell her about the ineptness of his wife, does not do well. The father, who insisted that his daughter list the imperfections of his son, does not do well. Parents should try to assuage the difficulties of their children not complicate things. The children should resolve their own problems not rely on their parents to solve them. That’s not only natural but of worth and necessary. There are parent who feel their children have to right as to live their personal lives. Sometimes they are offended that the children leave their nest and make a nest of their own. Sometimes a father will feel that a stranger has taken is daughter away from him. And why? Because he thinks he is married to her. And the same pertains to the mother who feels the loss of a son. That kind of attitude has ruined many a marriage. I do not mean that the married children should make a total break with their parents. That’s a bad idea too. A young wife should to use a certain tact and diplomacy in regard the parents who want to hold on to their children to avoid conflict. An occasional visit to the parents to keep up relationship also is a good idea, for example inviting them to dinner, keeping track of their birthdays or names days. A good will is created. A certain French woman one wrote: “With great cautiousness you ought to behave yourself in regard to the parents of your husband – not pointing out the difference of your parents and the parents of your husband. However if despite your trying to be of good heart and your behavior is regarded as destructive, it is a firm but sincere criticism is the road to take. This is the advicii9e of a smart lady who knows what she is talking about. A young husband also should be civil with the parents of his wife. A husband who is a brute, wanting to hold his wife in chains his heading for trouble with his father-in-law. While visiting Poland this year, I came across and beautiful example. In Poznan, Warsaw, and Krakow couples go to church together a wife with her mother-in-law of the husband with his father-in-law walk side by side in pairs. Bonding is easy: the husband tells his father-in-law how for fortunate he is that he married his daughter, and so on. How happy is such a marriage. Not many marriage traditions like this in America. How many men neglect not only their father-in-law but their wives. Instead of taking the wife to her parent’s home he may go alone to the theatre, tavern or his friends. Or he sits at home and watches TV. I know an injudicious wife who wasted a young and good husband. She so aggravated him that he lost his health and today he goes to work without health without a home and without a wife. Why? After marriage instead of taking care of the home, when the husband went to work, she locked the door and headed for her parent’s home. She sat there for hours; fed her husband from canned goods. She never sat with him at the table, for she had sated herself with her parent’s food. Her unjudicious mother continued to permit her to behave in the way she did and instead she told her daughter, “If he ever says anything to you, tell him that your mother still lives and you will always find a place here.” In addition the wife had a girl friend who she spend hours criticizing others. Her husband begged her to change her ways. No way was this going to happen. He began to complain and curse. She brought her, mother, father and brother into the situation and started a war in her own home. She went to live with her parents not even a year after their marriage and he remained a hermit. He drank too much and became ill. She enlarged the list of widows. He is shortening his life. /who then is responsible for this state of affairs? Is it worth trying to figure it out? Who set the seed for this bad growth of the marital couple? Who choked the seed of love, misunderstanding and unity in the marriage? Who brought war to the household? In Italy one often sees a horse, and ox and a donkey. The horse and the ox are side by side and the donkey is added bewildered at the injustice of man. And so with marriage. Husbands and wives each day remind yourself of the words of the marriage vows – especially the words, “you”, “to you” ---I take *“you” ,* I promise “*you”, and* I will not “part with *you”* until death. I end today’s talk with a period and a shout!