

THE INFLUENCE OF READING ON THE CHRISTIAN FAMILY

By MOST REV. E. MULHERN,

Lord Bishop of Dromore

AND

THE RELIGION AT THE HEARTH

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ONE need not be a close observer of the signs of the times to become convinced of the wise counsel exercised by The Catholic Truth Society in devoting the whole week of this year's Conference to the discussion of various aspects of Family Life. To foresee dangers ahead, to sound a warning note, and to adopt suitable precautionary measures against these dangers, is but common sense as well as a hopeful means of success, should further action be called upon.

Although hitherto, by God's grace, we have been comparatively free from many evils which elsewhere have become rooted vices, we cannot close our eyes to the fact that, through the agency of the Press and in many other ways, an insidious campaign is being carried on, which threatens some of our most cherished institutions.

Prominent among the legacies bequeathed by our forefathers is a high ideal of the stability, dignity and sanctity of Family Life. Recognising the teaching of the Church on the Sacrament of Matrimony as that of Christ Himself, the duties and obligations of this Sacrament have ever been to our people an inexorable law. Occasional defections from this ideal have only served to strengthen and emphasise their deep reverence for the sacredness of the marriage vow and to impel them to reflect this conviction more perfectly in their lives.

Outside the Catholic Church there is a tendency to regard the Sacrament of Matrimony from a purely material standpoint, and to view it as a mere human contract subject to the change and development of circumstances. On the other hand, Catholic Truth—which never varies—maintains the stability of family life as constituted by God in the beginning and re-established by Christ, Who, to confirm and bless the bond, gave it the fulness of Sacramental efficacy.

Although Catholic teaching on family life has been extensively treated during the week, I should like briefly to draw your attention to a few points of importance extracted from Encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII.

"The family life," he tells us, "was founded by God and intended by Him to be the source from which the human race should spring and continue to exist." . . . "It comes before Society and is its basis." "The family is the cradle of Civil Society, and it is, in great part, within the domestic circle that the destinies of nations are prepared." Again he writes:—"It is universally admitted that prosperity, both public and private, depends principally on the constitution of the family, the greater the solicitude of parents to instil into their children, by word and example, the principles of religion, the more beneficial will be the results for the Common Good." He then goes on to say:—"But the family has a higher destiny than material ease and comfort. Since man's destiny is not this world, but the enjoyment of eternal bliss in heaven, the real end of the family is to bring children into the world, to make them children of the Church, to educate them and bring them up in the religion of the true God and of Jesus Christ our Saviour, that afterwards they may become fellow citizens of the Saints and familiars of God for all eternity."

There is, therefore, a fundamental connection between the family and man's eternal destiny; and the family in working out this destiny becomes the leaven of Society and the true source of the strength and stability of the State. If all who are interested in the Common Good and upon whom rests the responsibility and opportunity of ameliorating

the social evils everywhere prevalent, if rulers and subjects, employers and employed, recognised and acted upon the truths that have been enunciated and explained during the week, then, indeed, lasting benefits for rich and poor and for the world at large, would undoubtedly ensue.

Parents, therefore, have from God a noble, a sublime commission; it is to co-operate with Christ in the work which He came upon earth to accomplish. As in His case, it involves sacrifice. It imposes grave responsibility, for the due discharge of which man's natural powers are wholly inadequate. But God never imposes impossible burdens, whether in the natural or supernatural order. He proportions His help to the services He demands, provided man makes use of the opportunities afforded him and places no obstacles in the way. In order that man may attain the end of his being, divine grace is indispensable, but many secondary helps are given too, and among these helps—after the spoken word of God—perhaps none is more necessary or more useful than reading, provided, of course, it be of the proper kind. All God's gifts are good, but may be abused. Frequently, in the domain of literature, they are grossly abused, so that in this respect, as in all other departments of the Christian Life, one must never forget the motto: "Avoid evil and do good."

To speak of the influence of reading on the family is but to reiterate what has been said over and over again at every meeting of this Society since its foundation. Beyond all doubt it may be said, that in these days, the greatest dangers that beset the path of those who would lead a truly Catholic life, be they old or young, are scattered over the literature that is served up for the reading public. The reading public here means everybody, and those, therefore, who would safeguard the divine ideal of family life, must save their homes from the defilements of an evil Press, which is being used for the dissemination of doctrines subversive not only of the teaching of Christ and His Church, but also of the Natural Law. Principles are advocated and recommended that have as their ultimate result the destruction not alone of the family but even of the race. Faith and morality are attacked; or, rather, faith through morality, for, as everyone of experience knows, once morality is effaced, loss of faith follows. Since the first sin, the devil has always found human agents to draw men away from the happiness for which they are destined, and these seem to progress more rapidly in devising new methods for sinning than the world in general progresses in its discoveries for the betterment of Society. And not the least active among these agents of Satan are the authors of infidel and immoral literature. Concerning writers of this type, we may take the personal estimate of one of their number as descriptive of all. "I cannot," writes Rousseau, "look upon my books without shuddering; instead of instructing I corrupt; instead of nourishing the mind, I poison it, but, passion carries me away, and, with all my eloquent discourses, I am simply a murderer." This is the self-appreciation of a French writer: and what happened in France and other European countries may happen in our own if we are indifferent or careless about the reading matter we provide for ourselves and for those under our charge.

More dangerous in a sense than these grossly immoral or aggressively infidel productions which by their offensiveness repel all right-minded men, are the publications of various kinds, which, if not directly opposed to Catholic doctrine, are uncatholic in tone and sentiment; or, if not openly immoral, are, in their general tendency, sensational and always suggestive of evil thoughts against purity of mind and innocence of heart. They emanate from the pens of writers who have no belief in God or in the supernatural, or who ignore both and whose aim is to catch the interest of their readers by presenting in fascinating form and language the plots and schemes of men and women, whose only motives in life and action are the impulses of their nature and the gratification of sense. Such writings draw the mind away from God and fix it on the creature. It would be impossible to exaggerate the extent of the harm such books are capable of working especially on the impressionable minds of the young. Enervating and debasing their minds, they familiarise them with the worst things of which human nature is capable and lead them to think lightly of man's most sacred obligations and at the same time render them callous and indifferent to the sneers levelled at the practices of religion and at the truths of faith. There cannot be any doubt as to the grave obligations of parents in regard to such writings. The healthy man will not take unwholesome food nor give it to his family, however enticingly it be presented; much less will he swallow poison although it be enveloped in a gilded coating of sweetness. How much more careful, then, should he be to protect himself and his family from the pernicious influence of literature which is not merely hurtful, but ruinous to morals, poisonous to the faith, and destructive of the soul.

But the exclusion from the home of objectionable publications is only a first step in the Catholic parents' duty.

Good reading matter must be provided in the stead of this, not only as an antidote against it, but for the purpose of preserving and supplementing the knowledge accumulated during school life. The amount of knowledge acquired by even the best trained scholar is limited. Education creates a thirst for knowledge rather than imparts it, and it is the function of reading to maintain and add to the instruction received in early life.

The professional man, however brilliant the preparation for his future career may have been, will, if he bid good-bye to his books upon entering life, soon find himself without a clientele, whilst it may be said of the bulk of our people that they leave school at the commencement of their education. If, therefore, our people are to keep pace with the times, if they wish to be fully equipped for the proper discharge of all the duties of life, they must, by reading and study, keep up work well begun, or strive to supply what has been wanting in it. In general, one might lay down as a rule that the reading matter of a Catholic home should follow on the lines of what Catholic education ought to be.

Education is the development of all man's faculties, physical, mental and moral, so that he may be able to fulfil all the duties of his state of life; but since his ultimate destiny is eternal life, the Catholic ideal of education is that religion should be an essential and integral element in it, not merely a supplement to intellectual and moral training, and that religious training should be more than instruction in the truths of faith and the precepts of the Divine law, that it should include within its scope the duties of religion such as prayers and the reception of the Sacraments; in other words, that Catholic truth and Catholic practice, that is, the Supernatural, should colour and vivify all man's activities. For, it should be noted, the supernatural is not something that hovers around and over one when engaged in prayer and devotional exercises and afterwards retires on the approach of one's secular pursuits. When God raised man to the supernatural state, He did not destroy his nature, but perfected and supernaturalised it, so that man might be enabled to direct every act of his life towards his eternal welfare. This is what St. Paul means when he says: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God." Hence the professional man, the merchant, the farmer, the workman may sanctify every act he performs in the discharge of his daily duties. So, too, may the athlete who, by his prowess, sheds lustre on himself and on his country, by the same display of skill, merit an eternal reward. To maintain that the reading matter of the Catholic home or of the individual, whoever he may be, should be of the character described, is not to restrict the liberty of anyone who professes Catholic principles, for, on the assumption that the reader recognises his duty to keep within the law of God in regard to what he reads, and not to spend in reading the time that is due to the ordinary pursuits of his calling in life, the quantity and quality of his reading are circumscribed only by his human limitations. Good literature covers the whole domain of learning and embraces, too, whatever contributes to pure entertainment and amusement in the matter of reading.

Tastes differ, and individuals will pursue divergent courses of reading, but the quest of genuine knowledge is the seeking after truth, and truth leads to God, Who is essential Truth. Hence there is no class of literature within the wide limits mentioned that may not be made to lead to edification as well as the development of secular knowledge. This is particularly true in regard to Biography and History. It should be unnecessary to make a special appeal for the reading and study of the history of our own country, yet there seems to be some need to do so. The conditions under which our people were educated in the past afford some excuse for the widespread ignorance of Irish History among our people. The excuse no longer exists, at least in the greater part of Ireland. The remedy lies in our own hands, and its application would in time undo the harmful effects produced by overdoses of the histories of every country in Europe, ancient and modern, pagan and Christian, except Ireland.

In spite of the unworthy challenges that now and then, in these days, seem to be levelled against our right to the title of "Island of Saints and Scholars," history shows that learning and sanctity went hand in hand in the Golden Age of our past. But we do not recall the past for the mere pleasure of admiring its glories. Its lessons are of more practical importance for us. Why should we not strive under new and more favourable circumstances to emulate the learning of our forefathers? And, if we base our quest for knowledge as our ancestors did, on the teachings of the Gospel, there is no reason why we should not strive also to imitate them in those virtues which sanctified them, and diffused themselves over the continent of Europe.

Abundance of literature suitable for a Catholic can always be procured. Instructive, edifying and amusing works of the highest literary merit come from the Catholic Press to meet the want of the most fastidious, whilst Societies such as the Catholic Truth Society, cater for the simplest tastes and most restricted means, placing within the reach of the

poorest families useful, if not altogether necessary help towards moral and intellectual improvement and pleasure. But since it is the eternal that matters for all men, whatever be their avocation in life, it should be the aim of everyone to grow in the knowledge of God and of divine things, for we cannot perform our duties unless we know them. Men make great sacrifices in order to build up a name and a fortune for themselves. Parents do not grudge to spend themselves and, at times, even more in money than they can spare, that they may educate their children, that they may place and even maintain them in good worldly positions. It is not an unreasonable demand to make that they should bestow equal, even greater, care on "the one thing necessary," in seeing that the religious knowledge of their children should keep pace with the development of their intelligence, and that they should themselves keep alive and add to their own store of such knowledge. Our Divine Master Himself, the Evangelist tells us, grew in wisdom as He advanced in age.

If the fulfilment of this duty involved great labour or long hours, we should still look upon it as an obligation; but neither one nor the other is necessary. We have all at one time learned our penny Catechism, but how few of us knew it or even now know it! Between the covers of that little book may be found a programme of religious instruction that may be developed by the aid of simple commentaries, extensive enough to satisfy the cravings of ordinary minds and to teach men all the principles of Catholic life, and even of perfection.

This is what a learned and zealous priest of. experience—the Abbé Charpentier—has to say of the Catechism: "The Catechism is an epitome of the teaching that Jesus Christ came on earth to bring to men. It is His Gospel. It ought to be the book of every Christian, of the rich man as well as of the poor, of the learned as well as of the ignorant, of the old as well as of the young. Fathers and mothers, legislators and chiefs of people, you desire for the family and for Society an instruction which will make children respectful and docile, workers honest and temperate, servants devoted to their masters, the rich generous to the poor; the poor resigned to the Will of God, subjects obedient without servility and free without lawlessness; an instruction which subjects industry to the yoke of faith, commerce to the laws of righteousness; an instruction, the beginning and foundation of true fraternity, which makes us see in each man a brother to be loved, to be respected, and to be helped in case of need. Take your Catechism, then, read it and repeat it to your children. The father seated by the fireside and surrounded by his children will make them repeat their Catechism lesson, he will add his own explanations and will relate to them a story from sacred history, from the life of Christ, or from the history of the Church."

Such a method of instruction is easy, and is sufficient to lead to a more perfect knowledge of God. The more God is known the more perfectly is He loved; and the home in which this love is cultivated will be the fruitful nursery of every domestic virtue. Love, purity, fidelity, obedience, self-sacrifice and consideration for others will flourish such a home; and although the primary purpose of the family is the sanctification and salvation of its members, the practice of these virtues in the home will be the safeguard of society and of the State. "Each Christian family," says Leo XIII, "presents the likeness of the heavenly home; and the wondrous benefits thence resulting are not limited simply to the family circle, but spread abundantly over the whole State at large."

THE RELIGION AT THE HEARTH

BY

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Lord Bishop of Raphoe.

In an age of rapid, nay, even violent changes, we should like to assure ourselves that what is best in Christian civilization be not submerged. At times, indeed, the very framework of society gets a rude shock, and thinking people become thoroughly concerned about the future. Some of our institutions that perhaps to generations of human beings seemed unassailable and destined to last until the end of all things, have disappeared with tragic suddenness. Others have weathered the storms but bear the marks of centuries of change. The deeper their roots strike into the soil of humanity, the greater the admiration and veneration they inspire. In endeavouring to trace their origin, we may find that we have to go to the dawn of history, or perhaps to a time that may be aptly enough described as "In the beginning." So ancient, indeed, that the story would have long ago faded from the memory of man, did we not get it from the mind of the Creator Himself revealed through the inspired writer in Genesis:—"And God created man to His own

image: to the image of God He created him: male and female he created them. And God blessed them, saying: 'Increase and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it . . . 'Wherefore a man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh."

In a word, the family is of divine origin. It is the plan of Divine Providence for the continued existence of the human race—a grand scheme in which man co-operates with the Creator in the mightiest of His works, in peopling the earth here, and heaven hereafter.

One will readily understand, then, and appreciate the various definitions and descriptions that are often applied to this the most ancient of societies. It is called the corner-stone of the human edifice: the pivot of society: the shrine of human affections: the ark of salvation the cradle of the nation: the foundation of all societies. The heart of the nation is truly said to be in the home, where are the springs of the nation's life, the fountain from which it is refreshed and renewed. And let us add that the best guarantee of civilization is in the sanctity and welfare of family life; the future of generations depends upon it and is largely determined by it.

Such language, if true for all, has an especial significance when applied to the Christian family. If Genesis tells us enough to make us reverence marriage, the family, its sacred relationships and purpose, the teaching and example of our Divine Lord give us a new doctrine—the higher Christian ideal of matrimony and family life. You will understand when I say that family life is now sacramental life, and that what God joins, He seals with a sacramental seal bearing the inscription: "Until death do us part."

The family is now patterned on that into which Jesus was born, in which He lived for well-nigh His full time on earth, to which the great Pope Leo XIII, of happy memory, exhorted the modern world to turn its eyes, there to behold "noble picture of a divinely-constituted family in which all men might see the most perfect example of home life, of holiness, and of every virtue."

The Christian ideal of the family and home life we owe to our Lord. He taught first by example, laying the foundations of the Christian home, and living the simple home life. At a later period, he explained, partly for the benefit of an adulterous generation of His own day, what God intended the union of man and woman in wedlock to be from the beginning. He did not stop there, however, but included it amongst the Sacraments that He specially instituted to help man on his way to eternal salvation; so that the solemn mutual consent to life-long partnership pronounced before God's altar and received by the Church's official witness, the sacred minister of Jesus Christ, is now the symbol of inward grace; the family is based on the sacrament of matrimony; the home is the environment of sacramental life.. To His Church, accordingly, Christ entrusted this as well as the other sacraments, to her the special care and guidance of family life. In her teaching and practice today she is true to her divine commission as in the earliest centuries; to her trust she has been faithful as the Catholic tradition: shows; and if she has lost in the course of the centuries many of those once baptised into her fold, ay, even entire flocks and nations, she has had to make the sacrifice rather than be false to that same commission.

It is only to be expected that where the faith became dimmed or altogether lost, the Catholic ideal suffered too. The new communions set up failed to protect the marriage-tie or the Christian family. The old Catholic ideals were losing ground as society began to be parcelled out into sects or Churches that soon found themselves 'powerless to enforce Christian discipline; authority in morals went with authority in faith, and the era of the "isms" was ushered in: individualism, rationalism, naturalism, or the newer paganism, industrialism, feminism, communism, etc., until in our day a lamentable ignorance of Christian family life and the home, its rights and responsibilities, its sacred honour, its stability and permanence, pervades masses of human beings that still go by the name of Christian, that still retain, perhaps, some religious instinct and Christian sentiment, but the walls of whose family life have suffered a widely opened breach from evils that the infant Church had to conquer in the days of Imperial Rome, evils against which there is only one Church today that, by universal consent, raises her voice and wages continual warfare; one Church that stands four-square against a rising tide of paganism, in its determination to fight and conquer in the twentieth century and thus bring modern society back to Christ, evils that she successfully fought and conquered before she was many centuries old.

Undoubtedly the passing decades leave their impress on home life. Whether for good or ill depends on the character of the age. The period within the memory of those who are still hale and hearty has been one of transitions,

of violent upheavals, material and moral. Social systems have suffered a break-up, and a noticeable decay of reverence has manifested itself. We cannot be blind to the fact of an ever-growing spirit of independence—shall I say self-sufficiency—amongst the youth of both sexes; of an eagerness to shake themselves free from moral restraint and parental control; to be allowed to "go on their own," as they say; in short, a want of dutifulness in the young. There is the whirl and excitement of modern life, a persistent and restless pursuit of sense-pleasures. There is a yearning for, the wider and freer life as well as the powerful allurements of the attractions that an age of luxury can afford. One is conscious of a prevailing lack of seriousness, a disposition to glide on the surface of life without probing its depths, an indifferentism to the things in life that matter. There is an incessant whirl of out-door amusements or round of giddy engagements that leave no time for the restful calm of the home. There is a love of luxury and ease foreign to the robust and hardy qualities of the religious spirit of our fathers and grandfathers; a running-away from the duties that require sacrifice or self-control; a reluctance to entertain a thought of self-denial or voluntary penance in the good old-fashioned sense. All this tends to blunt the edge of the Christian conscience.

It is scarcely to be wondered at, then, that so many fail to grasp the Christian teaching about marriage, the family and the home; so many enter upon the holy state without a thought of its responsibilities and duties. It is too much to expect such people to realise the supernatural destiny of the child and the part that the earthly home must play in fitting it for an eternal home.

Many of these might arouse nothing more than a sense of pity in us. But for another class—I speak of some women, very few, if any, in Ireland—who affect to despise motherhood and home duties as being a sort of slavery that is beneath the attention of "intellectual" members of the sex, one cannot help entertaining a feeling akin to contempt. It would be a catastrophe if the business of home-making, which, for the great mass of women, must for all time be their highest vocation, were considered as something to which they might not seriously address themselves. Any offshoot of ultra-feminism propagating any such view would be a menace to society.

Having dwelt upon features of our age that weaken family life and make inroads upon the true Christian home, it is refreshing to hearken back to the teaching of St. Paul in his epistle to the Ephesians. The Apostle teaches the doctrine of the Christian family based on the sacrament of matrimony, and the mutual relationships, rights and duties of the little society that God intended to flourish in the home. "This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church." How sacred the marriage-tie that symbolizes the union of Christ and His Church. The Apostle again: "Let women be subject to their husbands as in the Lord . . ." "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loved the Church . . ." "Children, obey your parents in the Lord . . . Honour thy father and thy mother . . . And you, fathers, provoke not your children to anger: but bring them up in the discipline and correction of the Lord."

These mighty sentences help us to understand the religious ceremony, the nuptial blessing, the solemnity of the occasion as the young couple, with hands clasped before the altar of God, pledge mutual trust and life-long fidelity. They are entering upon a holy state, about to set up a little home, to face the world together, to share their joys and sorrows (for tribulations may await such), to belong to each other and to God. Theirs they mean to be a happy home, a home that will have God's blessing. There shall reign domestic peace, devotedness, pure affection and reverence. The religion on which it is founded they hope to be their truest consolation, the source of the graces and helps needed as the years roll on. The husband will be the protector and provider like Joseph at Nazareth. The thought of the home will spur him on to greater efforts, to be patient in trials, to resist temptations to squander what should be spent on the home. He will forget labour and fatigue in the smiling welcome that awaits him as he returns from toil or duty abroad. As the little community grows he will watch over it with anxious care. He will forget self in those whom he loves. His simpler and nobler side, hidden perhaps to those who meet him out-of-doors, will manifest itself in the family circle. Strengthened by the grace of the sacrament he will be faithful to the office of parenthood, which is, in very truth, a divine mission, having entrusted to it the care and training of the future citizens of heaven.

The Saviour's loving invitation; although addressed to all, has a special meaning for parents: "Suffer the little children to come unto Me." Parents, guardians, educators, take heed, for in these words you have the Saviour asserting His claim to the little ones, who, therefore, have a divine right to a Christian training and education which shall enable them to be, in very truth, His. Their angels, He reminds you, see the face of the Father in Heaven, angels whom He assigned to them to be their guardians. Take heed, parents, that you be not of those on whom the Saviour pronounces

woe for scandalizing His little ones. They are at the mercy of the scandal-giver, for they cannot defend themselves. Their fate is, in great measure, in their parents' hands. The Saviour in Heaven is no less concerned about them than He was when on earth He took them in His arms and caressed them. He blesses them now from His Heavenly throne, and is glorified beyond words as often as on bended knees, with hands joined, they speak to God and address Him as "Our Father who art in Heaven."

The child needs a home. It must have the example of good parents if it is to be good. There is no substitute for the home and the home influence. There the first and most lasting impressions are received. There the first teacher of the race, the mother, schools her charge; other teachers may build on the foundations laid by her, but it must not be forgotten that she, more than any other, has the opportunities of training, moulding, educating in her hands. The school may co-operate, supplement, but the school is not a home. On the parents it depends whether the natural powers of the children get a fair chance to develop; on them, too, it depends whether the grace of baptism is allowed to bear the fruit that God meant it to. If children are to grow up to be good Christians, they must live in a good home, cared for and watched over by loving and virtuous parents.

Around the hearth the most beautiful virtues are learned: the lesson of unselfishness, so necessary for the members of the little society of the home as well as for the members of the bigger society of the world; the lesson of helpfulness and service to others, so necessary for worthy citizenship. The family is, in the best sense, a socializing influence, where the interests of individuals are subordinated to the common weal; where authority and liberty are most harmoniously blended. The family's the thing: the home's the thing. The State looks to it for the training of its future citizens in the virtue of truthfulness and honesty. The Church looks to it to teach her children reverence for sacred things, piety and the fear of God.

If the home be the training ground, it is in the world that the contest takes place. The world tests the quality of the home training. The business of life calls for firmness and grit. "Life," as the poet says, "is real, life is earnest." Hard work, suffering and sacrifice must ever be the lot of the majority of human beings, even under the most favourable circumstances. And yet some theorists insist that the world is to be pictured to the child mind as a garden of pleasure. They want to eliminate all mention or suggestion of sacrifice and effort, of self-denial or self-control. The path of life is to be made smooth, the acquisition of knowledge a sheer delight, home and school life generally one long-drawn-out entertainment.

Such ideas do not indicate healthy thinking. They ignore realities, and are even harmful, inasmuch as they lay no stress on the necessity of salutary discipline, on the necessity of the exercise of due authority on the part of parents and educators, and leave youth but poorly equipped to resist the temptations of the real world, which may not turn out to be the beautiful place in which to be happy that pampered youth is led to believe. Yes, parents must not be blind to the truth in this matter. If they do not themselves show the example of, but on the contrary recoil from sacrifice and effort in their own lives, and indulge every whim and fancy in their boys and girls, they may be preparing a generation that will embitter their parents' old age, that will not even understand the meaning of reverence and respect for parental or any other kind of control, that will have no respect for obedience, even when it is demanded by those whom by nature they should love; a generation so utterly consumed by the craving for self-gratification, weakening and demoralizing, as to sap the foundation of character, lower the standard of public and private morality, bring disgrace to many homes, and multiply the institutions that are filled with the wreckage of humanity. The spirit of Christ must ever be opposed to the spirit of the world, and if the home is to fulfil its mission of training souls for eternity, there can be no doubt as to which spirit should influence it. It was not without reason that Christ preached constantly the need of self-denial, that He counselled restraint even in lawful pleasures.

Christian mothers, it is to you that the Church looks, on you rests her hope of stemming the evils of our time, principally the shamelessness of much of what calls itself fashion in art, literature, dress, and amusements. You have sons and daughters to bring up as good Christian men and women, as worthy citizens, as devout and loyal members of Holy Church. Yours is a noble vocation, entitling you to a unique place in the Catholic fold. You have the example of Mary, who guided the steps of her Boy at Nazareth. To her the Church recommends you as your protector, patron and model. Your privilege is great, your responsibility is great too. Speaking generally, the business of home-making is your true life-work, a noble vocation that requires the finest qualities of head and heart. It is a task to fill your life

and heart, it is a task that requires a sustained effort of service. It is you that can make the nation truly Catholic. The home needs you; there you reign. You should be relieved of other cares, especially of the necessity of working outside your home. Your whole time and attention are needed for the welfare of the family. It is for you to see that the home influence, which is the strongest and most lasting, is also the noblest and purest. Your Irish heritage carries with it an unsullied reputation for womanly dignity and purity; Christian reserve has been in the past—and we pray that the future may not witness any lowering of the standard—a mark of Irish maidenhood; the domestic virtues the boast of Irish civilization. Irish Catholic mothers appear to have seen in their own task a reproduction of Mary's life at Nazareth; they have been the mainstay and bulwark of the simple Irish Catholic home, with its emblems of faith and fatherland, its Christian salutations, its family prayer, its awful reverence for the Holy Mass, the faith preserver in the penal days; the Irish Catholic home, the replica of Nazareth, the nursery of religious vocations, the sanctuary of the faith, the shrine of Irish good-nature and kindness, the well-spring of a pure race.

How many Irish saints could express themselves in words similar to those of the Cure of Ars when asked how he had acquired such a love for prayer: "After God, it was the work of my dear mother, she was so good. Virtue passes from the heart of a mother to the hearts of her children who do willingly what they see her do." Who has not heard of Augustine and Monica, his saintly mother, the story of whose influence over her erring son will be read as long as Christian literature is prized. "It is in stumbling over the prayer," says a French author, "taught him by his mother in childhood days that many a man, perhaps for the first time in years, has turned his thoughts to heaven and finds his soul flooded by pious and tender memories, and takes a great resolve to desire the recompense of meeting her one day in heaven."

Happy the man who has a happy Christian home. Be it humble or grand, he is rich. A man may work abroad, but he lives at home. If his native land denies him the comfort of a home, he will cross ocean or mountain or desert to find some spot fit to live in, where he may enjoy the blessing of a home. It is a craving of the human heart. How pathetic the fate of a country that has to witness the break-up of its homes—"a brave peasantry, the country's pride,"—and the scattering of its families. Recall the famine, evictions, the "clearances" throughout our own land, the wreckage of more than half a million homes in the short space of half a century. Here in Dublin and in other cities far away, many of them found a shelter. But did they get what might, with any show of reason, be called a homestead? Tens of thousands found themselves helpless in the drift of modern life. They tried to exist under the grind of industrialism, they reared families and continue to rear them under the most appalling conditions of overcrowded and insanitary tenements—conditions that render decent family life a triumph of Christian fortitude; and yet, wonderful to relate, they have not allowed the injustice of this world to blind them to the justice and goodness of God, to whom they have remained ever faithful; and they await with Christian courage and resignation the dawn of the day when some mighty prophet of legislative and social reform, shall, like another Moses, lead them from the house of bondage into the promised land.