

TAKING THINGS SERIOUSLY

January 1950 editorial

A couple is on the way to a team meeting:

The husband says to his wife: "Didn't the Smiths tell us last time that their oldest daughter had been admitted to a sanatorium?"

The wife replies: "That's true, I'm glad you reminded me"...

They arrive at the Smiths':

The wife says to their hosts: "How are you? How's your daughter? We've thought a lot about you; we've really shared your anxiety..."

In a neighbouring street, the Browns are hurrying to get ready:

The wife says to her husband: "Did you, at least, glance at the study topic?"

The husband (a lawyer) replies: "No, but you know that I only need to glance at the questionnaire to be eloquent!"

As the Jones climb the stairs, they suddenly remember that it is customary to share intentions during the prayer. They quickly rack their brains... That's it, I've thought of something: Nicole's whooping cough!

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Things are not taken seriously.

So many 'good' people treat things lightly... It is so wearing to take things seriously! It disturbs our peace. We've got enough worries as it is. Life would not be worth living if we took everything seriously! ...And how far will it take us? Besides, what does it mean to take things seriously?

I will not answer in the abstract but with facts that I witnessed or were told about (*using fictitious names*).

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Christmas is approaching... Sheila and Pat O'Brien have promised themselves a special treat for Christmas, and are looking forward to the feast with no less impatience than their children. They had been dreaming for so long about this special treat. In a few days time, their dream would become reality.

Suddenly, the phone rings. Their friends, the MacDonalds, very distraught, tell them that their little boy has caught poliomyelitis.

That evening, during night prayers, Sheila O'Brien says hesitatingly to her husband: "We must do something for them... we must add sacrifice to our prayer". Together they give up the idea of the treat; the money they will save will go to some very poor people...

When they see the MacDonalds again, they will be able to say: "We have associated ourselves whole heartedly with your grief". It will be true, it will be serious.

On another occasion, I was having dinner with the Williams. Our evening together was both sad and peaceful. We spoke at length about their little son Dominic who had just died. They showed me photographs of him, his face full of life - only a few weeks ago.

They said to me: "Every night, Father, during our prayer, we speak to our Dominic; but we still have not had the simplicity - or the courage - to do so during the prayer at our team meeting. And yet, we are very fond of these couples. They have been wonderfully kind to us in difficult times. We must resolve tonight, in your presence, to let them see at our next meeting that we suffer deeply and offer our suffering.

These are serious and earnest people. When we are capable of that sort of thing, our friendship is real and serious.

Henri Caffarel