

Book Review

CLEAR LIGHTS ON MARRIAGE, SEX AND CELIBACY

by

Rev. Fr. Marciano Malvar Guzman, Ph.D.

The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy. Edited by Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre. Published by Sinag-tala Publishers, Inc., 1976, 388 pp.

Sinag-tala Publishers, Inc. enhances its already prestigious collection of spiritual and doctrinal writings with a highly reassuring book on such timely as well as eternal issues like marriage and the family, and the meaning of celibacy. Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre's **The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy** offers a collection of the Church's enlightening statements, together with the most classical biblical passages directly referring to these themes.

In presenting some of the most important declarations of the Church on the previously mentioned subjects, this volume clearly unmasks the serious threat poised to individuals and societies by the growing secularism and materialism of our times, which seek to deny the supernatural and substitute man for God. Fed by naturalism, which aims to reduce the supernatural to the merely natural, the immanentistic philosophies which began in the Renaissance humanism, and the neo-modernistic trends which seem to creep steadily into some sectors of society, some unchristian elements nowadays launch relentless attacks against the indissolubility of marriage and strive to morally justify the practice of birth control by artificial means, while at the same time debase the dignity of virginity and celibacy which Christians have always highly esteemed. **The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy** gives the reader the consistent position of the Church on marriage, sex and celibacy, helps him see the deceitful snares laid to unenlightened individuals by pressure groups advocating divorce, artificial contraception, sterilization, the commercial exploitation of

sex, and abortion, and makes him perceive the real dignity of marriage and apostolic celibacy in the context of the common good.

Through this highly recommendable volume, Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre makes the reader share the richness of Christian doctrine on marriage, sex and celibacy by letting the Church speak for herself through relevant passages of Holy Scriptures, the teachings of several ecumenical councils (Florence, Trent and Vatican II) and Roman Pontiffs from Leo XIII to Paul VI. The book seeks to achieve a three-fold purpose as the author himself states in the **Introduction**: "The purpose of this book is to gather in one volume some of the most important Church statements on Marriage and Celibacy prefaced by the most classical biblical passages on same. First, in order to show the expected continuity of doctrine in all Church statements: if the Church could change in any point of faith or morals it would not be a **divine** institution; it would have secularized itself — this is not so much conservatism for its own sake, as fidelity to a living tradition received from God: if the tradition is **living**, a change can only be (i) homogenous with what preceded it, and (ii) for the better, not for its own sake, no contradiction with the past, but consistent continuity. Second, so that Catholics may know with certainty what is real Church doctrine, to which they have a right, and what is just opinions of individual theologians... And third, so that both Catholics and non-Catholics may find all this precious material put together for any serious study of the matter, as well as for quick reference".

Rev. Dr. Joseph M. de Torre, a holder of a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of St. Thomas Aquinas in Rome, and presently a lecturer in Social Economics and Ethics at the Center for Research and Communication (CRC), has previously written a book entitled **Marxism, Socialism and Christianity**, published last year by CRC, and edited a volume on the Church's teachings on society entitled **Social Morals**, published by CRC in 1975.

The editorial note accompanying the author's most recent work aptly declares, **The Church Speaks on Marriage and Celibacy** has this time "plucked the relevant passages on the subject matter from various religious sources to come up with such a rare collection of priceless doctrine".