

University of Notre Dame

Religious Bulletin

March 11, 1932

"Lust is Not Love."



THE fifth point noted in the remote preparation for marriage reads as follows:

"Never confuse either infatuation or lust with love. Love implies reverence. A girl who does not command your respect is unworthy of you. Your own self-respect demands that you shun such company; and if you are lacking in self-respect you are doomed to learn by bitter experience that lust is a usurer who sucks blood even to the grave."

On the matter of self-respect little need be said. It can hardly be taught, and if it has not been imbibed with your mother's milk you will have to wait for experience, slow-moving but sure, to offer you a substitute for it. In other words, if your mother was a lady you have self-respect instinctively; if she was not, you will have to wait for caution to produce in you some of the effects of self-respect.

Don't marry a girl to reform her. Infatuation may lead you into this stupid experiment, but cold reason argues against it. It doesn't work out. And don't run around with young widows, grass or sod. Leave widows to the widowers. They may make perfectly good wives, but they make fools out of freshmen, and bigger fools out of seniors.

While love is essential to marriage, lust is its greatest enemy. Passion aroused but unsatisfied leads to many of the physical ills of women, including irritability, neuresthenia, premature loss of beauty, sterility, and insanity; and on the moral side it so degrades her moral sense that she is incapable of instilling virtue into children—if she has any. Familiarities breed more than contempt.

Its effect on a man is to make him coarse and licentious (like those who guffaw loudly in the dark at a suggestive movie) and to incline him to insane jealousy, suspecting in his wife the continuance of the incontinence that marked their courtship. You will never know what it means to a man until he breaks down and tells you—as many men tell a priest after years of married life—that his life is wrecked because his beastly lack of restraint in courtship made it impossible for him to respect his wife. When a man wants to respect his wife, but cannot because he is evil-minded—that's tough! The clean man has no regrets.

The world makes no account of the evils of courtship; these evils are stock jokes for the funny papers. But neither does the world sanctify marriage as a Sacrament, nor does it hold you to one wife until death. And neither does the world light a candle or breathe a prayer at your grave. The world knows all about lust but little about love.

You and Yours, *The Home World*, and *Letters on Marriage* will give you the right ideals if you want them; but if you have let lust come into your courtship, you will have to pay the penalty. The restoration of ideals can be brought about by severe penance, which includes the giving up of the occasion of sin; most men are not fond of penance, however, and they will simply have to pay the penalty by leading a dog's life in marriage.

What makes you think you have a right to ask a good girl to be your wife? You may have a good job in prospect, or you may have a rich aunt with asthma, but if you think money the basis of a happy marriage, read the alimony news of a single day. You may feel that there is an all-consuming love between you; that is just what that kind of love is—all-consuming. It consumes gas, it consumes liquor, it consumes your bank roll, it consumes your happiness. The head you bring to the altar should not be dizzy with infatuation but sober with faith and humility. After all, love is a matter of sacrifice, not sentimentality. "He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me," said Our Blessed Lord; and love is not love unless it shows itself in sacrifice. St. Joseph, the model husband, was a perfect exemplar of unselfishness; the Blessed Virgin, his divinely-appointed spouse, was equally a model of self-renunciation. Perfect sacrifice and the grace of God made this the perfect pattern of married life, The Holy Family.