

CATHOLIC TRAINING OF CHILDREN

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a Translation from the French

An excerpt from "Christ in the Home"

TRAINING THE ADOLESCENT

To TRAIN little ones is difficult enough. When these little ones grow up the difficulty of educating them grows with them.

There is a particular age—between thirteen and seventeen—when the rise of new energies generally produces a crisis. The child is no longer a child; neither is he a grown-up. He is in a period of transition which we must not fear but which we must consider sympathetically; it is a time when we should be ever ready to come to his help at opportune moments.

It is also a time when restraints weigh upon him. Until now the child did not distinguish his individual identity much from those about him. What they thought and felt he was satisfied to feel and think in perfect harmony. But now his personality is emerging. Before this it was indistinct. Oh yes, at times traits of it would shine out and predict the future character but it was only a faint sketch. Now the design takes form and definite lines.

It is thrilling to see the dawn of manhood and womanhood in the young as they rise up to meet life. It is depressing to think of possible deformations! A design can so easily change into a caricature!

There is no question now of a dead image on inert paper! We are concerned with an animated potentiality, with an intense dynamism—a soul seeking itself. It is like a person lost in the night groping about here and there to find the right road. We can speak to the adolescent, guide him, but nothing takes the place of personal experience and it means much to allow the young the liberty to try their luck.

Even as a baby, as soon as he takes his first steps, the child uses all its baby strength to pull away from its mother. The mother had until then held him in her arms. But one day she put him down so that he could learn to stand and to put one foot before the other. As soon as he learnt this new game the little one is ready for his first expedition. And what mother, even though she rejoices at the prowess of the young explorer, does not suffer when she realizes that her arms and her heart can no longer hold back this little conqueror already setting out to meet life?

As the adolescent boy or girl grows older the span of their investigation widens. There is the immense field of their own individuality. How many realities, how many mysteries they encounter at every step! Fortunate that youth who, avid until now to ask questions, remains willing to ask some still! He wants to learn certainly, even more than ever before, only he wants to learn by himself so he withdraws into himself to solve his problems. Who could ever know as he does his little domain; he is jealous of it; he closes his arms about his riches; he yields to no one the right to violate his treasure.

We should not be astonished at this but stimulate their research unobtrusively, provide them, without appearing to do so, with the means to solve their problems; we should not pry into their confidence but rather cleverly inspire and provoke it. Let them realize that mother and father themselves formerly discovered this whole world that challenges their discovery; that mother and father can therefore serve as prudent but well-informed advisers to the young novices of life.

Then there is the whole world outside of themselves—the frame of their life, their surroundings, and other people; that is quite a universe. What is the significance of such a smile, such a silence, such an action? They thought everyone was good—that was a mistake! They thought that life was conquered without difficulty—they have to struggle hard: How much work to learn the least thing!

And then the whole domain of religion. It was all so simple formerly. Now there are problems on every side. And love? This whole transformation that they sense within themselves? Those impulses of feeling? Those sensations never before experienced, organic phenomena whose nature and reason they do not know?

We need great sympathy before their laborious and often worried seeking and also much vigilance mingled with a gentle firmness, high moral principles, and exceptional psychological insight almost bordering on prophecy. Above all we need much prayer.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS (1)

THE training of adolescence ought to make much allowance for the difference between the sexes and for the difference of individual temperaments within each sex.

The boy as he grows older becomes more and more individualistic. Everything exists for him. His little person makes itself conspicuous without fear. He loves to make noise not only because of his love for activity but also to assert his presence. In games he likes to direct and if he envisions the future he always sees himself in the role of a leader....

He must be taught that other people exist and what is more, that he has the duty not only to refrain from harming them but to help them. Every opportunity for him to render service should be used to advantage—to take care of his little sisters gallantly and willingly, to run on errands for father or mother or someone else in the household. The boy and later the man is a great egoist. It is wise to counteract very early this tendency of his to make himself the center of interest, to turn his attention to careers of devoted self-sacrifice, to impress him with the repercussions his actions have upon others and to enlighten him on his duty to give much since he has received much and to penetrate him with the realization that he has a responsibility toward his own.

The little girl as she advances toward womanhood—and this begins quite early—very quickly becomes conscious of herself as part of a relationship. She feels herself physically weaker than her brothers and her powers of feeling orientate her even at that early age whether she is aware of it or not, toward love—in the beginning toward the couple “mamma and baby” but later toward the couple “husband and wife.”

Much less individualistic than the boy—although she can be so in her own way and sometimes fiercely so—she is above all family-minded. She loves to rock the baby, to help her mother. If she prefers one study more than another, history, literature or mathematics, it is more often because of the teacher who teaches it than the subject itself. Early in the little girl’s life are verified the words of George Sand concerning woman, “Behind the things that she loves there is always someone.”

Because of the complexities of feeling, the education of the adolescent girl is more delicate and more difficult than the education of the adolescent boy. The boy is more heavy, more blunt, more matter of fact, less given to fine distinctions; the phenomena of puberty are more tardy in him and are generally not at all or scarcely ever accompanied by any fits of feeling but rather a mere hunger for sensations: he is still the individualist.

Because of her periods, a phenomenon which often troubles the adolescent girl even after its mysterious significance has been chastely and adequately explained to her, she becomes more curious and uneasy about all that bears on the problem of life and is much more susceptible to emotional unbalance and the fascination of abandoning herself to daydreams than a boy of her age. If the adolescent boy is healthy, he doesn’t indulge in dreaming; he makes noise or pulls all kinds of pranks. The girl, even when she loves study, loves still other things and she is much attracted by the perspective of an eventual giving of herself.

Beautiful is the task of giving her a clear idea of her essential vocation; to guard her from false notions; to get her to be diligent in the tasks of the moment, her house duties and school assignments; to direct her need for unreserved giving so that what is but a vague instinct within her becomes translated into terms of clear duty; to impress her with the immense responsibility of having been chosen to give life unless God chooses her to renounce this power, for love of Him, in virginity.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS (2)

EVERYDAY experiences give many examples of the distinctive differences between the two sexes especially during their adolescence: the egocentric interests of the boy, the self-radiating tendencies of the girl. The boy thinks about his future exploits; the girl dreams of possible children. In the one, love of glory; in the other love of love itself.

The following bit of conversation between two sisters is in itself an amusing commentary on feminine adolescent psychology.

- “What are you thinking of,” the twelve year old asked her fifteen year old sister, “of your future husband?”
- “A husband,” protested the elder, “I am too young. I have a lot of time before I begin thinking of a husband!”
- “Well then what are you thinking about?”

- “I was planning what kind of trimmings I would have on my wedding dress.”

Even when we take into account the differences created by nature between boys and girls, we still must make allowances for different temperaments within the sexes. Each child lives in a world of his own, in a world that is strangely different from the world of those about him. With one individual maternal influence will have greater force; with another, paternal influence. One child may have vigorous health, whereas another is delicate. In the one a melancholy temperament may predominate; in another, the exact opposite, the sanguinic with extrovert tendencies conspicuous. One child may be calm and poised; another, a little bundle of nerves...Consequently, if the educator has but one method of dealing with all, a single and only method, he can expect to meet with disappointments.

However in providing for these individual differences a real problem must be faced: It is not sufficient to correct the one child and refrain from correcting the other; to congratulate the one and ignore the success of the other and so on through all the possible variations that might be in order. All this must be done while preserving the impression of treating all alike. If children perceive, as they sometimes do with reason, that there is partiality shown to one or other of the family, authority is broken down, jealousy enters and soon constant wrangling results.

The ideal is to maintain poise, serenity, evenness of temper, and a steadiness of behavior that nothing can upset.

Superiors of religious orders are advised to make use of a practice which is beneficial for all—an honest examination periodically of their faithful fulfilment of the trust confided to them. Have I given evidence of any partiality or any unjustifiable toleration of wrong? Have I seen to it that the rules have been observed, the ways of customs of the order and its holy traditions held in honor?

In what way are things not going as they should? One can pass quickly over what is as it should be, thanking God humbly for it but direct attention by choice to what is defective and faulty to determine to make the necessary corrections either in one's person or one's work. Mussolini's comment has a point here: “It is useless to tell me about what is going along well. Speak to me immediately of what is going badly.”

If only parents would make it a habit to practice this counsel suggested to monks: Stop a moment to observe the train pass; look to see if the lighting functions, if the wheels are well oiled, if there is any need to fear for the connections. People do that from time to time in regard to their personal life and we call it a Retreat. It is strongly advisable to make a retreat to examine oneself on the conduct and management of the home, of one's profession; such a retreat should be sufficiently frequent to prevent painful surprises.

Our Lord said that when one wishes to build a tower, he sits down to calculate the cost and requirements for a solid structure. What a tower is the Christian home! That is something to construct! How necessary are foundations that will not crumble, materials that will hold solidly! How essential an able contractor, attention to every detail, care to check every stone, exactitude in the measurements for every story . . . !

Perhaps I have forgotten to sit down . . . to calculate . . . to get on my knees. There is still time!

A FATHER'S LETTER

RACINE the great classic dramatist wrote a letter to his son urging him to complete fidelity in his religious duties and to love for the interior life.

“You beg me to pray for you. If my prayers were good for anything you would soon be a perfect Christian, who hoped for nothing with more ardor than for his eternal salvation. But remember, my Son, that the father and mother pray in vain for their children if the children do not remember the training their parents gave them. Remember, my Son, that you are a Christian, and think of all that character makes of obligation for you, all the passions it requires you to renounce. For what would it benefit you to acquire the esteem of men if you would jeopardize your soul? It will be the height of my joy to see you working out your salvation. I hope for it by the grace of Our Lord.”

When Racine was thirty-eight and at the height of his power, his religious directors through the misguided zeal of their Jansenistic spirit commanded him to give up writing for the theatre which he did with untold pain. Consequently, when he spoke to his son of the practice of renunciation, he could speak with authority.

Especially sensitive to physical suffering, he accepted sickness humbly and generously: “I have never had the strength to do penance; what an advantage then for me that God has had the mercy to send me this.”

It is a great grace for children to have a father who teaches the divine law with firmness, and who moreover lives

this divine life, joining personal example to precept.

Am I sufficiently attentive to give my children the supernatural equipment they need? Am I sufficiently careful about that still more important duty of giving them a good example always and in everything.

If there was too much severity in Racine's manner it was due to his own training at Port-Royal, the Jansenist center. When his brother Lionval was only five years old he insisted that he would never go to the theatre for fear of being damned. Madelon, at ten years had to observe Lent to the very end even though she felt ill because of it. The mother kept them in step. Did she not command young Louis Racine who had indulged in writing about twelve stanzas of poetry on the death of a dog to betake himself to Boileau for a good scolding?

There must be no exaggeration in the exercise of authority; it would no longer be Christian in character but an erroneous way of understanding the morality and perfection of the Gospel. It is essential to retain a zealous will on the part of the children and a courageous practice of generosity. We must however always remember that they are children and not impose upon them too heavy a yoke thereby running the danger of giving them an incorrect idea of religion or of disgusting them even with its most balanced practice.

We must be mindful too that some day they will be confronted with fearful difficulties. They will need a training that is not harsh but strong otherwise we can fear shipwreck or at least ineffective returns.

If my profession or my health prevent me from fasting, am I careful to get a dispensation, to substitute another mortification for it, to manifest an exemplary moderation on all occasions, in general, a real detachment from food and body comforts; to deny myself amusements that might prove dangerous?

MISUNDERSTOOD CHILDREN

ANDRE BERGE in his book on "Bewildered Youth" gives us the story of a young man who had been left completely to himself by his parents. Taken up with their own affairs, business and pleasure, these parents let their son grow up with no concern at all for his soul, his ambitions, his difficulties, his temptations, his failings.

At first, the youth relished this liberty which he interpreted as reserve on the part of his parents. But soon he came to realize that it was nothing more than cowardice, abandonment of duty and flagrant desertion of obligation on their part; he was living in the home but was not of the home--a mere boarder in a hotel. As soon as he was out of his childhood, they showed no more care for him; he found himself confronting life alone, confused, cut off. He should have been able to expect counsel, affection, protection, light. Nothing of the sort did he receive. Instead he met with selfishness; faced by loneliness, life began to pall upon him; he had no one to untangle his problems, no one to point out definite steps to follow on the bewildering way.

Unable to bear living any longer in this way with no vital ties binding him to those who should have been nearest to him, he decided to break all connections, to go away. Material separation from his own would but serve to accentuate the separation of their souls.

He left this note as an explanation of his conduct and a reproach for theirs:

"To my parents,

"Why do you desert me? You do not understand that I am stifled between these walls and that my heart is bursting. Do you not understand that I am growing up and that life is calling me, that I am alone all day with its voice? You who could have so lovingly directed me in life, why do you abandon me?"

"Well, so much the worse, I will meet life alone. I am so far from you already through your fault."

How heavy the obligations of parents! Let us not consider now the case of grossly selfish parents as described in the preceding story. We shall consider parents who are concerned about accomplishing their mission.

Are they not in danger of two extremes in the fulfilment of their duty: either to exaggerate their control or to exaggerate their reserve.

If they try to exercise too much control over the young adventurers in freedom who are making ready for their first flights will they not incur the blame of tyranny, excessive watchfulness and supervision?

If, on the other hand, they try to avoid this reproach, are they not going to lack firmness? By trying to win confidence through a gentleness that gives free rein are they not going to see all the restraints which they deem good broken down and the advice they judge opportune utterly ignored?

How have I succeeded in this problem of training? Do I steer my bark with proper mastery? The reefs are many; a solid craft is needed, a steady hand at the helm. Am I acquainted with the route, the true merits of my crew?

My God grant me the grace to know how to rear my little world as you want me to; to know how to form each of my children according to Your plans; to know how to attain balance in sharpness, firmness and restraint. Grant that the youth formed in my home may never be confused, lost before life but rather know always where to find counsel, support, the warmth of love and guidance, an understanding and patient heart that can give help with enlightened insight.

A DEFAULTING FATHER

A RELIGIOUS was trying to extricate a young man of twenty-two from a distressing and almost insurmountable difficulty; the young man wrote him the following explanation for falling so low:

“. . . I was endowed as any normal person and would have been able to succeed in my studies as any one else but for some wretched habits—and I say these words, trembling with a powerless rage—wretched habits which came to poison the work of God. A cousin and a friend bear with me the responsibility for the first steps toward those devastating sensations that enkindled the odious flame which in turn upset my mental and physical health. No more willpower or rather no more strength despite good will; no more memory; all these results followed in succession. I blame my parents especially my father who had given up all religious practices. He never spoke to me with a view to understanding me; never did we have the least conversation which could indicate any common bond of ideas or feeling; he fed my body, that is all....”

What a terrible indictment are these words! How they prove the necessity of watching the associations of the children, their work, the reasons for their laziness; the importance of keeping their confidence, of knowing how to win that confidence; of showing them understanding and a willingness to help; of giving them an assurance of victory.

“I was endowed as any normal person and would have been able to succeed.” Nothing more readily weakens the resilience of the powers of the mind and the heart than lust. What the young man said is exactly true; he had abandoned himself to impurity, he lost the keenness of his intelligence, the retentiveness of his memory and a relish for effort. Even grave physical injuries sometimes result. “Devastating sensations” and “the odious flame” quickly depleted and consumed vital energies.

“A cousin and a friend.” How absolutely necessary is vigilance over the friendships that circumstances and relationships often provide, and sometimes alas that certain corrupted individuals seek to establish to give vent to their secret taste for perversion.

If the child had confided in someone at the onset of the first serious difficulties! But nothing in the attitude of the parents invited confidence, a request for enlightenment, a humble avowal of imprudence or faults already committed. How many children, how many youths yearn to speak! Someone, their father or mother or a director must take the first step. Nothing happens. Nobody imagines that they want help; nobody deigns to interest themselves in them. The mother is absorbed in her worldliness or completely oblivious of their needs; the father is wrapped up in his business; the spiritual director if they have one at all does not find the time or the means to help . . .

And the child, the young boy or the young girl carries the weight of inward suffering and is stifled by it.

“I blame my parents . . . never did my father speak to me with a view to understanding me; never did we have the least conversation which could indicate any common bond of ideas or feeling; he fed my body, that is all.”

Did this father realize that even while he was nourishing the body of his son, he was contributing to the death of his soul by a double sin of omission! He did not help his son in his moral life when he needed it; he gave him a very bad example by openly abandoning the Christian law.

Such sins are paid for and paid for painfully. How prevent lack of training and mistakes of training from producing their disastrous effects?

To develop the body is fine, commendable, and a duty. Even more important is it to develop the soul, to protect it, to strengthen it, to uplift it.

A MOTHER TO HER SON

WHEN Leon Bloy was about twenty years old, he fell into one of those crises not uncommon in youth, particularly in youth whose environment brings contact with unbelievers and persons of loose morals, and he drifted from his religion. He was wretchedly unhappy besides, unhappy because of the very direction he was taking; but an involuntary confusion and probably a certain amount of wilful pride prevented him from breaking with doubt to return to the path of light.

The mother read her son's soul clearly. She did not reproach him, nor did she speak to him exclusively nor immediately of his religious problem; she attributed his interior troubles to different causes of an inferior order which more than likely played a part in his wretchedness. She wrote to him:

"How is it my dear child that you do not write to us. I feel heavy hearted because of it for I am sure that you do not realize what is taking place in your poor soul; all kinds of things are conflicting within it—it is ardent and lacks the nourishment proper to it; you turn from one side to the other and you cannot tell what really bothers you. Ah! poor child, be calm, reflect. It is not that you feel your future lost or compromised; at your age one cannot have established his future or despaired of it; it is not for most persons your age still uncertain. No, it is not that, Your work, your studies do not show sufficient progress? Why? Perhaps because you want to do too many things at once; you are too impatient. No, not that either? Your mind is willing enough but your heart and your soul are suffering; they have so many yearnings that you are scarcely aware of, and their unease and their suffering react upon your mind sapping from it necessary strength and attention.

"You are suffering, you are unhappy. I feel all that you experience and yet I am powerless to console you, to encourage you much as I should love to do so. Ah! that we might have the same convictions! Why have you rejected the faith of your childhood without a profound examination of your reason for and against it? The statements of those whom faith irritates or who have no religion for lack of instruction have made an impression on your young imagination; but just the same your heart needs a center that it will never find on earth. It is God, it is the infinite you need and all your yearnings are driving you there. You belong to that select number of elect to whom God communicates Himself and in whose regard He is prodigal of his love when once they have consented to humble themselves by submitting to the obscurities of faith."

What a frightening duty mothers have! To bring forth the bodies of their children is a beautiful ministry; to rear their souls is an even greater ministry.

What anguish for a mother when a grown child, a son in early manhood or a daughter in early womanhood cuts loose from faith, and considers God lightly! If ever she feels that she has lost her hold over her son or daughter, that they are escaping her, it is when she sees them follow the paths of doubt or fall under the spell of the intoxicating enchantments of flirtation.

A mother must continue to bring forth her children all her life. In this sense they are always her little ones. Not that she makes them feel their bonds of dependence any longer but that she watches over them. And she prays! Except for a brief reminder from time to time, the clear statement of her hopes joined to the definite but loving message of the father, an occasional letter in which true principles are recalled, the chief role of a mother whose adult child has strayed is prayer, patient waiting and sacrifice—the persevering effort to become a saint.

What if she were to die before she sees the return of the Prodigal? What if the Child were to die before she has seen him "return"?

She should not be discouraged. Can we know the mystery of souls? Can we know what takes place in the last moments? Can we know what goes on within when the exterior reveals nothing? Can we know the value of a mother's tears? Monica will continue to the end of time to convert Augustine; but Monica must be a saint.

TICK TOCK

THE mother of Cardinal Vaughan had fourteen children—eight boys and six girls. Remarkable educator that she was, she believed that she owed the best part of her time to her little world.

The children's special room looked like the nave of a Church for each little boy and girl had his statue to care for and they never failed to put flowers before it on special occasions.

With what art this mother settled a quarrelsome boy or a vain or untruthful little girl! With the littlest ones she was not afraid to become a little one and like them to sit on the ground. Thus, placed on their level, as the biography of her Jesuit son expresses it, she used to put her watch to their ears and explain to them that some day God would stop the tick tock of their lives and that He would call to Himself in heaven His children whom He had lent to earth.

In the course of the day, Mrs. Vaughan loved to pick out one or other of her band, preferably two, chosen on the basis of their earnest efforts or some particular need for improvement, and make a visit to Church. Yes, they should pray at home too; they had God in their hearts; but in each village or in each section of town, there is a special house generally of stone where Our Lord lives as He once lived at Nazareth except that now He remains hidden under the appearances of a little Host. She explained to them that prayer consists not in reciting set words but in conversing with Jesus. And if they had been very very good she would let them kiss the altar cloth and sometimes the altar itself, a favor the children regarded as most precious. When they had beautiful flowers in their green house they brought them to Church; happy and proud were the ones who were entrusted with delivering the bouquets or the vases of flowers!

Besides the visits made to "Jesus, the Head" there were also visits to the "members of Jesus," "What you do to the least of My brethren you do to me." And Mrs. Vaughan explained to each child according to its capacity to understand the great duty of charity and the reason for this duty. She did not hesitate to take them into sordid homes. Sometimes people were horrified to see her take the children to see the sick who suffered from a contagious disease. Wasn't she afraid her children would contract it? But kind, firm Mrs. Vaughan did not allow herself to be the least disturbed by such comments. "Sickness? Well if one of them contracted a sickness while visiting the poor, that would still not be too high a price to pay for Christian charity. Besides God will protect my children much better than mother-love can."

Here was true formation in piety, true formation in charity.

Here too was encouragement to follow a high ideal.

Herbert, the eldest of the boys, was once quite concerned over a hunting trip that the weather threatened to spoil. "Pray mamma," he said, "that we have good weather!"

And Mrs. Vaughan more concerned to lift her son's soul than to secure him a pleasurable time answered smilingly, "I shall pray that you will be a priest!" How the boy took such an answer at the moment is not recorded. We do know this:

Herbert was . . . the future Cardinal!

Mrs. Vaughan also gave her children an appreciation of the fine arts. She herself played the harp delightfully. From time to time she gathered her household about her for a gala time playing, singing, and a bit of mimicry; she always used the occasion to remind the children that there are other melodies and other joys more beautiful than those of earth.

TRAINING IN GENEROSITY

THE child is instinctively selfish, but he easily learns generosity.

His training should be directed toward it.

Little Rose of Lima's childhood was marked by a series of accidents, maladies, and sufferings which the crude treatment of that time often aggravated rather than relieved. When only three months old she crushed her thumb under a trunk lid and the nail had to be removed. She also had to undergo an ear operation which was followed by a skin disease that began on her head; her mother treated it with a salve which burnt her so severely that the surgeon had to treat her for weeks, removing proud flesh so that the healthy skin could heal.

Thanks to her mother's exhortations, this little girl of four years bore the cruel pain with an astonishing calmness and in perfect silence. Are not the staggering mortifications we see her imposing on herself later due to her early training?

Like all little girls, she was vain and took considerable care of her hair which was very beautiful. Her brother used to throw mud at it and get it all dirty just to tease her. Rose became very angry, but the brother, recalling perhaps some sermon he had heard, assumed a preaching tone on one of these occasions and said to her solemnly, "Take care, vanity will be your ruin; the curled hair of girls are cords from hell which bind the hearts of men and drag them into the eternal flames."

Rose did not answer, but bit by bit began to understand . . . and she detached herself. That detachment prepared her for greater sacrifices and soon we see her offering her virginity to God.

Jacqueline was another little girl, a little girl of our own day, who learned the lesson of sacrifice. She was sick and suffering much. “Oh, I believe nobody has ever had pain like mine!”

- “Where does it hurt?” she was asked.
- “In my stomach, in my head, everywhere!”
- “Think of St. Francis who had a red hot iron applied to his eyes as a treatment. . .”

This time her attention was caught. She forgot her own misery to sympathize with her dear saint whom people had hurt.

- “Did they cure him after all that?”

Guy de Fontgalland had to have many strychnine injections in his leg.

- “Offer it to Jesus, my darling,” suggested his mother. “He was crowned with thorns for love of you.”
- “Oh yes, that is true and He kept the thorns in His head while they quickly removed the needle from my leg.”

A mother had three children; the oldest was four, the second, three, and the baby, twenty months. It was Good Friday. Why not encourage them to offer Jesus on the Cross some little sacrifice which would cost them a little?

- “My children, I will not deprive you of your chocolate candy at lunch today; but little girls who love Jesus will know themselves how to sacrifice their chocolate.”

She made no further reference to it. None of the children answered. That evening the mother was very much moved to see the three chocolate bars at the foot of the Crucifix. Our Lord must have smiled at the childish offering; one of the candy bars bore the teeth marks of the baby who had hesitated before the offering and begun to nibble on her chocolate.

These stories of successful lessons in generosity are encouraging. What others have achieved, can I not achieve too?

MOTHERS AND VOCATIONS

WHEN Motta was elected to the Swiss Federal Council his first act was to send this telegram to his mother: “To my venerated mother, who remaining a widow while I was still a child, engraved in my heart the concept of duty by teaching me that duty dominates all interests, all selfishness, all other concerns.”

To be sure God remains the Master of vocations. Motta was not entering upon Holy Orders. His providential position was to be quite different and very fruitful besides.

What is certain is that never—or shall we say rarely, very rarely—is a vocation born into a family unless the mother has inculcated in her children a sense of duty and a habit of sacrifice. Of course, all children who receive a strong supernatural training do not enter the priesthood or religious life, but no child enters upon any career calling for great self-sacrifice, prescinding some unusual influence which is rare, if he does not acquire early in life a solid spirit of renunciation and generosity in the accomplishment of duty.

On the other hand, where mothers know how to go about teaching and above all practicing complete fidelity to duty and total renunciation, where they always put the supernatural love of God before material love for their children, Our Lord finds it easy to choose His privileged souls.

Monsignor d’Hulst said many a time to Abbe Leprince, “It takes a truly Christian mother to make a good priest. The seminary polishes him off but does not give him the substance, the sacerdotal spirit.”

All things considered, that holds true for novitiates and religious life. Nothing replaces family training, above all the influence of the mother. But that training and that influence must be wholly supernatural.

Madame Acarie, foundress of a French Carmelite Convent where she was known as Sister Marie of the Incarnation, strove earnestly to rear her six children for God. She explained to them: “I would not hesitate to love a strange child more than you if his love for God were greater than yours.”

However, individual free will always remains and God is Always Master of His gifts. That thought ought to calm the fear—unjustifiable as it is but humanly understandable—of certain mothers who think, “If I conduct my home along lines too thoroughly Christian, if I instill into my children too strong a habit of the virtues which lead to total

renunciation, to an all embracing zeal, I shall see my sons and daughters renouncing marriage one by one and setting off for the priesthood or the convent.”

If that were to happen, where would be the harm? But that rarely happens in practice. Furthermore, is marriage a state of life that does not require a sense of duty or abnegation?

Let there be no anxiety on this score but perfect peace. The important thing now is not that God might choose so-and-so but that the home give Our Lord maximum glory; that each child whatever its destiny serve an apprenticeship in generosity and the true spirit of the Gospel. Everything else as far as the future is concerned should be left to God.

PRIESTS IN THE FAMILY

THE supreme honor for Christian families is to give priests to God. The father can do much to inspire a priestly vocation but the mother who is often closer to the children can do more. For this she needs a priestly soul, a gift that is not so rare in mothers as one might believe. “There are,” said Rene Bazin, “mothers who have a priestly soul and they give it to their children.”

The lack of priests is a terrible sickness of the world today, a sickness that is growing worse. The war has depleted their number and the absence of priestly influence in many parishes before and during the war has damaged more than one vocation.

It is necessary that Christian families desire to give priests to the Church; that they beg God for the grace to prepare to the best of their ability for the eventual flowering of the priesthood.

Christian families should desire to give priests: Such a desire presupposes a profound esteem for the priesthood on the part of the parents. What a pity it is when a child who broaches the subject of becoming a priest meets with his father’s unreasonable anger, “If you mention vocation to me again, I’m going to strangle your confessor for it!” Can there be any greater blessing than a priest in a family?

Christian families should pray: A priestly vocation is a supernatural favor; prayer is essential to obtain it. God’s gifts are free, that is true, but we know that He makes some of His choice graces depend upon the prayers of His friends.

Christian families should prepare for vocations: Parents should know how to detect the germs of a vocation. “I hear the grain growing,” said an old peasant as he walked about in his field. No one can better read the soul of a child than the mother. “I know him through and through as if I had made him.” This rather common but profound statement expresses very well the sort of intuition mothers have for all that concerns their child. Although the boy himself may not have discovered the divine germ, the mother, if she is keen and close to God, has been able to discern it.

How then help this germ to bud?

Help it gently, for there must be no pressure brought to bear upon the child. Suggest, yes; force, no.

Inspire great esteem for the priesthood. Consider a priest’s visit to the home as a privilege and a festive occasion. “From the age of seven,” declared Father Olier, the founder of the Sulpicians, “I had such an esteem for a priest that in my simple childish mind I believed them no longer human.” When asked the source of his great esteem, he said, “From my father and my mother.”

“Dear child, since you love to go to church so much and since you are so good in public speaking, you ought to become a priest,” suggested the father to his son, the future martyr, Blessed Perboyre.

Often the mother has quicker insight and longer-ranged vision. The father sometimes resists the vocation of his child. Such was the case with Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Alphonsus Ligouri. The father of Saint Alphonsus refused to speak to him for a whole year.

Sometimes though the father is the one who inspires the love for the priesthood. At the time of the confiscation of Church property in 1905 in France, a father perched his son on his shoulders to watch the pillage of the churches to incite in him a desire to become a defender of the Church later and if possible a priest.

Madame de Quelen did not hesitate to bring her son to the prison of the Carmelite priests to visit the priests interned there. The bishop later chose the Church of this Carmelite prison for his See.

If a child seems drawn to the priesthood show him the high motives that can lead him to embrace such a calling—the desire to imitate Our Lord and the desire to save souls.

What a reward the parents reap at their son's ordination or on the day of their death. That repays them for all the sacrifices they willingly made; repays them with interest.

THE MOTHER OF A SAINT

MADAME DE BOISY, the mother of Saint Francis de Sales, brought many precious virtues with her to the chateau of Thorens in Savoy where her husband lived. Unassuming and kind, she considered the village households around her estate almost as part of her family; she showed concern for their poverty and sufferings, settled their differences and exercised a control over them that was highly successful for the simple reason that she was careful not to make a show of it. Watchful to see that her servants were truly a part of the family, she encouraged them, without constraining them, to practice their faith and offered to read spiritual books to them herself after the evening meal; she invited all of them to attend the family prayer.

Unfortunately her marriage promised to be sterile. At Annecy in a church dedicated to Our Lady of Liesse, she begged God to give her a son, promising to "exercise all her care to make him worthy of heaven." On August 1567, Francis de Sales was born. He was so frail a child that all feared for his life.

As he grew older, the child had no greater delight than to show kindness to the unfortunate and to distribute among the poor the delicacies his mother gave him for this purpose. It is said of him that by way of thanking his mother he promised her, "When I am my own master, I will give you a beautiful red silk dress every year."

At the same time she was training her little boy to almsgiving, Madame de Sales was also educating him to love of God and to sacrifice.

Soon the hour of separation struck. The child had to leave for the school of La Roche and later for the College at Annecy. He was beloved by all, excused the faults of his comrades and one day even took a whipping in place of his cousin Gaspard de Sales. Shortly after his First Holy Communion he told his mother that he wanted to receive the tonsure some day and that therefore she ought to have his beautiful blond curls cut now.

Francis had two brothers. To characterize them and himself, he developed a comparison between the trio and the seasoning of a salad: "Jean-Francis with his violent temper furnishes the vinegar; Louis with his wisdom the salt; and I, the good-natured chubby Francis, put in the oil because I love mildness."

Francis possessed a secret of which his mother was the confidant: He wanted to be a priest at any cost. Madame de Sales shared his dream and upheld her son in it. After six years at Jesuit schools and colleges accompanied by outstanding success he entered the University of Padua. Here he astonished his professors with the brilliant way he defended his thesis although he was scarcely twenty-four at the time.

The father already envisioned his son as a great lawyer, then a senator, and the founder of a fine family, but Francis, enlightened by a providential experience he had one day while riding through a forest, decided not to delay his consecration to God any longer.

His father objected. The mother intervened: "Can we dispute with God over a soul He wants for His service?" Secretly she had clerical clothes made for Francis. The post of provost of the Cathedral Chapter became vacant. The father finally gave in and on June 8, 1593, Francis was ordained to the diaconate. In the opinion of his father, who missed the joy of seeing him a bishop, Francis preached too much and didn't put in enough Greek and Latin when he did preach. But Francis knew how to talk to souls as his famous missions at Chablais strikingly demonstrated. Rich and poor besieged his confessional.

On December 8, 1602, Francis, who was then thirty-five gave his first episcopal blessing to his mother, who soon put herself under his spiritual direction. One of the last joys of this noble mother was to read her son's "Introduction to Devout Life," a book which met with spectacular success.

A stroke brought the saint's mother to the point of death. The holy bishop of Annecy came hurriedly to her bedside. She recognized him, took his hand and kissed it, then putting up her arms to draw his head closer to her to kiss him, she said, "You are my father and my son!"

Francis closed her eyes at death. Broken by sorrow, he wrote to Madame de Chantel, "It has pleased God to take from this world our very good and very dear mother in order to have her, as I strongly hope, at His right hand, since she was one of the sweetest and most innocent souls that could be found."

Sons are worth what their mothers are worth.

PARENTS OF SAINTS

SAINT FRANCIS DE SALES was the first child of Madame de Boisy. Saint Paul of the Cross was the first of sixteen children. The saint in the family is not always the oldest. Saint Bernard was the third of seven. Saint Thomas Aquinas was the sixth child in the family. Saint Therese of the Child Jesus was the last of nine children. Saint Ignatius of Loyola the last of thirteen.

What glory would have been lost to the Church if the parents of these children had consulted their selfishness rather than their duty of parenthood and had left buried in the realms of nothingness these little beings destined to become saints! It brings to mind the conversation between two women, the one voluntarily sterile, the other surrounded by fine children. The first woman explained to the second that she just couldn't be tied down. The second responded with the classic argument:

“And suppose that your father and mother had reasoned like that, where would you be?”

The saints are rarely only children for two reasons: The first, that there cannot be any sanctity without a habit of renunciation and this habit is much more readily acquired in a large family where each one must forget self to think of others; where the rubbing of character against character whittles down selfishness; where the parents do not have time to overwhelm their offspring with a foolish indulgence that spoils them. The second, that God gives the grace of a holy call, by preference, where there is an integral practice of virtue, where virtue is held in honor, where the parents do not fear difficulty but trust in Divine Providence.

Saint Vincent de Paul was one of five children and Saint Vincent Ferrer, one of eight, Saint Aloysius Gonzaga, Blessed Perboyre, Saint Bernadette were each, one of eight children. In the family of the Cure of Ars there were six children; in that of Saint Margaret Mary Alacoque, seven; in that of Saint Benedict Joseph Labre, fifteen. In the family of Saint Catherine of Siena, there were twenty-two children of the same marriage. And how many more examples we could still find!

There is a charming Breton legend that carries an equally charming lesson. One day Amel, the fisherman, and his wife Penhov, who used to bring fresh fish to the monks, had left with their child to bring in the nets. They were overtaken by the tide. The water rose higher and higher and higher. “Wife, this is our last hour; put your two feet on my shoulders; in this way you will hold out longer...and love my memory.” Penhov obeyed. Amel sunk into the sand like a post driven in with a hammer. Penhov seized the child and lifting it above her said, “Put your two feet on my shoulders; in this way you will hold out longer. And love deeply the memory of your father and mother.” The mother too sank beneath the water and soon only the golden hair of the child floated on the water. An angel of God passed by. He seized the child's hair and pulled. “My, how heavy you are!” Another blond head appeared, that of Penhov who had not let go of her boy's feet. “How heavy you both are!” Then Amel appeared for he had not let go of his wife's feet.... By the child the father and mother had been saved!

Who knows whether or not some parents will enter Paradise because an angel has seized their child by the hair! What a beautiful letter of introduction for Heaven is a child and above all a canonized child!

TRAINING IN CHARITY

JEANNE-ANCELOT-HUSTACHE gives us a picture of her little daughter Jacqueline in the book entitled “The Book of Jacqueline.”

She is a well-endowed child; she is made much of, in fact, too much petted by her grandmother, by her father, by her sister who is extremely proud of her and by all the guests of the home. She is in danger of becoming a charming little self-centered individual as so many children are.

Happily, attentive care watches over her and strives to give the child the spirit of charity, love for the poor, for children, for the weak and the suffering. Little by little, Jacqueline opens her heart to this love, toward the suffering of the world.

She finds exquisite words, unexpected delicacy in greeting people, in thanking them, and in easing every wound that she guesses with a subtle and tender intuition. She is embarrassed rather than triumphant because of the special advantages she has over companions who are less gifted, poorer and less endowed. She pities the poor beggar on the boulevard; she brightens the lives of the aged sick in the hospice of Ligny with her refreshing graciousness. At seven

years this is how she prays to the Blessed Virgin for an unfortunate servant:

“O my Mother, my Mother, please deliver Yvonne. The poor little one. Nobody wants her. Her father doesn’t want her, her mother is now far from her. She stole, she is in prison, she is sad and never will any one take her from it, never until her death; I alone on earth love her, I love her because she seems to say to me, ‘If they would let me alone with you, I would never do anything bad.’”

“I alone on earth, I love her.” That is the answer of Jacqueline to the secret appeal of the merciful Christ: She will give herself entirely to those who have no one to love them; she will be their Sister of Charity, their Little Sister of the Poor, their Sister of Mercy.

The hour of God for this privileged child was to come in an unexpected way. She was to die while still very young and she was to go to the Christ of the extended Arms, the Christ who loves little children who are charitable and pure.

What an advantage for the child’s later life, if the parents have succeeded in making it alert to the refinements of charity, to a concern for the needs of the world.

They do not lack opportunities. Perhaps mother and child are taking a walk. Here comes a poor grandmother, gathering dead branches, leading along an emaciated, sickly child. “Suppose we go to their aid?” suggests the mother to her little one.

Christmas comes. In many families some good little children will have nothing, not the smallest present. Their papa is too poor; he earns just enough to provide bread to his household. Playthings? By no means; playthings cost too much. “Suppose we bring them that doll you don’t play with anymore. Mother will dress it again so that it will look fine.” Or, “Suppose you look for that mechanical horse you relegated to the attic. Papa will repair it so that it will seem like new.”

Then there are the Missions. A terrible flood in some land has been reported. How many people are suffering! Let us fix up a bank into which each one can put his little alms! When we have a nice sum, we can send it over there. Or perhaps there is an occasion to ransom a little pagan baby so that it can be reared as a Christian. The opportunity to explain that spiritual alms are superior to material alms should not be passed by.

Once a child’s eyes have been opened, how well it will know how to be good!

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (1)

To AWAKEN the child to solicitude for the poor and the wretched is a splendid thing. However parents do not fulfil their whole duty, if they fail to give it a sense of responsibility for the common good and a true concept of cooperation.

Instinctively the child refers everything to its own small personal interest. If it is not taught very early to concern itself for others, it will be in danger of becoming narrow and selfish, of being forever oblivious to the general welfare, in other words, of never achieving a social sense.

While the child is very young this training will not consist in formal instructions but rather in a constant directing of attention on a thousand different occasions to the fact of having to be concerned about others. It will be taught to go upstairs without making a noise because mamma is resting; not to slam the doors because little brother or little sister is asleep; not to play noisily near papa’s study. The child will learn very early in this way the social consequences of its actions.

The child may be with the whole family to meet someone at the station; the parents will have a fine opportunity to show it how selfish it is to stand directly in door ways and passages as it loves to do, since that obstructs the entrances and exits for people coming in from trains or those who merely wish to leave that way.

If a little girl accompanies her mother on a shopping trip, she can be taught not to ask the clerk to display more goods than necessary because it will all have to be refolded and replaced after she leaves.

At basketball or football, it is not so important to be a star player oneself as to bring the team to victory. It is true sportsmanship and true nobility to renounce a personal triumph by passing the ball to a fellow player who will assure the victory because he is in a better position or better qualified.

“Point out to us the lessons of the football game,” a young sportsman asked his older friend. And he gave the one that extols the virtue of renunciation: “I will pass my chance to him”—the sacrifice of selfish or vain calculating with

a view to the result for the whole.

The child can be shown that when there is question of committing an infraction of discipline in school, he ought to avoid it not so much because of the effect on the teacher—"He who budges will have to deal with me"—but rather the disturbance it causes for his comrades whose attention is distracted and progress retarded. Discipline was not invented for the comfort of the teacher but for the good of the pupils.

In this way, theoretical teaching is preceded by the practical background of the child in an atmosphere of cooperation, of social interchange of help. Every occasion for practice of this type should be accompanied by an explanation that later they must always act with like consideration in the office, the factory, the army or in whatever community they may be.

Once the children are old enough to understand more theory, every opportunity to instill doctrine should be seized: An international problem arises: Selfishness or mutual help? What does the Church say on this point? What does the Gospel say? Or perhaps it is a problem of relations between employer and workers, a strike in the father's factory or in the city. Here too, what does the Church say? What does the Gospel command. Selfishness or reciprocal understanding?

Trained in this fashion the young will be ready and quick to understand the social or international doctrine of the Church when they are old enough to be taught it academically. They will not oppose correct principles, as they only too often do with a wall of prejudices or pseudo-traditions, when their religion or philosophy teachers explain them.

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (2)

WE HAVE accomplished a good deal if we have accustomed the child to put itself as much as possible "in the place of others." "If I were in such and such a situation, what would I do, what would I think?" We are all wrapped up in ourselves as in a cocoon, the child more than anyone else; particularly if it has been coddled, if it has been born into a family that is comfortably fixed, if it gets accustomed or others make it accustomed to being waited on.

The child must be encouraged to wait on itself and to give service. If for any reason the mother needs to hire help, that is no reason for the child to monopolize such help to its own comfort; it should never be permitted to give direct orders to domestic help.

As much as possible, especially in the case of little girls, the child should be given the opportunity to do many little tasks that make family life run more smoothly: to set the table, to dust up a room, to arrange a bouquet, to take care of the baby. Such assignments should not be presented to them as burdensome tasks but as an aid toward the common good, a lightening of mamma's work so that they are joyful about it even if it demands an effort, upsets their well-laid plans or requires a sacrifice. Often the child will be delighted, proud of its importance. However care must be taken to appeal not to vanity but to responsibility.

A delicate point to consider is the question of friendships. Should the child be permitted to associate with children who are not as we say of their class? They will meet in school. If these possible friends are morally good and well-mannered, why not? It will offer a fine opportunity to show that money is not everything, that the only true worth is virtue and human dignity. The child may be too much inclined to pair off only with those who belong to the same social circle or environment; that flatters its vanity. The parents should react to this tendency by teaching the little one that it ought to share with a comrade who is less privileged and while avoiding indiscriminate associations with anybody and everybody, seek out as friends not the best dressed but those who are the best students, the most truly pious, the strongest personalities for good, in a word, those that deserve most esteem.

Should the family circumstances require sacrifices, show the child that there are people who are poorer; silence all jealousy. When the time comes for a choice of profession direct the boy or girl to choose judiciously not according to possible profit or financial returns but according to the possibilities for best serving society, the common good.

Generous parents will not hesitate, if the child's qualifications are adequate and the opportune moment presents itself, to speak of vocations of complete consecration, the priesthood, religious life. There are so many needs in the world. "The harvest indeed is great, but the laborers are few." They enlist their children's interest. A priest? Why not he? A religious? Why not she?

That supposes a spirit of detachment in the parents, an informed appreciation for the needs of the Church, love of

the general good of Christianity, the sacrifice of little hopes for building up a new family. Yes, it means that.

Such parents will often call attention to the distress of the world; to the struggle of nations among themselves. They will explain to their children that union alone is fruitful; furthermore that union alone is truly Christian.

What an inspiring example do those children have whose father has always been a man of broad sympathies and a generous heart, highly social-minded; if in his profession he has always tried to serve rather than merely to earn money; if a lawyer, he has always been concerned for justice; if an industrialist, he has applied himself to bettering the human aspects of production; if a merchant, he has been attentive to injure no one; if a doctor, he has sacrificed himself to do the most possible good; if an employee, he has given his time loyally and honestly to his work—a worker eager for work well done and the social defense of his profession.

The boy and girl learn from this to consider their chosen professions or careers as future social service. They get out of their narrow selfish views which formerly warped their characters—they emerge with souls truly formed.

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (3)

IF WE are alert to seize the occasions, everything can serve to teach children to guess or at least to understand the needs and requirements of others.

A little girl who could no longer be called a baby had not as yet any brother or sister. One day she noticed her mother busy with the details of a layette: “Is all that for Liette, mamma?” She was Liette. “No dear, not for Liette, but for a little brother or sister who is going to come.”

Liette was utterly stupefied. What was this? Mother was not working only for her then!

The first school for social consciousness is the family. What a handicap if mother has never worked for anyone but Liette, if Liette remained an only child! We can readily guess what selfishness she would have been capable of displaying.

The family is together: “It’s so stuffy here, I’m going to open the window.”

“No, grandmother has a cold.”

The child understands it is not alone; others count.

The family lives in an apartment. The children are making an uproar. “Gently, children; we must not disturb the people downstairs. Not so much noise.” Others count.

The little girl is learning how to keep house. She shakes her dustcloth out of the window. “Did you look to see if someone was passing by?”

To know that other people exist and to understand that we must restrain ourselves for them is the root of social consciousness. A person would think that we all would have it and to spare.

Unfortunately experience proves otherwise.

Mother and child go to a neighboring park for play. How tempting to make little sand piles all along the bench beside mamma! “You will see, I will not get you dirty mamma.”

“No, my little one, but you are not thinking of the people who may come in a little while to sit on this bench.”

The street as well as a public garden can offer opportunities for such lessons. “Step aside dear. Don’t you see that mother who is pushing her baby buggy; let her pass.”

On the streetcar: “Give your place to the lady.”

In a train. “Take turns sitting by the window.” “Let’s not speak so loud; it will disturb other people’s conversation or their reading.”

On a visit. “The steps have just been scrubbed; clean your shoes on the mat and walk along the edge so as not to track them up for the lady.”

All this is rounded out in Catechism lessons. “Then in heaven I will be with some poor little child, won’t I?”

Children of poor families should be taught the dignity of poverty and labor, the duty of contributing one’s best efforts to lift the living conditions and social status of their group.

Children of wealthy families should be taught their responsibility toward the working classes; they should be taught how far material, moral, and spiritual destitution can go and what they ought to do to learn how to remedy it.

TRAINING IN SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (4)

WE HAVE not done everything when we have given children the idea and the desire of going to the aid of the poor. There is something better to be done. That is to teach them gradually to try to prevent misery from invading the poor world. We shall never succeed completely in checking it, but what a beautiful work it is to try to spread more happiness among men!

As children grow and reach an age of keener perception and of deeper reflection show them that the problem involves:

- The relations of social classes with one another;
- The relations of nations toward one another.

Within a single country, there are those who have what they need, those who have more than they need, those who have not even the essentials.

Is it not fundamental to establish a condition in the world in which the fewest people possible lack the necessities of life or better in which the most people possible can attain a sufficient possession of the goods of the earth, the culture of the mind and the knowledge of supernatural riches?

To the degree in which we are impregnated with the spirit of the Gospel, we will desire that our brothers about us are not only cured of their wounds but preserved as far as they can be from possible wounds and established in a state of adequate human development, and of adequate divine development.

To dress a wound that has been infected is a good deed; to prevent a wound from being inflicted is a better deed. To prearrange indemnity for those who fall into unemployment is good; to strive for a status of work in which unemployment is prevented is better.

Now the conditions of modern living, the economic equipment of society, have thrown a whole section of society into a situation in which life has become very hard, in which “earning one’s living” has become a terrible problem.

Young boys and girls must be taught to realize these facts as they grow up. They must open their minds to an understanding of the social problems in their most agonizing aspects; they must prepare themselves to work to the best of their ability to counteract these evils.

When the social questions are concerned with relations between peoples of different nations, then how many problems crop up! Wars, even after treaties have been signed, leave hearts embittered. New difficulties arise. A very correct idea of patriotism is of capital importance!

Is periodic war between nations justifiable? Ought we not do everything in our power to constitute a state of peace in the world by an honest agreement between nations?

What procedures should we follow that these desirable understandings be effective?

What virtues must be developed in order to reconcile at one and the same time concern for national dignity, love of peace, brotherhood according to God.

How can we get different peoples to live together side by side without the grave interests of any group suffering even though each nationality remains deeply concerned for its own greatness?

A whole education on these points must be given.

THE FAMILY AND THE SCHOOL

To CHOOSE a school and then to help the school are two great duties of the family.

1. To choose a school. It is quite clear that a Catholic family ought to choose a Catholic school. On every level of education when there is a choice between a Catholic school and a public school, Christian parents have the serious duty to prefer the one which speaks of God and Christ rather than the one which sins by omission.

It is a duty and a serious duty for many reasons:

First of all when Catholics practically bleed themselves to death financially to maintain their schools, not to profit by their sacrifice is to do them grave injustice.

Then, and this is serious, even when there need be no fear of the danger of immorality, the very fact of the mixed religions necessarily involved is a danger for the child’s faith since because of this variety, the education offered is severed from all allusion to things eternal. It is by a regrettable amputation that educators pretend to

isolate in the human being, the merely human vocation and the supernatural vocation. We have not been created to be human beings pure and simple but divinized human beings. Educators can work in vain, secularization will accomplish nothing in changing this truth. It is just that way. The same holds for the education the parents give to supplement that of the school; it is immeasurably harmful for the moral life of young minds and young hearts never to hear mentioned that which alone counts for life. That is, however, how so many generations have become accustomed to put life on one side and religion on the other as if they were separate water-tight compartments.

To count on the school alone, especially when it is neutral, to equip children adequately for life is a grave delusion.

Spencer, that English realist, once wrote:

“The one who would want to teach geometry by giving Latin lessons or who believed he could teach pupils to play the piano by drawing would be considered crazy. He would be just as reasonable as those who pretend to improve the moral sense by teaching grammar, chemistry or physics.”

An education, even a solid education that is purely secular is insufficient for the full development of the moral sense and the adequate formation of character.

2. To help the school. After the school has been carefully chosen, the family still has the duty to help the teachers in their task. Therefore, parents, older brothers and sisters should:

- show new interest in the children’s studies not as they often do through vanity but through real interest in the children.
- should never contradict the disciplinary measures that teachers thought necessary; if a punishment has been inflicted at school or a schedule decided upon, the pupil’s family ought to support it and express themselves as being in accord with it.
- should, if necessity has obligated them to put a child in a secular school, supplement the regrettable deficiencies of the school by competent religious instructions; they must also exercise vigilance over the friendships and associations the children form.

They should exercise vigilance in this regard even when the school is of the highest moral standard; particularly careful must they be of the influences of doubtful companions the children might become acquainted with on their way to and from school. Along with the school and the home we must take account of the influence of the streets.

THE SECULARISM OF CHRISTIANS

WE ARE not concerned here with refuting the doctrines of secularism. Every Christian ought to know the mind of the Church on this subject; we need not go back to ancient documents either to discover it. It is enough to recall the Encyclical “Summi Pontificatus” issued by Pius XII in 1939 at the beginning of the Second World War.

Denouncing the aggressive encroachment into the field of religion by some present-day particular doctrines, he traced even farther back the source of the evil which has poisoned the whole life of Europe; he pointed to the doctrines which tried to build up the present and the future of humanity by getting rid of God and getting rid of Christ.

The problem now is to determine which of the unfortunate species of secularism has invaded me, my home, my habits, and which now may dominate me.

Of course there is no question of a denial of God or of Christ. But what place do they hold in my family life? In my daily life, in my profession, in my participation in civic affairs?

Has it not often happened that in choosing schools or colleges for their children so-called Christian parents often evidence a utilitarian materialistic spirit; they give lame reasons for choosing the secular colleges instead of a Catholic college—the teachers are better, the chances for success after graduation are more certain. Are they so sure? And if by chance it were true? Do the souls of their children mean less than a diploma?

Has it not often happened that the influence of such Christian parents in their social and civic life was practically nothing as far as bringing the doctrines of the Gospel and the teaching of the Church to bear on those domains?

And even though they neglected nothing of the essential practices of their religion, was it not primarily mere formality rather than solid convictions; conformity or fashion rather than true worship? There was a great disparity between their external actions, their attitudes and real prayer, the living knowledge of the gift of God?

Is not following the doctrines and the morality of Christ nothing more than letting them be evident in my life and my family?

The world must be made over. In the light of an Apocalypse, terrible ruins have been effected. The edifice that was the European world appeared solid; the foundation stone was deficient. Are we going to build the new world on an equally fragile base? If we are, then, the causes remaining the same, the results must inevitably be the same. And we shall continue indefinitely to see renewed destructions. If God has no place in the foundations of the City with all that His inclusion implies, then how can the City remain standing? That is a thought expressed in an ancient psalm; there is no exception—the truth of this fact remains. The stability of nations and of society is bound up with eternal principles.

Am I sufficiently convinced of this? Do I not have much more confidence in human formulas than in the rule of complete truth? Do I not unconsciously try to establish human life only upon the human? Am I not still and always, in spite of the lesson in world events, the victim of a deficient ideal, of inadequate principles?

I must Christianize my Christianity. I must make it evident in every department of my life—in my relations with my family and with society; in the opinions I hold regarding national and international issues. In all that depends on me there shall be one hundred percent Christianity.

FAMILY AFFECTIONS

THE family spirit, that traditional ensemble of convictions, ideals, and domestic practices which constitute the sacred patrimony of people united by the same blood, can exist without a very strong affection among the members. The family spirit is in itself something precious; but when it is merely a sort of collective egotism, it has been blemished; it is a beautiful fruit injured by a worm.

What an inspiring and noble reality family affection is! One author refers to it poetically:

“. . . Beautiful families that travel as a group and as a choir on the road to heaven after the pattern of stars that are united in constellations in the firmament . . .”

How we ought to pity those husbands or wives and often young boys and girls who find the hours spent at home long; those husbands and wives who are bored with each other; those brothers and sisters who find one another's company monotonous and whose glance is ever on the door, the gate or the garage!

Mutual Love of Parents and Children: Joseph and Mary did not grow bored with Jesus; Jesus did not tire of the company of Mary and Joseph. It is said that love does not go backward. We do not find too many examples of parents who do not love their offspring but how many children neglect their father and mother with painful disregard! They explain it by saying that young people like to be together. But there is a time for everything. There are some who do not make enough of the part of the home in their lives. How strange it is that children can be so loving when they are little, so demonstrative, and when they grow up so adept at saddening their parents?

Brotherly and Sisterly Love: Where will we find love if not between brothers and sisters? “Who then will love you,” Bishop Baunard asks, “if you do not love your brother. It is like loving yourself. I believe the etymology of the word *frater*, brother, is made up of these two words *ferre alter*, that is nearly another self.”

The Count de Mun wrote in his “Memoirs,” “It is sweet to me to have to speak in the plural when recalling the first years of my existence. I have a twin brother who has never been so much as a step away from me in my career. My life is his life, my joys have been his, and his successes mine. It is not Anatole and Armand, he and I, it is we.”

Marshal Lyautey had a brother who was a colonel during the war of 1914; this brother manifested to all who spoke to him not only his admiration for Lyautey, the Governor of Morocco, but his deep affection.

One only had to hear Father Foch, a fine type of Jesuit, mention his brother Marshal Foch to sense his love; though he showed a complete reserve it was more eloquent than any discourse; his was a warmth of heart which a few restrained but touching words sufficed to express.

There should be place in the home for the affection that grandparents, uncles and aunts deserve.

On the children's birthdays, why not invite the godparents; they would enter better into their office. “Men and women who have held children at the baptismal font, I remind you that you will have to render an account of them before God.” For their part, the children will get a better realization of this beautiful institution of Christian

sponsorship.

If all the members of the family are to understand one another and love one another, each one must have a great virtue. The same training and the same blood are not sufficient; self-conquest is necessary. Bossuet expressed it well: "Natures are always sufficiently opposite in character to create frequent friction in a habitual society. Each one has his particular disposition, his prejudices, his habits. One sees himself at such close range and one sees oneself from so many angles, with so many faults in the most trifling occurrences! One grows weary, imperfection repels, human weakness makes itself felt more and more, so that it is necessary to conquer oneself at every hour."

THE HIERARCHY OF DUTIES

APOSTOLIC work if carried on inopportunately or immoderately can take a woman away from her home too much.

Beyond a doubt, there are immense needs: help for the sick, catechetical instructions, guild meetings for the Sisters, spiritual conferences, and in all of these, great charity can be exercised. It is much better for a woman to spend her time in such things than in lounging, or in numerous and useless visits, in exploring for the hundredth time some enticing department store. Nevertheless, the duties of the home remain her principal work: To plan, to arrange, to mend, to clean, to sew, to beautify, to care for the children. Insignificant duties? But what would that matter if they represented the Will of God? Are we not too often tempted to want a change? Impetuous zeal, poorly directed service, caprice under the guise of generosity seek to substitute for daily duty which perhaps has not much glamor about it but which is just the same wanted by God.

Would not the greatest charity in such a case be not to engage in works of charity but to remain faithfully at home and devote oneself to works which no one will speak of and which will win no one's congratulations? Later when the children have grown up and settled, there may be leisure; then a large share in the apostolate will be open according to one's strength and time. Until then, my nearest neighbor, without being the least bit exclusive about it but merely judging with a well instructed understanding, will be this little world that has established itself in my home....

Another danger besides excessive apostolic works that might ensnare some wives and mothers of families would be to give exaggerated place to exercises of piety. Did not one of the characters in a novel by George Duhamel lament this tendency: "I have heard priests say that some women have spoiled their married life by excessive attendance at religious ceremonies and they sighed, 'Why did they get married if they had a religious vocation.'"

There are unfortunately some husbands so superficially Christian that they see exaggeration in the most elementary and normal practice of piety on the part of the wife and mother. That is only too sadly true! Their judgment is worth nothing.

We are referring only to an actual excess which would really be considered such by a competent judge.

There is no doubt that a married woman, if she is a good manager and is not encumbered by some job outside the home, can find time for normal religious exercises and can even provide for meditation, spiritual reading and a relatively frequent assistance at Mass and reception of Holy Communion; time, after all, is something that varies in its possibility for adaptations and compressibility and woman excels in the heart of putting many things into a small place....

If she suspects that her husband finds certain exterior acts of piety exaggerated, attendance at weekday Mass for instance, let her increase her private devotions somewhat, a little more meditation or spiritual reading when he is not around; whether he is right or not, it is better not to irritate him if grave consequences might result. That is how Elizabeth Leseur managed; never did she betray the least annoyance when disturbed in her devotions; she always answered her husband's call or his outbursts of irritation with a pleasant face.

Never neglect a duty but observe the order of their importance.
