

FAMILY LIFE TODAY

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A Personal Note

Fathers and mothers of the present and future—I am writing these pages in the hope that they may be of help to you in your family life. They are an attempt to point out evils and to suggest the remedies which are an application of Christian principles. If you can discuss these ideas with others, you will gain greater value from them. Further, you may thus be able to take part in the very worthwhile task of promoting Christian family life.

The Family

The family is the basic unit of society. It is essential that this fact should be known and remembered by legislators, educators, and especially by parents. Christ sanctified the family, and the Church has always regarded it as one of her sacred duties to protect family life and to promote the spiritual and temporal welfare of the family. It is in and through family life that most people will save their souls. Therefore, we should appreciate the importance of the family and of those things that protect the family. We should also know just how menacing is anything that threatens the stability, the unity, the happiness and the complete development of family life.

Is Anything Wrong?

Only those who are completely blind to modern trends will be unaware of the fact that vicious attacks from within and without are being made upon the family in these days. The future offers no immediate sign of a change in this. Rather does the position seem to grow worse from day to day with the increasing influence of materialism and naturalism and the concomitant decline in the practice of religion, particularly outside the Catholic Church.

I. WITHIN THE HOME

Let us get it clear that a home is not just a building of so many squares. A home is a place—a centre of life is perhaps a better description—in which the mutual love of husband and wife radiate to each other and also to those children who are begotten through loving union. Unless this union of the husband and wife is based on love, respect and discipline, there are positive dangers to all those who live in that house with insecurity, unhappiness, even hatred, as the consequences.

With the mention of dangers to the family our minds usually turn immediately to such things as comics and films. I think you will agree, however, after more serious reflection, that the most insidious dangers can come from within the home itself. Unless in the home there is mutual love and respect based on the love of God and trust in His Providence, the greatest danger of all is striking at the heart of the family and of the children.

Religion in the Home

Religion must be a vital force in family life—something to be lived by all its members. If religion is regarded merely as a nuisance on Sunday mornings, or only as a subject for children at school, there can be no true religious life in the home. Have you ever thought of the consequences of this?

Perhaps we are inclined to think that delinquent or troublesome children only come from poor and neglected homes—from the sub-standard dwellings that form the slum areas of big cities—the houses with broken windows and rickety doors and furniture—the houses where filth lies undisturbed and where dirty and shabbily clothed children are subjected to obvious immoral companionship and environment. From these houses we more or less take it for granted that there will be troublesome children coming forth - children who lack love and respect—respect for others, respect for the law. We are usually, though not always, correct in this judgement.

Unfortunately, however, with the decline of religion in public life, we have adopted an attitude of mind in which we think that, provided all the material needs of the children are satisfied, everything else is satisfactory for sound home life and training of children. Experience teaches us almost the opposite. True love and respect, not financial standing, are the essential qualities of a good home.

Sad Example

Let us consider a few examples from real life which have come to my notice.

The first was a case of over-indulgent parents. Their girl had been given a very expensive church schooling. When she reached the age of eighteen years, she received a car for her own personal use and was allowed to go wherever she liked. Her parents, though nominally Christian, were, in fact, pagans, but good, "nice" people. The daughter, in spite of her respectable parents, on leaving school was soon in constant trouble with the law because of her immoral life and association with criminals. In other words, according to the common statement, "She had let her family down." But had she? They did not lift her up. They supplied everything on the material level, but nothing on the spiritual level. Now she is living solely on that material level on which, though admittedly in a more "respectable" manner, her parents have lived.

Another is the case of a Catholic girl who always went to a convent school. Three months after she left school she dropped the practice of her religion. On investigation, it was found that there was absolutely no religious life whatsoever in her home. The parents did not attend Mass. In their home there were no private or family prayers, no reverence for God, no religious pictures; there was a picture of nudes in the front room. The girl afterwards lived with a married man and said, "I hate my parents." Yes—she hated the parents who gave her a Catholic schooling and all that went with it, but who did not give her a love of spiritual things; they did not give her a love of God and a respect for the laws of God and man.

Two Examples

These two examples happen to concern girls, but boys are concerned just as much, if not more. I could quote more examples but these two suffice to illustrate how important it is for parents to be aware of their obligation to supply more than the material needs of their children. In other words, the home must provide a real and vigorous religious life, supported by the mutual love, respect, sympathy and understanding of parents and children. Sometimes this parental concern comes too late. When one of the girls to whom I referred had reached the age of eighteen years and had disgraced her parents, the father wanted to whip her. If perhaps he had used his discipline with love and respect when she was younger there would have been no occasion for severity later. But this particular father had been too indulgent all along. He had let the child do what she liked. When she satisfied her whims as a young woman, he did not appreciate it. But that was the way he had trained her.

The Attitude of Parents

This is what happens. Babies can be so cute, interesting and entertaining. But when they get about three or four the situation changes. Let's take just one example: Dad is trying to read the paper and is interrupted by a stream of questions: "Why does the light burn, Daddy?" and "where does the electricity come from, Daddy?" and many other problems that confront the developing mind of the growing child. Dad gets tired of it, loses his patience and yells, "Oh! go and play." Perhaps money for sweets is given as a bribe. It is interesting to note in passing, how frequently children are reprimanded for being impatient while their parents are constantly displaying impatience in their presence.

Where there is a persistent attitude of no give and take, no consideration for the child's queries and difficulties, there is this result: when the child finds it has some real need or has a real question, it will not go to Dad or Mum because "They don't understand me. They don't want to answer questions." In such cases, it is clear that those early years of the child's life, with the wonderful opportunity which they offer between the child and the parent, are being wasted, because Dad or Mum or both are too selfish.

So you see, we need to remember this: those early years from babyhood are the times for building up that attitude of confidence and respect which is so essential in the problems later on. Take, for example,

the child who asks, "Daddy, where do babies come from?", and he hears, "Oh! Go and ask your mother." The child asks his mother, and the mother says, "Oh! The storks bring them." The child knows it is not being told the truth because Dad wouldn't have behaved the way he did, and Mum wouldn't have looked so embarrassed if she were speaking honestly. Then comes a day when the child wants to know further information of this nature and it will ask a little playmate down the street who knows all the answers and is very proud to tell everybody else about it. Once this situation has arisen the parents have forfeited the privilege of giving this most intimate and important knowledge to their children, because the child has lost confidence in them.

Helps for the Parents

That is why the proper attitude of confidence must be built up from the earliest years. If it is not, there is a serious danger coming into the family. Of course, sometimes parents haven't the faintest idea of the way they should answer their children's questions. Parents must equip themselves with the knowledge and methods required to explain and meet the various needs of their children, particularly in the matter of questions about sex. There are many books, both good and bad, on this matter. Some good ones are: *You Are Her Mother* and *He's Your Son* (small pamphlets available from Catholic bookshops and the Advocate Office. *Christopher's Talks to Catholic Parents*, by David Greenstock (Burns, Oates), is also very helpful. Worthy of special mention here for adolescents are the books: *Youth Looks Ahead* (A Guide for Catholic Girls), by Sr. Winefride, and *The Years Between* (A Guide for Catholic Boys), by P. F. Dorian, both published by the Polding Press, Brisbane.) But never think that you will solve all the problems by giving your child a book. It is rather a question of building up, giving as much and only as much, knowledge as the child needs and can understand at the particular age it has reached. Your dealing with your child will be a revelation of your whole appreciation of the dignity and sacredness of life, of your own attitude towards sex. These will be revealed because your own attitude to your child is yourself, your whole life, and that is what you reveal when you answer your children's questions. Besides using books, there are other ways of equipping yourselves—school parents' study groups, Christian Family Groups, Cana Conferences and also pre-Cana Courses before marriage. You well know all the trouble people take to fit themselves to earn their living. It is reasonable to ask, "Do you go to at least an equivalent amount of trouble to fit yourselves for the most worthy dignity of being a father, or of being a mother?" Sometimes the answer must be "No."

Authority and Discipline

Because of the need of proper discipline in the home, authority must be used, but used wisely. Sometimes the discipline in a home is harsh. In these homes it is not, "Do this because it is a reasonable and good thing to do it," but "Do this because I say so, and don't dare to ask why." Such an attitude can build up a spirit of rebellion among the children. There will, of course, be times when Dad or Mum must lay down the law. Also it is wise for both Dad and Mum to agree on the required rules and remedies before taking any action. On no account should they disagree over this in the presence of the children. Once children know that they can play one parent off against the other, their authority is seriously weakened. While the use of authority presents difficulties in dealing with young children, it can present tremendous difficulties in the case of adolescents. The adolescent is not inclined to rely on others and has not yet gained sufficient insight to be capable of understanding the necessity and right of authority. He may reveal this in various ways, he may seem to be ashamed of his parents because they are out of date; he wants to rebel against all authorized and traditional authority; he wants to show that he is no longer a baby; he may rebel against parents who continually nag that he is not progressing satisfactorily in school work; he, and probably more frequently she, is antagonized by coercion in what they think are trivials.

Youth Can Co-operate

In solving the various problems, it is necessary to work with adolescents and not against them. To let them see that there are reasons for things in both individual and general cases. The adolescents in families can be assisted to make their own rules and to see that they are kept.

It is amazing what results can be achieved in this way, particularly in such matters as the performing of duties at home, the number of evening outings per week, spending and saving, etc.

Do not mistake me, however, by thinking that there is no place for direct parental authority. It is essential that this must exist and be exercised, but exercised in a reasonable and sensible fashion. In the Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth by Pope Pius XI we read: "Parents and all who would take their place in the work of education should be careful to make the right use of the authority given to them by God. This authority is not given for their own advantage, but for the proper upbringing of their children in a holy and filial 'fear of God, the beginning of wisdom' on which foundation alone all respect for authority can rest securely."

Sometimes, parents make the mistake of appealing to the perfection which they exercised when they were young, e.g., "When we were young, we were not allowed to do that," or simply, "We always obeyed our parents when we were young." Bad memories are probably the only excuses which can be offered to prevent such statements being lies. Sooner or later, the children will find out, perhaps from your own lips, that this perfection did not exist.

In obtaining the obedience of adolescents, it is well to remember that the principal incentive to voluntary action is found in the motive or reason for things. It is not sufficient that the motive be really one of value or importance, it must be one that really appeals to the particular individual. We need also to remember that supernatural motives, which are of the greatest worth in themselves, may not appear so at first sight. Further, we must lead up to supernatural motives by the use of natural motives offered by the interests and desires of the youth. Hence, the need to know the interests and desires of the specific boy or girl. This can only be obtained where there is intimate contact, as in the home or in the school. Careful observation can give this knowledge. All this is difficult, but it is very worthwhile. For unless we can reach the adolescent in his intimate interests and desires we cannot move him. But if we have achieved some insight into them, we can really inspire youth. And he, who can inspire, holds youth in the hollow of his hand.

We must recognize the need for intelligent, prudent and co-ordinated discipline in every home. If it does not exist, respect for authority in the home and outside of it will be destroyed.

The Adolescent

Because of the special difficulties that many parents experience with their adolescent children, I think it is profitable to devote some attention to this particular age group.

With the onset of adolescence comes a period that is essentially one of trouble and of problems for the individual. Accordingly, it is usually a period of unrest and uncertainty. The reliability of things and of persons vanishes, not because these persons or things have become different, but because the adolescent's relations towards them have changed. This change of relations is due to the change in the individual himself, or rather, to the consciousness or awareness he has of himself. The happy unconsciousness of his early childhood is lost for ever. Within himself and in his personality, there are rapid changes going on. To him the world and the people in it present an ever-changing aspect.

Nobody can ever hope to understand the adolescent mind and even less to influence it somewhat, unless he is fully aware of the fact that uncertainty is the very basic feature of this age.

Yet we frequently meet with adults who judge the growing generation with impatience or even with harshness. They have left their own youth behind them, and distance lends enchantment to many things. They have forgotten that the frivolity, the heedlessness and the simple efforts towards adjusting themselves, which they now find so irritating in the adolescent, were equally galling to their elders when they were young.

The Main Problem

This brings me to the fact that we need to remember each individual who is growing up, and must not place all adolescents in one and the same mould.

The central phenomenon and the real problem of adolescence is the formation of the definite self. All other features and factors, such as sexual growth and awareness, are aspects of this one central process.

One can never hope to attain a real understanding of the adolescent mind unless one fully acknowledges the central and fundamental importance of this process of formation and consolidation of self. This process is revealed in uncertainty, which becomes the very characteristic of adolescence.

The dawning consciousness that he is becoming a distinct person makes the adolescent feel that he ought to be able to rely on himself, that he ought to be independent in his decisions, that he ought to become fully responsible for his actions. From this arises the longing for independence, a tendency for self-assurance, the unwillingness to listen to advice and the repugnance of blind obedience. In simpler and less dignified language, we see arise in these young people the "don't fence me in" attitude.

Little children in the average good home develop an unquestioning confidence in their parents. With adolescents, this attitude vanishes quickly and so it is important that the infantile attitudes of parents be replaced by ones adequate to the individual stages of development. This replacement often fails to take place on the part of the parents because they do not understand what is happening with their child. They do not notice, or very often, they do not want to know, that their child is no longer the little, helpless and implicitly trusting being he was but a few months before. They are shocked or disappointed to see the charming traits of childhood disappear.

What Parents Can Do

Instead of adjusting themselves to the new situation, instead of trying to understand this new personality of their child, parents often reproach him for things for which he should not be held responsible. Sometimes they try to treat him as if he were still a little child.

This is a most unhappy and dangerous situation. Parents should try to observe and follow carefully the gradual changes in their child and adjust their attitude and their measures to them. They should avoid all behaviour which undermines the original trusting love of the child. Their neglect in these matters may have no immediate effect, but impressions keep on rankling in some secret place in the child's mind and they become influential the very moment problems arise within the child—problems which make confidence difficult, obedience loathsome, tenderness repulsive. Parents should be happy to be able to help their children to grow up, to be able to depend upon and to be able to control themselves.

The Adolescent Needs Help

Because of his uncertainty, the adolescent may not know what is really wrong with himself, or why he needs help, and even if he has some vague idea of these things, he frequently does not know how to express it because all his experiences are new and different. With the slowly growing consciousness of being a distinct person, having to live his own life, the adolescent mind develops a natural reluctance to disclose itself. What makes the parents, who have been accustomed to the open-mindedness of the child, call the adolescent reticent, secret and impenetrable is, in truth, the first manifestation of a normal and even necessary quality of an adult mind. One may give to this quality the name of discretion, meaning the right discernment of things to be told and things to be withheld. The adolescent, because of his essential uncertainty, does not as yet know how to steer a middle course. Accordingly, he may be very outspoken one day and become utterly reticent the next. For this reason, it is well to make use of every opportunity he offers of getting to know him and his problems better. It will never do with adolescents to put them off, because we can never be sure that tomorrow they will be as willing to confide and to listen as they are today.

Uncertainties

This state of uncertainty to which I have referred is at the bottom of what is so often alluded to as the fickleness of the adolescents. They are fickle, no doubt; their interests change rapidly; they form friendships that do not last; they get enthusiastic about things that bore them soon afterwards; they are meek today and stubborn tomorrow, willing to work for a short spell and soon disgusted with everything concerned with work; they may be friendly, considerate and then cross, egotistic, impossible to approach. All these things and many similar things are true. But all the changes made, all the difficulties caused by them, all the trouble at school and at home, are but external signs of the inner uncertainty.

If you add to all this the question of the end of school days, the selection of the kind of work that they want, the new problems of work and environment, you can see that those who are responsible for adolescents are faced with a situation in which they must give tremendous help and never-ending sympathy and understanding.

It is well to mention here that much of the modern increased understanding of youth and of its problems fails to benefit the adolescent as it should because the one force, that can protect him and counteract the very dangers to which he is exposed, is invoked but very little and, in some quarters, it is not invoked at all. I mean the force of supernatural religion. It is a regrettable fact that much of the literature on adolescence is frankly naturalistic and materialistic. We must keep in mind the fact that in our Catholic Faith and in the sacramental helps supplied by it, we have the answer to our needs.

Religion in the Home

Here again right attitudes are very important. In the home there must be respect for God, there must be prayer, must be talk about God and what God wants, and His goodness and His kindness, His Providence. Threats about God's punishments should not be necessary. God should be presented to the children as a loving Father, exemplified to the children in their own loving father and mother.

Religious practices will present problems in the home. Let us consider, e.g., the Rosary. This is long and tiring for little children, and if they get into an awful row because they wriggle a little or if they giggle occasionally, they will start to dislike the Rosary. The same can happen if children are lined up for Confession and Communion on every possible occasion without their first being given the opportunity of deciding to receive the Sacraments of their own accord. This may particularly apply in the families of very devout parents. Perhaps later on the children will say, "I'm sick of religion. I'm finished with it."

Again, a danger is coming into the lives of these children from within the family itself not from neglect of religion, but from a mistaken attitude on the part of parents in the religious life of their children.

Within the Home—A Summing Up

In the above pages you can see my reasons for stressing that the greatest dangers that can come to young people are frequently the dangers from within their own family. But, if the family is firmly grounded in the love of God, relying on His Providence, and the other points to which I have referred are remembered, it doesn't matter so much about the other dangers with which I shall now deal. The children will have the right approach and will be equipped and strengthened by their Faith and their family to face them.

II. OUTSIDE THE HOME

In the next pages we shall consider some outside influences which can present dangers to children and the family.

Schools

In the light of the sacrifices made by Australian parents for their Catholic schools, I do not think there is any need for me to stress here the importance of the Catholic school. But it is true that people sometimes think they have done everything when they have sent their child to a Catholic school or that they need do nothing to train a child before sending it to a Catholic school. Some children come to school without knowing even how to make the Sign of the Cross. This is a serious matter. If this happens to be your attitude, you are not fulfilling your part as a parent, because, remember this: The parents are the first and primary teachers of the children. Anybody else is in a secondary capacity. Teachers are in loco parentis, acting on your behalf, and therefore, they must co-operate with you and you must co-operate with them, because they're working for you. Your duty to educate your child begins when it is born and continues until it becomes an adult. The teacher's task directly affects only the years and times of school. If that were remembered, schools would do more because their teaching would be backed by the home training and could continue from it. In addition many school-parent difficulties would disappear. Once

people know their duties and responsibilities most problems that arise in school life would cease to exist or be easily solved by parents and teachers having a calm and reasonable talk about them.

Companions

Friends are very important for children as well as for adults. Most parents are very particular about the kind of food their children eat. On this point, I may mention just in passing that some parents are not as careful as they ought to be about their children's breakfasts. The number of children who come to school without any breakfast, except for a plate of cereals and some sweets, is amazing and disturbing. These children are not in a position to be obedient or to work hard in school. Sometimes, their other meals are also not of the type that will nourish them sufficiently and keep sickness away. However, we must grant that most parents are very careful about their children's food. Yet sometimes they are not sufficiently careful about the companions with whom their children play. On this score, I think it well to remember that the children will pick their own playmates, but they should get into the habit of picking them with Dad's and Mum's help. Remember that there are some children who can be a definite menace to the morals and the whole outlook of your children. Sometimes children, even before they have started school, will come home and astound you by the vocabulary they have acquired. They have usually learned it from companions. If they can learn words, they can learn bad habits as well. Parents should be absolutely sure about the regular companions of their children. Where there are several good children together, others will not have quite so much influence. Remember! If you have built up the confidence of your children, they'll come home and tell you everything that is going on. That information will solve many a problem and save much worry.

Investigations, conducted some years ago in an Australian city, revealed some really serious acts of immorality among quite young children. While the parks and dead-end streets were the most common places, some of these actually took place in the backyards of their own homes while mother was away or else inside thinking everything was all right. Frequently the mother did not know who were in the backyard with her children.

You must be sure that you know the companions of your children, whether they are very small or in their teens. On the other hand, your vigilance must not display distrust of them. I think it is a question once again of having developed the atmosphere of confidence with your children in their early years.

Boy-Girl Relationships

This question of companions raises the further one of relationships between boys and girls. Parents and teachers of the adolescent are aware of the words spoken by Pope Pius XI to "remove occasions of evil and provide occasions for good in recreation and social intercourse". However, there is reason to fear that sometimes the attempts to remove occasions of evil are often directed mainly, if not exclusively, in keeping a person away from bad companions. The other sex is in consequence, represented as a kind of enemy. Thus it happens that what is demanded with the best of intentions may prove inadequate for the preservation of that important virtue—chastity.

The attempt to preserve the chastity of youth by keeping them apart from persons of the other sex fails to obtain the desired result for a number of reasons. Segregation may in fact stimulate the imagination and cause more difficulties because of dangers from the same sex and also from movies, reading and other forms of entertainment. In the designs of an all-wise Providence, boys and girls drift apart in the years before adolescence but during adolescence naturally seek each other again. I think it is well to remember that it is God's plan that they should be interested in one another and enjoy each other's company. Normal contact between boys and girls on a social plane actually can provide enormous aids to purity. Respect and reverence for one another can grow and be inspired in these circumstances. On the other hand, if the other sex is regarded as an enemy, this falsehood creates new difficulties of its own. The people who try to create this attitude will also use terms which are incorrect and which ought to be abandoned, e.g., to speak of "impure parts of the body". We know that every part of our body is made by God and therefore sacred to Him, but not impure. Instruction on this matter is a total fallacy if it does not make clear the essential fact that it is only the misuse of the body which is sinful. Because of wrong attitudes during

adolescence, it is astounding to discover the number of married adults who cannot rid themselves of the feeling that the use of marriage is wrong. It is well to recall the opening words of the Encyclical on Christian Marriage by Pope Pius XI: "How great the dignity of chaste wedlock." Parents themselves ought to acquire and also try to develop in their children the right attitude towards sex and discard the method of introducing fear of the other sex. Let them concentrate on a positive training of self-control in allowable and desirable social contacts.

Parties and Drink

On this question, I would like to refer to the topics of parties, drink and dress. Following on the lines of the materialistic psychology so common nowadays many parents have adopted the mistaken view that you must let young people do what they like and how they like. They are inclining more and more not to take their recreation and fun with their growing children. A drift away from entertainment in the home is another feature of this.

I think I have made it clear that it is important for young boys and girls to mix together at social functions. At these functions, however, it seems most desirable that Mum and Dad or other elders should be present, not as icebergs, but as the seniors, very happy to see the young people enjoying themselves. If this is done the excesses that occur at some parties in the way of playing love games with the lights out or going away from the party in unsupervised pairs will be avoided. Another modern craze, at the moment, is for young people to take alcoholic drink at parties and also before dances. Does it not seem staggering to you that adolescents should need the artificial stimulus of intoxicating drink so that they can enjoy themselves? Once young people, particularly girls, take drink, their natural reserve and modesty is broken down, and more serious consequences can easily follow. I think it would be a wonderful thing if young people would keep their Confirmation pledge or take a pledge when they are leaving school until they are twenty-one or, better still, until they are twenty-five. Parents should be happy to see their children become members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Association of the Sacred Heart, not because drink in itself is an evil thing but so that they can make the sacrifice in reparation to God the Father for sins committed through drink. At the same time they will avoid many pitfalls for themselves.

Modesty in Dress

A few brief lines on the question of dress. Through modesty in dress, the important virtue of chastity is promoted and protected. Dress should be an aid to good appearance and be in keeping with the particular social event. However, aided and abetted by materialistic and naturalistic philosophies, the designers of dress have adopted what might be called the "bare as you dare" policy. The designers completely ignore the question of original sin. They also completely forget the psychological and physiological difference between men and women. Rather perhaps than forgetting it, they are deliberately acting upon it, in the service of the Devil. Would that mothers would explain to their daughters the difference in the way men and women react to sex stimulation. Girls should realize that the average man cannot but experience difficulty in the control of thoughts and desires if the more intimate parts of their bodies are displayed, over-suggested, or over-emphasized before him. So too the growing girls should know that a boy is affected, e.g., by necking and petting, in a very different way from herself. This knowledge can enable a girl to avoid being an occasion of sin for the boy, and instead, to be a positive help to his virtue and her own. Likewise, the fathers should make this difference clear to boys who will then have a closer watch over themselves because of the knowledge that the girl may not realize the seriousness of intimate situations.

Catholic women have a great heritage of dignity from the Blessed Mother of God herself. I think it can be said, without any exaggeration, that Catholic women do not prize that heritage as they should and that many are following the train of pagan standards. I speak with feeling on this matter because I know for a definite fact that many of the adolescents now leaving school appreciate the importance of Christian modesty in dress. In carrying out their ideals they are hampered and discouraged by the example of their mothers and the attitude of their fathers. There is no one who can inspire them to higher ideals than their own mothers and it is a great tragedy if mothers fail them in this important matter.

Literature

I have just read an article by a Catholic woman, which finished up with this sentence, "if the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world, surely it can rule the comics out." That statement was worthy of serious consideration. In our daily and weekly papers you can find in one section an article condemning comics and the kind of lurid drawings and the lack of dress so noticeable in them. Yet even on the same page or on a page further over you will find far worse things among the advertisements or news reports and feature articles. There is all that inconsistency in our daily papers. In addition, you have the special journals and magazines for men and women. Some of them are worthwhile, but many of them contain very second-rate material. Practically all of them are materialistic in outlook. That is a well-known fact, and yet these publications are found in homes, and in Catholic homes. Are people prepared to realize that this literature can be a danger to their children's outlook and attitude? That is the point I want to stress.

Attitudes are formed through reading, and constant reading of trashy romantic journals and comics cannot fail to sap the high ideals of young people. A single reading may not affect a person's life and ideals but with continual reading you soon have people agreeing with the ideas and thinking that they are the fashionable and desirable things to do. The result is that when young people are placed in somewhat similar situations these are the solutions and attitudes that come to them. Are we sufficiently convinced that many of these attitudes are a positive danger to the morals and the sane Christian outlook and lives of our young people?

Films, Radio, TV

There is a great number of people who send or agree to let their children go to the pictures every Saturday afternoon irrespective of the type and quality of the programme. This may be a gentle riddance from the selfish point of view of the parents, who convince themselves that the children will be all right. It is worth asking if, even from the physical point of view, it is a good thing for the children to be shut up in the pictures all Saturday afternoon, especially after they've been in school all the week? Another danger arises from traditions of behaviour that grow up in some theatres. For example, I have reliable evidence that, in some theatres, the behaviour of quite young boys and girls sitting in the darkened stalls was absolutely immoral. No doubt the absence of any form of suitable supervision by parents or theatre officials was partly responsible for this. So much for the physical and companionship aspects of picture-going. In addition, there are the ideas that are put before the children. Through these, series of attitudes are built up as a result of going frequently to the pictures. If people would wake up and use their common sense they would pick the picture shows that are worth seeing. Also, they would use their heads while they are there. In turn, this would affect box-office returns and then encourage the production of the better type of picture. To help people in selecting and judging films, there are some very fine publications being produced by the Catholic Youth Movements. They can help in developing an intelligent attitude towards films, using them when they are good, and avoiding them when they are harmful.

Similar remarks apply to the use of television and radio. Selection of programmes should be made with both parents and children co-operating in the task. Once again it is essential to work with the children in protecting their own welfare.

Support for Apostles

I do hope that these pages have not appeared like a long, dull sermon damning all modern pleasures. We are living in the twentieth century and we are to be the apostles of the Christian Family in it. I am concerned about the matters mentioned in this pamphlet because, when you get an overall picture of the young people of a State, not just Johnny, Mary and Tommy, Joan and Brian, who form this particular good family, you can see the result of pagan influences at work; you can see the changes that are taking place. In Catholic Action groups are young people who study these problems and you can see how concerned they are. You see how much they realize the force of public opinion, and how helpless they feel in the face of it. They do what they can, but often they complain that if they had the support of their elders in a lot of these matters they could do far more about them. It is a task for all grown-up people and particularly for parents to back up these young people who try to do what is right, to enlighten those who

are not sure what is right and to strengthen those who are too weak to do what is right.

The Home Must Be Catholic

Let us remember that, if the homes are really Catholic, the young people growing up in them will have the strength they need to face up to the various problems that arise from the force of public opinion and the mode of life that others lead around them.

It is the parents' privilege to be the first teachers, to be the chosen ones in whom their children can place an all-embracing love and confidence. When the children reach adolescence, the worthy Catholic parents can be the sure refuge during those years of uncertainty when the personalities are being formed and consolidated. In spite of all the apparent faults and failures, the love, confidence and understanding of the parents will help them to triumph.

In overcoming the many modern dangers to children and the family there will be anxieties and disappointments in plenty. Is the effort worthwhile? A hundred times - yes. To quote the words of St. John Chrysostom in the early centuries: "What could be more important than to train the minds of childhood and to shape the habits of the young? In truth, far greater than any painter, far more excellent than any sculptor or any other artist ranks, in my esteem, the teacher, who moulds the character of youth." And who can be a greater teacher than the parent? Let not parents be discouraged, let them go to Christ as Pope Pius XII said in his Encyclical on Christian Worship: "Let married people go in their crowds (to Communion) so that from the food they receive at the Sacred Table they may derive the power to train their children to be like Jesus Christ and to love Him." Let them go to Mary for example and consolation, to her who saw the Son of God, made Man, advance in age and grace and wisdom under her guidance. To the Holy Ghost Who is the Spirit of Truth, let them turn for enlightenment and courage to carry out their noble work.

If parents do this, they will have homes which will be bulwarks against all attacks, homes which will be centres of Catholic life and work and worship.

Nihil Obstat:
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