

For Souls Called



to the Holy State of Matrimony

From *The Catechism of Perseverance*
by Monsignor Gaume

With *Tobias*, the Biblical book on Marriage — *Jesus' Sermon on Marriage* at a Village on the Lake of Galilee as given to an Italian Mystic — and, *The Cross of Christ Custom* resulting in no divorce.

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[no date]. With, the *Book of Tobias* from the Douay-Rheims Old Testament

Booklet compiled and typeset by Robert T. Hart

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For Souls Called to the Holy State of Matrimony

The Sacrament of Holy Orders was established to perpetuate the Ministers of the Church, and the Sacrament of Matrimony to perpetuate the Faithful. The former keep Our Lord Jesus Christ continually present on earth; the latter come into this world to receive Him. Thus it is to the New Adam¹ and to our union with Him that...all the Sacraments refer. Matrimony or Marriage may be considered in two lights — as a contract and as a Sacrament. As a contract, it reaches back to the beginning of the world. As a Sacrament, it reaches back to Our Lord, who raised the natural contract to the dignity of a Sacrament, by giving it the power to produce grace.

Of all contracts, that of Marriage is the most ancient and the most sacred. God Himself is its Author. He instituted it in the terrestrial paradise, when, after creating Adam and Eve, He blessed them, saying, *“Increase and multiply, and fill the earth.”*² Adam, receiving at the moment his inseparable companion from the hands of God, pronounced these mysterious and prophetic words, *“This now is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh; wherefore a man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh.”*³

Under the Patriarchs, Marriage continued the most solemn and venerable contract: witness the history of Isaac and Rebecca, or of Jacob and Rachael. It was the same under the Law of Moses. Of which we have examples of the marriages of Ruth and Booz, and Sara and Tobias. But all still occurred, as in the time of

¹ *New Adam:* Our Lord Jesus Christ (See 1 Cor. 15:45-9) — [R T. Hart].

² Gen. 1:28.

³ Gen. 2:23.

the Patriarchs, around the domestic hearth, among relatives and friends, amid the prayers which were offered up by the father and the company present to invoke the blessing of God on the newly espoused. It was as yet only a natural or civil contract.

The time drew nigh when Marriage should be destined to give the New Adam brethren; to the Church, children, to the world, not Jews, but Christians — not a carnal nation, but a holy nation. It was therefore necessary that Marriage, whose end became more dignified and sanctified, should be ennobled and enriched with the graces necessary for the newly espoused. This is what Our Lord did, by raising it to the dignity of a Sacrament.

Definition: In the New Law, Marriage or Matrimony is *a Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ to perpetuate the divine life, by giving to those who receive it worthily the graces to sanctify themselves in their state and to bring up their children in a Christian manner, and it represents the union of Jesus Christ with His Church.* The Marriage of Catholics contains all the qualities which constitute a true Sacrament. We find therein (a) a *sensible sign* — the giving of hands, the mutual consent of the parties, and the blessing of the Priest; (b) a sign *instituted by Our Lord*; (c) a sign *which has the power of producing grace*, as we shall presently show. Hence the Holy Fathers, who lived in the times when, according to Protestants themselves, the Roman Church was yet the infallible organ of truth, say with St. Paul that Marriage is a great Sacrament.⁴

Let us mention on this matter a most significant fact. In the sixteenth century, Protestants published boldly that the Greek schismatical Church rejected, like them, the Sacrament of

⁴ Tertull., *de Mongamia, de Præscript.*, c. xl; Amb., lib. I *de Abraham*, c. vii; Aug., lib. *De Fide et Operib.*, c. vii, *de Bono Conjug.*, c. xxiv; Tertull., *ad Uxor.*, c. ix; Amb., *Epist.* xxv, *ad Vigil.*; *Conc.* iv *Carth.*, can. xiii; Orig., *Tract.* vii, in *Matt.*; Athan., *Epist ad Ammonium*; Chrys., *Homil.* lvi, in *Genes.*; Aug., *de Nuptiis et Concupiscentia*, c. xvii, &c.

Marriage. During the year 1574, they accordingly sent a copy of the Augsburg Confession of Faith to Jeremias, the schismatical patriarch of Constantinople. He, having assembled a number of Eastern bishops, delivered to them a learned refutation of the Protestant Creed. He remarked particularly that in the East it was believed and had always been believed that Marriage was one of the seven Sacraments of the New Law.⁵ The Council of Trent therefore understood well both the meaning of the Scripture and the testimonies of Tradition, when it declared its anathema against anyone who should dare to say that Marriage under the New Law is not a Sacrament instituted by Our Lord Jesus Christ, and does not confer grace.⁶

Elements: We find the *matter*⁷ of the Sacrament of Marriage in the contract by which the two parties are given power one in regard to the other. Let us here remark how great is the dignity of this Sacrament, so little understood, so little respected in our days,⁸ by many of those who receive it. Its matter is not water, as in Baptism, nor holy oil, as in Confirmation and Extreme Unction, but the living temples of the Holy Ghost, the sacred members of Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Its *form* consists in the words and signs by which the parties to be married express their mutual acceptance and consent. The consent must be clearly expressed by each party, and in terms that denote present time. Marriage is not a mere giving away: it is an agreement, which requires the express consent of both parties; and the words which express this consent must refer to

⁵ Divinum Sacramentum esse atque unum ex illis septem quæ Christus et Apostoli Ecclesiæ tradiderunt. (*Censur., orient. eccl. c. vii.*)

⁶ Sess. xxiv.

⁷ Every Sacrament is composed of *matter* and *form*. [*R T Hart*]

⁸ This was penned in the late 1800's, what is to be said of the "little respect" for the "dignity of this Sacrament" in our day! [*R T Hart*]

present time: for words relating to future time would not make, but simply promise, a marriage.

The parties themselves are the *ministers* of this Sacrament, which, in virtue of the precept of the Church, ought to be sanctified by the presence of a Priest and made valid by his presence. So that a marriage is null, if not made in presence of the Parish Priest of one of the two parties, or another priest representing him. There must also be two or three witnesses.⁹

Institution: It is believed that Our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament on the day when He sanctified by His presence the wedding feast of Cana. Be this as it may, the Apostle St. Paul reveals to us the institution of the Sacrament of Marriage, when he says to us that the union of man and wife is a great Sacrament in Jesus Christ and the Church.¹⁰ It is certain that by his words, *This is a great Sacrament*, the Apostle alludes to Marriage. In effect, the union of man and wife, of which God is the Author, is the *Sacrament*, that is to say, the sacred sign of the bond which unites Jesus Christ with His Church. Such is the meaning attached to these words by all the ancient Fathers who have given their explanations, and afterwards by the holy Council of Trent.¹¹

⁹ Præscripsit (sancta Synodus) ... Parochus, viro et muliere interrogatis, et eorum mutuo consensu intellecto, vel dicat: Ego vos in matrimonium conjungo, in nomine Patris, et Filii, et Spiritus Sancti; vel aliis utatur verbis, juxta receptum uniuscujusque provinciæ ritum. ...qui aliter quam præsentem Parocho, vel alio Sacerdote de ipsius paroc hi seu ordinarii licentia, et duobus vel tribus testibus, matrimonium contrahere attentabunt; eos sancta Synodus ad sic contrahendum omnino inhabiles reddit; et hujusmodi contractus irritos et nullos esse decernit, prout eos præsentem decreto irritos facit et annulat. (Sess. xxiv, c. i; S. Alph., *Theolog.moral.*, lib. VI, *Tract.* vi, n. 897; Ferraris, art. *Matr.*, n 28.)

¹⁰ *Ephes.*, v.

¹¹ Sess. xxiv, *Proæm.*

Effects: To make known the precious effects of the Sacrament of Matrimony, it suffices to explain the concluding words of our definition: It gives the married couple the grace to sanctify themselves in their state, and to bring up their children in a Christian manner, and it represents the union of Jesus Christ with His Church.

Like all the other Sacraments of the Living, that of Matrimony produces, not the first grace, which makes sinners just, but the second, which makes the just still more just. It is only accidentally that it sometimes confers the first, and remits mortal sin.¹² Matrimony also produces a sacramental grace, which in turn produces three effects, or, according to the language of the Fathers of the Church, three principal goods: the grace of fidelity, the grace of a good education of children, and the grace of indissolubility.¹³ These three characteristics essentially distinguish a Christian marriage, which they raise far above all Jewish and heathen alliances; but they present difficulties to nature. This is the reason why Our Lord, the Author of all the Sacraments, has provided married persons with an abundance of graces to make them worthy of it.¹⁴

The first duty of married persons, as well as the first bond of Christian marriage, is fidelity. The husband and wife give each other a reciprocal power over their bodies, with an oath never to

¹² Sacramenta vivorum aliquando *primam* gratiam conferre possunt, scilicet cum aliquis putans non esse in statu peccati mortalis, vel existimans se contritum accedit cum *attritione* ad Sacramentum. (S. Alph., lib. VI, n. 6.) — See also Mgr. Gousset, *Theolog. Moral.*,

¹³ Bonum quod habent nuptiæ tripartitum est: fides, proles, Sacramentum. In fide attenditur ne prætur vinculum conjugale cum altero, vel, altera concubatur. In prole, ut amanter suscipiatur, benigne nutiatur, religiose educetur. In Sacramento, ut conjugium non separetur, ut dimissus aut dimissa nec causa prolis alteri conjungatur. (S. Aug., *de Gener.*, lib. X, c. vii.)

¹⁴ *Conc. Trid.*, sess xxiv, *de Doctrin. Sacr. matr.*

violate the holy alliance of marriage. *A man, says Our Lord, shall leave father and mother, and cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh.*¹⁵ In like manner, the Apostle declares that *the wife has not the power of her own body, but the husband; and the husband has not the power of his own body, but the wife.*¹⁶ The obligation of fidelity is equal on both sides: no distinction between husband and wife.

To make the accomplishment of this fidelity easy, the Sacrament of Matrimony ennobles, strengthens, perfects the natural love of married persons, and transforms it into a pure, holy, steadfast affection, like that which exists between Jesus Christ and the Church. A pure affection, which, banishing all that would not be worthy of Angels, lead the married couple to live wisely, soberly, and chastely, as children of the Saints, friends of Jesus Christ, and heirs to Heaven. A holy affection, which, founded on views of Faith, makes the yoke which they have imposed on themselves agreeable, and transforms the cares which they lavish on each other into pleasures. A steadfast affection, keeping their hearts ever firmly united in spite of the natural changeableness of the mind and the various trials of life, helps them to bear with each other, to excuse each other's faults, and in fine to observe inviolably the promises to which they have sworn at the foot of the altar.

From this mutual affection, formed by grace and commanded by religion, flow particular duties of married persons towards each other. It obliges the husband to treat the wife with gentleness and honour, remembering that Adam regarded Eve as his companion, since he said to God, *The woman whom Thou gavest me as a companion;*¹⁷ and to occupy himself with some honest business. By attention to the latter

¹⁵ *Matt.*, xix, 5.

¹⁶ *1 Cor.*, vii, 4.

¹⁷ *Gen.*, iii, 12.

duty, he will not only avoid idleness, which is the mother of all vices, and the source of innumerable jealousies, tears, and dissensions, but be enabled to provide respectably for the support of his wife and children. He must also govern his family in a Christian manner, correct and steady the habits of those who compose it, so as to keep all to their duties, and thus secure the happiness of the domestic circle entrusted to his care.¹⁸

The same affection requires of the wife that obedience and kindness which gain the heart of her husband; that modesty which causes him to respect her; that simplicity which, despising the vanities of fashion and disarming jealousy, lets him clearly behold the inward beauty of her soul. Hear how the Prince of the Apostles speaks. *Let women, he says, be subject to their husbands, so that if there are any of them who do not believe the word, they may be won without the word, by the good lives of their wives: considering the purity of your manners, as well as the respect which you entertain for them. Do not adorn yourselves outwardly according to the art of the hairdresser, or with displays of gold, or in splendid attire; but adorn the hidden man of the heart with the incorruptible purity of a quiet and meek spirit, which is a rich ornament in the sight of God. For it was thus that heretofore the holy women, who hoped in God and obeyed their husbands, adorned themselves. Such a one was Sara, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord.*¹⁹

A consequence of this Christian affection is the care which the wife ought to take never to love or to esteem any other person as much as she does her husband, according to God, that

¹⁸ In our day, when even in many “devout” Catholic families the husband does not live up to or understand his office of Head of the Family, and the wife does not know or fulfill her role as Heart of the Family, submissive to her husband, I heartily recommend the Encyclical *Casti Cannubii* of Pope Pius XI that makes clear the God-ordained, complimentary roles of spouses.

¹⁹ 1 *Petr.*, iii, 1,2, &c.

is, whatever his qualities may be. In effect, respect and affection for superiors ought to be regulated, not according to their virtues, but according to their title of superiors. A last consequence is the vigilant solicitude which the wife ought to have about domestic affairs, so that economy, order, and neatness may always let the husband find happiness within his own doors.

For this purpose a Christian wife ought to remain willingly at home, and not leave it except through necessity and even with the permission of the husband. Let the wife who would maintain domestic union, who would acquire a legitimate ascendancy over her husband and transform her house into a little paradise on earth, make use therefore continually of the following recipe, employed with so much success by all holy women: "Pray, be industrious, suffer, and be silent."²⁰

The second duty of married persons, and for the accomplishment of which the Sacrament gives them a special grace, is the education of children. This grace leads them first to regard children as a blessing. St. Paul makes so much account hereof that he says, *The woman shall be saved by the children whom she brings into the world.*²¹ An expression which is not to

²⁰ The following magisterial teachings on the proper order in the spousal relationship may also be useful: Pope Leo XIII reminded us in his Encyclical *Arcanum* (Feb. 10, 1880): "*The husband is the chief of the family and the head of the wife. The woman...must be subject to her husband and obey him; not indeed, as a servant, but as a companion, so that her obedience shall be wanting in neither honor nor dignity. Since the husband represents Christ, and since the wife represents the Church, let there always be, both in him who commands and in her who obeys, a heaven-born love guiding both in their respective duties*" (See Eph. 5:22-33). Later, in *Casti Connubii* (Dec. 31, 1930), Pope Pius XI proclaimed this order of the family as unchangeable and constituted by God: "*...this subjection of wife to husband in its degree and manner may vary according to the different conditions of persons, place and time.... But the structure of the family and its fundamental law, established and confirmed by God, must always and everywhere be maintained intact.*" [R T Hart]

²¹ 1 *Tim.*, ii, 15.

be understood only of the bearing of children, but also of their education and care to form them to piety. The proof of this is that the Apostle immediately adds, *if she remains in the Faith*. Although education is a duty common to both parents, it seems therefore to belong more especially to the mother. On the one hand, she is oftener with the children, particularly at that tender age when impressions are wont to decide the character for the remainder of life; on the other, God has more abundantly enriched her with the means of forming them. The grace of the Sacrament is therefore very necessary for her.

It is this that gives her, as well as her husband, a due share of prudence, gentleness, firmness, watchfulness, and patience; and they require a large share, in order to acquit themselves worthily of the kind of priesthood with which they are honoured. It teaches them to consider their children as a sacred deposit which God Himself has entrusted to their keeping, and of which He will demand an account, blood for blood and soul for soul. It commands them to avoid every action that might scandalize these children. In a word, it teaches them that God has not given them children in order that they may bring up a learned, rich, or happy family according to the world, but a family of Saints. Why is it that so many fathers and mothers are ignorant of these first principles of their obligations, and that, instead of following them, they violate them continually?

The third duty, or the third effect of Christian marriage, for which the Sacrament confers a special grace, is indissolubility. The bond or tie of marriage among the Faithful cannot be broken but by death. Founded on the principles of the Gospel, the legislation of all Catholic peoples ranks divorce, so fitly termed the sacrament of adultery, among crimes that deserve punishment.

In effect, indissolubility is one of the greatest benefits of the Sacrament of Matrimony. Therein are found the honour of families, the protection of the wife, the guarantee of public and

private morality, the education and the very life of children, as well as the strength of society. But this everlasting yoke may sometimes become heavy. Accordingly, Our Lord prepared married persons, in the Sacrament of Matrimony, the graces necessary always to bear it.

The accomplishment of these three duties produces the perfection of Christian marriage, which consists in representing the *union of Jesus Christ with the Church*. This representation is the glorious privilege, the noblest duty, of married persons: a duty which, well considered, includes every other duty, and which, faithfully practiced, secures the happiness of the world. The Divine Saviour wished that His holy and chaste union with the Church should be copied in every family by husband and wife, that so every family might become a home of Saints, and thus society, which is only the assemblage of all families, might become a people of Saints. Let us see how married persons represent this union between Jesus Christ and the Church.

The Son of God left His Father to be united to the Church, as a man leaves his father and mother to be united to his wife. The Church was formed from Jesus Christ dead on the cross, as woman was formed from man during his sleep. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church; the husband is the head of his wife. Jesus Christ protects and guides the Church, leads it to Heaven; the husband ought to be the protector and guide of his wife, ought to show her the way to Heaven, much more by his example than by his words.

Jesus Christ and the Church are but one — one Spirit animates them; so man and wife are but one flesh — one spirit ought to animate them. Jesus Christ loves the Church tenderly, but He loves it with a view to its eternal happiness — and the Church, on her side, respects her Divine Spouse, and observes an inviolable fidelity towards Him; so the husband ought to love the wife, but with a view to her eternal salvation — and the wife

ought to respect her husband, and observe an inviolable fidelity towards him. Jesus Christ is inseparably united to the Church; it is the same with the husband and wife — their union is indissoluble, it cannot be broken but by death.

Hence it follows that the sacred union of marriage can only be contracted between one man and one woman, and that polygamy, that is to say, a plurality of wives, though tolerated in the Old Law, is absolutely forbidden by the New. If this practice were still allowable, marriage would no longer represent the union of the Saviour with the Church, which is the special cause of its dignity as a Sacrament.²² Such are the effects of Christian marriage.

Dispositions for receiving this Sacrament. To participate in these effects and graces, it is necessary to prepare oneself for marriage with great care. As after First Communion there is nothing more important than the choice of a state in life,²³ marriage is of all acts that which exercises the greatest influence on the destiny of young persons, families, and society. Hence there is no act to which one should bring a more diligent preparation, and yet, by a strange perversion, there is hardly any to which is brought a more negligent.

The dispositions for marriage are:

1. In the first place, vocation [that is, you must be called to this state]. When placing us in the world, God destines each of us for a particular state. If we enter it, special graces, proportioned to our duties are in store for us, and our salvation becomes more easy. Not so, if we take a wrong

²² Such is the meaning attached by Theologians to these words of St. Paul: *Sacramentum hoc magnum est, ego autem dico in Christo it in Ecclesia.* (See Filassier, t. I.)

²³ When this text was first published, First Communion was not received until around the age of 12 or even 14, thus *after* having received the Sacrament of Confirmation. [R T Hart]

course. He who is out of his vocation is miserable all his life. He is like a disjointed member, which suffers itself and causes the whole body to suffer; like a straying traveler, who wearies himself much, yet does not reach the end of his journey; like a fish out of water, which writhes, and pants, and dies.

To lead a chaste, pious, and truly Christian life in youth; to ask of God every day, by good works, the grace to know our vocation; to take counsel of parents, of persons fearing God, and especially of our confessor, but long before deciding, and not on the eve say of accepting a situation; to inquire seriously of ourselves what is the state in which, having regard to our dispositions, we can more easily save our souls, and what, at the moment of death, we shall wish to have done; finally, to consider what answer we should give a person who, being in the same position as ourselves, with our qualifications and defects, came to consult us on the profession that he ought to embrace: such are the means to know our vocation.

2. The second disposition for marriage is a great purity of intention. One must only enter this state in a view of God, to accomplish His Holy Will: not through caprice — not through passion — not through sordid interestedness, which transforms marriage into a low bargain. Religion recognizes the following motives as just: (a) the obtaining of a helper, that one may more easily endure the inconveniences of life, the infirmities and pains of old age; (b) the desire of having children, less to leave heirs of one's name and wealth than to give faithful servants to God — such was the intention of the

holy Patriarchs of the Old Law;²⁴ (c) the fear of yielding to attacks of concupiscence.²⁵

3. The third disposition for marriage is the state of grace. The Sacrament of Matrimony being a Sacrament of the Living, he who should dare to receive it in the state of mortal sin would render himself guilty of a horrible sacrilege. The better to prepare oneself, it is necessary to avoid dangerous meetings, to give alms, to offer up prayers or other good works, and to redouble one's fervour in the reception of the Sacraments of Penance and the Eucharist.

It is recommended at this important period, to make a general confession²⁶ of one's whole life, or at least of the portion gone by since the First Communion; but, to do so, one must not wait till the very moment of being married. Oh, how many persons there are who lead in marriage a life of anguish and misery, for having neglected these precautions! How many are the consequence of the profanation of the Sacrament of Marriage! We do not hesitate to say that herein is to be found one of the greatest wounds inflicted on society.

To avoid too great a misfortune, those who think of marriage ought, as we have just said, to prepare themselves long beforehand by a cessation of sin, by good works, and by fervent prayers. Such, indeed, is the conduct of a number — alas! too small — of young persons truly Christian.

A few years ago, a young physician, dwelling in the capital of France, received there the Sacrament of marriage with such

²⁴ *Tobias*, 6:18.

²⁵ 1 *Corinthians*, 7:2; and the CATECHISM OF THE COUNCIL OF TRENT

²⁶ It is to be noted that — except in the case of necessity — general confessions are not recommended for those who are scrupulous. [*R T Hart*]

edifying dispositions that it is most useful to make them known. It was in the month of October, 1829. A friend introduces him at a respectable house, and encourages him to hope for the hand of an only daughter, as pious as the rest of her family. The young lady is soon promised to the doctor, whose modesty is no less remarkable than his learning.

About ten days before the nuptial ceremony, he calls to see the mother of his future wife, and begs to have a private conversation with Miss Amelia. "It is impossible, sir," she answers, very courteously; "my daughter has not been well for the last two days, and she requires rest." "But, madam, it is a great disappointment to me not to be permitted to say a few words to the young lady. I have scarcely had the pleasure of seeing her more than three or four times in society. Until the present moment, I have not had one good opportunity of expressing my sentiments to her and of knowing hers." "Your earnestness pains me, sir; my daughter cannot be seen." "And yet I have something very important to communicate to her!" "I will call her, if you like, and you can speak to her in my presence: my daughter has never had a conversation alone with any man."

"But I shall soon be her husband!" "Then, sir, my daughter will no longer belong to me: till that time I must fulfill towards her all the duties of a prudent Christian mother." "Ah! Madam," exclaims the physician, "I must acquaint you with my design. Brought up myself by religious parents, I have always remained faithful to that holy Religion which dictates to you your admirable conduct. The indifference which unfortunately exists among men of my profession may have inspired you with distrust; but, far from sharing in that indifference, I make it my glory and joy to follow in particular the practices of the Faith: the more I study them, the more venerable they appear to me. If I so earnestly desired an interview with your daughter, it was that I might learn her dispositions on this matter, and beg of her to

prepare by a general confession to receive, with the nuptial blessing, all the graces that are attached to it.”

The virtuous physician did not rest here. For eight days the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated, to draw down an abundance of heavenly blessings. But what was most admirable of all was to see, on the very day of the marriage, the bridegroom and bride approach the Holy Table accompanied, the one by his esteemed father and weeping mother, the other by her mother and grandmother. What an example for young people! What a lesson for indifferent or irreligious parents! Is not this your opinion? If all other unions resembled this one, would the world be covered with iniquities, and society shaken even to its foundations?

If young persons could doubt of the care with which they are bound to prepare for marriage, the numerous precautions which both the Church and State²⁷ require to precede its being contracted would suffice to teach them how important the conjugal union, and that with what fear they should burden themselves with the tremendous obligations that are its consequence.

All peoples, even pagans, have preceded marriage with a *betrothal*, as a preparation for it. A betrothal means *a mutual promise to marry each other, made by two persons free to do so*. That the betrothal may be valid and obligatory, the promise must be true and sincere, given by each party with deliberation, and manifested by words or external signs. The betrothal is intended to afford the parties time to know each other; to consider and examine maturely, before taking a step that must engage them for life, whether they are likely to find in their future marriage that which shall secure their happiness in this world and the next.

²⁷ In former days of greater sanity, the State had great concern about marriage because it understood the consequences that marriages have on the welfare of society, and thus on the nation. [R T Hart]

The Jews used to celebrate the betrothal with nearly as much solemnity as the wedding.²⁸ Among the Romans, it was the custom to send to the future wife an iron ring, without any ornament of precious stones.²⁹ The couple to be married pledged their faith reciprocally: one by giving the ring, the other by accepting it.³⁰ Among the Franks, the man would give his future wife, not a ring, but a few pieces of money. These called to mind the custom established among the different nations, of purchasing those women who were sought in marriage; for paganism regarded woman as man's slave. Thanks to the New Adam! her lot has greatly changed; but the piece of money which is blessed on the marriage day ought to tell her of Him to whom she is indebted for this change.

The conclusion of the betrothal is followed by the publication of the bans. The word *ban* means *public proclamation*.³¹ The Church wishes that marriages about to take place should be announced to the Faithful: (a) that all may betake themselves to prayer to draw down on the newly espoused the blessings of Heaven — never were these blessings more necessary; and (b) that the marriage may be contracted without impediment. The bans ought to be regularly published on successive Sundays or Festivals, during the solemnity of the Mass, and in one or more parishes according to the age, position, and residence of the parties.

After the publication, the Priest says to the Faithful, "If you are aware of any impediment to these marriages, you are bound under the penalties declared by the Church, to reveal it." These penalties are heavy, and it is a mortal sin not to reveal an impediment of which one has knowledge. The obligation of

²⁸ Phil., *lib. De special. Leg.*

²⁹ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.*, b. XXXIII, c. i.

³⁰ Hence it is that Tertullian calls this ring *annulus pronubus*.

³¹ This word comes from the German.

revealing an impediment extends not only to the inhabitants of the parish in which the bans are published, but to all those who are informed of it. The laws of the Church which enjoin this disclosure are general. They regard every one; and the matter concerns the public welfare, since its aim is procure the salvation of souls, the peace of families, and the tranquility of the state, as well as to prevent the profanation of the Sacrament.

The publication of the bans is intended, as we have just shown to bring to light any impediments that may lie in the way of marriage. In point of fact, it is not and never was permitted, among any polished people, that persons should marry one another indiscriminately: nature itself forbids it. Now, there are two kinds of impediments which interfere with marriage. Some render it null: for this reason, they are called *invalidating impediments*. Others do not annul it, but prevent its being contracted without sin: they are called *prohibitory impediments*.

The following are the chief invalidating impediments, with which the Faithful ought to be acquainted: —³²

1. *Error*. For example, Peter intends to marry Teresa. He is deceived, and gives his consent to Catherine, whom he supposes to be Teresa: the marriage made with Catherine is null. This impediment comes from natural right; for the first condition of an engagement is that the parties should know what they engage themselves to.

2. *A solemn vow of chastity*. A religious man or woman, in the true sense of the word *religious*, or a man who has received Holy Orders, cannot marry. Such a marriage would be null. Persons who make a vow of chastity form a spiritual alliance

³² The reader should note that the laws and impediments regarding marriage as found in this booklet are that which the Church prescribed in the late 1800's. They may not be the same today. [R T Hart]

with Jesus Christ. They give themselves to Him: they can no longer dispose of their body or their heart. This impediment is intended to oblige those who consecrate themselves to God to respect their engagements. Nothing is more sacred than a solemn promise made to God. To violate it would be an exceeding great scandal. To prevent this, the Church has laid down the impediment of which we speak. Do you know any arrangement wiser in itself or more useful to society?

3. *Relationship.* It is forbidden to relations of collateral line, as far as the fourth degree, inclusively, to marry one another, under pain of nullity of marriage. To know what degree of relationship exists between two persons, it is only necessary to see their distance from the common stock. Father and mother are the common stock; their children, that is, brothers and sisters, are in the first degree of relationship; the children of brothers and sisters, that is, cousins, are in the second degree; the children of cousins are in the third degree; the children of these last are in the fourth degree; and so on. The Church extends the impediment of which we now speak to the fourth degree. To prevent grievous maladies,³³ and to strengthen the bonds of charity among men, are the objects of this law. We cannot fail to admire how well the Church understands and wants of her children, as well as the spirit of her Divine Spouse, when she endeavours to make of all mankind but one united family.

4. *Difference of Religion.* It is not permitted Christians to marry with infidels, who have not been baptised. If they do so their alliance is null. It is not the same as that which is contracted with heretics. This is forbidden; but it is not null,

³³ A friend of ours, the late learned and lamented Dr. Boudin, head physician of the military hospital of Vincennes, shows, in a work on consanguinity in marriage, the dangers to which families who marry within the degrees prohibited by the Church expose themselves. Marriages thus contracted give 28, 30 or 32 per cent. of deaf-mutes, while in other marriages the average is only 2 per cent.

unless in consequence of some other impediment. The difficulties opposed by the Church to mixed marriages, are a new proof of her maternal solicitude. She knows that the company of heretics is often far more dangerous to Catholics than that of Catholics is useful to heretics. True, in the early ages the Church tolerated the marriages of her children with strangers; but the reasons for this toleration have long ceased to exist. As soon as paganism was nearly destroyed, she forbade her children to contract alliances with infidels, and this under pain of nullity. If she does not forbid marriage with heretics in so absolute a manner, she does all that lies in her power to hinder it. When, for weighty reasons, she thinks well to authorize such a marriage, she annexes to it all the conditions calculated to prevent its being a stumbling-block to salvation. It is required (a) that *all* the children born be brought up in the Catholic Religion; (b) that the Catholic party shall not be taken off to a country where he or she cannot practice the Catholic Religion; and (c) that the Catholic party shall use every effort to convert the other.³⁴

5. *Violence*. When the consent of one of the parties is not free, but extorted by force and fear, the marriage is null. The impediment arises from the law of nature: an indispensable condition of every agreement is the liberty of those who subscribe to it.

6. *Public decency*. Should a betrothal come to be broken through, by a solemn vow of chastity made by one of the parties before the accomplishment of the marriage, or by mutual consent, or by marriage with another, one of the parties cannot marry the father, mother, brother or sister of the other. Such a marriage would be null. This impediment does not extend

³⁴ If the laws of the Church concerning marrying those outside the Catholic Faith have changed somewhat in modern times, the principles which cause the Church to dissuade her children from such marriages have not.
[R T Hart]

beyond the first degree. It was established by the Church in order to secure for the promise of marriage a due respect, and to prevent a multitude of disorders, including rash betrothal.

7. *Affinity*. There are two kinds of affinity: that which is contracted by marriage, and that which is contracted by the Sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation. The impediment of affinity contracted by marriage consists in this, that the husband is allied to all the relatives of his wife and the wife to all the relatives of the husband. It follows hence that the one of the married persons who survives the other cannot marry with the other's friends³⁵ to the fourth degree, inclusively, under pain of the nullity of the marriage. The impediment of spiritual affinity consists in this, that it establishes a relationship: (a) between him or her who baptises the child and the child baptised and its parents, so that the person who baptises cannot afterwards marry the child or the child's father or mother; (b) between the child baptised or confirmed and its godfather and godmother in Baptism or Confirmation, so that the godfather or godmother cannot afterwards marry this child; and (c) between the godfather and godmother in Baptism or Confirmation and the father and mother of the child baptised or confirmed, so that, one of the child's parents afterwards dying, the godfather or godmother cannot marry the other: all under pains of nullity. It was the Church that established this impediment. She rightly considers those who concur to give the child a Christian life as its spiritual parents. Now, in order to dignify this title and to make those who bear it fulfill the obligations which it imposes, she forbids those who are honoured with it to enter into a marriage alliance with their spiritual child, or with the child's father or mother according to the flesh. In the eyes of the Church, both parties are near relatives of the child. Now, near relatives may not marry one another.

³⁵ *friends: i.e. relations. [R T Hart]*

8. *Abduction*. This is the carrying away of a person against his or her will, or against the will of his or her parents, tutors, or guardians. Marriage cannot be thus effected without granting to the person so carried away full liberty; this being denied, the marriage is null. Can anything be more moral than such an impediment?

9. *Clandestinely*. That a marriage may be valid, it must be celebrated in the face of the Church — in the presence of the Parish Priest (or another Priest appointed to fill his place), the parties to be married, and witnesses. It was in consequence of monstrous abuses that this impediment was established.

There are three prohibitory impediments: (a) a simple vow of chastity, of becoming a religious or of not marrying; (b) a betrothal — one cannot, when affianced to a particular person, marry any other in the world without sin, so long as the force of the betrothal subsists; and, (c) a command of the Church — unless by dispensation, nuptials are forbidden from the first Sunday of Advent to the Feast of Epiphany, inclusively, and from the first day of Lent to the octave of Easter, inclusively, and the reason for this prohibition is, because these two seasons of the year being reserved for prayer, recollection, and fasting, Christians ought then to occupy themselves much more with their eternal settlement in Heaven than with temporal alliances on earth.³⁶

Such are the principle impediments of marriage. They have for their object the good of souls, the advantage of society, and the honour of Religion. The Church has full right to establish them. Her Divine Spouse, the Author of the Sacraments, confided the administration of them to her; and the Council of

³⁶ After the Second Vatican Council, the prohibitions during the penitential seasons have been changed. Some diocese and some local parishes still observe them [*R T Hart*].

Trent was justly entitled to strike with anathema anyone who should dare to say the contrary.

Yet, however wise and necessary these impediments, there may be reasonable motives for dispensing from them. The Church never refuses a compliance in this respect, when the good of her children requires it. But when a dispensation is asked, it is necessary, under pain of nullity, to tell the truth, that is, to state one's motives for seeking it. To obtain it, a person is often obliged to have recourse to Rome, and to give, in compensation, a certain sum. Is it not just that, to maintain the unity of the hierarchy and the authority of his supreme dignity, the Sovereign Pontiff reserves to himself alone the right of dispensing with general laws of the Church? As for the sum of money required, is it not also just that he who seeks a dispensation from a law made for all should compensate for this kind of infraction or privilege by a good work? Moreover, the money that is sent to Rome on account of dispensations is not turned to the benefit of the Roman Court. It is employed either in defraying the expenses of excavating the catacombs for the discovery of the bodies of martyrs, or in maintaining missions for the propagation of the Faith. In some dioceses, this money is consecrated to local works.

Such is the brief sketch of the Church's legislation regarding marriage. In the eyes of anyone who studies this legislation, it is a masterpiece of wisdom, an admirable collection of guarantees for the fundamental act of the family and society.³⁷

Necessity. Considered in regard to nature, marriage is necessary to perpetuate the human race. In regard to the Church and Christian society, the Sacrament of Marriage is necessary to give those who receive it the graces they require, that they may

³⁷ See our developments on this subject in *l'histoire de la société domestiques*. lib. [?] II, c. xi, p. 105 et suiv.

fulfill their duties and forms Saints for Heaven. This is the reason why Our Lord raised the natural contract to the dignity of a Sacrament; but all are not obliged to receive it. Our Lord placed virginity above marriage, and the Apostle tells us that the young person who marries does not do ill, but that one who does not marry does better.³⁸ All persons should follow their particular vocation.

Liturgy. What shall we say of the ceremonies that accompany the solemn union of marriage? Their first title to our reverence is their antiquity. From the early ages, Christians have sanctified their entrance into this state by the common prayers of the Church and the blessing of her Ministers.³⁹ Marriages used to be celebrated publicly before the Bishop, who, in the Holy Sacrifice, recommended to God the parties to be married. These made their oblation on the occasion with the rest of the Faithful, and their names were called out. The nuptial blessing was regarded, not as a simple ceremony, but as a source of graces.

To the nuptial blessing was added the blessing of the ring, which the man placed on the woman's finger. The future spouses also presented some pieces of money for the poor: our ancestors always desired that the poor should have a share in their feasts. Children of the same family, they did not think that some ought to suffer while others rejoiced. The man took the hand of the woman, as a sign of that faith which he promised to her.⁴⁰ A veil was stretched out over their heads; a mysterious ceremony that taught them that modesty was to be the rule of their conduct. The colour of this veil was purple, the better to

³⁸ *Cor.*, vii.

³⁹ *Ign., Ep. ad Plycarp.; Tertull., ad Uxor.*

⁴⁰ *Greg. Naz., Ep. lvii*

mark a virtue so becoming in married persons whose chief ornament it is.⁴¹

Another ceremony, no less ancient than that just mentioned, was the coronation of the persons to be married. On their young brow the Priest placed a crown, which was left in the church as a something holy. It was usually formed of an olive branch, with white and purple bands. This usage was intended to denote the virginal innocence with which the young persons came to be married, and the glorious victory which they had won over their passions.⁴² The bride and bridegroom communicated at the Mass of their marriage, in order to cement in the Blood of the Saviour that union which they were come to confirm, and to draw from this adorable mystery the graces necessary for their new state. Why! alas! do not their successors act thus still? Are their wants less numerous than those of the Early Christians, or are they less obliged to aspire to sanctity?

Be that as it may, the most of these venerable ceremonies are still in use among us. The parties to be married, accompanied by their witnesses, place themselves at foot of the altar the future husband on the right, the future wife on the left side. The Priest causes the couple about to be married to express to each other their mutual consent. They give the right hand to each other, and the Minister of the Most High pronounces over them this prayer: *I unite you in marriage in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, &c.*

At the same time he forms over them the Sign of the Cross, to remind them that it was in the name of the Blessed Trinity and through the merits of Our Lord's death that marriage was raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, and that no one can sunder the bond which the Saviour establishes between married persons. In

⁴¹ Amb., *lib. de Virgin.*, c. xv.

⁴² Chrys., *Homil.*, ix, in 1 Cor.

order to teach them that their union ought to be sanctified, he sprinkles some holy water over them: and now they are united for ever. The Angels in Heaven and the Church on earth have heard their vows — God Himself has received them: they must in future have but one heart.

It remains to give the wife the sign of her alliance, the pledge of her consecration. The Priest does so by blessing the ring. The husband presents it to his wife, who receives it as a sign of the chain with which she has just bound herself. She is no longer her own; she belongs to her husband, as the Church does to Jesus Christ. The Priest also blesses a piece of money, a figure of the community of goods between the newly espoused.

The Mass begins. After the *Pater*, the Priest, turning towards the married pair, his right hand extended over their heads, pronounces an admirable preface, in which he invokes on them all the blessings heretofore lavished on the alliances of the Patriarchs. He asks all these blessings through *Our Lord Jesus Christ*, and his most powerful prayer will infallibly produce its effects if the parties in whose favor it is uttered place no obstacle to it.

How grave and solemn is every word of this prayer! What a majestic dignity accompanies it! The man is warned that he begins a new career. The words of the nuptial blessing — words which God Himself pronounced on the first couple in the world — tell the husband respectfully that he performs the most important act in his life, that his is about to become like Adam the head of a family, and that he takes upon himself the full burden of our human condition. The wife is no less instructed. The image of pleasures disappears from her eyes in the presence of that of her duties. A voice seems to cry to her from the midst of the altar, “O Eve! knowest well what thou doest? Knowest thou that there is no longer any liberty for thee, save that of the tomb? Knowest thou what it is to bear in thy mortal womb an immortal man, made to

the likeness of God?” Among the ancients a hymeneal celebration was a ceremony full of scandal, a scene of noisy rejoicing, which taught none of the grave thoughts inspired by marriage: Christianity alone gives it dignity.⁴³

After the Mass, there is a visit to the sacristy to write the act of marriage on the parish registers. It was the same with the Early Christians: these registers were called *matrimonial tables*. Not only were agreements having reference to the material interests recorded thereon, but also the obligations of the married state in general. In assemblies of the Faithful, the Fathers of the Church often made use of these tables to remind married persons of the sanctity of their duties.

Such are the prayers and ceremonies that accompany the celebrations of Catholic marriage. Who will tell the social advantages of the Sacrament?

Social Advantages. If the family is the basis of society, it is plain that the Sacrament which forms the family is the basis of the social edifice. In raising marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament, Our Lord raised society too, and enabled it to attain that intellectual superiority which distinguishes Christian nations. Unity, indissolubility, and sanctity were the characteristics of the primitive family. Developing itself in accordance with its principles, the family should give birth to a perfect society; but the original disorder overthrew the divine plan. Polygamy and divorce, breaking up primitive unity, introduced jealousy, rancour, and unhappiness into the family.⁴⁴

⁴³ See *Génie du Christ.*, t. I. c. x; Aug., *Serm.* cccxxxii et li.

⁴⁴ I conceive the unity, the indissolubility, and consequently the consecration of marriage by the impossibility of otherwise finding conjugal happiness, paternal authority, the education of children, or even honour or wealth. The mere prospect of the possibility of a divorce would suffice to make the best of married persons but an indifferent or even a degraded character, and the happiest alliance horrible. (Madrolle, *Démonst. Eucharistique*.)

Concupiscence, shutting out every idea of sanctity, reduced the husband and wife to the level of brutes. And from the domestic hearth came forth swarms of malevolent beings! And degraded society was lost in the cesspool of its own corruption! The father was a despot, the mother a slave, and the children victim, until it could become the murderer of its guilty parents. In these few words, you have a history of the pagan family.

The Son of God, the Word by whom all things were made, came down from the eternal hills to repair His work. He began by recalling the family to its primitive institution. He proscribed polygamy and divorce, and made the conjugal bond a Sacrament of the New Law. Numerous graces, suited to the wants of married persons, were attached to it. The family changed its face, and by the family the world was renovated.

Oh, what a difference between the pagan and the Christian father! The first is a despot with a drawn sword. Between him and his children there are no other relations than those of a wild beast with its young ones, of a tyrant with slaves. Paternity, in so far as it is sublime, has no existence for him. The Christian father, on the contrary, is familiar with holy joys. The venerable representative of that Beloved Father who is in Heaven, the living image of the Creator, he participates not only in His divine paternity, but also in His exhaustless tenderness. The object of respect and love, how sweet does that power become to him which he shares even with his wife and children! Every day, in the most trifling as well as in the most important occurrences, he feels that he is more loved than feared. His authority is even more sacred than if he wielded a sword. On his brow Christianity has placed a ray of the majesty of the Most High, and a voice, resounding through the family, is heard continually to say, He who hears you, hears me.

What shall I say of the mother? It is to her especially that the Sacrament of Matrimony is profitable. Paganism only shows

me in the wife a slave to be dishonoured, to be beaten, to be cast away, to be left to shame and misery; or a beast of burden that is set apart, as is still done in Africa, for the rudest labours.

On the contrary, how beautiful is the place which the Sacrament of Matrimony assigns to the mother of a family in Christian society! A sacred being, an object of liveliest affection, of the most tender regard, of veneration to all who surround her, man is no longer a despot for her, but a protector and a supporter. Over his heart she exercises the most powerful of all sways, that of gentleness and patience. Placed between the father and the child, she is a sweet mediatrix of peace — and apostle of that charity which she communicates to every one who comes near her, of that Christian life for which she is so well made. Endowed with an angelic mission, she draws man to God by her virtues, and sows the first seeds of good in the heart of youth. How heavenly is her authority! Today, thanks to the ideas which Christianity has spread among us, a deluge of anathemas would fall upon the head of the child that should cease to love and respect its mother!

And the child itself, what does it not owe to that august Sacrament which changed those who gave it existence into new beings? The slave of every caprice, the victim of every tyranny, was the pagan child. No respect for its life, for its heart, for its mind. How different is the lot of the Christian child! The Son of God before it is that of its parents, the brother of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the heir of Heaven, the angel of the earth, the living sanctuary of the Divinity: this is the child of Faith! What a formidable barrier protects its life! Woe to him who should dare to lay hands on its days or its innocence! To touch it is to touch the God of hosts in the very apple of His eye. I am no longer surprised to see cities and countries covered with establishments for the preservation of the child in body and soul. To do good to this child of the Most High is, as Christianity tells us, to merit the eternal gratitude of its Father who is in Heaven.

Such, then, in a few words, is what the Sacrament of Matrimony has done and still daily does for the family, and for each member of the family, and consequently for society, of which the family is the basis. Take away this Sacrament, and the alliance of man and woman is henceforth no more than an ignoble contract; and fortune takes place of all those genuine qualities which, by securing the happiness of married persons, provide for the order and the repose of society. Take away this Sacrament, and the family relapses into that state of degradation from which the Gospel drew it forth: the father becomes once more a despot, the mother a slave, and the child a victim. Cast your eyes now over the peoples who have not yet heard the *Good News*,⁴⁵ and over those who despise it. What a sight! And yet there are men who ask what is the use of Christianity! And these men are thought great philosophers!

Prayer

O my God! who art all love, I thank Thee for having raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament; grant to those who receive it the grace to comply worthily with their duties.

I am resolved to love God above all things, and my neighbor as myself for the love of God; and, in testimony to this love, *I will often pray for my father and mother.*

⁴⁵ In Anglo-Saxon the word Gospel means Good Spell or Good News. (Tv.)

THE BOOK OF TOBIAS

This Book takes its name from the holy man Tobias, whose wonderful virtues are herein recorded. It contains most excellent documents of great piety, extraordinary patience, and of a perfect resignation to the will of God. His humble prayer was heard, and the Angel Raphael was sent to relieve him. He is thankful and praises the Lord, calling on the children of Israel to do the same. Having lived to the age of one hundred and two years, he exhorts his son and grandsons to piety, foretells the destruction of Ninive, and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. He dies happily.

CHAPTER ONE

Tobias's early piety. His works of mercy, particularly in burying the dead.

1 Tobias of the tribe and city of Nephtali, (which is in the upper parts of Galilee above Naasson, beyond the way that leadeth to the west, having on the right hand the city of Sephet,)

2 When he was made captive in the days of Salmanasar king of the Assyrians, even in his captivity, forsook not the way of truth,

3 But every day gave all he could get to his brethren his fellow captives, that were of his kindred.

4 And when he was younger than any of the tribe of Nephtali, yet did he no childish thing in his work.

5 Moreover when all went to the golden calves which Jeroboam king of Israel had made, he alone fled the company of all,

6 And went to Jerusalem to the temple of the Lord, and there adored the Lord God of Israel, offering faithfully all his firstfruits, and his tithes,

7 So that in the third year he gave all his tithes to the proselytes, and strangers.

8 These and such like things did he observe when but a boy according to the law of God.

9 But when he was a man, he took to wife Anna of his own tribe, and had a son by her, whom he called after his own name,

10 And from his infancy he taught him to fear God, and to abstain from all sin.

11 And when by the captivity he with his wife and his son and all his tribe was come to the city of Ninive,

12 (When all ate of the meats of the Gentiles) he kept his soul and never was defiled with their meats.

13 And because he was mindful of the Lord with all his heart, God gave him favour in the sight of Salmanasar the king.

14 And he gave him leave to go whithersoever he would, with liberty to do whatever he had a mind.

15 He therefore went to all that were in captivity, and gave them wholesome admonitions.

16 And when he was come to Rages a city of the Medes, and had ten talents of silver of that with which he had been honoured by the king:

17 And when amongst a great multitude of his kindred, he saw Gabelus in want, who was one of his tribe, taking a note of his hand he gave him the aforesaid sum of money.

18 But after a long time, Salmanasar the king being dead, when Sennacherib his son, who reigned in his place, had a hatred for the children of Israel:

19 Tobias daily went among all his kindred, and comforted them, and distributed to every one as he was able, out of his goods:

20 He fed the hungry, and gave clothes to the naked, and was careful to bury the dead, and they that were slain.

21 And when king Sennacherib was come back, fleeing from Judea by reason of the slaughter that God had made about him for his blasphemy, and being angry slew many of the children of Israel, Tobias buried their bodies.

22 But when it was told the king, he commanded him to be slain, and took away all his substance.

23 But Tobias fleeing naked away with his son and with his wife, lay concealed, for many loved him.

24 But after forty-five days, the king was killed by his own sons.

25 And Tobias returned to his house, and all his substance was restored to him.

CHAPTER TWO

Tobias leaveth his dinner to bury the dead. He loseth sight by God's permission, for manifestation of his patience

1 But after this, when there was a festival of the Lord, and a good dinner was prepared in Tobias's house,

2 He said to his son: Go, and bring some of our tribe that fear God, to feast with us.

3 And when he had gone, returning he told him, that one of the children of Israel lay slain in the street. And he forthwith leaped up from his place at the table, and left his dinner, and came fasting to the body:

4 And taking it up carried it privately to his house, that after the sun was down, he might bury him cautiously.

5 And when he had hid the body, he ate bread with mourning and fear,

6 Remembering the word which the Lord spoke by Amos the prophet: Your festival days shall be turned into lamentation and mourning.

7 So when the sun was down, he went and buried him.

8 Now all his neighbours blamed him, saying: Once already commandment was given for thee to be slain because of this matter, and thou didst scarce escape the sentence of death, and dost thou again bury the dead?

9 But Tobias fearing God more than the king, carried off the bodies of them that were slain, and hid them in his house, and at midnight buried them.

10 Now it happened one day, that being wearied with burying, he came to his house, and cast himself down by the wall and slept,

11 And as he was sleeping, hot dung out of a swallow's nest fell upon his eyes, and he was made blind.

12 Now this trial the Lord therefore permitted to happen to him, that an example might be given to posterity of his patience, as also of holy Job.

13 For whereas he had always feared God from his infancy, and kept his commandments, he repined not against God because the evil of blindness had befallen him,

14 But continued immoveable in the fear of God, giving thanks to God all the days of his life.

15 For as the kings⁴⁶ insulted over holy Job: so his relations and kinsmen mocked at his life, saying:

16 Where is thy hope, for which thou gavest alms, and buriedst the dead?

17 But Tobias rebuked them, saying: Speak not so:

18 For we are the children of the saints, and look for that life which God will give to those that never change their faith from him.

19 Now Anna his wife went daily to weaving work, and she brought home what she could get for their living by the labour of her hands.

20 Whereby it came to pass, that she received a young kid, and brought it home:

⁴⁶ *Kings.* So Job's three friends are here called, because they were princes in their respective territories.

21 And when her husband heard it bleating, he said: Take heed, lest perhaps it be stolen: restore ye it to its owners, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch any thing that cometh by theft.

22 At these words his wife being angry answered: It is evident thy hope is come to nothing, and thy alms now appear.

23 And with these, and other such like words she upbraided him.

CHAPTER THREE

The prayer of Tobias, and of Sara, in their afflictions are heard by God. The Angel Raphael is sent to relieve them.

1 Then Tobias sighed, and began to pray with tears,

2 Saying: Thou art just, O Lord, and all thy judgments are just, and all thy ways mercy, and truth, and judgment:

3 And now, O Lord, think of me, and take not revenge of my sins, neither remember my offenses, nor those of my parents.

4 For we have not obeyed thy commandments, therefore are we delivered to spoil and to captivity, and death, and are made a fable, and a reproach to all nations, amongst which thou hast scattered us.

5 And now, O Lord, great are thy judgments, because we have not done according to thy precepts, and have not walked sincerely before thee:

6 And now, O Lord, do with me according to thy will, and command my spirit to be received in peace: for it is better for me to die, than to live.

7 Now it happened on the same day, that Sara daughter of Raguel, in Rages⁴⁷ a city of the Medes, received a reproach from one of her father's servant maids,

⁴⁷ *Rages*. In the Greek it is *Ecbatana*, which was also called Rages. For there were two cities in Media of the name Rages. Raguel dwelt in one of them, and Gabetus in the other.

8 Because she had been given to seven husbands, and a devil named Asmodeus had killed them, at their first going in unto her.

9 So when she reproved the maid for her fault, she answered her, saying: May we never see son, or daughter of thee upon the earth, thou murderer of thy husbands.

10 Wilt thou kill me also, as thou hast already killed seven husbands? At these words she went into an upper chamber of her house: and for three days and three nights did neither eat nor drink:

11 But continuing in prayer with tears besought God, that he would deliver her from this reproach.

12 And it came to pass on the third day, when she was making an end of her prayer, blessing the Lord,

13 She said: Blessed is thy name, O God of our fathers: who when thou hast been angry, wilt shew mercy, and in the time of tribulation forgivest the sins of them that call upon thee.

14 To thee, O Lord, I turn my face, to thee I direct my eyes.

15 I beg, O Lord, that thou loose me from the bond of this reproach, or else take me away from the earth.

16 Thou knowest, O Lord, that I never coveted a husband, and have kept my soul clean from all lust.

17 Never have I joined myself with them that play: neither have I made myself partaker with them that walk in lightness.

18 But a husband I consented to take, with thy fear, not with my lust.

19 And either I was unworthy of them, or they perhaps were not worthy of me: because perhaps thou hast kept me for another man.

20 For thy counsel is not in man's power.

21 But this every one is sure of that worshippeth thee, that his life, if it be under trial, shall be crowned: and if it be under

tribulation, it shall be delivered: and if it be under correction, it shall be allowed to come to thy mercy.

22 For thou art not delighted in our being lost: because after a storm thou makest a calm, and after tears and weeping thou pourest in joyfulness.

23 Be thy name, O God of Israel, blessed for ever.

24 At that time the prayers of them both were heard in the sight of the glory of the most high God:

25 And the holy angel of the Lord, Raphael was sent to heal them both, whose prayers at one time were rehearsed in the sight of the Lord.

CHAPTER FOUR

Tobias thinking he shall die giveth his son godly admonitions. He telleth him of money he lent to a friend.

1 Therefore when Tobias thought that his prayer was heard that he might die, he called to him Tobias his son,

2 And said to him: Hear, my son, the words of my mouth, and lay them as a foundation in thy heart.

3 When God shall take my soul, thou shalt bury my body: and thou shalt honour thy mother all the days of her life:

4 For thou must be mindful what and how great perils she suffered for thee in her womb.

5 And when she also shall have ended the time of her life, bury her by me.

6 And all the days of thy life have God in thy mind: and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord our God.

7 Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee.

8 According to thy ability be merciful.

9 If thou have much give abundantly: if thou have a little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little.

10 For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity.

11 For alms deliver from all sin, and from death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness.

12 Alms shall be a great confidence before the most high God, to all them that give it.

13 Take heed to keep thyself, my son, from all fornication, and beside thy wife never endure to know a crime.

14 Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words: for from it all perdition took its beginning.

15 If any man hath done any work for thee, immediately pay him his hire, and let not the wages of thy hired servant stay with thee at all.

16 See thou never do to another what thou wouldst hate to have done to thee by another.

17 Eat thy bread with the hungry and the needy, and with thy garments cover the naked.

18 Lay out thy bread, and thy wine upon the burial of a just man, and do not eat and drink thereof with the wicked.

19 Seek counsel always of a wise man.

20 Bless God at all times: and desire of him to direct thy ways, and that all thy counsels may abide in him.

21 I tell thee also, my son, that I lent ten talents of silver, while thou wast yet a child, to Gabelus, in Rages a city of the Medes, and I have a note of his hand with me:

22 Now therefore inquire how thou mayst go to him, and receive of him the foresaid sum of money, and restore to him the note of his hand.

23 Fear not, my son: we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good.

CHAPTER FIVE

Young Tobias seeking a guide for his journey, the Angel Raphael, in shape of a man, understandeth this office.

1 Then Tobias answered his father, and said: I will do all things, father, which thou hast commanded me.

2 But how I shall get this money, I cannot tell; he knoweth me not, and I know not him: what token shall I give him? nor did I ever know the way which leadeth thither.

3 Then his father answered him, and said: I have a note of his hand with me, which when thou shalt shew him, he will presently pay it.

4 But go now, and seek thee out some faithful man, to go with thee for his hire: that thou mayst receive it, while I yet live.

5 Then Tobias going forth, found a beautiful young man, standing girded, and as it were ready to walk.

6 And not knowing that he was an angel of God, he saluted him, and said: From whence art thou, good young man?

7 But he answered: Of the children of Israel. And Tobias said to him: Knowest thou the way that leadeth to the country of the Medes?

8 And he answered: I know it: and I have often walked through all the ways thereof, and I have abode with Gabelus our brother, who dwelleth at Rages a city of the Medes, which is situate in the mount of Ecbatana.

9 And Tobias said to him: Stay for me, I beseech thee, till I tell these same things to my father.

10 Then Tobias going in told all these things to his father. Upon which his father being in admiration, desired that he would come in unto him.

11 So going in he saluted him, and said: Joy be to thee always.

12 And Tobias said: What manner of joy shall be to me, who sit in darkness, and see not the light of heaven?

13 And the young man said to him: Be of good courage, thy cure from God is at hand.

14 And Tobias said to him: Canst thou conduct my son to Gabelus at Rages, a city of the Medes? and when thou shalt return, I will pay thee thy hire.

15 And the angel said to him: I will conduct him thither, and bring him back to thee.

16 And Tobias said to him: I pray thee, tell me, of what family, or what tribe art thou?

17 And Raphael the angel answered: Dost thou seek the family of him thou hirest, or the hired servant himself to go with thy son?

18 But lest I should make thee uneasy, I am Azarias⁴⁸ the son of the great Ananias.

19 And Tobias answered: Thou art of a great family. But I pray thee be not angry that I desired to know thy family.

20 And the angel said to him: I will lead thy son safe, and bring him to thee again safe.

21 And Tobias answering, said: May you have a good journey, and God be with you in your way, and his angel accompany you.

⁴⁸ *Azarias*. The angel took the form of Azarias: and therefore might call himself by the name of the man who he personated. *Azarias*, in Hebrew, signifies *the help of God*, and Ananias *the Grace of God*.

22 Then all things being ready, that were to be carried in their journey, Tobias bade his father and his mother farewell, and they set out both together.

23 And when they were departed, his mother began to weep, and to say: Thou hast taken the staff of our old age, and sent him away from us.

24 I wish the money for which thou hast sent him, had never been.

25 For poverty was sufficient for us, that we might account it as riches, that we saw our son.

26 And Tobias said to her: Weep not, our son will arrive thither safe, and will return safe to us, and thy eyes shall see him.

27 For I believe that the good angel of God doth accompany him, and doth order all things well that are done about him, so that he shall return to us with joy.

28 At these words his mother ceased weeping, and held her peace.

CHAPTER SIX

By the angel's advice young Tobias taketh hold on a fish that assaulteth him. Reserveth the heart, the gall, and the liver for medicines. They lodge at the house of Raguel, whose daughter Sara Tobias is to marry. She had before been married to seven husbands, who were all slain by a devil.

1 And Tobias went forward, and the dog followed him, and he lodged the first night by the river of Tigris.

2 And he went out to wash his feet, and behold a monstrous fish came up to devour him.

3 And Tobias being afraid of him, cried out with a loud voice, saying: Sir, he cometh upon me.

4 And the angel said to him: Take him by the gill, and draw him to thee. And when he had done so, he drew him out upon the land, and he began to pant before his feet.

5 Then the angel said to him: Take out the entrails of the fish, and lay up his heart, and his gall, and his liver for thee: for these are necessary for useful medicines.

6 And when he had done so, he roasted the flesh thereof, and they took it with them in the way: the rest they salted as much as might serve them, till they came to Rages the city of the Medes.

7 Then Tobias asked the angel, and said to him: I beseech thee, brother Azarias, tell me what remedies are these things good for, which thou hast bid me keep of the fish?

8 And the angel, answering, said to him: If thou put a little piece of its heart⁴⁹ upon coals, the smoke thereof driveth away all kind of devils, either from man or from woman, so that they come no more to them.

9 And the gall is good for anointing the eyes, in which there is a white speck, and they shall be cured.

10 And Tobias said to him: Where wilt thou that we lodge?

11 And the angel answering, said: Here is one whose name is Raguel, a near kinsman of thy tribe, and he hath a daughter named Sara, but he hath no son nor any other daughter beside her.

12 All his substance is due to thee, and thou must take her to wife.

13 Ask her therefore of her father, and he will give her thee to wife.

⁴⁹ *Its heart. The liver* (ver. 19). God was pleased to give these things a virtue against those proud spirits, to make them, who affected to be like the Most High, subject to such mean corporeal creatures as instruments of his power.

14 Then Tobias answered, and said: I hear that she hath been given to seven husbands, and they all died: moreover I have heard, that a devil killed them.

15 Now I am afraid, lest the same thing should happen to me also: and whereas I am the only child of my parents, I should bring down their old age with sorrow to hell.⁵⁰

16 Then the angel Raphael said to him: Hear me, and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail.

17 For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power.

18 But thou when thou shalt take her, go into the chamber, and for three days keep thyself continent from her, and give thyself to nothing else but to prayers with her.

19 And on that night lay the liver of the fish on the fire, and the devil shall be driven away.

20 But the second night thou shalt be admitted into the society of the holy Patriarchs.

21 And the third night thou shalt obtain a blessing that sound children may be born of you.

22 And when the third night is past, thou shalt take the virgin with the fear of the Lord, moved rather for love of children than for lust, that in the seed of Abraham thou mayst obtain a blessing in children.

⁵⁰ *To hell.* That is, to the place where the souls of the good were kept before the coming of Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN

They are kindly entertained by Raguel. Tobias demandeth Sara to wife.

1 And they went in to Raguel, and Raguel received them with joy.

2 And Raguel looking upon Tobias, said to Anna his wife: How like is this young man to my cousin?

3 And when he had spoken these words, he said: Whence are ye young men our brethren?

4 But they said: We are of the tribe of Nephtali, of the captive of Ninive.

5 And Raguel said to them: Do you know Tobias my brother? And they said: We know him.

6 And when he was speaking many good things of him, the angel said to Raguel: Tobias concerning whom thou inquirest is this young man's father.

7 And Raguel went to him, and kissed him with tears, and weeping upon his neck, said: A blessing be upon thee, my son, because thou art the son of a good and most virtuous man.

8 And Anna his wife, and Sara their daughter wept.

9 And after they had spoken, Raguel commanded a sheep to be killed, and a feast to be prepared. And when he desired them to sit down to dinner,

10 Tobias said: I will not eat nor drink here this day, unless thou first grant me my petition, and promise to give me Sara thy daughter.

11 Now when Raguel heard this he was afraid, knowing what had happened to those seven husbands, that went in unto her: and he began to fear lest it might happen to him also in like manner: and as he was in suspense, and gave no answer to his petition,

12 The angel said to him: Be not afraid to give her to this man, for to him who feareth God is thy daughter due to be his wife: therefore another could not have her.

13 Then Raguel said: I doubt not but God hath regarded my prayers and tears in his sight.

14 And I believe he hath therefore made you come to me, that this maid might be married to one of her own kindred, according to the law of Moses: and now doubt not but I will give her to thee.

15 And taking the right hand of his daughter, he gave it into the right hand of Tobias, saying: The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob be with you, and may he join you together, and fulfill his blessing in you.

16 And taking paper they made a writing of the marriage.

17 And afterwards they made merry, blessing God.

18 And Raguel called to him Anna his wife, and bade her prepare another chamber.

19 And she brought Sara her daughter in thither, and she wept.

20 And she said to her: Be of good cheer, my daughter: the Lord of heaven give thee joy for the trouble thou hast undergone.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Tobias burneth part of the fish's liver, and Raphael bindeth the devil. Tobias and Sara pray.

1 And after they had supped, they brought in the young man to her.

2 And Tobias remembering the angel's word, took out of his bag part of the liver, and laid it upon burning coals.

3 Then the angel Raphael took the devil, and bound him in the desert of upper Egypt.

4 Then Tobias exhorted the virgin, and said to her: Sara, arise, and let us pray to God today, and tomorrow, and the next day:

because for these three nights we are joined to God: and when the third night is over, we will be in our own wedlock.

5 For we are the children of saints, and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God.

6 So they both arose, and prayed earnestly both together that health might be given them,

7 And Tobias said: Lord God of our father, may the heavens and the earth, and the sea, and the fountains, and the rivers, and all thy creatures that are in them, bless thee.

8 Thou madest Adam of the slime of the earth, and gavest him Eve for a helper.

9 And now, Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever.

10 Sara also said: Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us, and let us grow old both together in health.

11 And it came to pass about the cockcrowing, Raguel ordered his servants to be called for, and they went with him together to dig a grave.

12 For he said: Lest perhaps it may have happened to him, in like manner as it did to the other seven husbands, that went in unto her.

13 And when they had prepared the pit, Raguel went back to his wife, and said to her:

14 Send one of thy maids, and let her see if he be dead, that I may bury him before it be day.

15 So she sent one of her maidservants, who went into the chamber, and found them safe and sound, sleeping both together.

16 And returning she brought the good news: and Raguel and Anna his wife blessed the Lord,

17 And said: We bless thee, O Lord God of Israel, because it hath not happened as we suspected.

18 For thou hast shewn thy mercy to us, and hast shut out from us the enemy that persecuted us.

19 And thou hast taken pity upon two only children. Make them, O Lord, bless thee more fully: and to offer up to thee a sacrifice of thy praise, and of their health, that all nations may know, that thou alone art God in all the earth.

20 And immediately Raguel commanded his servants, to fill up the pit they had made, before it was day.

21 And he spoke to his wife to make ready a feast, and prepare all kind of provisions that are necessary for such as go a journey.

22 He caused also two fat kine, and four wethers to be killed, and a banquet to be prepared for all his neighbours, and all his friends.

23 And Raguel adjured Tobias, to abide with him two weeks.

24 And of all things which Raguel possessed, he gave one half to Tobias, and made him a writing, that the half that remained should after their decease come also to Tobias.

CHAPTER NINE

The Angel Raphael goeth to Gabelus, receiveth the money, and bringeth him to the marriage.

1 Then Tobias called the angel to him, whom he took to be a man, and said to him: Brother Azarias, I pray thee hearken to my words:

2 If I should give myself to be thy servant I should not make a worthy return for thy care.

3 However, I beseech thee, to take with thee beasts and servants, and to go to Gabelus to Rages the city of the Medes: and to restore to him his note of hand, and receive of him the money, and desire him to come to my wedding.

4 For thou knowest that my father numbereth the days: and if I stay one day more, his soul will be afflicted.

5 And indeed thou seest how Raguel hath adjured me, whose adjuring I cannot despise.

6 Then Raphael took four of Raguel's servants, and two camels, and went to Rages the city of the Medes: and finding Gabelus, gave him his note of hand, and received of him all the money.

7 And he told him concerning Tobias the son of Tobias, all that had been done: and made him come with him to the wedding.

8 And when he was come into Raguel's house he found Tobias sitting at the table: and he leaped up, and they kissed each other: and Gabelus wept, and blessed God,

9 And said: The God of Israel bless thee, because thou art the son of a very good and just man, and that feareth God, and doth almsdeeds:

10 And may a blessing come upon thy wife and upon your parents.

11 And may you see your children, and your children's children, unto the third and fourth generation: and may your seed be blessed by the God of Israel, who reigneth for ever and ever.

12 And when all had said, Amen, they went to the feast: but the marriage feast they celebrated also with the fear of the Lord.

CHAPTER TEN

The parents lament the long absence of their son Tobias. He sets out to return.

1 But as Tobias made longer stay upon occasion of the marriage, Tobias his father was solicitous, saying: Why thinkest thou doth my son tarry, or why is he detained there?

2 Is Gabelus dead, thinkest thou, and no man will pay him the money?

3 And he began to be exceeding sad, both he and Anna his wife with him: and they began both to weep together: because their son did not return to them on the day appointed.

4 But his mother wept and was quite disconsolate, and said: Woe, woe is me, my son; why did we send thee to go to a strange country, the light of our eyes, the staff of our old age, the comfort of our life, the hope of our posterity?

5 We having all things together in thee alone, ought not to have let thee go from us.

6 And Tobias said to her: Hold thy peace, and be not troubled, our son is safe: that man with whom we sent him is very trusty.

7 But she could by no means be comforted, but daily running out looked round about, and went into all the ways by which there seemed any hope he might return, that she might if possible see him coming afar off.

8 But Raguel said to his son in law: Stay here, and I will send a messenger to Tobias thy father, that thou art in health.

9 And Tobias said to him: I know that my father and mother now count the days, and their spirit is grievously afflicted within them.

10 And when Raguel had pressed Tobias with many words, and he by no means would hearken to him, he delivered Sara unto him, and half of all his substance in menservants, and womenservants, in cattle, in camels, and in kine, and in much money, and sent him away safe and joyful from him.

11 Saying: The holy angel of the Lord be with you in your journey, and bring you through safe, and that you may find all things well about your parents, and my eyes see your children before I die.

12 And the parents taking their daughter kissed her, and let her go:

13 Admonishing her to honour her father and mother in law, to love her husband, to take care of the family, to govern the house, and to behave herself irreprehensibly.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Tobias annointeth his father's eyes with the fish's gall. He receiveth his sight.

1 And as they were returning they came to Charan, which is in the midway to Ninive, the eleventh day.

2 And the angel said: Brother Tobias, thou knowest how thou didst leave thy father.

3 If it please thee therefore, let us go before, and let the family follow softly after us, together with thy wife, and with the beasts.

4 And as this their going pleased him, Raphael said to Tobias: Take with thee of the gall of the fish, for it will be necessary. So Tobias took some of that gall and departed.

5 But Anna sat beside the way daily, on the top of a hill, from whence she might see afar off.

6 And while she watched his coming from that place, she saw him afar off, and presently perceived it was her son coming: and returning she told her husband, saying: Behold thy son cometh.

7 And Raphael said to Tobias: As soon as thou shalt come into thy house, forthwith adore the Lord thy God: and giving thanks to him, go to thy father, and kiss him.

8 And immediately anoint his eyes with this gall of the fish, which thou carriest with thee. For be assured that his eyes shall be presently opened, and thy father shall see the light of heaven, and shall rejoice in the sight of thee.

9 Then the dog,⁵¹ which had been with them in the way, ran before, and coming as if he had brought the news, shewed his joy by his fawning and wagging his tail.

10 And his father that was blind, rising up, began to run stumbling with his feet: and giving a servant his hand, went to meet his son.

11 And receiving him kissed him, as did also his wife, and they began to weep for joy.

12 And when they had adored God, and given him thanks, they sat down together.

13 Then Tobias taking of the gall of the fish, anointed his father's eyes.

14 And he stayed about half an hour: and a white skin began to come out of his eyes, like the skin of an egg.

15 And Tobias took hold of it, and drew it from his eyes, and immediately he recovered his sight.

16 And they glorified God, both he and his wife and all that knew them.

17 And Tobias said: I bless thee, O Lord God of Israel, because thou hast chastised me, and thou hast saved me: and behold I see Tobias my son.

18 And after seven days Sara his son's wife, and all the family arrived safe, and the cattle, and the camels, and an abundance of money of his wife's: and that money also which he had received of Gabelus:

19 And he told his parents all the benefits of God, which he had done to him by the man that conducted him.

⁵¹ *The dog.* This may seem a very minute circumstance to be recorded in sacred history: but as we learn from our Saviour (Mt. 5:18), there are *iotas* and *tittles* in the word of God: that is to say, things that appear minute, but which have indeed a deep and mysterious meaning in them.

20 And Achior and Nabath the kinsmen of Tobias came, rejoicing for Tobias, and congratulating with him for all the good things that God had done for him.

21 And for seven days they feasted and rejoiced all with great joy.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Raphael maketh himself known.

1 Then Tobias called to him his son, and said to him: What can we give to this holy man, that is come with thee?

2 Tobias answering, said to his father: Father, what wages shall we give him? or what can be worthy of his benefits?

3 He conducted me and brought me safe again, he received the money of Gabelus, he caused me to have my wife, and he chased from her the evil spirit, he gave joy to her parents, myself he delivered from being devoured by the fish, thee also he hath made to see the light of heaven, and we are filled with all good things through him. What can we give him sufficient for these things?

4 But I beseech thee, my father, to desire him, that he would vouchsafe to accept one half of all things that have been brought.

5 So the father and the son, calling him, took him aside: and began to desire him that he would vouchsafe to accept of half of all things that they had brought.

6 Then he said to them secretly: Bless ye the God of heaven, give glory to him in the sight of all that live, because he hath shewn his mercy to you.

7 For it is good to hide the secret of a king: but honourable to reveal and confess the works of God.

8 Prayer is good with fasting and alms more than to lay up treasures of gold:

9 For alms delivereth from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting.

10 But they that commit sin and iniquity, are enemies to their own soul.

11 I discover then the truth unto you, and I will not hide the secret from you.

12 When thou didst pray with tears, and didst bury the dead, and didst leave thy dinner, and hide the dead by day in thy house, and bury them by night, I offered thy prayer to the Lord.

13 And because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee.

14 And now the Lord hath sent me to heal thee, and to deliver Sara thy son's wife from the devil.

15 For I am the angel Raphael, one of the seven, who stand before the Lord.

16 And when they had heard these things, they were troubled, and being seized with fear they fell upon the ground on their face.

17 And the angel said to them: Peace be to you, fear not.

18 For when I was with you, I was there by the will of God: bless ye him, and sing praises to him.

19 I seemed indeed to eat and to drink with you: but I use an invisible meat and drink, which cannot be seen by men.

20 It is time therefore that I return to him that sent me: but bless ye God, and publish all his wonderful works.

21 And when he had said these things, he was taken from their sight, and they could see him no more.

22 Then they lying prostrate for three hours upon their face, blessed God: and rising up, they told all his wonderful works.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Tobias the father praiseth God, exhorting all Israel to do the same. Prophetieth the restoration and better state of Jerusalem.

1 And Tobias the elder opening his mouth, blessed the Lord, and said: Thou art great, O Lord, for ever, and thy kingdom is unto all ages:

2 For thou scourgest, and thou savest: thou ledest down to hell, and bringest up again: and there is none that can escape thy hand.

3 Give glory to the Lord, ye children of Israel, and praise him in the sight of the Gentiles:

4 Because he hath therefore scattered you among the Gentiles, who know not him, that you may declare his wonderful works, and make them know that there is no other almighty God besides him.

5 He hath chastised us for our iniquities: and he will save us for his own mercy.

6 See then what he hath done with us, and with fear and trembling give ye glory to him: and extol the eternal King of worlds in your works.

7 As for me, I will praise him in the land of my captivity: because he hath shewn his majesty toward a sinful nation.

8 Be converted therefore, ye sinners, and do justice before God, believing that he will shew his mercy to you.

9 And I and my soul will rejoice in him.

10 Bless ye the Lord, all his elect, keep days of joy, and give glory to him.

11 Jerusalem,⁵² city of God, the Lord hath chastised thee for the works of thy hands.

⁵² *Jerusalem.* What is prophetically delivered here, and in the following chapter, with relation to Jerusalem, is partly to be understood of the

12 Give glory to the Lord for thy good things, and bless the God eternal, that he may rebuild his tabernacle in thee, and may call back all the captives to thee, and thou mayst rejoice for ever and ever.

13 Thou shalt shine with a glorious light: and all the ends of the earth shall worship thee.

14 Nations from afar shall come to thee: and shall bring gifts, and shall adore the Lord in thee, and shall esteem thy land as holy.

15 For they shall call upon the great name in thee.

16 They shall be cursed that shall despise thee: and they shall be condemned that shall blaspheme thee: and blessed shall they be that shall build thee up.

17 But thou shalt rejoice in thy children, because they shall all be blessed, and shall be gathered together to the Lord.

18 Blessed are all they that love thee, and that rejoice in thy peace.

19 My soul, bless thou the Lord, because the Lord our God hath delivered Jerusalem his city from all her troubles.

20 Happy shall I be if there shall remain of my seed, to see the glory of Jerusalem.

21 The gates of Jerusalem shall be built of sapphire, and of emerald, and all the walls thereof round about of precious stones.

22 All its streets shall be paved with white and clean stones: and Alleluia shall be sung in its streets.

23 Blessed be the Lord, who hath exalted it, and may he reign over it for ever and ever, Amen.

rebuilding of city after the captivity: and partly of the spiritual Jerusalem, which is the Church of Christ, and the eternal Jerusalem in heaven.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Old Tobias dieth at the age of a hundred and two years, after exhorting his son and grandsons in piety, foreshewing that Ninive shall be destroyed and Jerusalem rebuilt. The younger Tobias returneth with his family to Raguel, and dieth happily as he had lived.

1 And the words of Tobias were ended. And after Tobias was restored to his sight, he lived two and forty years, and saw the children of his grandchildren.

2 And after he had lived a hundred and two years, he was buried honourably in Ninive.

3 For he was six and fifty years old when he lost the sight of his eyes, and sixty when he recovered it again.

4 And the rest of his life was in joy, and with great increase of the fear of God he departed in peace.

5 And at the hour of his death he called unto him his son Tobias and his children, seven young men, his grandsons, and said to them:

6 The destruction of Ninive is at hand: for the word of the Lord must be fulfilled: and our brethren, that are scattered abroad from the land of Israel, shall return to it.

7 And all the land thereof that is desert shall be filled with people, and the house of God which is burnt in it, shall again be rebuilt: and all that fear God shall return thither.

8 And the Gentiles shall leave their idols, and shall come into Jerusalem, and shall dwell in it.

9 And all the kings of the earth shall rejoice in it, adoring the King of Israel.

10 Hearken therefore, my children, to your father: serve the Lord in truth, and seek to do the things that please him:

11 And command your children that they do justice and almsdeeds, and that they be mindful of God, and bless him at all times in truth, and with all their power.

12 And now, children, hear me, and do not stay here: but as soon as you shall bury your mother by me in one sepulchre, without delay direct your steps to depart hence:

13 For I see that its iniquity will bring it to destruction.

14 And it came to pass that after the death of his mother, Tobias departed out of Ninive with his wife, and children, and children's children, and returned to his father and mother in law.

15 And he found them in health in a good old age: and he took care of them, and he closed their eyes: and all the inheritance of Raguel's house came to him: and he saw his children's children to the fifth generation.

16 And after he had lived ninety-nine years in the fear of the Lord, with joy they buried him.

17 And all his kindred, and all his generation continued in good life, and in holy conversation, so that they were acceptable both to God, and to men, and to all that dwelt in the land.

— END OF THE BOOK OF TOBIAS —

JESUS' SERMON ON MARRIAGE

IN A VILLAGE ON THE LAKE OF GALILEE

as revealed to the Italian Mystic, Maria Valtorta

Taken from **THE POEM OF THE MAN-GOD**, Vol. IV, pp.211-5.

Jesus appears at the door of the hospitable house and He smiles, raising His arms to bless the patient citizens awaiting Him.

Peace be with you all.

Were you waiting for Me? Were you afraid that I might run away without saying goodbye to you? I always keep My promises. I am with you today to evangelize you and I will remain with you as I promised, to bless your houses, your gardens and boats, so that each family may be sanctified, and your work may be sanctified as well. But, remember, My blessing is to be assisted by your good will in order to be fruitful. And you know which is the good will that must enliven a family so that the house sheltering it may be holy. The husband is to be the head, but not the despot, of the wife, of the children and of the servants, and at the same time he is to be the king, the true king in the biblical sense of the word.

Do you remember chapter eight of the First Book of Kings? The elders of Israel gathered together and went to Ramah, where Samuel lived and they said to him: "Look, you are old and your children do not follow your ways. So give us a king to judge us, like the other nations." King, therefore, means judge, and he should be a just judge in order not to make his subjects unhappy here on the earth with wars, abuse of power, unfair heavy taxes, or in eternal life with a kingdom permissive of lasciviousness and vice. Woe to those kings who fail in their ministry, who turn a deaf ear to the voices of their subjects, who turn a blind eye to the evils of the nation, who become responsible for the sufferings of the people through alliances formed against justice for the only purpose of strengthening their power with the help of allies! But woe also to those fathers who

fail in their duties, who are blind and deaf to the needs and faults of the members of their families, who are the cause of scandal or grief for it, who stoop to arrange worthless marriages by compromise, in order to enter into an alliance with rich powerful families, without considering that matrimony is intended, besides procreation, for the elevation and comfort of man and woman; it is a duty, a ministry, not a bargain, it is not sorrow, it is not debasement of either husband or wife. It is love, not hatred. The head of the family, therefore, must be just without excessive hardness or pretensions and without excessive compliance and weakness. But if you had to choose between the former excess and the latter, pick the latter, because God, with regard to it, may say to you: "Why were you so good?" and will not condemn you, because excess in kindness is already a punishment for man through the overbearing action which other people take the liberty of performing against good persons; whereas He would always reproach you for your hardness, which is a lack of love for your closest neighbour.

And the wife at home must be just with her husband, her children and servants. She must obey, respect, console and help her husband. She is to be obedient, providing her obedience does not imply consent to sin. The wife must be submissive but not degraded. Beware, o wives, that the first to judge you after God, for certain guilty condescension, are your very husbands, who persuade you to comply. They are not always desires of love, but they are [often] also tests of your virtue. Even if he does not think about it at the moment, the day may come when the husband may say to himself: "My wife is very sensual" and thence he may begin to be suspicious of her fidelity. Be chaste in your conjugality. Behave in such a way that your chastity may impose on your husbands that reservedness which one has for pure things, and they may consider you as their equals, not as slaves or concubines kept only for "pleasure" and rejected when they are no longer liked. The virtuous wife, I would say the wife who also after conjugality retains that virginal "something" in attitude, in words, in her transports of love, can lead her husband to an elevation from sensuality to sentiment, whereby the husband divests himself of

lewdness and becomes really “one thing” with his wife, whom he treats with the same respect with which a man treats a part of himself, which is just, because the wife is “bone from his bones and flesh from his flesh” and no man ill-treats his bones or his flesh, on the contrary he loves them, and therefore husband and wife, like the first married couple, look at each other without seeing their sexual nakedness, but let them love each other because of their spirits, without degrading shame.

Let the wife be patient and motherly with her husband. Let her consider him as the first of her children, because a woman is always a mother and man is always in need of a patient, prudent, affectionate, comforting mother. Blessed is the woman who knows how to be the companion and at the same time the mother of her husband to support him, and his daughter to be guided by him. A wife must be industrious. Work, while it does away with daydreams, is good for honesty and to one's purse as well. She should not torture her husband with foolish jealousies, which serve no purpose. Is the husband honest? A stupid jealousy, by driving him out of the house, exposes him to the danger of falling into the snares of a prostitute. Is he not honest and faithful? The fury of a jealous wife will not cure him, but her grave attitude, free from grudge and rudeness, her dignified and loving, still loving behaviour, will make him ponder and return to reason. Learn how to win back your husbands, when a passion separates them from you, through your virtue, just as you conquered them in your youth through your beauty. And, to gain strength for such duty, and resist the grief which might make you unfair, love your children and consider their welfare.

A woman has everything in her children: joy, a royal crown for the cheerful hours when she is really queen of the house of her husband, and a balm in sorrowful hours, when betrayal or other grievous experiences of married life scourge her forehead and above all pierce her heart with thorns of her sad regality of martyr spouse. Are you so depressed as to wish to go back to your family, divorcing, or to find compensation in a false friend who craves for the female but feigns to feel pity for the heart of the betrayed wife? No, women, no! Your children, your

innocent children, who are already upset and prematurely sad because of the domestic milieu, which is no longer serene or just, are entitled to their mother, to their father, to the comfort of a house, where, if one love has perished, the other remains vigilant to watch over them. Their innocent eyes look at you, they study you and they understand more than you think, and they mould their spirits according to what they see and understand. Never scandalise your innocent children, but take shelter in them, as in a bulwark of adamant lilies, against the weakness of the flesh and the snares of snakes.

And let the woman be a mother. The just mother who is the sister as well as the mother, who is the friend as well as the sister of her sons and daughters. And who, above all and in everything, is an example. She must watch over her sons and daughters, correcting them gently, supporting them, making them ponder, and all that without preferences; because children were all born of the same seed and of the same womb and if it is natural that good children are well-liked, because of the joy they give, it is also fair that children who are not good should be loved as well, although with sorrowful love, bearing mind that man must not be more severe than God, Who loves not only good people, but also those who are not good, and He loves them to try and make them good, to give them means and time to become so, and He is patient until the death of man, reserving to Himself the right to become just Judge when man can no longer make amends.

And let me tell you now something which does not concern this subject, but is useful for you to bear in mind. Very often, too often, we hear people say that wicked persons are better off than good persons and that this is not fair. First of all I say to you: "Do not judge by appearances and by what you do not know." Appearances are often misleading and the judgement of God is not known on Earth. You will become aware of it in the next life and you will see that the fleeting welfare of the wicked was granted as a means to attract them to Good and as a reward for the little good which even the most wicked man may do. But when you see things in the right light of future life, you

will realise that the joyful time of the sinner was shorter than the life of a blade of grass, which began to grow in spring in the gravel-bed of a torrent, which dries up in summer, whereas one moment of glory in Heaven is greater than the most triumphant life any man ever lived, because of the joy which it confers on spirits who delight in it. Therefore, do not envy the prosperity of the wicked, but strive, through good will, to possess the eternal treasure of the just.

And reverting to how the members of a family and the inhabitants of a house should be, so that my blessing may remain fruitful in it, I tell you, children, to be submissive to your parents, to be respectful and obedient, so that you may be so also with the Lord your God. Because if you do not learn to obey the simple orders of your fathers and mothers, whom you see, how will you be able to obey the commands of God, which are given to you in His name, but you neither see nor hear Him? And if you do not learn to believe that he who loves, as a father and a mother love, can but order good things, how can you believe that the things, which are related to you as commands of God, are good? God loves, you know? and is a Father. And just because He loves you and wants you to be with Him, dear children, He wants you to be good. And the first school where you learn to become so, is your family. You learn there to love and to obey and there begins for you the way that leads to Heaven. So be good, respectful, docile. Love your fathers also when they correct you, because they do so for your own good, and love your mothers if they restrain you from doing actions which by their experience they know are not good. Honour your parents and do not make them blush because of your wicked deeds. Pride is not a good thing, but there is a holy pride, the pride of saying: "I did not grieve my father or my mother." Such behaviour, which makes you enjoy their company while they are alive, is peace on the wound of their death, whereas the tears, which a son causes his parents to shed, scorch the heart of the wicked son like melted lead, and notwithstanding every effort to soothe the injury, it is painful, and all the more so when the parent's death prevents the son from making amends... Oh! children, be good, always, if you want God to love you.

Lastly, holy is that house which, through the justice of the masters, the servants also become just. Masters should remember that bad behaviour exacerbates and spoils servants, and the servants should bear in mind that their bad behaviour disgusts masters. Let each stay in his own place, but with a tie of love for the neighbour to fill the division existing between servants and masters.

Then the house blessed by Me will keep its blessing and the Lord will dwell in it. And likewise, My blessing and thus My protection will remain on boats, kitchen gardens, working and fishing implements, when you lead your lives as fishermen or market-gardeners working holily on days permitted and holily devoted to worshipping God on holy Sabbaths, and you do not cheat when selling or weighing, and you do not curse your work, neither to you make it the sovereign of your lives by preferring it to God. Because if work gives you a profit, God give you Heaven.

And now let us go and bless houses and boats and oars and kitchen gardens and hoes....

§ § §

The Cross of Christ Custom for Marriage

Author unknown

In the town of Siroki-Brijeg in Herzegovina not one single divorce has been recorded among its 13,000 inhabitants. Not one single family has broken up in living memory. For centuries, because of the pressure of the Turks and then the Communists, the people suffered cruelly as their Christian faith was always threatened. They knew through experience that salvation comes through the Cross of Christ. That is why they have indissolubly linked marriage to the Cross of Christ. They have founded marriage — which brings forth human life — on the Cross, which brings forth divine life. The Croatian marriage tradition is so beautiful that it is beginning to take hold in Europe and America too.

When a couple is preparing for marriage, they are not told that they have found the ideal partner. No! What does the priest say? *“You have found your Cross. And it is a Cross to be loved, to be carried, a Cross not to be thrown away, but to be cherished.”* I know if fiancés were told this in my home country of France, they would be struck dumb. But in Herzegovina, the Cross represents the greatest love and the Crucifix is the treasure of the home.

When the bride and groom set off for the church, they bring a Crucifix with them. The priest blesses the Crucifix, which takes on a central role during the exchange of vows. The bride places her right hand on the Crucifix and the groom places his hand over hers. Thus the two hands are bound together on the Cross. The priest covers their hands with his stole as they proclaim their vows to be faithful according to the rites of the Church.

The bride and groom do not then kiss each other, they rather kiss the Cross. They know they are kissing the source of love. Anyone close enough to see their two hands joined over the Cross understands clearly that if the husband abandons his wife or if the

wife abandons her husband they let go of the Cross. And if they abandon the Cross they have nothing left. They have lost everything, for they have abandoned Jesus. They have lost Jesus.

After the ceremony, the newlyweds bring the Crucifix back and give it a place of honor in their home. It becomes the focal point of family prayer, for the young couple believes deeply that the family is born of the Cross. When a trouble arises or if a conflict breaks out, it is before this Cross that they will seek help. They will not go to a lawyer, they will not consult a fortuneteller or an astrologer, they will not rely on a psychologist to solve the problem. No, they will go straight before their Jesus, before the Cross. They'll get on their knees there in front of Jesus they will weep their tears and pour out their hearts, and above all exchange their forgiveness. They will not go to sleep with a heavy heart because they will have turned to Jesus, the only One who has the power to save.

They will teach their children to kiss the Cross every day and not to go to sleep like pagans without having thanked Jesus first. As for the children, as far back as they can remember, Jesus has always been a friend of the family, respected and embraced. They say "nighty-night" to Jesus and kiss the Cross. (As one priest said: "*They go to sleep with Jesus, not a teddy bear*"). They know that Jesus is holding them in his arms and that there is nothing to be afraid of, and their fears melt away in their kiss to Jesus.

“...[M]arried persons represent [the] union between Jesus Christ and the Church: The Son of God left His Father to be united to the Church, as a man leaves his father and mother to be united to his wife. The Church was formed from Jesus Christ dead on the cross, as woman was formed from man during his sleep. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church; the husband is the head of his wife. Jesus Christ protects and guides the Church, leads it to Heaven; the husband ought to be the protector and guide of his wife, ought to show her the way to Heaven, much more by his example than by his words.

“Jesus Christ and the Church are but one — one Spirit animates them; so man and wife are but one flesh — one spirit ought to animate them. Jesus Christ loves the Church tenderly, but He loves it with a view to its eternal happiness — and the Church, on her side, respects her Divine Spouse, and observes an inviolable fidelity towards Him; so the husband ought to love the wife, but with a view to her eternal salvation — and the wife ought to respect her husband, and observe an inviolable fidelity towards him. Jesus Christ is inseparably united to the Church; it is the same with the husband and wife — their union is indissoluble, it cannot be broken but by death.

“Hence it follows that the sacred union of marriage can only be contracted between one man and one woman, and the polygamy, that is to say, a plurality of wives, though tolerated in the Old Law, is absolutely forbidden by the New. If this practice were still allowable, marriage would no longer represent the union of the Saviour with the Church, which is the special cause of its dignity as a Sacrament.” (see pp. 12-3)

The portion of *The Catechism of Perseverance* dedicated to the Holy Sacrament of Matrimony is placed within these pages to remind Catholics of the lofty state in which Jesus Christ placed Marriage. The information found herein seems particularly pertinent in our times when the attack on the family (abortion, contraception, feminism, same-sex unions, etc.) has never been greater.