

# The Church in Human Affairs

THE FAMILY IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING CULTURE

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THE CHURCH IN HUMAN AFFAIRS: 1962  
THE FAMILY IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING CULTURE: SUGGESTIONS  
FOR A SPECIAL OBSERVANCE IN EPIPHANYTIDE  
JOINT COMMISSION ON THE CHURCH AND HUMAN AFFAIRS  
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## Preface

*by* C. GRESHAM MARMION

*Male and Female He created them. And God blessed them . . .* God's Church continues to bless them in His name. The human family is more than the basic unit in human society. The family is the very foundation of all life: social, economic, and religious. Within the generative and social processes of the family, we find a reflection of God's love and will for life. The pressures of today's rapidly changing culture have threatened the role of the family in society, and this change has called the Church to a more active role in securing and perpetuating the family as God created it and as God wills it. If we, the Church, by apathy, neglect, or ignorance fail to be an active force within families already established or an active influence in those to be formed, the forces of cultural cancer will destroy that which God created, that which He used, the Holy Family, when He sent into this world His Only Begotten Son. God appointed no other guides than His Church to give light in darkness and direction in confusion. Christian family life is among the Church's most challenging missions of today.

# The Family in a Rapidly Changing Culture

**O** GOD, WHO hast so consecrated the state of matrimony that in it is represented the spiritual marriage and unity betwixt Christ and His church; look mercifully upon these thy servants, that they may love, honor, and cherish each other, and so live together in faithfulness and patience, in wisdom and true godliness, that their home may be a haven of blessing and of peace; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Spirit ever, one God, world without end. Amen.

**T**HUS THE CHURCH prays for all those who seek God's grace and the Church's aid in the establishment of a true marital relationship and in the care and nurture of children which may come to this union. Filled with faith, armed with hope, and inspired by love, this man and this woman, blessed in His name, move into a new relationship in God's world. But this is a world distorted. Marriage and the "family is rooted in the elemental processes of life itself," and "the whole enterprise of marriage and the establishment of a family is perhaps the most vivid expression we know of responsible human freedom under God."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lambeth Report (Greenwich, Seabury Press), pp. 2, 142. and 2. 145.

The Lambeth Conference of 1958, in the Report on The Family in Contemporary Society, called the Church's attention to the plight of the human family in a rapidly changing culture, and also enunciated the Church's role in providing "the setting and the protections of law and doctrine." This report, and the immediate needs of individual families in a world distorted must serve to drive the Church to a deeper understanding and a more active role of not only giving guidance and support, but of providing controls and restraints which will for now stem the tide of decay and provide in the future for a more wholesome fulfillment of God's purposes in marriage. The Church's role must be an active concern and an active partnership with marriage, lest by our own passivity, we forfeit our role in this vital area of human affairs. In our default, secular forces of distortion will all too readily assume the role.

## THE MARITAL INSTITUTION AND OUR CULTURE

**E**VEN though marriage is an institution vital to the elemental processes of life and even though its history reaches back into the dim recesses of human history, it is, nevertheless, an institution which takes its framework of reference from the culture in which it lives. The process of change is inseparable from the process of growth. Conception, birth, life, and death are common not only to man but to cultures and institutions as well. Each successive stage is characterized by change. One need but to trace the development of a single human life from conception to death and we immediately become aware not only of the physiological changes which, of

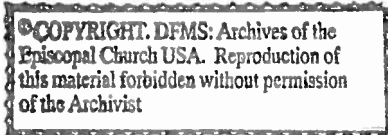
necessity, take place, but we are profoundly struck by the formative forces of culture which shape the destiny of the individual involved. Many of these forces are dramatic. Many are subtle. All are important.

Change no man can stop. Change man can direct. Herein lies one of the primary tasks of Christendom in contemporary society. But we can not lead by the written word alone. We must actively lead by being in the field and not in the towers of isolation handing down pronouncements which all too often have little relevance to the human situation. And when significant reports, such as those of Lambeth, do come before us, their significance is lost in our own confusion.

Before true leadership can ever take place, we must clear our confusion. Before our confusion can ever be cleared, we must become aware of the world in which we live. We must, as a Church and as church people, become as familiar with our culture and its forces as we are with television programs and their products. Every time a religion has abdicated its role as the cultural monitor and guide that religion has died and the culture decayed.

There is little doubt in the minds of most responsible church people that the need to understand our culture is of prime importance. There are a few who would deny the reality of the present situation by seeking to return to days long since silent, and in the traditions of antiquity, seek to find an easy solution to the problems of a rapidly changing culture. This retreat will not work.

We can take a lesson from one of the branches of physical medicine. Not only does physical medicine seek to relieve suffering. It seeks to prevent suffering and crippling illnesses. Within the preventive field, a most



vital role is played by the immunologist, the one who seeks to control the causative agents. Before these destructive agents can be controlled, they must be identified. This identification can only come if they are grown in the laboratory. This growing process is impossible until the researcher can create the culture within which the agent can be grown. Finding the proper culture is the major part of the project. Once the culture is understood, then, and then only, can the agent be reproduced and the proper antidote be reached. The knowledge of the culture within which destructive forces grow is gained only through patient and tireless work. There is no short-cut. True, the researcher has a head start when he benefits from the experience and efforts of those who have preceded him, but he must also bring to bear additional data and techniques developed in his own age. He must take from the past that which is relevant; he must work tirelessly in the present; and thereby he can help assure a more meaningful future.

The Church's role in a rapidly changing culture is not unlike the role of the medical researcher. This is doubly true in the case of marriages and the families that result. While physical science has been probing the outer reaches of physical knowledge, the social and religious disciplines have largely fallen into the role of cataloging events already completed and drawing from this mass of information certain theories. This is not enough. To define a force once unleashed is of little value to those who have been affected by this force.

The prophet of the Old Testament did look at the world around him and the history behind him. He could from this observation draw conclusions which showed the eventual results of a given course of actions. But

also, he could warn in divine tones of the catastrophic captivities which were the reward for ignoring the better way. The Church today cannot ignore its prophetic role in a world which is seeking adequate havens during its turbulent journey of change.

Facts are not enough. While they add to man's storehouse of information, they in themselves have no therapeutic value. Facts we must have, but we cannot stop with facts. Within the laboratory of faith, we must subject these facts of our culture to the scrutiny of experience and must analyze them in light of the Church's eternal mission. Then and then only can we really be about our Father's business, the business of making men whole. Of all the institutions concerned for the total welfare of man, the Christian Church alone has the depth of human experience, the maturity of religious tradition, and the genuine commitment to work for the whole state of Christ's Church sufficient to assume the supportive and preventive roles in our age of anxiety.

Marriage, as part of our culture, has changed and is changing. Families, as the basic units of culture, have changed and are changing. The eternal truths of the Christian tradition can only be related to the contemporary world by a Church that is aware of the cultural forces and of the demands placed upon the partners of the marriage and upon the families they have established. The Church must ceaselessly strive to relate itself to the human situation. We as a Church seeking to preserve and foster good marriages and healthy family relations must begin where the marriages are today. We cannot either romanticize the family through medieval concepts of chivalry, nor can we accept the Hollywood concepts of marriage.

Marriage and the family must be critically analyzed by the Church in light of past experience and present-day needs. First we must realize, as does Dr. Philip Q. Roche, that "we are born to love, but cannot do so until we learn to do so. This learning to love is inextricably bound up with the moral life formalized in our legal and religious institutions . . . in the first place, it should be noted that love is actually a relatively rare phenomenon in our society."<sup>2</sup> He states further that "love is a phenomenon of civilized society, and has made a relatively recent appearance in the history of mankind."<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, in speaking of marriage and the family in the past century, noted that "love was not conceived as existing in the marriage state, but outside the bonds of matrimony."<sup>3</sup>

The popular concept and the contemporary basis for marriage and the family is love. As one popular song puts it, "Love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage."

Yes, in sentimental song, in sensuous celluloid, in maudlin magazines, and novels nefarious, love is extolled as the elixir of life. Yet in the very word "love," we find difficulty. "Take the word *love* for example . . . A word which obviously should be most important in conveying personal feelings. When you use it, the person to whom you are talking may think you mean Hollywood love, or the sentimental emotion of the popular songs, or religious charity, or friendliness, or sexual impulse, or whatnot."<sup>4</sup> This ambiguity is a symptom of

<sup>2</sup> P. Q. Roche in *Man and Wife* by E. H. Mudd and Aron Krich, pp. 55 and 57.

<sup>3</sup> C. S. Lewis in *Allegory of Love*.

<sup>4</sup> Rollo May in *Man's Search for Himself*, p. 64.

our culture. Even our language has suffered at the hands of our rapidly changing cultural pattern.

The very word which verbalizes not only the basis for marriage and the human family, but the word which stands also for the essence of the Christian religion, has suffered distortion. Why is this? Can we not reach a common understanding of a concept so vital to human relations? The answer for now is "No." One of the truest characteristics of our age is the characteristic of transition. We are an age in transition. We are living in an age which was conceived during the dying decades of one era, born in the tumultuous decades of scientific striving, and left to mature in the decades of an age whose character has not yet crystalized. For this reason, all things are changing. Even the eternal verities of religion are being challenged and abused on all sides.

These uncertainties are reflected in the very institution which is at the very center of human society: the human family. While we may well consider the basis for marriage and the family today to be love, the very ambiguity of the term itself is reflected in the uncertainty manifested in today's families. The traditional role of the individuals within the family unit is changing: traveling fathers, working mothers, economic and social needs formerly met within the family unit are now provided outside the home. Instances to support this evidence of uncertainty<sup>5</sup> abound. The plentitude of this material removes the necessity of further exploring it here. But further exploration will fully demonstrate the Church's task to its families in a rapidly changing culture. The

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<sup>5</sup> A full and adequate picture of the current situation is found in the CSR Foreground Study No. 7 published in 1958 by the National Council, edited by Muriel S. Webb.

availability of material only accentuates the need.

The care and nurture of children, for example, is the primary obligation of parenthood. Yet in this rapidly changing culture which has taken fathers and mothers out of the home, a culture which has produced a fantastic mobility within its population, and a culture which has provided mass media of entertainment which cultivates confusion in young minds, there is little anchorage for the young mind. Where will it find care and nurture? The Church alone can be the constant quality in this transition. Even in the mobility of masses, the Church is in each new place. But before the Church can fulfill the need, the Church must come to a clear understanding of its role and reach a mature understanding of the very love it seeks to teach to the searcher.

Fundamentally speaking, we are all DPs in this age. We have been evicted, separated, dislocated. Our haunted restlessness testifies to our homelessness. We are the migrants spiritually unemployed, picking up any inadequate and temporary job even in the most successful tasks. We have been cut off from the ground of tradition; we are not committed to anything fundamental.<sup>6</sup>

The restless, the lonely, the displaced of our times are all too ready to knock on the door of any prophet who offers "peace in our time." Where can one find roots in a rootless society? The hardened earth of an arid path, the rock-strewn fields of today cannot provide the soil for growth. Their hopes deceived, their fears unquieted, and their doubts unanswered, the wanderer goes on seeking, finding solace only in silence. Yet does not the Church call, in His words, *Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*

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<sup>6</sup> Miller, Samuel H., *The Life of the Church*, p. 57.

But we cannot give rest until we understand the weariness. We cannot give hope until we meet the hopeless. We cannot give love until we know the loveless. "The cocktail party is the secular substitute for the eucharist. What they (the homeless) cannot achieve because of the weakness of their impoverished souls, they seek to gain by a chemical reaction desperately and cheaply bought."<sup>7</sup> These are the families we seek to lead. These are those who before our altars are made one flesh in holy wedlock. These are they, committed to the Church, whom we seek to feed with the bread of life and refresh with the wine of eternity. Yes, these are they, these are our brothers whose keepers we are, for God wills it.

Man in his rebellion, man in his frustration, has raised many golden calves to assuage his emptiness, but time and change erode their glitter, and dull their appeal. Alone and empty once more, man returns to his ceaseless searching. The Church alone stands in the chaos of confusion calling to man for only through the Church can man call upon God. But is our voice clear enough today to override the clatter of confusion? Are we certain of our own message? Do we know those to whom we call?

#### THE CHURCH'S TASK

THE CHURCH'S fundamental task to its people is to recall the fact that our ministry is to individuals, unique and separate, created by God for a purpose. Ours is a ministry to individuals joined together in a communion of His own creation. "Communion means the relating

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58-59.

of the parts, all the parts: good and evil, corporate and individual, divine and human. It is the curing of the split condition that we have come to know as Hell."<sup>8</sup> The Church of today must be the vehicle of communion and the means of communication. Only as we speak at the crossroads where human lives intersect, and lift this communion to the level of the holy; only as we infuse the communications of human conversation with a sense of the divine, can we ever minister to families in an age seeking purpose and reason.

Literally, the Church's ministry is one of communion amidst confusion. To be silent is to deny our mission. To speak without a divine dimension is to prostitute our divine commission. We cannot come under the condemnation of the poet when he wrote:

Our dried voices, when  
we whisper together  
are quiet and meaningless  
as wind in the dry grass  
or rats' feet over broken glass  
in our dry cellars.<sup>9</sup>

These voices speak of an urbanized society caught in the backwash of the industrial revolution. It is a society within which the individual is lost in the bigness of business, submerged in the collective pot of cultural conformity, and disavowed in the labyrinth of labor. Big education has categorized us. Big science has dissected and classified us. Big business and big industry have impersonalized us. We live under the anonymous authority of public acceptance. We have laid our self-

<sup>8</sup> Loomis, Earl A., Jr., *The Self in Pilgrimage*, p. 95.

<sup>9</sup> Elliott, T. S., *The Hollow Men*, p. 101.

hood on the altar of bigness and let our life blood drain meaninglessly into the arid earth which was once the garden of God's personal creation.

There is but one altar upon which the churchman can place himself; here, within the communion of saints alone, we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies. In making the true altar meaningful to families, we must also be aware of the other altars which call out for their victims. A valid altar, a meaningful life, these are the products of a living faith, a faith which relates to the life of the world today and tomorrow.

As the Church seeks to minister to the families of the household of faith, we must not only rediscover our mission to man, but we must be fully and completely aware of the false prophets, the blind guides who would lead those committed to our charge into the ditches of despair. With symptoms on every side—increasing numbers of divorces, rising incidents of juvenile delinquency, and the public glorification of infidelity, the Church must take vigorous steps today if it is ever to be a cultural force tomorrow.

All that has been said of culture, of society, of the world in which we live, is not only true for the masses, but is seen explicitly in each human family. Each human family, each communion of man and woman and child is a microcosm of the world divided. No one clergyman, no one parish, can singly change the course of world events. But each clergyman, each parish, each individual churchman, can be and is responsible for the sphere of influence within which he lives, however large or limited this may be. Because we do not find ourselves living in a large urban area does not mean we are free from

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the "fall-out" which comes from the explosion of urbanization. Because our individual parish or community does not have a large percentage of divorces or infidelities does not mean that we are safe from the cancer of cultural decay, which divides by human acts those whom God hath joined together.

The families which compose the household of faith must live in this cultural chaos whose legacy of faithless fears and worldly anxieties seek to hide from our eyes the marital mission of the Church revealed to us by God as his purpose in creation, that they may be one flesh. Platitudes will not cure the gnawing pains of cultural cancer. A vigorous attack on reality alone will destroy the enemy. Armed with faith, guided by experience, and girded with concern, we must go forth, knowing that he who is not with us is against us.

During this Epiphanytide, when the Church directs our thoughts to its mission in the world, let us recall that there is a marital mission to which each of us is committed. Epiphany begins with glimpses of the Holy Family, a unit in communion, which produced for the world a gift without equal, a gift not bought with gold and frankincense and myrrh, but rather a gift bought with love whose chief character was sacrifice, a gift without which no man alive could live beyond the mortal span of years. Is it not our mission to recall to the world's attention that love's true quality is found in sacrifice and not sensuality?

What more vital mission is there than our obligation to those whom we bless in His name, join together as one flesh, and call them a Christian family? As stones fitly placed together by the hands of man raised cathedral spires of faith toward heaven, thus the hands of the



Church with preparation, care, and continued concern can raise marital monuments to God which will fill the emptiness of a lonely world. Preparation from earliest youth, constant care for those who come to be married, and continued concern during the years of family living, these are the ingredients the Church must use to build homes which can be havens of blessing and of peace. The Church's responsibility in this area is ever-increasing. Each priest, each parishioner must be a watchman and guide for those who seek. Adequate preparation in family studies can not be limited to a professional few lest it be everyone's job but no one's responsibility. "It will be generally agreed that the most valuable contribution the Church can make toward the stability of the marriage bond is to help young people to marry in the right way."<sup>10</sup> In the hands of all concerned with the human family in a rapidly changing culture, the Church places tools professionally prepared, and these, added to the invisible resources of a meaningful faith, can be the antidote to the creeping cultural cancer which seeks to destroy that which God, through His Church, seeks to join together.

Our experience of God and of life, like the book of Genesis itself, begins with those whom God hath joined together. All constructive change must begin here in the family. At the center of each true family must be God. We, the Church, must put God there. He appointed no other vehicle for His coming. The Church of His son gives us the way, the truth, the life. This the Church must do: become the active, creative instrument by which families

<sup>10</sup>The Lambeth Report, p. 23.

Seek to live by the teaching and example of Jesus Christ;  
Joins in the worship of Almighty God on Sundays in church;  
Joins in common prayer and Bible reading, and grace at meals;  
Is forgiving one to another, and accepts responsibility for one another;  
Shares together in common tasks and recreation;  
Uses abilities, time and possessions responsibly in society;  
Is a good neighbor, hospitable to friend and stranger.  
Only in such a family; only in a true family,  
Can children learn that there is one God,  
... Learn what love and judgment mean,  
... Learn, little by little, how to be free.

Only in a true family can children find the models, both human and divine, which serve to lead them to a responsible freedom within which they too can establish a family and a home worthy of the God that made them and the Church that cares for them.

# Suggestions for Worship\*

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

COLLECT, Epistle, and Gospel for the Day

PSALMS and Lessons for Morning Prayer: Psalms 127  
and 128: Genesis 2:18-24; Colossians 3:12-24.

HYMNS: 296 For the beauty of the earth  
504 Our Father by whose Name  
433 Lead us, O Father  
276 Now thank we all our God

## *For a Blessing on the Families of the Land*

ALMIGHTY GOD, our heavenly Father, who settest the solitary in families; We commend to thy continual care the homes in which thy people dwell. Put far from them, we beseech thee, every root of bitterness, the desire of vain-glory, and the pride of life. Fill them with faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness. Knit together in constant affection those who, in holy wedlock, have been made one flesh; turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers; and so enkindle fervent charity among us all, that we be evermore kindly affectioned with brotherly love; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

## *For Parents*

DELIVER US, good Lord, from the excessive demands of business and social life that limit family relationships; from the insensitivity and harshness of judgment that prevent understanding; from domineering ways and selfish imposition of our will; from softness and indul-

\* Subject to authorization by the bishop of the diocese.

gence mistaken for love. Bless us with wise and understanding hearts that we may demand neither too much nor too little, and grant us such a measure of love that we may nurture our children to that fulness of manhood and womanhood which thou hast purposed for them; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

CHARLES S. MARTIN

## *Litany for a Christian Home*

*Prayers New and Old* (Forward Movement Publications)  
Page 101-2.

# For Further Reading

*The Family Today*, being the Lambeth Report: National Council, 35 cents.

Lambeth Looks at the Family: National Council, 25 cents (Pages 32 and 33 contain additional resource material, which all are invaluable to a parochial program on the subject of the family).

Fromm, Erich, *The Art of Loving*, (New York, Harpers, A World Perspectives Publication, 1956).

Loomis, Earl A., Jr., *The Self in Pilgrimage* (New York, Harpers, 1960).

May, Rollo, *Man's Search for Himself* (New York, Norton, 1953).

Miller, Samuel H., *The Life of the Church* (New York, Harpers, 1953).

Mudd, E. H., and Krich, Aron, *Man and Wife* (New York, Norton, 1957).

## Suggestions for Epiphany Observance

1. Devote time with each session of the parish youth group to discuss mating and dating, marriage and the family. Reading the marriage ceremony with youth groups sets forth not only the Church's teaching and expectations in matrimony, but instills a sense of significance and respect before the senses become dulled by sentiment and ceremony. It is often of value in this setting to employ additional professional help from the ranks of Christian physicians, lawyers, counsellors.
2. A similar emphasis can be used with adult groups, except that more attention can be spent on understanding cultural forces and their consequences.
3. The First Sunday in Epiphany is often referred to as Holy Family Sunday, and it is most fitting that the focus on the service be on the human family and its responsibility in a rapidly changing culture.
4. It can be of value to use *The Marks of a Christian Family* found in the Lambeth Report as a basis for family self-examination and inventory. It also might prove enlightening to use these marks similarly for an evaluation of the parish as a family.
5. Together with the vestry, or other responsible groups within the parish family, discuss the Church's role in both pre-marital and post-marital counselling, survey the resources available, books, pamphlets, discussion groups, within the parish, for those seeking further information. Familiarizing yourself also with the resources available through the National Council.