

THE RELIGIOUS AND MORAL TRAINING OF CHILDREN

or Christian Education in the Catholic Home

ADVICE TO PARENTS

The direct purpose of the Fourth Commandment is to lay down the duties of children to their parents. But indirectly and implicitly we must understand from it that parents have duties to their children. These duties are divided into two classes. The first class has to do with the bodily and civil education of the child, to fit it for its position in the present life; the second class has to do with the moral and religious education of the child, to fit it for its position in the life to come.

THE DUTY OF PARENTS.

The duty of providing for off-spring until they are able to provide for themselves is dictated by nature itself, and even the brutes fulfil it. Yet there are in the world fathers so unnatural that they think only of themselves; they deny themselves nothing; they satisfy all their desires; and they leave their children hungry and half-naked. Undoubtedly there are fathers in nearly every community who spend in folly the money that should be used to buy what is necessary for their children. It may be only a quarter or a half-dollar spent now and again; but these little sums quickly run up to many dollars, perhaps a hundred dollars in the course of the year, and all this time their children are staying away from school, from catechism, and from Mass on Sunday, because they have not clothes or shoes which that money would provide for them.

THE TRUE CATHOLIC.

How often a head of a family will say that he does his best but he cannot keep his children properly clothed. Before he was married, however, he was wasting the money which he should have been saving up with a view to getting married. He is reaping now the folly of his youth. Still worse is the case of those parents who through idleness and lazy habits, have become unable to provide for the wants of their families.

The duty of providing for the children imposes on the parents the obligation of preserving them as far as they are able from all that can injure their bodily health.

THE CARE OF CHILDREN.

Many children grow up weak and sickly because their parents have not taken proper care of them, have not given them proper food, or perhaps even have ill-used them. But while taking proper care of their bodily health, they should not go to the other extreme and be over-anxious and over-careful about them. For in this way they are likely to make them grow up soft, delicate, unable to endure any hardships, unable or unwilling to work. All children should be brought up to habits of industry; they should be taught from early years that they must not be idle; that idlers are no use to themselves nor to anyone else. Even if parents are rich, they should still bring their children up to some employment.

EARLY EDUCATION AND HABITS OF INDUSTRY.

Going to school should be the chief employment of children up to the age of fourteen or fifteen. But during the hours which remain after school they should be taught to make themselves useful. It is a great shame to see women who are splendid house-keepers, with daughters who know nothing at all about house-keeping.

These women know how to do things so well themselves, and are so anxious to have them done well, that they cannot bear to have their daughters making experiments, which in the beginning of course, means a good many mistakes and a good many failures.

Again there are foolish mothers who will wear their fingers to the bone that their daughters may have soft white hands.

MISTAKES OF MOTHERS.

Mothers are committing a very great mistake, and worse than a mistake, when they do not teach their daughters all that they know themselves about house-keeping. A girl that is a perfect mistress of plain cooking and plain sewing is far better equipped to be mistress of her own house than if she could play two or three instruments and sing in two or three languages.

But first of all, in the natural order, parents should teach their boys and girls habits of cleanliness, order, neatness and carefulness. This means that parents should be cleanly, orderly, neat and careful themselves, and that they should bid their children to follow their example.

PROVIDE FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

It is your duty to provide for your children; and you cannot provide for them as you should, unless you keep your affairs in order and practice: economy in your expenditure.

Those parents, then, are guilty, who, through their wasteful and improvident habits, do not keep their expenses in proper proportion to their earnings, so as to be able to lay something by for a rainy day. Those parents are guilty who neglect their work and thereby make their families suffer. But much more guilty are those who spend what they earn in foolish or in sinful amusement, and, instead of supporting their families burden them with debt.

This means, of course, that parents must lead a life of sacrifice for the sake of their children, and must deny themselves a great many things which it would be lawful for them to have if they were unmarried. But when they were getting married, they knew the obligations which they were assuming; they took the burden willingly upon them; and now they should cheerfully bear it.

All this has reference merely to the bodily education of your children, the education which will fit them for the position they are to fill in this life.

THE TRUE CATHOLIC. CHOOSING A VOCATION IN LIFE.

The choice or a state of life, however, **MUST** be made by themselves. You may advise them; and it is their duty to listen to your advice with all respect. But you have no authority to tell them, for instance, that they must get married, or remain single; that they must or must not enter the priesthood or the convent. If you tell them this, they are not bound to obey you.

When they enter into a certain state of life, it is they, not you, who will have to bear the burdens of that state; therefore, it is they, not you, who must choose the state whose burdens they have to bear.

You have no right to command in this matter. But you have a right to direct and guide your children in the choice of a state of life, and you should do so. If you watch them closely, you will know their abilities sooner than they will themselves; you will even know their likes and dislikes before they have realized them themselves. You may be able to suspect what are the designs of God in regard to them; and then it will be your duty to do all in your power to help them realize these designs.

As soon as they express any inclination for a certain state of life, you should examine this inclination for them, and try to find out their reasons for wishing to enter that state, showing them the obligations, the consequences, the dangers of the course they wish to take. If you know that the choice is a bad one in itself, or that your children are not fit for the position they are inclined to choose, it is your duty to do all in your power to persuade them not to make this choice.

You cannot command in this matter, but it is your duty to advise; and if through want of your advice and direction your children make a bad choice, God will not hold you guiltless.

THE SPIRITUAL WELFARE OF CHILDREN.

There are comparatively few parents who do not pay attention to the bodily welfare of their children; but there is a vast number who pay little or no attention to their spiritual welfare.

Yet this is the all-important thing. So long as God leaves your children with you, they are only a deposit in trust; He commits them for a while to your care, so that as you were the instruments in His hand of bringing them into this world, so you may also be the instruments of bringing them to eternal happiness.

Our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Matrimony "to enable the husband and wife to live happily together and to bring up their children in the fear and love of God." The Lord made Christian marriage indissoluble, that the parents always living together might constantly work together in the Christian education of their children.

If your children do not succeed in this world; if they are not distinguished by talent, by riches, by dignity; this makes no difference, provided that in the end they save their souls. And the salvation of their souls depends to a very great extent on the Christian education which you give them. In order to give them this education, you must instruct them, watch over them, correct them, give them good example.

EARLY RELIGIOUS TRAINING.

This instruction is given by teaching them the principles of Christianity and training them to habits of piety. In the first place you must teach them the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Ten Commandments, explaining these in a manner which suits their age. To make them learn these by heart without giving them any explanation, is like giving hard bread to a child that has not yet cut its teeth. According as their minds develop, you must explain to them, as best you can, the fundamental truths of religion.

Let them know that God created them to know Him, love Him, and serve Him; that they are to remain here only for a time; that there is another life, a happy one or an unhappy one, which is to last forever.

Tell them about the soul" that is in them; that, though they cannot see it, it is far more precious than the body which they can see.

Tell them about the state that soul was in when they were born; how they were delivered from that state through the merits of Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven, was born in a stable and died on a cross to save sinners; how these merits have been applied to their souls in baptism; what promises were made in their name at that time, and how they must keep those promises.

Tell them that they must pray to God every day, since it is from God that all good things come; that they should ask Him for what they need, and thank Him for everything He gives them.

"And have we got to teach our children all that?" some parents will say. Yes, you have. "Can't we leave it to the catechism teachers and the priest?" No, you cannot ; and it is a great mistake for you to think you can.

YOUR DUTY AS PARENTS.

The duty falls on you in the first place; you may get the priest or the catechism teachers to help you; but you must not throw the work entirely on their shoulders. No one else can do the work as well as you can, because no one else has so much authority over your children; no one else has so many chances to teach them. The little lessons that you can give them now and then, even while you are doing your housework, are worth more to them than long instructions given them by others.

IGNORANCE OF PARENTS A POOR EXCUSE.

"Well," a good many parents will say, "I would be quite willing to instruct my children, if I were able. But I never was very well instructed myself ; I don't know enough to instruct them." That is not a good excuse.

Suppose a ship goes ashore and becomes a total wreck, with the loss of the crew, and the captain explains it to the owners by saying, "I don't understand navigation." Do you think they would take that for an excuse! Would they not say to him: "You don't understand navigation, and yet you took charge of a ship! Why then you have committed a crime; you are a robber and a murderer!"

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS PARENTS.

When you got married, Christian parents, you freely and deliberately took upon yourselves all the responsibilities of married life. One of these was the Christian education of such children as God might give you. If you, knowing you were not able to instruct children, took on yourselves the responsibilities of parents, you committed a grievous sin, a sin which may cause the loss of your children's souls, and which will certainly cause the loss of your own soul, unless you begin at this very hour to repair the mischief as far as may be in your power.

If you are ignorant of the fundamental truths of the Christian religion, that would be a sin for you even if you never had children; but if your ignorance prevents you from instructing your children, it is a double sin, because it is your bounden duty to instruct them. If you have not the necessary knowledge, you must try to acquire it, and in the meantime provide good books and take care to send your children to the catechism class; for, if you cannot instruct them yourselves, you must get someone else to do it. It is because this instruction is so often neglected, that so many children turn out badly.

To teach the principles of religion to your children is not enough, however. It is your duty to train them to habits of piety; it is your duty to mould their characters.

THE CHARACTER OF A CHILD IS LIKE WAX.

The character of a little child is like a piece of soft wax which may be moulded into any shape; but you must begin to mould it in time.

Even babes notice things long before they can speak; then let them notice the reverent way in which you speak of God our Father in heaven, and of Jesus Christ our Savior. Let them notice the terms of praise in which you speak of anything that is right and good, and the signs of abhorrence which you show for everything that is wrong and wicked.

Point upwards to heaven, and tell them that there is where good people go to be happy forever; point downwards and tell them of the dreadful fire in which the Wicked will burn forever. Show them the crucifix and a picture of the Blessed Virgin, and let them kiss them with reverence. Fold their hands in prayer; teach them to make the sign of the cross; do all this even before they are able to walk; and when they do begin to speak, let the names of Jesus and Mary be the first you teach them, and let the first coherent words they utter be a prayer.

When your children get a little older, you are to explain things more fully to them, telling them that God made the world and all that is in it, and how we are bound to serve Him. Especially, you should impress upon them that God is everywhere; that He sees everything we do and hears everything we say; that we cannot hide anything from Him. There is nothing better calculated to keep them from sin.

Try to stir up in their hearts a personal love for our Lord; teach them to look to the Blessed Virgin as their mother in heaven; teach them to have proper respect for sacred places and things. Try to inspire them with a great hatred of sin, especially of the sins most common to children, lying, stubbornness, bad temper, greediness, laziness.

TELL THEM A TRUE STORY.

This does not mean that you are to be continually preaching to them; far from it. A word now and again, a bit of advice; even when they ask you to tell them a story, you can turn this to profit, and take occasion to tell them a true story, the story of Jesus and His love, the story of His blessed mother and stories of the saints, and thus little by little you will sow the good seed in their hearts.

Of course you must see to it, that, as soon as they are able, they say their prayers morning and evening. When children come to the age of seven or eight without knowing even the Lord's Prayer, or the Hail Mary, the parents of those children are certainly guilty of mortal sin.

The first lessons in the catechism should be given by yourselves and even when they are attending the catechism classes, you should examine them; then you should instruct them for confession, and afterwards bring them to confession. At the same time you must take care not to overburden them with religious practices; be satisfied with a little, but see that they do that little well. A few prayers well said are better than many prayers badly said.

AS THE TWIG IS BENT THE TREE WILL GROW.

But just as you cannot teach your children the principles of religion if you do not know them yourselves, so you cannot train them to habits of piety if you are not pious yourselves. It is all important, therefore, that you should lead truly Christian lives, not only for your own souls' sake, but for the sake of the souls of your children.

"As the twig is bent the tree will grow," is an old proverb. The same idea is expressed in the words of the Holy Scripture: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it."

It cannot be said that children who have been well brought up never go wrong; but this can be said, that in the great majority of cases such children come out right in the end. They may have wandered from their father's house, but they know that house well, they love it still in their hearts, and they know the road by which they can return to it. Then when misfortune or disgrace, or sickness comes upon them, they say with the Prodigal of the Gospel: "I will arise and go to my Father." So we never despair of a sinner who has received a sound Christian education.

IGNORANCE HAND IN HAND WITH BAD HABITS.

But if ignorance goes hand in hand with bad habits and vices, ignorance of the fundamental principles of religion, ignorance of the most important duties of a Christian, it may well be said that there is no remedy for the evil. It is a hopeless case; and for this the parents are chiefly responsible, and will be held responsible at the Day of Judgment.

After having done your duty to your children in the matter of instruction, you must not forget that they are children of Adam, that they have been conceived in sin, and that, although this sin has been washed away in baptism, its consequences remain, and one of those consequences is an inclination to evil. It is your duty to counteract this inclination to evil as far as may be in your power, by watching over your children and correcting them.

You must watch over your children to keep them from learning to do wrong; you must correct them to make them stop doing wrong. But an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, watchfulness is much better than correction. Yet of all the duties of parents, watching over their children is the one which is most neglected.

"I always thought my children were so good," we hear many a poor father or mother say, "and I never knew the difference till it was too late. If I had known it sooner, I would have remedied the evil."

No, they did not know it, that is very true. But why did they not know it? Should they not have known it? What pains did they take to get information on the subject?

Truly, it is a strange thing, says St. Jerome, addressing himself to parents, that you are the last to know of the bad conduct of your children. Everyone else knows; the whole neighborhood is talking of it; and you do not even suspect that anything is wrong. This could not happen if you were even the least bit watchful. It could only happen when you shut your eyes and ears.

It is your duty to be watchful, and if you neglect this duty you are guilty of grievous sin.

STUDY THEIR CHARACTERS AND INCLINATIONS.

You must study the characters and inclinations of your children ; you must keep them out of danger; you must keep an eye on their conduct. You must notice the first signs of any evil passion and Check it at once. Even a very young child will show whether he is inclined to be bad-tempered, spiteful, proud; obstinate, vain. These are the germs of diseases of the soul; if they are allowed to develop, they will kill the soul; but they can easily be destroyed while yet in the germ, and it is the duty of parents to destroy them.

Watch your children, then, in order to break down their self-will, and make them from the beginning thoroughly obedient. It is a great mistake to pass over everything with little ones, under the pretext that they do not understand what they are doing or saying.

It is a great mistake to let these little ones have their own way, in order to keep them in good humor. They should be made to understand that they will never get anything by crying for it. Once they see that they can get what they want in this way, they will have it, and then instead of obeying you they will make you obey them. If you allow them to have their

own way for a time,—until they get more sense, as you say,—you need not be surprised to find their self-will grown so strong that you are not able to break it.

WATCH OVER YOUR CHILDREN.

Watch them, then, from the start, in order to develop their good and to check their bad inclinations.

Watch them, in the second place, to keep them out of danger. It is quite possible that danger may come to their souls through your own imprudence. You must be very careful that you do not scandalize your children yourselves, also that they do not scandalize one another.

Again, you must be very careful not to allow anyone to have charge of them who is not of a thoroughly good character. If children learn bad language and bad conduct from servants, the parents are very often to blame, for you should not employ such servants around your children.

TEACH THEM TO AVOID BAD COMPANY.

You should try to know who are your children's companions, and what kind they are, positively forbidding them to keep bad company.

Encourage your children to talk freely to you about their studies and amusements, asking them questions, and you will learn a great deal that will be useful to you. They will reveal unconsciously what you want to know, and then you can give them advice. If they are going to school, try to make the acquaintance of their teacher, and inquire how the children behave, what faults the teacher has noticed in them, and so on. The teacher has sometimes better opportunities of observing them than the parents have.

Keep an eye on your children's conduct at all times, as far as possible. Let them never be far away from you if you can help it, and make it your business always to know where they are. Insist that they shall come straight home after school, and then, if they want to go anywhere, let them ask permission.

PARENTS SHOULD ALWAYS KNOW WHERE THEIR CHILDREN ARE.

If you have a horse or a cow, you always know pretty well where they are to be found. Can you say the same of your children! Even at night, when they should all be in the house, many of you do not know where they are. They are running the road somewhere and learning no good, you may depend on that.

This is criminal carelessness on the part of the parents who permit it. The youngsters should never be allowed out after dark, and even with the grown-up ones you should insist that they be in at an early hour. There must be no going to bed and leaving the doors open for them to come in.

How any father or mother can go to sleep with an easy conscience, while their boys and girls are out, and they don't know where they are, is something hard to understand. You should never allow your girls to go out at night, without a proper escort, and this applies to going to church as well as to going anywhere else. If your girls are going out to service, you should be very particular as to what kind of families they go with.

You should see that they do not neglect their religious duties, and if you find that any attempt is being made to draw them away from their faith, you should put a stop to it immediately. You should never allow them to read a book until you have examined it and satisfied yourself that it is harmless.

If you cannot read, you should get someone else to make this examination for you. And when you are examining a book, try to put yourselves in your children's place. There may be nothing in the book which would do you any harm, and yet it would be dangerous for your children to read it. Some unwise parents think that their children are all right when they have a book in their hands. "My boys never go out at night; they spend all their time reading." "Reading what?"

This duty of watchfulness is very difficult and very painful, but nothing will excuse you from it, and you have the grace of the Sacrament of Matrimony given you for the special purpose of helping you to perform your duties as parents,—a grace which may be renewed as often as you receive worthily the Sacrament of Penance.

PARENTS SHOULD WORK TOGETHER.

Father and mother must work together in the education of the children ; the husband who throws all the responsibility on his wife is doing very wrong. Whether instructing them, or watching over them, you must share the labor between you. You should not take it for granted that your children are bad, but neither should you take it for granted that they only want wings to make them angels.

The best natural dispositions may be completely destroyed by a bad education, and the worst natural dispositions may be thoroughly corrected by a good education begun in time. Watch your children, then, Christian fathers and mothers, for it is your duty.

And remember, that the best watchers are those who can watch without seeming to watch. It is a tiresome task, and it will be a severe strain upon your energies; but it is also a grand and noble task, and great will be your reward if you perform it well.

BE REASONABLE, BUT NEVER ALLOW DISOBEDIENCE.

Never allow them to disobey you, not even in the smallest matter. Be prudent and reasonable in giving your commands, but once they are given, insist that they shall be obeyed. If the command is about a trifling matter, you need not have given it; but since you have given it, you must make your children obey it. And if they get the habit of obeying you in small things, they are not likely to disobey you in more important things.

What a pitiful state of affairs when we see parents begging their children to do something, or perhaps even offering them a reward if they will do it! If you do this, you are encouraging disobedience, putting a premium on it, in fact, since you let your children see that by disobeying you they will gain something.

PARENTS MUST NOT BE INCONSISTENT.

You must make a distinction between one fault and another, between the faults which arise merely from levity and those which come from malice. The more grievous the fault, the more severe should be the correction.

And yet there are many parents who will get into a furious rage with their children on account of an accident, a pane of glass broken, for instance, or a jacket torn. And perhaps these same parents will pass over lying, disobedience, cursing, or immodest language in their children with the mildest kind of a reproof, or it may be without any reproof at all.

Now, the children know very well, in spite of all your scolding, that a broken pane of glass or a torn jacket are not very important matters. And surely they must think that, in your estimation at least, lying, disobedience, cursing and immodest language are less important still.

But the slight correction which will do for a docile child will not be enough for a headstrong one. Some children are easily led to do right; others must be driven. You must study the characters and dispositions of your children, in order to know how you should deal with them.

The faults committed by parents in regard to the duty of correction may be set down under three heads: excessive mildness; excessive severity; a combination of the two.

Excessive mildness and indulgence is the fault of those who are so passionately fond of their children that they cannot bear to cause them the least pain or sorrow. They are so afraid of causing them this sorrow by correcting their faults, that they overlook their faults, they leave them unpunished, or perhaps they even go so far as to laugh at their faults.

How often we hear a child give a saucy answer to his father or mother, and the father or mother laugh at it as if it were a good joke. If the boy is headstrong and disobedient, if he is quarrelsome with his young companions, and impudent to older people, his parents pass over all this; perhaps they are even proud of it, for it shows that the lad has a high spirit. Yes, he has the kind of high spirit which makes a splendid street rowdy, the kind of high spirit which may cause him to end his days in the penitentiary or on the scaffold, and which is pretty sure to lose him his soul.

Murder is becoming more and more common. Not one in a hundred murders is committed in cold blood. Ninety-nine out of a hundred are due to bad temper; bad temper which the murderer's parents would not check when he was a child,

because it was only high spirit. How many a good man has been driven to drink by the tongue of a scolding wife. And she first learned to use her tongue in this fashion when she was a young girl. Her father and mother never taught her to control her temper; no, they were proud of her high spirit. What foolish parents! And do you think your children will love you better because you treat them in this criminally indulgent fashion?

Instead of showing your love for your children by not correcting them, you are proving yourselves their deadliest enemies. You are ruining them for this life, and for the next, and you are preparing endless misery for yourselves.

Be mild and just with your children, but be also firm and energetic enough to make yourselves respected. Your children will not love you any the less for it, and they will esteem you a great deal more.

But while avoiding one excess, you must take care not to fall into another which is even more grievous and deplorable, that is the excess of severity.

ILL TREATMENT OF CHILDREN.

There are parents so bad tempered that they will tolerate nothing. They cannot say a single word of kindness; they are always scolding or threatening, and their hands are ever ready to strike. There are brutal parents, who, even when they punish with good reason, punish far too severely.

Such harshness as this is altogether unnatural. God has implanted in all creatures a love and tenderness towards their young; and He expects his rational creatures not to root out this affection from their hearts, but to give it a proper direction.

To act in direct opposition to this is to act against nature itself, and must have very serious consequences. It greatly diminishes that affection and regard which children have by nature implanted in them towards their parents; for however strong this may be, if they meet with nothing from their parents but harshness and brutality, this will necessarily cool their love towards them. It has the worst effects upon the children themselves; it breaks their spirit, discourages them from all good, renders all advice useless to them, and makes them leave their parents at the first opportunity, and expose themselves in the cruel world to misery and perdition.

SHOW LOVE AND TENDERNESS TOWARD YOUR CHILDREN.

To prevent this, the parents should always show a love and tenderness for their children, never get in a passion with them, but teach them the necessary obedience with all mildness as well as with all firmness, and convince them that correction is given them only for their real good.

The Word of God makes great difference between necessary discipline and harshness: "Father, provoke not your children to indignation, lest they be discouraged," says St. Paul.

And again, "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord." Your correction ought to be the correction of the Lord, that is to say, it should be animated and directed by a real desire for your children's salvation. It should not be the correction of the devil, inspired by brutal passion which seeks only to ill-treat those who have given offence.

If, when you are correcting your children, you really have nothing else in view except their good, you will easily keep within proper bounds, and go no further than is necessary. And if circumstances require that the punishment should be rigorous, you will let them see that though you are displeased with them, you love them still.

In this way your children will receive correction with advantage, since on the one hand they know perfectly well that they have done wrong, and on the other they will be persuaded that if you chastise them, it is with regret and only for their good.

But in order that your children may be persuaded that the severity which you show them at times comes from your love for them, you must treat them properly in every other respect.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILDREN TO DO RIGHT.

You must show that you are pleased with them when they are obedient and respectful to you; you must animate and encourage them when they are doing right; you must give them little rewards now and then for their good conduct.

Above all, you must not leave them in want of what is really necessary for them. if you never display your authority except in scolding, threatening and beating them; if you pay no attention to them except when they displease you; if you keep them down like slaves; if you leave them without clothes to wear, while you are wasting your earnings or are too lazy to work; if you neglect your children in this way, you will not win their affection, and without their affection, your correction will do them no good, but make them grow worse through stubbornness and contempt. You can do anything with your children if they really love you.

WIN THE LOVE OF YOUR CHILDREN.

If you want to win the love of your children, show them that you really love them, not by tolerating what shouldn't be tolerated, but by the thousand little acts of kindness which good parents find it so easy to perform.

Excessive mildness is one fault; excessive severity another; and, strange to say, we often find the two in the same person. There are parents who, in dealing with their children, follow no other rule than the good or bad humor they happen to be in. One day they will turn the house upside down for nothing at all; another day they will laugh at things which they ought to punish severely.

Sometimes they will pass in the same hour from caresses to blows and from blows to caresses. This is folly, and worse than folly. What authority can you acquire over your children if you act in this way. The manner of rearing children is not a thing to be decided by the humor you happen to be in. It must be regular and systematic.

WIN THE RESPECT OF YOUR CHILDREN.

You must have control over yourselves; you must keep your minds well-balanced, if you want to win the respect of your children. We see some parents who can never manage their children either by threats or by tenderness; while others have only to give a sign, a word, a look, and they are obeyed.

The reason of this difference is that the latter class of parents are always even-tempered, never punishing to-day what they laughed at yesterday; they are always gentle, yet always firm; they do not command their children by fits and starts; they govern them in a steady, regular fashion. The former class of parents have not learned how to govern themselves; how then can they expect to govern their children?

CORRECTION IS THE MOST DIFFICULT PART OF EDUCATION.

To fulfil this duty properly you need a great deal of discretion and a great deal of prudence; prudence to distinguish one ease from another; prudence to choose the most favorable time and circumstances; prudence to keep within certain limits; so as not to make your children despise you for your indulgence or hate you for your severity.

It is not enough that parents should be good and pious, unless they are prudent as well. There are many good and pious persons who have not a grain of prudence; and therefore there are many good and pious parents who do not know the first thing about bringing up children. The world is surprised to see the children of such good parents turn out so badly; yet there is nothing surprising about it, for goodness will not bring up children properly unless there is prudence with it. On the other hand, we see parents who are not particularly pious succeed very well in bringing up their children; and the reason is because they have good judgment and a great deal of prudence.

"But how are we to get this prudence, if we do not possess it naturally?" you will ask. In the first place, you should always act with a pure intention, for the glory of God and the good of your children's souls; you should never act hastily, but only after reflection; you should take the advice of others, and not be too much attached to your own opinion.

But above all, you should pray earnestly and fervently to the Father of light, that He would give you the light of His Holy Spirit, that He would give you the wisdom you need. Pray with confidence, and be sure that God who has called you to the task of bringing up children will not refuse the grace which you need for the performance of that task.

NEVER CHASTISE A CHILD WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY.

Some parents say they cannot bear to lay a hand on their children unless they lash themselves into a rage. This is precisely the time when you should not inflict punishment of whipping at all, for you are likely to do it too severely, and your children will think you are merely working off your bad temper at their expense. But depriving the child of some pleasure you intended to give it, the sending of an unruly boy supperless to bed, can be carried out without any feeling of anger.

DO NOT SHOW PARTIALITY.

Another mistake made through want of prudence is the showing of partiality toward some children. Children differ from one another in character and disposition as they do in looks; and it is quite natural that you should like some of your children better than others because of their more agreeable qualities.

This feeling of preference is not a sin of itself; nevertheless, you must keep it down and not allow it to have any influence with you in your outward government of your children; for it would be a sin of injustice, and a great sin, to show more favor to one than to another simply because one has greater natural gifts than another. Partiality is bad on every side,—bad for those to whom you show favor, because on the one hand you make them disliked by those who are less favored; and on the other hand they spoil them, they become selfish and stubborn, they disobey you readily because they know your foolish fondness will overlook anything they may do. In the end it is more than likely that they will repay you for this foolish fondness by treating you with neglect or even with harshness.

Again, the partiality which you show to some of your children is very bad for the others; for, when they find themselves neglected and despised, their natural love for you will begin to grow cool; when they are corrected by you even with good reason, they will put it all down to your dislike for them; and they will have feelings of jealousy, envy, even hatred for those of their brothers and sisters whom you like best. And so your partiality is laying the foundation for discord and disunion which never will have an end.

But, you will ask, is it not right to show special favor to those who deserve it! Yes, but only to those who really deserve it. You may show special favor to good children, for then the others will see that they have only to be good to be treated with equal favor; but you should never show any special favor to a child on account of their cleverness or good looks, because then the others will see themselves shut out from your favor without any fault of their own, and they will have bitter feelings towards the favored ones and towards their parents. Even when the preference is a just one, you must be careful not to show it in too noticeable a manner. Herein also, if prudence is not used, the consequences may be serious.

FATHER AND MOTHER SHOULD AGREE IN HARMONY.

If the father thinks the mother is too soft and easy with the children; if the mother thinks the father is too hard and severe; if you disagree between yourselves as to what ought to be done, and above all, if you are so imprudent as to disagree before your children,—what is the result? The result is that you are despised by your children, and that correction is made impossible, since the children have reason to believe that one of you will protect them when the other wishes to punish them.

It is therefore of the very greatest importance that both parents should be perfectly agreed in the education of their children. Or if you sometimes disagree, discuss the matter in private until you have come to an agreement.

PARENTS SHOULD SET A GOOD EXAMPLE.

It is very seldom, of course, that we find parents so wicked as to teach evil to their children directly. In general, no doubt, you are eloquent in praise of virtue and religion, and desirous of persuading your children that you are really attached to these things. This is all very good. But what will the children think, if they see your actions give the lie to your words! Which are they more likely to follow, your teaching or your example! Do you not know that example is much

more powerful than precept! And if this be true of all example, how much more is it true of the example given by parents, whom the children see so constantly, whom they look up to, whom they consider the best models in the world for them to follow in their conduct. Your lives are constantly before your children's eyes.

YOUR CONDUCT IS THEIR GUIDE.

They feel perfectly justified in doing what they see you do.

Since your example has so great an influence upon the conduct of your children, you should understand the importance and the necessity of having that influence a good one. Never an improper word or gesture should escape you before them; your life should be a mirror of virtue and of good Christian conduct. Then your instruction and your correction will have some effect, being supported by your example.

But how can you instruct or correct when your conduct contradicts your words? You may tell your children: "Don't do as I do, but do as I say;" but if you tell them this, you are simply wasting your breath. It is no use for you to tell your children that they must not neglect their prayers, if they see you get up and begin your work in the morning without bending a knee to God. No use for you to tell them to go to Mass on Sundays, if they see you staying at home without any good reason. No use for you to send them to Confession, if you never or very seldom go yourselves. No use for you to tell them to be truthful, if they hear you telling lies. No use for you to tell them to be honest, if they hear you boasting of how you have cheated your neighbor. No use for you to tell them they must love their neighbor, if they see you quarrelling or hear you talking spitefully or slanderously about people you don't like. No use for you to tell them not to curse, nor to use improper language, if they hear you cursing whenever anything annoys you, if they hear you using impure language yourselves or laughing at others who use it.

Sad to say, this is the way many parents bring up their children, giving them very good instructions and very bad example.

These are extreme cases, of course, but there are many others wherein parents are guilty of grievous sin in giving bad example to their children. It is a matter for long and careful examination of conscience on the part of every father and mother. Mild and gentle as our Savior usually was when dealing with sinners, the words He used about scandal-givers, and especially about those who give scandal to little children, should make us tremble:

"WHOSOEVER SHALL SCANDALIZE ONE OF THESE LITTLE ONES THAT BELIEVE IN ME, IT WERE BETTER FOR HIM IF A MILLSTONE WERE HANGED ABOUT HIS NECK AND HE WERE CAST INTO THE SEA."—Math. xviii, 6.

And if this be true of any scandal-giver, with how much greater force does it apply to fathers and mothers whom God has made the natural guardians and protectors of these little ones. He placed them under your care, that you might teach them to know and serve Him here on earth, in order that they might be happy with Him forever in heaven.

LITTLE BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

A grown-up son or daughter ought to be of great assistance to their father and mother in looking after little brothers and sisters, and at the same time they will be laying up for themselves a fund of experience on which to draw later on when God calls them to be heads of families. Young men and women should try to take an interest in children, to understand them and sympathize with them. After the grace of God, nothing is a more powerful factor for good in the rearing of children than to have an intelligent interest in them and sympathy with them. And without this the grace of God is powerless, for God wishes His grace to do its work through human instruments.

Every young man and woman should try to fit themselves for the work of education, the work which includes instruction, watchfulness, correction and good example.

MODELS FOR ALL PARENTS.

As to you on whom the duty has fallen of performing this work, you must labor to perform it as though everything

depended on yourselves alone, and at the same time, you must pray as though nothing at all depended on you. Ask God to show you what you ought to do, and then to give you the grace to do it. Ask Him to prepare your children's hearts, that they may be ready to receive the good seed you are going to plant therein. Employ the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, those models for all parents; employ the intercession of the guardian angels and the patron saints of your children.

Having done all this, having worked and having prayed, your mind may be at ease; having done your best, both by your own efforts and by prayer, you need not worry as to whether the result shall be a success or failure. God does not require that you shall succeed; He simply requires that you shall do your duty. And if you have done your duty, whether you succeed or fail, your reward will be the same.

THE HONOR DUE TO PARENTS.

One of the most precious gifts which parents can bestow upon their children is a sense of reverence. If the amount of reverence now in the world were reduced, the amount of sin, suffering, misery, and death, would at once visibly increase. Life and happiness are closely connected with reverence for holy persons and holy things. The foundation of this virtue is laid when children can learn to honor their parents. How unfortunate are the children whose parents have little in them that is worthy of reverence! And even when the parents are good, or at least try to be good, they may fail to lay the foundation of reverence in their children. When children are allowed to do as they please, or when they obey only by coaxing and coddling, they may grow up so full of selfishness that there is no room for a sense of reverence in them.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT.

The Fourth Commandment does not merely say to children: Obey your parents. Obedience is necessary, but not enough. The Commandment says: honor thy father and thy mother. To honor is to fear and love and respect as well as to obey. It is the child's first exercise in the virtue of reverence. It is a preparation for a life of reverential fear of God. He tells us in Holy Scripture that the practice of the honor due to parents is a condition of long and happy life in this world. He does not say that everyone who fulfils this condition will have a long life, because there are other necessary conditions; but He does imply that the child who has no reverence for parents is on the road to misery and untimely death.

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BE REVERENT.

And the beginning of it in the child is the practice of the honor due to its parents. The parents who do not insist in receiving the honor due them are guilty of a very great injustice to their children. The children who do not learn to revere their parents will scarcely learn to revere God, and are thus unprotected and exposed to the wickedness of the world. And when trouble of mind and weakness of body follow, as they so often do, that is a natural working out of sin against this law: "Honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest be long-lived upon the earth." But the primitive reverence of the child for its parents needs to be engrafted on to reverence for God at a tender age; else it will not grow. Hence the great usefulness of family prayer, and the need of conducting it with reverence. If the prayer is said in a hurried way, as if in haste to get to the end of it. it will have a bad effect on the future lives of the children. Parents should speak of holy persons and holy things in a reverent way.

A reverent use of such words as holy and blessed has a good effect. A mother who says: "Children, it is time for the Holy Rosary," teaches reverence by using that word holy. And the father who speaks of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, teaches reverence.

THE FAMILY IS GOD'S SCHOOL FOR TEACHING.

Much more, if the child revere not the father on earth, how can he revere the Father in Heaven! And in family worship the two kinds of reverence unite and mutually strengthen each other. It is an act of filial reverence to be at home at the hour of family prayer, and an act of reverence for God, to be attentive during the prayer. The union of the two is the seed

of a strong and beautiful Christian character.

What we should care to form and preserve in ourselves is the Catholic character, a character as distinct as it is beautiful, and which is entirely built upon the foundation of the Catholic faith.

"HONOR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER."

The Duties of Children to their Parents

First, To love them with filial piety, or a true, sincere, and inward affection; to wish them well; to pray for them ; and to help them in their temporal needs.

Second, To pay them honor and respect in thought, word, and deed.

Third, To obey them in all that is not sin.

WHEN CHILDREN INCUR THE DISPLEASURE OF GOD.

If they show their parents no signs of love, treat them harshly, or scowl upon them;

Much more if they hate them, curse them ("He that curseth his father or mother, dying, let him die," Lev. xx. 9) ; if they wish them dead, or win any evil to befall them;

If they provoke them to anger, or cause them trouble, pain, or annoyance; much more if they make their parents sin;

If they do not assist them in poverty or affliction; and especially if they do not procure for them, in case of need, the means of receiving the last Sacrament;

If they strike their parents—a crime which God ordered to be punished with death (Exod. xxi. 13).

If they threaten them, treat them with contempt, or expose their sins or failings without grave and serious reason;

If, through pride, they despise their parents as poor and uneducated, or refuse to recognize them, or publicly ridicule them;

If, before they are men or women, and as long as they are under their parents' authority, they refuse to obey them, either in matters of morals, or of religion, or of household arrangements; for instance, —

If they go into company, or seek amusement, to which their parents object; or if, against their parents' will, they endanger their morals or their good name, by company-keeping, especially late at night, or at any unreasonable times or places;

If, against their parents' command, they neglect Mass, the Sacraments, or other religious duties;

If at school, or during hours of study, they waste their time, and so put their parents or others to useless expense;

If by disobedience to their parents' commands, they in any way endanger the good order or the peace of their families;

And, generally, if they engage to be married without their parents' knowledge and consent.

With respect to sins of disobedience, however, three things must be observed—

First, That parents must not be obeyed if they command anything sinful;

Second, That they need not be obeyed if they command anything grossly unreasonable, as, for instance, if they command a child to marry where there is no affection, or not to marry where there is no reasonable ground of objection; and

Third, That in order to make disobedience a grave sin, there must be an unmistakable command, and not merely persuasion or desire, on the part of the parent.

Lessons on Infancy and Youth

QUOTATIONS FROM HOLY SCRIPTURE

"And they brought to Him young children, that He might touch them: And the disciples rebuked them that brought them.—Mark, 16:13.

"Whom when Jesus saw, He saith to them: Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God."—St. Mark, 10:14.

"Amen I say to you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, shall not enter into it." St. Luke, 18:17.

"And embracing them and laying His hands upon them, He blessed them."—St. Mark, 10:16.

From my infancy mercy grew up with me.—Job, 31:18

Out of the mouths of infants and of sucklings, thou hast perfected praise.—Ps. 5: 3.

I am poor and in labors from my youth: and being exalted have been humbled and troubled.—Ps. 87:16

Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 18: 3.

Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. 18: 4.

After they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth. And the Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom and the grace of God was in Him.—Luke 2: 39, 40.

As new-born babes desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation.— 1 Peter 2 : 2.

QUOTATIONS FROM THE HOLY FATHERS

Since Jesus was subject to His parents. He no doubt showed His perfect obedience by sharing their labors with them—
St. Basil.

Being subject to His parent, unrepining and obedient He endured corporal toil.—St. Basil.

Modesty, though it is desirable in all persons, at all times and in all places, is especially becoming in youthful souls.—
St. Ambrose.
