Threats to American Family Life

Joseph T. Alves

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also give God to their children. Too many parents who would be horrified and angry at charges of malnutrition and maltreatment of their children in the natural order, are yet starving them to death in the spiritual order because of sin in their own lives.

As Christ on the Cross secured grace for all of us, so married people secure grace for each other and parents secure it for their children. We are talking about man redeemed but also redeeming.

CONCLUSION

So, human, unique and sexual beings get married—that’s who. But they are also redeemed, called to live with each other, not only in the natural order of love but in the supernatural order, directly with God. If they are willing to throw away their spiritual birthright of love-union with God, it is oftentimes because the earthly “mess of pottage” is more attractive. Perhaps we in the teaching Church will be judged more severely by God than they because our failure to show God in His beauty is greater than their failure to see Him.

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Threats To American Family Life

REVEREND JOSEPH T. ALVES, D.S.W.*

Tolstoy, in opening one of his novels, states that every happy family is happy in the same way, but that every unhappy family is unhappy in a very different way. This simple, but profound truth is the reason why every disturbed family needs and deserves lengthy and unique attention. It is one of the great achievements of our community that unhappy families can come to receive this unique attention from a number of professional caseworkers in Catholic Family Counseling. But it is one of the most distressing features of our day that so many need it and that almost every third family—perhaps even despite the marriage counseling services available to them—becomes so unhappy that its life together ends in divorce. This evil, though not the sole evil threatening the existence of happy family life in America, is nevertheless a very great one. But before discussing this at any length let us first take a look at the American family and see what changes have taken place in it during the past fifty years.

The family of today is not the family of fifty years ago. Then the family was an extended family which included relatives of various degrees. Today the family is a conjugal one composed of mother and father and the children. Fifty years ago the family was a production unit, whereas today it is a consumption unit. From a patrarchal, authoritarian society it has developed into a democratic one. From a rural society, it has become an urban society for less than 10% of the families in America now live in rural areas. There is less food raised in kind by the family. Today, the family is dependent, almost exclusively, on wages. Now there are nearly 15 million Americans who are dependent on old age and survivors insurance benefits. Also the family has shed various responsibilities which it had fifty years ago. Religious instruction, for example, is now solely the responsibility of the Church. Education is now solely the responsibility of the school. The American family has become more mobile; it has very few, if any, roots. There is a great movement today to the suburbs for residence, with the father working in another community entirely. There is no clear-cut division of labor between the sexes. Yes, there has been a great increase in the standard of living and a drop in the illiteracy level. There are 43 million families in America today. The forecast is that there will be 15% more in the next ten years. The age at which people contract marriage has decreased from 26 for the groom and 22 for the bride at the turn of the century, to 22 for the groom and 20 for the bride today. The birth rate has in-

*Father Alves is Executive Director of Catholic Family Counseling, Inc., Archdiocese of Boston. He is the Commissioner on Aging of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a member of the American Academy of Religion and Mental Health, a member of the American Academy of Clinical Sociology. The above address was made to the Catholic Alumni Sodality, Boston, at a spring meeting.

AUGUST, 1964
There are more than six million children under twelve years old in the United States under twelve years old are caring for themselves without even neighbors or anyone to look after them.

So much is it clear why jurisdiction over divorce cases in Massachusetts came to rest principally in the Probate Court. What is even more difficult to understand is why the ecclesiastical procedure and grounds for granting separations (without the right to remarry) were taken over to be used in proceedings in which a complete release from the bond of matrimony was to be given. The fact is that this adversary procedure, borrowed from a very different legal proceeding, never really suited the legal contest in which two persons seek to rescind the contract of marriage. It has now come about as a matter of fact that the adversary proceeding, originally designed to make it difficult to get a divorce, is being abused and exploited in a tidal wave of uncontested divorces.

Without recommending that the adversary procedure be discarded, one must face the fact that the law as presently constituted frequently renders the judge powerless even to attempt a reconciliation. If corroborated and uncontested evidence is submitted, the Tribunal must grant a divorce.

Many states and counties have been far more aware than Massachusetts of the inadequacies of the legal procedures borrowed from the ecclesiastical courts and applied to petitions for divorce. The District of Columbia, the City of Toledo, Los Angeles, Denver, and several other areas have adopted reconciliation. Without recommending that the adversary procedure be discarded, one must face the fact that the law as presently constituted freely renders the judge powerless even to attempt a reconciliation. If corroborated and uncontested evidence is submitted, the Tribunal must grant a divorce.

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as a life of dedication of a man and a woman to each other; for our forefathers marriage meant a solemn vow to love, not a rescindable promise to be in love. How can we reestablish that noble ideal? It will take an enormous effort on every level of society to check that decay and disintegration of family life which is the greatest threat to the spiritual security of the nation. It is up to the intellectual and spiritual leaders of our age of anxiety to study the new crisis that is upon us, up to all to help them to hammer out new laws, and to radiate new ideals.

I appeal to all Catholic parents to consider this their primary responsibility—forming spiritually strong and emotionally healthy parents of the next generation. This republic will be as fearlessly plundered and laid waste by barbarians in the twentieth century as the Roman Empire was in the fifth; with this difference, that the Huns and Vandals who ravaged the Roman Empire came from without, and that your Huns and Vandals will have been engendered within your own country and by your own institutions.

Conversation in Silence

Eyes are a savory blend of moods and emotions. They show trust in childhood, inspiration in youth, protection in motherhood, memories in the golden age. In business, they bargain; in anger, they defy. Their language is love, punctuated by a wink and translated by a smile. In prayer, they silently speak craving for the Almighty. In love, they are shining medallions, deflecting sorrow as they radiate trust. They are detectives by instinct, searching the soul and measuring the love. They are salesmen, mirroring the mind, selling the intangible, selling themselves. They are a factory of dreams. Tears are but summer showers with rainbow the reward for sorrow melted by the warm new sun. They are the stars that guide the destiny of the earth bound; they need no halo for the reward for sorrow melted by the warm new sun. They are the stars that guide the destiny of the earth bound; they need no halo for the reward for sorrow melted by the warm new sun. They are the stars that guide the destiny of the earth bound; they need no halo for the reward for sorrow melted by the warm new sun. They are the stars that guide the destiny of the earth bound; they need no halo for the reward for sorrow melted by the warm new sun. They are the stars that guide the destiny of the earth bound; they need no halo for the reward for sorrow melted by the warm new sun.

J. T. Nix, M.D., Ph.D.

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The Birth Control Controversy

In The United Kingdom

JOHN RYAN, F.R.C.S., F.I.C.S.
LONDON, ENGLAND

Seldom in the United Kingdom has the Catholic point of view on a medical-social problem been given such publicity in the national press as during the last few months. As would be expected, the problem is birth control, but considering the Catholic population in this country which is below 5 million, it is of more than usual interest that our point of view should have been given such prominence. The background of the general interest in this subject is the result of the flood of literature on birth control, repeated references on radio and television, and the focusing of public attention on the minority group, i.e., Catholics and their objection to family planning by the generally recognized methods in this country.

Until quite recently the Catholic hierarchy were prepared to accept the ruling of the Church on this question without going into the reasons too deeply. They were accepting the ruling as a matter of discipline, and some even as a matter of faith. For many years, in fact since 1948, I have suggested in articles and letters to the Catholic press, the importance of educating the Catholic community not only to know the teaching of the Church on birth control, but also to understand the reasons for the views we hold. I have stressed that Catholic social organizations and the clergy must inevitably be confronted with the question of planned parenthood. At that time there was still a strong core of Catholic opinion which considered that the sole purpose of marital sex relationship was procreation. Later, in 1951, following Pope Pius XII's Disciplines on Moral Problems in Married Life, planned parenthood, by means morally acceptable to the Church, became more recognized as a benefit to the family and society. There followed many books on the Catholic approach to the function of sex in marriage. In one of these books, Love and Control, by Cardinal L. J. Suenens, the author clearly brings into perspective the meaning of "primary" and "secondary" purposes of marital sex relationship, in the following passage:

In speaking of the primary purpose, the Church does not wish to consider the other purposes to be understood as secondary in the modern sense of the word. For us "secondary" signifies of lesser importance and it is not in that sense that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself. It must be that the Church wishes to express herself.