

Conference Commentaries On

MARRIAGE AND DATING

with Bing Escudero

Every culture has its own mode of preparing for marriage. Rites, rituals and ceremonies help sanctify a couples union. Their symbols represent universal and ethical truths for a lasting and stable relationship. It helps lay the spiritual foundation for the emergence of the family.

Modern dating is part of the preparation for marriage. Parents seem to be more concerned not about dating but with the mating options available in dating. A car is easily a mobile bedroom. Sensually provocative advertising pervades. Liberal looseness leads to license. Before it was premarital pregnancy. Now it is safe sex. Because younger women can be physically more vulnerable, female problems are compounded. Understandably so, the protective anxiety of parents are more for their daughters rather than for their sons.

Our modern culture is undergoing a transitional phase of painful exploration. It used to be that premarital sex was an issue by itself, then the concern for teenage pregnancy, now the paranoia is on sexually contracted diseases. Cultural attitudes may range from the very strict to the most liberal, depending on how moral codes are interpreted to suit specific situations. For example, sex is not okay before marriage. Or, sex is okay for those above age 18, but not for those age 17 and below. Abortion is a no-no, but it is okay for rape victims.

In a multi-cultural environment, there are more options. Ethical choices are more complex. Conformity with what the majority does, appear to easily lend approval to a similar mode of conduct. What is popular may not necessarily be ethical or spiritual. In fact, the

higher the ethical standard, the less popular it is in practice. Fortunately, however, deep within every human being, there is a longing and aspiration, no matter how minimal, for the spiritually perfect.

The awakening of that aspiration for high ethical ideals is what constitutes true education. We are educated for ideas, and not for ideals. There is great intellectuality with not so great intelligence that can go around. There can be the wrong ideas about ideals. Education for ideals will provide the guidance that parents and youths are searching for. The only spiritual education is a virtuous education.

The different cultures of the world are found in America. We can go beyond the outer cultural differences to seek the inner universal unities that are of the nature of ethical and spiritual principles. This undertaking will enrich our educational themes. Our final advancement, for both young and old, is from our humanity to our inherent divinity.

Let there be education for responsibility and respect toward people and property. Let there be education for maturity which is the consideration for others. Let there be education for ethical ideals and for spiritual values. If public agencies and social institutions do not provide it, the last recourse is for family upbringing to make up for its lack or its absence.

We can, more than ever, have great faith and trust in our youths. They face more challenges with their added opportunities. As parents we can provide the support, encouragement and guidance that they need. Our community efforts can be a very healthy reinforcement. Our involvement is critical to success at all age levels. The busier we are, the more time may be called for to be with our youths, to be with their own problems and their positive possibilities.