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## Book Review of *Beginning Your Marriage* by John L. Thomas

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IMPORTANT  
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## *Beginning Your Marriage*

John L. Thomas, S.J.

### Review by

Rev. John J. Egan

The Cana Conference of Chicago

Sometimes good things do come in small packages. After having made one's way through many large and frequently loosely written works that present partial views as complete guides to marriage, it is gratifying to find a relatively thorough, well-balanced and realistic work in a pamphlet of seven chapters and 104 pages.

*Beginning Your Marriage* is a small booklet that has been published by the Cana Conference of Chicago to fill the need for a brief text for engaged couples on the questions about the final days of courtship and the initial days of wedded life. Intended for engaged couples, it presupposes the decision for marriage and is not concerned with such preliminary questions as basic sex instructions, dating or courtship problems.

The author is the Reverend John L. Thomas, S.J., assistant director of the Institute of Social

Order at St. Louis University. His deep interest in the problems of the modern marriage and the family is evident from his other works, as *The American Catholic Family* (Prentice-Hall, 1956) and a *Guide to Catholic Marriage* (Bruce, 1955) on which he collaborated with Clement Mihonovich and Brother Gerald Schnepf, S.M. His qualifications are those of a priest and professional sociologist writing in an area of his field in which he has specialized. It is only natural that the preoccupations and viewpoints of the sociologist rather than those, e.g., of the psychologist, economist, or physician, should be apparent throughout the work.

The booklet is of peculiar value because of the broad but detailed presentation of a Catholic philosophy that the author has been able to inject in his terse treatment of the various practical problems that

a newly wedded couple will meet. Indeed, the matter treated is so broad and the problems considered are so numerous and varied that the booklet seems like a careful condensation of a much larger work. Nonetheless, readability of style (despite the scattered appearance of technical theological and sociological terms) and humor of approach have not been sacrificed.

Some idea of the wealth of ideas presented can be found in a list of the subjects treated. The first chapter quite adequately outlines the theology of human life and the role that the division of the sexes and marriage play in this synthesis. The second chapter sketches in the personal, social, religious, and properly sacramental aspects of marriage. In the third chapter the social elements are discussed under the headings of ecclesiastical law, state law, and current marital customs. Under the consideration of the various adjustments that must be made, the author in the fourth chapter takes up the personal aspect of marriage — adjustments in sexual, spiritual, and economic matters; adjustments with the other's family and friends; adjustments with the realities of family living. The marriage act forms the subject of the fifth chapter; here the author is not concerned so much with the techniques as he is with the personal significance and values necessary

to make physical love a genuine expression of Christian married love. In the sixth chapter various specific sexual problems and questions common to newlyweds are handled briefly but adequately. The seventh and final chapter closes the booklet with a discussion of the couple's vocation and task of living, work, and saving their souls together.

This little volume can serve as an excellent pre-marital instruction text. It is, perhaps of a specific use to physicians in the guidance of young people about to be married, or recently married, for it provides an excellent integration of the physical aspects of marriage with the psychological and spiritual factors which make them meaningful. It is too brief to serve as a text for any marriage course in school. Its frank discussion of sexual love likewise precludes its use to all but mature persons who are soon to be married. Within these limits, however, it not only is the one booklet of its kind, but probably will remain among the best for some years to come.

### *Beginning Your Marriage*

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