

# "Every Married Couple Should Read These Two Books!"

by JOHN M. HAFFERT



Some thirty-eight years ago I met the living sister of St. Therese (Pauline, whom St. Therese called her "little mother" and to whom she addressed most of her autobiography). I asked if she would pray for my work (I was writing my first book). Pauline answered not only that she would but later told me she had placed this work in the hands of St. Therese and that she knew that her little sainted sister would know at the right time to obtain the necessary aid for the work in question....

## No Surprise

I suppose it does not sound humble to say that every married couple should read that book. But I do not hesitate to say that I do not think any two books could be more important to the success of a person's marriage than *Sex and the Mysteries* and *Sign of Her Heart*. (I do not "profit" from saying this because I have never taken any royalties from them.)

On p. 184 of *Sign of Her Heart* I wrote of Lourdes as "the new Mount Carmel"—words used by the Bishop of Nimes speaking at Lourdes on the 25th anniversary of the apparitions (the greatest Marian devotion in the area of Lourdes at the time of Mary's appearances to St. Bernadette was to Our Lady of the Scapular). It was on the Feast of the Scapular (July 16th) that Our Lady appeared to St. Bernadette at Lourdes for the last time.

So it is no surprise to hear St. Therese saying: "I had asked Our Lady of Mt. Carmel for the grace you obtained at Lourdes.... I am so

happy you are wearing the Blessed Scapular!"

Today at Fatima Our Lady appears in Her final vision holding the Scapular down to the world. In all Her apparitions She shows Herself in different ways, but the Scapular is the universal sign that joins us to Her whether in the power of Her great miracle at Fatima or in the gentleness of Her appearances at Lourdes.

*St. Therese opens our eyes to that deep union which the Scapular symbolizes, especially in marriage.*

Often we hear married couples spoken of as being "two in one flesh." *St. Therese speaks of them as being "two in one soul"!* She speaks of the great depths of love possible in marriage as "almost infinite" and refers to the Scapular.

## Sign of Union

For St. Therese the Scapular was far more than a sign of salvation. It was not only an assurance of heaven but Our Lady's garment to unite us intimately with all the family of Carmel, and to each other in Mary's Immaculate Heart.

Most refer to Cana as a lesson in marriage, as the institution of a Sacrament. But St. Therese prays that Our Lord will always change the water into wine!... making every moment of a lifetime of marriage a moment of wonder.

Today many young people seem confused by changing customs. But deep in their hearts they all know that only in marriage can they pos-

sibly experience true love based on total commitment. And after making this commitment, those who have the Rosary and the Scapular in their lives will find, as St. Therese says, *that every day the water can change into wine.* Love of husband and wife can become "almost infinite."

## An Even Greater Love

But if love in marriage according to St. Therese could be "almost infinite," what can we say of love in those who, like St. Therese, are called to the celibacy of total consecration to Him Who is Infinite Love?

Fortunately, thanks to the beatification of Anna Maria Taigi (mother of seven) and thanks to many recent statements of the Church (especially in the documents of Vatican II), there is a new appreciation of the holiness and dignity of marriage. In the past, recognition of this dignity and holiness was overshadowed by the dignity and holiness of the priestly and religious vocations.

But when we lift up our eyes with St. Therese to the greatness of the married state, let us look even higher... for those privileged few who are called to it... to that state of which Jesus said: "He who can, let him take it."

*Each has his calling.* But we must feel that today many called to be spouses of Christ Himself are not answering the call. From many holy marriages like that of the parents of St. Therese, may we have many more like little Therese who were willing to be "the heart" of the Church!