

Begin your Novena for a  
Happy Marriage tomorrow if  
you forget to today.

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Toward The Solemn Engagement: Preliminary Considerations.

God could have created another kind of universe than the one in which we live. Since our universe is moral (and we can't live in any other), its environment is necessarily war-like--"life is a warfare." Each of us must work out his salvation contending against three evil forces, the world, the flesh, and the devil. Our goal may be missed not only by positively violating the moral law by which Christ and His Church guide us, but also by negatively neglecting to use the faculties, talents, and abundant graces which have been given to us through the Sacraments. . . A man can kill himself by shooting a slug through his brain, or by depriving his body of food and drink.

We are composed of body and soul, of matter and spirit. These two, as St. Paul often points out, are in constant deadly conflict, the law of the members fighting against the law of the mind. One of them must die in this struggle, for it is one unto death. To live the glorious life of the spirit, the flesh must die, and that is what is meant by self-denial or mortification.

Since the time of Christ the moral life we live is Christ's own life. He in us and we in Him, for He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. Some souls seek Christ directly by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, either by way of contemplation, as do Trappists and other contemplatives, or by way of contemplative activity, as do active Orders through the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Such is the religious life.

Two Sacraments minister to the growth of Christ's Mystical Body. Two sacraments, Holy Orders and Matrimony, not only aim at increasing divine life in our souls, but serve as "organs of growth." The priesthood nourishes the supernatural spiritual being of the Body of Christ; marriage, the supernatural bodily being. Related to each other as complementary sacraments within the Mystical Body's organism of grace as soul to body, "they build up the Body of Christ, supplying new members."

We have completed the Novena for Vocations and have begun the Novena for a Happy Marriage. The dignity of marriage is best understood in the words of St. Paul, who, in his Epistle to the Ephesians (5:23 ff), states that marriage is more than a sacred thing--it is infinitely more: by the very fact that the members of Christ, man and woman, unite in marriage, their union becomes a sacrament of the union between Christ and His Church. Karl Adam says, "Wherever Christian bride and bridegroom unite in wedlock, the holy union which exists between the most sacred Humanity of Christ and its members receives new actuality. . . It represents that sacred sphere of life on earth in which the mystery of the Body of Christ visibly reveals itself, and where it renews itself as often as two baptized Christians join hands in wedlock."

"In the eyes of faith," continues Karl Adams, "Christ and His Church beget through their (husband and wife) agency."

Keeping these tremendous and significant truths in mind, prospective husbands and wives will better understand the necessity for a chaste and virtuous courtship. What is called "engagement" or "betrothal" is simply a mutual promise made to marry. Its importance lies in this that it enables the engaged couple to know each other better to test the sincerity of their mutual agreement, and to start planning a home.

Although the engagement period may be and most often is the development and perfection of their humanly beautiful and divinely meritorious friendship, it is for some a time of particular danger. For in no way can the engagement be considered as license to indulge in dangerous and impure love-making. The Church knowing these dangers blesses the betrothal in her "Rite of Betrothal," a liturgically significant and richly symbolic ceremony. (Tomorrow's Bulletin will outline the Betrothal Ceremony.)

Prayers: (deceased) 13th ann'y, Dr. E. S. Lucas; Geraldine Schmidt; friend of Frank Driscoll; grandfather of Vernan Burkhardt (O-C).