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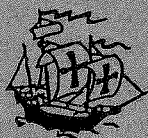
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PRESS

# Christian Citizenship

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## UNIT I THE THREE NECESSARY SOCIETIES

Man is, by nature, a social being. He cannot live independently of the three societies which he helps to form. He is part of a *family*, the basic unit of civil society, and the first society, as well. He is also part of the *Church*, which may be described as God's society in this world. Finally, he is subject to the *state*, an entity which developed from the basic human need to live together in communities, states, nations, and the world. As a Catholic lady or gentleman who lives in all three societies, you must understand them well enough to be able to live successfully within them. You have an important part to play in the preservation and propagation of Christian ideals.

### THE FAMILY

Family life is of divine origin. Bishop Fulton Sheen stated the simplicity of Catholic teaching when he said, ". . . in making man and woman, who find their natural complement in one another, and whose children are the incarnation of their mutual love, God did found the family."

### The importance of the family

The importance of the family is recognized by both Church and state, both of which cherish and protect it as the basic unit of all society. It is founded on the divine institution called marriage. This family-making bond, the holy sacrament of Matrimony, can never be broken, except by death.

Originally, each family was a self-sufficient unit, providing its own food, clothing, shelter, security, defense, and state – all in one. After a time, families grouped together for better security. These clans and

tribes eventually grew into what would become the state. From this we can see that the primary purpose of the state is to assist families in providing for temporal welfare.

In a way, the Church grew out of the need of families to worship God in a way worthy of His great dignity and majesty. Initially, it is likely that the father of the family was the priest. Leading the family in prayer, he would also offer sacrifice. This was all God demanded at the time. But as His Chosen People increased in numbers, fathers of families became fully occupied in providing a living for their dependents. Because they could no longer give the appropriate time and thought required for religious ceremonies, God instructed His People that certain men must be freed from work and other responsibilities, and be trained to perform the religious ceremonies and to offer sacrifice in the manner God specified. Thus, the priesthood was instituted by God Himself to assist families in performing their religious duties and to help them with spiritual development.

If a state is to have good citizens, they must be trained in civic virtues in the home. It is this home life which, by and large, determines the standards of a country's citizenry. Likewise, if we are to be holy members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we must be taught – and teach – goodness in the home. Honesty, integrity, and obedience to legitimate civil authority, not to mention the eternal law of Almighty God, have to be learned in the home.

The mother is the heart of the family. In ancient times, and even in numerous countries today, a mother does not occupy the high position she does in our homes. In many

places, women are considered an inferior sex. Paganism and many false religions degrade women to the level of unpaid servants. Christ showed great love for the home by spending thirty of His thirty-three years there. He showed devotion to His mother on numerous occasions, making it clear that God had intended from the beginning for women to have a place of honor in the home. In a Christian home, then, the father is the head of the family, but the mother is the center of love and affection. She is most certainly the heart of the family.

Every boy who truly has the spirit of Christ within him will imitate Our Lord's chivalry toward women. Prior to the Incarnation, it was considered "manly" to rule with the iron hand of stern justice, and to lord this authority over others. Christ changed this idea by raising such qualities from the natural level to the God-like level, making it manly to be gentle, considerate, courteous, thoughtful, and sympathetic. Truly, Our Lord Jesus Christ was the first real gentleman, and He intended for those of us who wish to follow Him to give due respect to our wives, mothers, and sisters.

### **Authority in the family**

As we have seen, even before the Light of Christ illuminated the world, primitive and pagan people had some ideas similar to ours concerning authority in the family. Since all men are descended from Adam and Eve, there is every likelihood that certain ideas, beliefs, and values were passed down from generation to generation. Additionally, the ideas of those who lived in ancient times were drawn from Natural Law and were based on strict codes of justice and obedience. Interestingly, the position of the father as priest in ancient times proves that *parental authority is of divine origin*. But, despite the fact that they recognized the great dignity and even divine

authority of parenthood, many pagan fathers abused their power.

Now, in the Christian home, the father's position of authority is supreme, as well; however, there is a significant difference. The Christian father recognizes that Almighty God has given him the privilege of cooperating with Him in the creation of human life. It is upon this fact which is based the dignity of the father of the family. Time after time, the popes and councils of the Church have taught that the father is the head of the family, and that the mother holds the place of honor beside her husband. Pope Leo XIII referred to the father as "the ruler of the family and the head of the woman." Pope Pius XI said, "The father's power is of such a nature that it cannot be destroyed or absorbed by the state." Interestingly, the same Pope warned fathers to "make right use of their authority." Christian fathers are to temper their use of authority by the spirit of loving care and God-given responsibility which Christ brought into the world.

The mother's position in the family is different from that of the father; however, her vocation is equally important. Pope Pius XI said, "As the father occupies the chief place in ruling, so the mother may and ought to claim for herself the chief place in love." The Christian mother, unlike those pagan mothers of old (or the as yet unenlightened of today), holds a place of honor *beside* her husband. She is the life-partner in the great work of rearing their children. No greater lay vocation exists, than to raise and educate the children given so generously by God in the manner in which He would want them raised.

With respect to the duties of children to their parents, it can be summed up in six short words: "Honor thy father and thy mother." In this short command can be found all the obedience, honor, respect, and gratitude that

children owe their parents. Other virtues and habits are good; however, unless children progress in intelligent obedience, they will not please God or advance in any of the other virtues which make saints and good citizens. Only when authority and obedience operate in perfect order will modern Christian homes resemble the ideal set for them at Nazareth.

When Christ left His own home and set out to purify society, He began at society's source. With all of His Eternal and Infinite Wisdom, He made His first public appearance and worked His first miracle at a marriage feast. Later, Our Lord raised marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament, and made it clear that man could never put aside what God had blessed. Both Church and state recognize marriage as a fundamental natural institution. Both realize that any weakening of the family is a weakening of the foundation of society. Unfortunately, the divorce laws of all fifty states of the United States have become quite permissive in the last few decades, and divorces are now quite easy to obtain in nearly every country of the world, as well. The Church's teaching, however, has not changed: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

### **American families**

Since the end of World War II more than fifty years ago, America has changed in many ways. In particular, families – and what we have come to define as the quintessential family – have been transformed in the most fundamental of ways.

Perhaps you have seen re-runs of television situation comedies of the 1950's, stereotyped by the working dad in coat and tie who returns home at the end of the day to his stay-at-home wife, also impeccably dressed as, with a crisp apron, she puts the finishing touches on the evening meal. Typically, there are only two or three children, generally very

well-behaved and respectful, and the entire family sits down to eat dinner, with pleasant conversation. In these television shows, the worst crisis that ever seemed to occur might involve, for example, the conflict which ensued after the father promised to take his sons on a weekend camping trip, but was subsequently told by his boss that he would be expected to work on the upcoming weekend instead.

As we stand on the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we can quickly and easily see that family life in America, particularly, and over the rest of the world, in general, has changed significantly. And the greatest change has been in the area of the stability of the family. Permissive divorce laws, in addition to undermining the very foundations of matrimony (as we noted above), have contributed to a huge concomitant increase in the numbers of children who divide their time between parents living at two different addresses. Sociologists have even developed a label – "blended" – for the family that results when one divorced adult who has primary custody of children marries another in the same situation. From a Catholic perspective, these may not be "marriages" at all – in fact, they most certainly are not if their first marriages were valid. Yet, we see all around us an almost lackadaisical attitude in "ending" one marriage and "beginning" another. We are only now beginning to see the effects of such a mentality on a generation of children who have grown and are entering into their own marriages – with all the marital misconceptions they may have learned from parents who walked away from one another when the going got a little tough.

It is, then, crucial that we take some time in this section to look at what should be a "normal" family. A home is the working and playing, the hoping and praying *together* of the family group. It is the close and intimate

relationship of people who are bound together by the unbreakable bonds of marriage, birth, or adoption. The members of the family are a unit. They bear one name. They eat, sleep, and live under one roof. They worship together in the same pew at Mass. If anyone wishes to see a member of the family, he naturally calls on him at home.

Family life is a daily, even hourly, contest. The opposing forces are “love and sacrifice” versus “selfishness and pleasure.” Being a parent is no vocation for a coward. Both mother and father face the necessity of battling all the forces of life. Children know that it is love which makes parents brave and heroic in facing poverty, suffering, or even death for them. Gratitude and decency demand from children a return of love, reverence, and obedience. Family love conforms to the real definition of the word *love*: “Love is such a devotion to another that you give yourself, your time, your strength, your health for that person.” Parents love in this way. Children, too, must develop this kind of real love for the members of their family and they must learn to show it in deeds.

The place a family lives – whether a farm, a small village, or a big city – will affect its way of living in a number of ways. Regardless of the geographic location, however, people can live together happily and profit spiritually from one another if they make the necessary effort. The kind of living quarters is not crucial, either. People can live happily in large houses or small cottages, in single-family houses or in multi-family apartment buildings. Happiness and a well-rounded home life depend upon the Charity of members of the family, themselves.

The homes of today are unlike those of any time in history. So many chores which were previously done by hand are now mostly

automated. These “labor-saving devices” are certainly beneficial; however, the family no longer depends entirely upon its own members for material things. Still, the duties of the family are the same. Members of the family must be taught right from wrong, and safeguard their faith and morals by giving them religious instruction, good example, and a Christian education. The family must take care of the health of the children, and show them how to live peaceably and happily with others.

If America is to remain a vital unit and a force for good in the world, parents and children must put forth intelligent effort to keep strength and unity in American home life. America grew because of strong family life. Yet, ironically, the family is under attack today from a number of sources – attacks which we will discuss later in this course. But America will be strong only as long as its families remain strong and vital units of society. Hence, our first duties as citizens are found within the four walls of our own home.

### **What the family does for each of us**

A good family performs the important functions of providing for our spiritual and social development. Its benefits are of two kinds – material things and things beyond price. The principal material things are food, clothing, and shelter. Those beyond price consist in the growth of our personality and fidelity to Christ. If homes are nothing more than places to eat, sleep and supply our physical needs, then totalitarian governments are not wrong when they take children from parents to educate and care for them. But there are things we get from good family life that no other agency can ever supply.

**Spiritual benefits.** A primary objective of good family life is the formation of boys and girls to the likeness of Christ, the formation of Christian characters. The number and quality

of your behavior patterns or habits are greatly determined by your home life. Whenever family members accept Christ's way of life, by making His principles and ideals their own, they grow as God intends.

**Material things.** If children realized the large amounts of money parents spend to keep them properly clothed, fed, and housed, they might be more considerate in their requests for luxuries. Making enough money to support a family has caused the very fabric of the American family to change since the end of World War II. Fifty years ago, mothers who were forced to work outside the home were almost unheard of. Now, the vast majority of American families find that income must be generated by both parents in order to make ends meet. To make matters worse, housing and food costs have skyrocketed, in reference to the proportion of the overall salary or wages previously needed for such goods. As an example, today, most families spend well over a third of their combined incomes just on rent or home mortgages. And then there are food, clothing, and transportation costs, all of which, when combined, allow very little for American families to save for the future.

**Personality.** A home provides the fundamentals which help personalities to develop most fully. First, your family provides affection. Love motivates your desire to help and serve others. Among family members, it helps develop correct attitudes, sympathetic understandings, and loyalties which cause personalities to grow and become good.

Besides love, another aspect of the family which develops personality is a *feeling of belonging*. All the members of a family belong to each other. Your mother, father, brothers, and sisters are yours more than any of your other possessions. Think of how

often you say, "My mother" or "My brother." It is a lonely person who belongs to no one – or to no group, especially a family group. Every one of us, for the proper development of our personalities, needs to belong to someone, and to have someone belong to us.

In addition to affection and a feeling of security, your family gives you a *feeling of security*. Your home is a place that makes you feel safe. Children are never afraid when Father and Mother are near. Family prayer, especially the recitation of the daily rosary, keeps alive in a Christian family a consciousness of the abiding presence of God in their lives. This gives the family's sense of security a solid and immovable foundation. Sorrow, misfortune, unhappiness – even death – cannot shake it.

### **Your part in family life**

Children have certain tasks to perform about the house. The kinds of work around a home change from generation to generation, from one location to another, and from one family situation to another. It is not the kind of work done around the house that matters so much, but rather, it is the fact that you take the responsibility of a fair share in it. Where a spirit of selfless cooperation exists, homes are happy, tidy, and efficient. Boys and girls who grow up taking their fair share of day-to-day home responsibilities will be best trained for their adult life – for successful partnership in marriage, for a fruitful religious vocation, and for happiness in business and social affairs.

In a good Christian home, citizens learn to live wisely and prudently. Each family member tries to respect the rights of others in sharing a family possession, whether that possession is the family income, the car, the radio, or the bedroom. Fair sharing of family possessions makes for happiness of the individuals, and is excellent training for the wider responsibilities of citizenship.



To keep the members of your family interested in home affairs is a sure way of preserving the unity of the family. In choosing forms of recreation you should try to discover interests which both you and your parents can share. We are all familiar with the great maxim of family life, "The family that prays together stays together." It is no less true that the pursuit of common interests is another great secret of family unity, for "the family that *plays* together, stays together," as well.

## THE CHURCH

In a sense, the family is the most important of the necessary societies because it is the first to which you belong, and you will never be more closely related to any human beings than you are to your father and mother. But in a greater sense, the Church is the most important because it will last forever. God is its ruler and its work is supernatural, or above the things of this world. The Church helps you to achieve the real purpose of your existence, because it is God's own Kingdom, and you belong to God.

### A kingdom and a contract

The Church is a kingdom. It is a union of all people under one Head, Christ, the King. Our Lord Jesus Christ, as God, calls all people to His Kingdom, the Kingdom of God, of which He spoke so often in the Gospels. The faithful swear allegiance to God, and promise to keep His law, and defend His kingdom, just as citizens of the United States, for example, swear allegiance to their country and promise to defend it. In this way, then, it is also a "contract," of sorts (though this is not meant to imply that the consent of those who serve is the ultimate source of authority for those being served).

The Church is a great organization, a union of all men everywhere in the world, an eternal Kingdom, greater than all the kingdoms of the world. It is composed of all nations, all families, all people everywhere. There is no conflict between citizenship in a state and membership in the Church. If you are a good citizen, you will be a good and faithful member of the Mystical Body of Christ – the One, True Church. If you are faithful to your duties in the Church, you will be a good citizen.

In His public life, Our Lord set about to establish His Church by choosing twelve apostles and seventy-two disciples as the leaders of His Kingdom. To these, He gave special powers, and on a rock-strewn beach on the north coast of the Sea of Galilee, Our Lord appointed Peter as head of the Church to represent Him. Christ promised to remain with the Church until the end of time. Holy Mother Church cannot teach us error about faith or morals, and she can never be destroyed. The Holy Ghost guides her forever in holiness and truth. The Church is the mouthpiece of God, a society instituted by God for men. *She is the congregation of all baptized persons united in the same true faith, the same sacrifice, and the same sacraments, under the Holy Father, the Pope.*

Because the duty of the Church to teach was laid upon by God, the Church has the right to teach. This right must be fully respected. The family offends God if it fails to take advantage of the sacraments made available by His priests. The state offends against God if it denies the right of the Church to maintain schools, to publish books, or to speak from pulpits, lecture halls, or over the television or radio. The irony of the current situation in our fair land is that while the Church is free to teach through all these means mentioned, many of those who should be

spreading the True Faith don't appear to be interested in the propagation of the Faith.

### **The parish**

Through the parish, the Church performs its functions and fulfills its duties. In fact, the parish is like a miniature model of the universal Church. The parish exists that the people of the community may be taught, sanctified, and governed in all that pertains to the spiritual good.

The government of a parish is the pastor's responsibility. In him is vested the spiritual power to offer the Sacrifice of the Mass, to administer the sacraments, to enforce or dispense with certain ecclesiastical laws, to teach the divine law as interpreted by Holy Mother Church, and to promote virtue. He also has the authority to manage the financial affairs of the parish. He is in charge of erecting buildings, and of the maintenance and repair of lands and buildings. He is the administrator of all property belonging to the parish.

The pastor has authority over these affairs because it is delegated to him by the bishop. In theory, the bishop is the pastor of all the people in all the parishes of his diocese. He is directly responsible to Almighty God for what is taught to the people, and for all the efforts made to sanctify them. Of course, the bishop cannot make personal contact with every soul committed to his charge. He, therefore, divides his diocese into smaller territories, ordains priests, assigns them to these territories, and delegates to them the authority necessary for carrying on the work of the sanctification of souls.

**Parochial activities.** The pastor teaches his people through a number of means, including Sunday sermons, adult and children's catechism, and convert instruction. A good pastor is tireless in his efforts to teach

his people to pray, to practice self-denial, and to live in virtue. He points out to them the dangers and temptations that lie in their path, and he joins with them in the effort to remove these obstacles to virtue.

Official records of weddings, funerals, and baptisms are kept in the rectory. Organizations within the parish for companionship, mutual encouragement, and example in the practice of virtue are intended to bring together people of similar sex, age, or common interests. There are many societies found in an active parish, including the Knights of Columbus, the Holy Name Society, and the Sodality of the Blessed Virgin Mary, to name just a few.

One of the most important activities of the pastor is his personal visitation of the people. In large parishes, there could be dozens of "shut-ins." These include the blind, the lame, the crippled, and those with incapacitating chronic health problems. Pastors spend much time in hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and private residences where the chronically ill and the temporarily sick desire the Sacraments.

The pastor is often called upon to settle family quarrels, or to intercede for a wayward son or daughter. In all this, it is his responsibility to promote virtue everywhere. He must personally oppose any person, and seek to close any place in his parish, which is an occasion of sin for his flock. Often he must go to Christ's enemies, or to the poor, weak sinners who have drifted away from God. With these he pleads and argues, praying that they may come back to the fold.

Additionally, if the people can afford it, a school is built where a complete Catholic education is offered all the children of the parish. The entire parish contributes money to build and maintain the school, but the direct responsibility for its administration falls on the