MARCH 7, 1943

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

I have before me two letters one pertaining long term affairs; and at the same time short term affairs. One letter was written by a mother; the other by the hand of a daughter. Please listen: “I have a large family and up until this time there were no major problems to deal with. In the last year there was a change and trouble. My 23 year-old son was going with a Polish girl. They were engaged. At the beginning of 1942 my son signed up for the military. He wanted to get married before he went into the service. I tried to talk him out of it. I suggested that he should wait until the war ended when he would have plenty of time. He was angry at me. He left without saying good-bye and would not write to me. I had the same problem with my daughter. She had been engaged for a year. In September he was taken into the military. They wanted to get married before he left. Again I advised against it because, who knows: he might be wounded and my daughter would have a cripple on her hand and waste her life because she would have to go to work and work hard to support herself, her husband and maybe children. Or, in the case he was killed in the war, then my daughter would become a widow at twenty years of age. Both of them were angry with me. The eloped and were married by a justice of the peace and my daughter went to live with his mother. She no longer speaks to me, but, passing by, she ignores me as if she didn’t know me and as if I was not her mother. I hurt greatly because of this situation.

Another letter comes from girl who is but seventeen years old. It is written in English. I translate into Polish. “In March of 1942, I went to a hall near a tavern, to dance with a boy whom I met the day before in another tavern. He seemed very nice. After a few glasses of beer and wine, he asked me to marry him. We went to a Justice of the Peace and married because he was going to the marine corp. He went into the service and to this day did not write me a word. He had to give me his name since the government sent me information that he was killed in the war. In December, I became a mother. My father yells at me and calls me names. He does not want me in his house. What should I do? Should I give the child away to an institution? Should I keep him with me? “

How many similar letters I receive weekly! Parents generally complain about their sons and daughters. And how many daughters and sons talk against their parent unyielding and non-understanding ways and so on without end. All of this comes with bad result. Love is stifled, peace is broken; hatred abides. And so entire families suffer and marriage becomes meaningless.

YOUTH – LISTEN A WHILE

Despite a general complaint about our youth, I don’t entirely blame them and never assign them sole blame. I never looked at our youth through black glasses nor was a pessimistic in viewing them. Often I have stood in their defense. Why? Because I have seen their virtues and their gifts and their worth. I am first to admit that they are far from perfect, but then, was there ever a time that all youth had achieved perfection in the full meaning of that word? And there is no sense in trying to compare youth of the past with youth of the present. As to the number of youth, it was smaller in the past. The generation was filled with elders, namely, those who came here to make their home in the USA or boarders who came to make some money and in a few years returned to Poland. In Buffalo twenty five years ago youth were in bad shape, Patrol cars wove their way through the streets, night and day. Police patrolled by two. Today: from time to time, some urchin drinks a bit much, goes into somebody’s car and goes for a joy ride. I do not want to speak of those good times, which never really were. Today despite the fact that we have more young people and children on the block, than on the West Side’s twenty five blocks; our youth is healthy in body, and noble in spirit. And now, what is youth’s view of marriage at the present time? Perhaps four percent belong to gangs? These look at marriage as a dance, a comedy, as a game of hearts. I venture to say that there never was a dearth of those in any community. Flying moths! And the great majority of young people look on marriage as serious business with responsibilities, that marriage is a state, a contract and a sacrament lasting all of life and founded by God so that humanity may not die. One does not need to explain the commitment made is life long career, one of the most perfect yet at the same time very difficult demanding great patience and dedication from both partners. They understand that God considered marriage such a great state, that he lifted it to the worthiness of a sacrament. They know that through marriage they can be coworkers in preparing the commonwealth with profitable citizens, and inhabitants of heaven. They have insight that together with God they become a creative force in humanity. They know that one cannot expect that marriage will be free from cloudy moments. They do not expect that marriage will change the man into a model husband and the wife into a model wife. The take care that, before marriage, they pick a partner with a disposition and character compatible with their own and in so far as possible pick a partner who will be also a friend in marriage. They do not waste their love on every Tom Dick and Harry or Kathy, Louise, and Felicia. The young man does not be an old towel, and the woman a dish-cloth. And so these young people, once they get together, work and pray hard, in order that their marriage become a thoughtful and happy career. One does not have to explain to them that they have to plan and be careful to manage it so that it does not end in a fiasco and catastrophe. Today, our youth do not follow the advice of certain authors and professors who write directives and recipes for the happiness of young husbands and wives, and at the same time divorce themselves. Our youth listens to and goes after the wise voice of the Church which teaches, warns, directs, counsels, and determines from the experience of two thousand years. It listens to the voice of the church which after years of its own existence saw millions of young people living successfully in marriage and which only cares about their eternal as well as their temporal success.

The enemies of the church maintain that the church fills marriage with various worn out and middle aged laws, which are not only unnecessary but actually harmful. If someone wishes to say from the above claim that the Church teaches that marriage is something solemn and sacred: that makes sense. If they say that the Church regards the life of persons as something important and of worth and beauty, I will agree to that also. But people forget or want to forget that marriage is of God’s origin. Marriage was not instituted by any philosopher or theologian. It does not come from the prescripts and rules of governments or nations. No, God instituted marriage and its primary goal is to preserve the peopling of the face of the earth. However, if someone in other nations across the sea or even here among us believes and teaches that man is nothing but an animal or cattle then without doubt the teaching of the Church concerning marriage is outdated, out of style and not modern. These and similar to you considers that two beings is not important or noble like the copulation of two ordinary two legged animals. Then from that point of view, a small baby is but a mere monkey. Of what consequence is the birth of a tiny animalistic being? And of what consequence is that for anyone.

And so, the Church teaches something else. The Church teaches that human life, is not only an important thing, but is sacredness itself and the greatest gift of the creator. Life is so important and so sacred because it gives man the possibility of meriting for himself success in eternity with God. Indeed, human beings are not animals, but are sons and daughters of Almighty God. Their goal is eternal. And every human being comes under the providence of God.

And thus, for this reason, marriage, which is a natural channel through which comes a new life into this world, is of great importance in the eyes of the Church. Marriage is not the haphazard coming together of two animals. It is the unity of two reasoning beings, two children of God, having immortal souls. When two of these people work together in the plan of the eternal God they co-create another human being. When this being is cared for properly, according the plan of the Creator, then everything is in order. If however two people are unfaithful in marriage, then the result is disastrous for the nation and for the people. This is proven by the French nation.

The Church knows well that Christ had in mind the goal and results of marriage that is why this state, this contract he elevated to the worth of a sacrament. Marriage is a means by which the life of humans could safely come into the world. It is a proven way to populate the world.

This is why the Church endowed Marriage with honor and respect. He wishes that the children of earth take the sacrament at the altar of God and have the Eucharistic Christ enter their hearts. The banns are issued three times in subsequent weeks before the wedding ceremony. Three weeks is a very short time in which the couple could make up their minds as to the importance about what they are to undertake.

The church gives the young bride a special benediction. This is so that she may partake of the most important role on earth. She is to carry new life beneath her heart. She is to be mother of the sons of the world. Today’s cynical and narrow approach to marriage is another indication that the world has lost the true meaning of the sanctity of marriage and treats it lightly. Thant view of marriage comes through the world’s disregard of the seriousness of taking on the marital state.

The life of a child of God and his immoral soul has a great worth and meaning.

What then is marriage? It is a contract in which two people worthy of taking on this contact give each other common privileges relating to common love and procreation rights. The sacrament of marriage is a sacrament which lifts the contact into the sphere of grace. In this sacrament God both sides the ability to fulfill the obligations for a successful marriage. Marriage is the business of two persons. They agree on the contract, and in the sacrament, God blesses this agreement.

Often young people ask themselves: “What is love.” And what comes to my mind is the love that leads to marriage. It is a deep and permanent emotions felt by a man or woman who have a great attraction to each other. The main reason for this attraction is the deep conviction that in the mutual company is found peace, satisfaction, security and fulfillment..

Others ask themselves if it is possible to fall in love with the first meeting. Why not? Sometimes it comes like a bolt from heaven; at other times it comes as slow as a bear. It all depends on the individual. To the former, I say that they shouldn’t immediately get engaged or what’s worse, get a license from the Justice of the Peace. The effect of that will be tears and complaint, and grinding of teeth. Instead of that first warm feeling and going to the marriage clerk, go to the oculist. To what extent should the parents interfere with the choice of husband or wife? Gone are the times when the mother would bring over the daughter of the neighbor and said to her son: “Joey, this is your future wife”. Or said to the daughter, “Dear, I brought your betrothed.” Those were the years when the parents were matchmakers for their children. The parents have the right to advise their children as to the course they should take but they do not have the right to compel their children. Wise and just parents should conduct themselves differently. They invite responsible youth to their home. They should permit them to get acquainted with one another in their own homes. Patiently they should discuss certain ideals about the work ethic, sobriety and piety. On the other hand, they should remind them of the consequences of egoism, anger, drunkenness and gambling and how they affect relationships. It is in that way the mother can open the eyes of her daughter of son, so the beloved man could get a basket, and the loved woman can plant the parsley. The careful mother does not openly declare a judgment of contrariness at first if she objects in any way. That never helps. It is too late. Better to enlighten on the ideals for a successful marriage, inviting youth to the home for common recreation. Interminably I am asked if it is ok to kiss your girlfriend or boyfriend. It has many meanings and one cannot definitely say that it is something salutary or not. Ordinarily and generally it is said that there is no moral implication in kissing. A mother kisses her child; a Catholic kisses the ring of a Bishop. A girl will kiss her girlfriend. A European will kiss the hand of a lady. A patriot will kiss his flag. A Frenchman will kiss a Frenchman. A drunk will kiss a drunk; sometimes he will kiss a cop, and sometimes a telephone pole. But a kiss between a woman and a man is particularly symbolic. It is a sign of a deep love; it is symbolic of marital love. It is an exterior sign of a true love. A careless practice of kissing should not be tolerated. I guess I’m clear and reasonable enough.

The woman, whose interest is marriage, would do well if she shows an understandable interest in a man she would like to go out with. She should be a good listener. She should permit him to talk about his intentions and his ambition. His successes and failures. She should urge him to find good employment, show that she is sympathetic and encouraging him to have gainful employment. Wise is the girl who from time to time invites the youth to her family home. At times a girl will frighten a suitor when, meeting him at the door of her home will say: “Let’s hurry away from this place, this hole in the ground.” Let him remember that when a lad starts thinking of marriage, he likes to image the home as a center of peace, and not as some sort of hole in the ground. Clever the girl who will make dinner and a good one at that. He expects that after marriage, and through the stomach one goes to the heart.

And now, we consider engagement. How long should it last? Quite long so that the couple could come to know each other well. What do they have in common? How do they differ in perceptions? And so how long should it be? It’s up to the young people: are they ready? Often engagement, that is long engagement, cannot be omitted. “Engagement is a promise; the man gives the woman a ring. And then one thing happens after another. If marriage is not possible at the time; it needs to be postponed. There is a difference between deliberately long engagements and engagements that are extended because of unforeseen circumstances. A deliberate very long engagement is a mistake, because they are in danger of moral problems for both parties. Their situation becomes more problematic with time, more dangerous because of irritability and nervousness.

Besides that, overly long engagements and usually problematic because they are not fair to the woman. They often resulted in a cancelled marriage. The young couple gets tired of unchanged circumstances which work on their nerves and so they go their own ways and the young lady suffers the most. He finds someone else more easily; she not so easily and so come the tears.

What about the age for marriage? Our forefathers took on marriage on a very young age. Times however have changed. Few people went on to a higher education; most ended with high school. Twelve year old children went to work, earning a living with hard work. It had repercussions on their physical being. They quickly matured in the early years a lot faster than the last two generations. Today’s youth, even in their twenties goes to school. Their financial situation depends on their parents. I do not know how to work and I don’t want to work because I was sheltered from work. It is a proven fact that the current generation will live longer than the previous generations because it matures later that the previous one, and comes to marriage later than the previous generations.

And now on to the two letters which have been read to you to our continuing talk. The mother wanted to be of help with her suggestion, but ruined four lives. Her son was going with a girl for four years. They knew each other fairly well. Were they engaged? So they intended to marry. They wanted to marry. The boy wanted to proceed honorably. The girl agreed to let him enter the armed forces with the condition that they marry before he left. Suddenly the mother comes in between. She wants them to marry at the end of the war? How long will that be? She says there will be lots of time at the end of the war. How is that something that’s assured? Will he return? Will he return healthy and whole? When he returns, will his intended be with him? And…a hundred other questions. If the mother had agreed to have them marry, there would be peace between them at least temporarily. And both of them would have blessed the mother. The young soldier would have left contented. He would have a wife to keep him in peace. He probably would have been a better soldier for it. But now?

The same holds for the daughter of the second letter. She had gone with a person for a year. Here again the mother dissuaded them from marriage on the thought that if the soldier returned a cripple the daughter would have her hands full and would have had to work. What a piece of egotism. Even if the soldier would have come back as a cripple, would that mean that the wife would have a bad existence. Many are hurt in auto accidents, in factories and even at play. The daughter would have to go to work for the man, a crippled soldier. Good, but how many wives and mothers have to work hard because their husband is a drunk or a gambler or just doesn’t want to work. These arguments do not hold water.

In the second letter, we have an entirely different case. Here, the young girl lost here sense. Her suitor gave her the impression of his graciousness and upon meeting for the second time the suggestion of marriage. I do not agree with such hasty marriage right of the bat. But it happened. What can be done? I do not recommend giving the child away for always either to an institution or another family.

As for the question, do we keep the child, pay for its upkeep, and work at the same time. Yes, if you have been engaged for a long period of time.

Do not get married after the first, second, or third time of meeting each other; and even more so if you are less than twenty years old because such a sudden and blind love is short lived. It is not long lasting. May young people! Remember this counsel and the indicators. You’ll save yourself some tears, complaining, and suffering!