

# Mothers - You Are Important!!

By Mrs. Kath. Evans.

Australian Catholic Truth Society No.1522 (1968)

## SOME OF THE JOYS

Much to my joy I am the mother of a large family. If you haven't experienced a big family you couldn't begin to imagine the happiness that many children can bring. There's always fun and laughter and the opportunity for serious discussion which is very stimulating. Then you have the endless questions-

"Mum, can you give me a few points for my debate on Friday night?" "Mum, how do you draw an eagle". "What will I wear to the party?" or as a last straw, "Mum, how do you spit polish cadet army boots?". And the mad rush in the morning. - "Where's my school case" as the teenager races down the hall to school and the two year old has hidden it in the shower recess - momentary panic. "Mum, the baby's eating toothpaste" - "I can't find my other shoe." "We have to take 50 cents for a new book". "A button just came off my blouse". and just as 5 and 6 year old are going out the door 5 says. "I don't want to go to school today" , and 6 says "come on I'll carry your case".

8.30 all is calm - a cup of coffee and a quick look at the paper while the washing machine chugs on. Then the many chores throughout the morning before preparing for the after school onslaught. In this affluent society in which we live, parents find it difficult to say "no" to their children's many requests, but, when there are a number of children and many requests to be considered there is much less likelihood of indulging the individual child and many more opportunities for the children to learn to share their possessions and to take their turn.

There is no loneliness either when you are surrounded by so many stages of young life, all going on simultaneously, all individually, yet all with the family to rely on.

Of course, in bringing up a big family every day is not one of undiluted joy. There will always be a grey Monday or black Friday and you have to be constantly alert to the needs of each child, with his own particular personality. But on these days it only needs a grubby face to come round the corner presenting a battered looking piece of liquorice with the words 'I found a recyclable bottle, Mum, and I bought you something and I've got a piece for Dad too' to realize how grateful we should be to God for bringing us so many joys as the mother of a large family.

## SOME OF THE WORRIES

It would be quite unrealistic to say that all is joy and that there is never any sadness or even a minor disturbance. We are constantly aware of the differences of personality and temperament that are to be found among our children and the clashes that occur because of these.

There will be the conscientious, studious child who tends to become too intense, and the one who is so lazy that she has to be continually urged on. We have the extrovert and the introvert. There is the problem of the shy child, the aggressive child, or the over-sensitive child - all of whose personality difficulties have to be watched over so that, as the years go by, we can see all our children

developing as sound and solid Christians, full of the love of God and ready to face whatever responsibilities life may bring.

One of the major worries of bringing up a family is the ever present one of "making ends meet." Children's needs and demands are tremendous and it calls for constant sacrifice on the part of parents to be able to supply what is necessary. We have the passing worries, wet weather, mountains of washing and ironing, wearinesses and disturbed nights, the rebellious teenager.

Then there is the worry of the sick child in the family. Perhaps, more than we are aware, this is a cross many parents have to accept, and they do this with courage and devotion. The disability has to be recognized in the family but not constantly referred to. Other aspects of their personality must be brought forward so that the child may feel as much one of the family as his more robust brothers and sisters.

We all know cases where the physical disabilities have receded into the background as the child grows because of the mother's positive, confident approach which stems from her love. If this love is then given by the whole family the response, in almost all cases, is so rewarding, because love gives the strength and courage that is needed.

All of this is part of the responsibility that God gives us when He sends us children and we can be sure that He will also send us the help we need when we ask Him for it.

#### RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

"Grandpa, please may I go to the shop with you" - So often today we hear children addressing their parents with an off-hand "Yes" or "No" instead of "Yes Mum" or "No Mum". This may seem to be only a very small thing but it is important in training them to have a respect for authority.

From a very early age we must teach our children to have this respect. If they see their parents exercising their authority with justice and know that it is inspired by love then respect will follow. When children speak or behave disrespectfully to others they should be corrected. Normally, good behaviour is taken for granted but there will be some times when a word of praise does not go astray.

Second only to the home in importance is the school. When we send our children to school we automatically give the teacher authority over them. Children readily accept this if we support the teacher. How disappointing it is to hear parents criticizing (even in front of the child) those who, after all, are only carrying out the role that we have assigned to them. These parents are letting their children down if they would only realize it, and setting up a conflict of ideas in their minds.

It's only natural for a child to occasionally bring home a story of an injustice done to him, whether real or just a misunderstanding. This is indeed a test for a mother, who naturally feels for her child, but, who realizes the loyalty she also owes to the teacher whom she has accepted as her counterpart. Very serious consideration must be given to the facts before the teacher is approached. Throughout life our children are going to have to deal with many different personalities and, even if on occasions, some decisions of the teacher may seem to be not wholly justified, it is a great opportunity for the children to learn to cope with apparent injustices.

If we try to teach our children respect for all those around them, - relatives, neighbours and their property, tradesmen who call, shop assistants, and particularly their teachers and the police, we will be confident they will grow into responsible, law-abiding citizens.

## DADS ARE IMPORTANT

A father who had plenty of money once asked his little boy what he would like for his birthday and the little boy said "To spend a whole day with you Dad."

If fathers would only realize how much they mean to their children, and, the importance children put on their opinions, I'm sure they would give them a much better hearing and not be so quick to tell them to "Pop outside" or "not now - I'm reading the paper." They would make much more of an effort to be with them - encouraging them in their work and sport even by their presence.

Have you ever been to a school sports day or concert and seen the expression change on your child's face when he manages to see his father in the crowd. His face seems to light up - his Dad's here. We all know that children make heroes of their fathers. How often do you hear them boasting that "My father can do anything" - And this is a good thing.

Most fathers these days, are working under much more demanding conditions than in days gone by and some tend to leave a lot of the bringing up the children to Mum. This is a great pity because children definitely need guidance, companionship and interest from their fathers as well as discipline. They respond wonderfully to the attention given them by Dad, and, hear his voice much more readily than they do Mum's, who can sometimes become like the voice on the radio, always in the background, always droning on, but never really making much impact.

The children must constantly be made aware of Dad, to be approached for advice and guidance, and we mothers, must try not to answer queries, before Dad even registers the question. Sometimes it takes quite a while for Dad to readjust when he gets home in the evening, from stresses and strains of work, to the different but endless chatter and clatter of a family in action.

We mothers, of necessity, must take a more active role in the rearing of our children, but, a family relationship tends to become lop-sided when mother takes over entirely. It's up to us to encourage the children to go to Dad and talk to him about their interests. Later, as the children grow older, if this confidence in Dad has been established, they will readily turn to him with their problems. Where Dad is playing his God-given role as head of the family, the whole family is united around him, giving him the warmth of being wanted and needed.

## TEENAGERS AT HOME

It is so pleasing to hear a mother of teenagers say how much she is enjoying her time with them, this time that so many people refer to as "the difficult years."

It's so refreshing to have all this carefree enthusiasm bubbling round me. The mad interests that change from day to day, of pop tunes, singing groups, hair-styles. Something that always amazes me, at the end of a season, on the Saturday afternoon, they play a beautiful game of football, Sunday morning everyone is looking for cricket bats, stumps and balls. I, in my innocence ask "why not kick the football around?"

Looks of amazement, but this is the cricket season! The game in season is the only game to play! They love variety and change, yet their tastes and interests are forming in these years.

We mothers know that these Teen years can be most rewarding, for this is the time when we see the efforts of our training realized. We see characters developing, ideas and opinions being expressed. These are the years, too, when our children can become our companions. If we have listened to them when they were little, talked to them and guided them in their decisions - now they will still

have confidence in us. We must always be ready, even though they pick a terribly awkward time, (and don't they usually) to listen to all they would like to talk about. So many parents lose contact with their children during these years and it is very hard to regain it.

Despite an apparent confidence and brashness, underneath they can feel quite unsure of themselves, and it's a great help if their experiences and mistakes are weathered in the protection of their own home with brothers and sisters who love and understand them. Because of group pressures exerted on the individual to conform, the importance of the home is paramount and cannot be underestimated.

We can encourage them to develop a critical approach to films, books and all their activities so that they will become discerning and not just follow the crowd. Above all, we must give them the courage to stand up for what they know to be right and not worry about the opinion of those companions who have little principle. This can be achieved with God's help and through our love for them.

### "LITTLIES" AND GOD

Mothers of little children are sometimes puzzled about the way to tell their "littlies" some of the wonderful things God has done for us because He loves us. Little children respond wonderfully to love and readily find so many things to thank God for in the world around us. There is no need to teach little children formal prayers if we can awaken in them a spontaneous response, and prayer has been defined, simply and beautifully as talking to God with love. If we begin by talking about God's gifts: "God made the sun. "God made the water. "God made the cow which gives us milk. "God made mummy and daddy. It then leads to the children's thinking about Him, the Giver.

Prayer in the true sense is then attained when the little one talks to Him. Thank you God, for the warm sun. Thank you God, for the water we splash and play in. Thank you God for my mummy and daddy who love me very much.

We are endeavouring to stimulate the little one to speak to God from his heart and to realize God's love for him. In this way he will then see that God is so good to him and to everyone because God is always good. Then, it must follow, God, who is always good wants me to be good like Him. So the child's conscience is beginning to develop and he is living for God and trying to do His will.

Every good and natural object of a child's love and endeavours can be an object of his prayer. By encouraging a child to talk to God in this way we can then progress to bringing to his mind other people's needs so that he develops understanding and sympathy for them.

We can then suggest that he asks God's help for "people who are sick in hospital," "children who are always -hungry," "the lady down the street, who has broken her leg." It is easy for children to talk to someone they know and if we talk about God "Wasn't God good to give us such a lovely day for our picnic", they will come to know Him and in this way love Him - and this is prayer.

IT DOESN'T JUST HAPPEN Belonging to a family implies being loved, being wanted and being sure that, no matter what the future may bring, this love and bond will always be there.

It goes without saying that a family will only be a happy one if everyone pulls together and works toward that end. It doesn't just happen. There must be respect for each other as individuals, each with his own personality, which must be recognized and accepted.

Each child should be allowed to develop his own interests and these should be encouraged by parents and brothers and sisters alike. How often do we hear the pleading request "please come and see the beaut cubby we've just built", "the lovely picture I've drawn", or even "all the leaves the silkworms are eating." Their many activities can be a constant source of interest and pleasure to all in the family who participate in them.

The interests and pastimes which are begun in the junior years and encouraged by the family can bear much fruit later in life and so be a source of pleasure and fulfilment for the years to come. How many times have we heard a man or woman particularly proficient or interested in some branch of the arts, or skilful with their hands, say "I was always encouraged by my mother" or "my dad started me on this."

The responsibility of moulding the family falls very much on mothers, as we're with our children for longer periods than their fathers are, and they do learn so much from us.

We should always be on the alert for any friction that may arise between our children. Of course, there'll always be some squabbles, but, as long as these blow over as quickly as they occur and nobody sulks or bears any malice, no damage will be done.

We should be aware of any anger, jealousy or envy one of another. These feelings are only natural at times, but the danger lies in allowing our children, and ourselves too, to give in to them. It is important to correct and discourage this behaviour and try to point out how undesirable it is. If we allow it to continue without being checked, the child's character will be damaged and possibly affect those with whom he comes in contact.

We can constantly bring to our children's notice how fortunate they are to have one another and though we want and encourage them to have friends, still, no one can ever take the place of their brother or sister.

#### COURTESY: RESPECT FOR ONE ANOTHER

We may all teach our children to be well-mannered but, how many of us, by our example as well as our teaching, go that little bit further and show courtesy to all with whom we come in contact. The dictionary defines courtesy as politeness, kindness and consideration, - respect for one another. Perhaps this is rather an old-fashioned virtue in today's world of rush and push, but doesn't this make it all the more appreciated when some one shows us some sign of courtesy, or, when we are courteous to those around us.

Children's behaviour patterns are formed from the way we act, so, we must make sure that politeness and consideration are shown to everyone, and not always be ready to jump the queue in the supermarket, descend on that last seat in the bus as if it were our right, be late for appointments even though we are always in a rush.

Life goes at a terrific pace and mothers always have so much to do but the kind word or smile costs nothing and yet it can mean so much. Only the other day my youngest little boy, out in the stroller, smiled and said "Hello" to a sad looking old lady and that word changed the whole expression of her face. Her eyes lit up and her day was made. Even a smile can be a wonderful lift to a person, particularly when it is unexpected.

Toddlers themselves need to be shown courtesy and consideration because by our example they will naturally respond as they get older - perhaps one of the earliest examples of their response could be

the "littlie" handing up the clothes and pegs as we hang the washing. Courtesy between brothers and sisters should always be encouraged and the opportunity never missed to praise a courteous act.

Something that's surely worrying all of us is the road toll, and, it's a fact that just can't be overlooked that these children of ours are the car drivers of the future. If we can develop in them thoughtfulness for others instead of always claiming their rights, we are helping and not hindering in the mammoth task of reducing the accidents on our roads, because of lack of consideration for the other person.

A courteous manner is a habit we must all try to develop and if we, in our day to day contact with others, can have left a feeling of warmth in them by their contact with us, we surely have done something worthwhile.

### A SENSE OF VALUES

When you walk into a home where love abounds you can't help but experience a warm, comfortable feeling of contentment.

Children are going to remember all their lives a happy mother who has time to play with them and not always "too busy". One who is not always at them unnecessarily for tidiness, envelope corners on their beds, a few extra drops of water on the bathroom floor, but they won't remember, in years to come, whether their house sometimes had a bit of dust around the mats, curtains that could have done with a wash last month, or floors that weren't quite as shiny as their friends down the street.

As each new baby arrives, mothers find that they must decide more and more which are the essentials in the home and which things can be left undone without affecting anybody greatly. I found, when completely snowed under by about a dozen jobs that needed doing (this was when I had seven children and the eldest nine) if I just stood for a second and thought "first things first" then everything became less formidable and I could tackle the most important job of the moment. I think (well it worked with me) if we can apply this "first things first" we can develop a very good sense of values and sift out the important from the unimportant or superfluous.

The most demanding and strenuous time in a mother's life is when she has a number of little children and no outside help, but, if the biggest ones can be encouraged to do even small jobs (that's if she can put up with the muddle the first few times) she will find that they develop a wonderful sense of responsibility towards their younger brothers and sisters, and the love that grows between them stems from the ability to do something for somebody else. They will have a much greater opportunity of becoming healthy, well adjusted adults by being able to cope with varying personalities in the love and shelter of their own home.

### THE RETARDED CHILD

A friend has a retarded child and I would like to tell you some of her thoughts which, I think, are really beautiful.

She said - "When Our Lord talked about taking up His cross daily He was giving expert spiritual and psychological advice - suited in a particular way to families among whose members there is a retarded child."

"The first step to working out how to deal with a problem and how to profit by the cross which you know will be there each day as long as the child lives, and what you do, is to accept the fact that this is a retarded child and this is a cross."

"The diamond of truth has many facets, each displaying a new beauty, each lighting up the dark road ahead - and the truth is - that this is not just a problem - this is a child who could come to any family, but whom God in His wisdom has sent to yours. This child works with impaired reasoning but the struggles and tantrums which can be so distressing are really a reminder that the soul, in its entirety is present, trying to exercise its great powers."

"Rightly used, this cross will bring gifts to all - the individual, the family and society. It demands that we give tolerance and opportunities for full and suitable development for the afflicted one. It demands that we give our very selves in the service of this person who, because of his impaired reasoning powers will never deface God's image from his soul. This thought alone could be the help that is needed by so many."

"For the family the opportunity of self-denial is given in abundance - self-discipline grows, true love is fostered, love which forces one to place the good of the loved one - in this case the search for independence - above one's natural pity. It can be a real Crucifixion - but like Our Lord's it opens the gate to a wider and fuller life for those for whom it is offered."

#### THE BETTER MAJORITY

We read about the packs who hunt and injure people, the car thieves and joy-riders, but little is published about the many wonderful young people around us today, who give much of their spare time to helping those less fortunate than themselves, collecting for charities, working in youth groups, such as scouts or guides, as voluntary aids in hospitals and orphanages and tirelessly supporting their school fetes and functions.

The majority of teenagers don't get enough praise, for the enthusiastic way they are applying themselves to study, and to the very difficult job of growing up into an adult world, where the majority of adults themselves, are awed and confused by our modern rate of progress. We are always urging them on, expecting more from them than was expected of us in our growing years. We didn't have the constant pressure that is forced on them today and yet they are co-operating with the adults, endeavouring, in most cases, to make something worth while of their lives. Most teenagers have boundless energy and if they can be encouraged to use their own initiative (without being too way out) and keep themselves occupied in their leisure time, particularly school holidays, with sports, hobbies and handicrafts, they'll have little time to get into mischief.

We are all aware of the lawless teenager in our society and the fact that so many young people are so good is all to their credit.

Some standards of thought and behaviour which are given much publicity are completely unacceptable to us as Christian parents, yet, their impact, particularly on the immature can be devastating. If our children are being subjected, over a long period, to these undesirable influences, it must have some adverse effect on their characters.

Our own task as mothers is made much more difficult - for example - haven't we all, at some time, been confronted, even in our own home, with a T.V. programme which we find objectionable. It is here that we must be prepared to turn the programme off and tell the children why. We cannot expect to shield them completely, but, if we do our job as parents, we can enable them to meet these influences and evaluate them properly.

With God's help and our love and guidance we can see them grow to be most useful citizens and worthwhile parents.

## GIVING OF ONESELF

But today, we are going to talk about something far greater than donations or gifts - it is the giving of oneself.

Mothers are giving of themselves continuously for their children and so may feel that there is nothing of themselves left to give to others. This is a great pity for, haven't we often experienced pleasure at even the smallest kindness done to us.

In our community there are so many activities that need our help and co-operation and it only needs the will to help somebody else and the unselfish offering of our time (be it only a couple of hours a month, and who of us is too busy to give a couple of hours a month).

A social worker once said to me that she is always amazed at the reluctance of people to tie themselves down to a set time - and at the number of excuses that are given. This is probably only a minor reason in most cases and the majority of people feel they are inadequate and lack confidence in themselves. However, anything worth doing requires effort, and experience teaches that if we don't give of ourselves we are going to be left to ourselves.

Helpers are always needed in the school today. The school library is playing a much more important part in educating our children and many schools are grateful for the help untrained staff can give in mending books or in supervising their distribution. With the growth of social work in our own municipality there is a multitude of tasks that can be undertaken.

"Meals on wheels" is a very good way to help and possibly we are not all aware that, as well as drivers, people are needed to go along as crew. They help serve the meals to those who would otherwise have no means of getting a hot dinner. If we have a car, driving a sick person to the doctor or outpatients department is always a way to help.

There are many aged and lonely people in our own suburbs and the social worker from the council can put us in touch with them to take them for a drive or to gatherings at the Senior Citizens Centre. A time spent reading to them or even just talking can be a help and not take up a great deal of our time. By this giving of ourselves we will surely have a feeling of satisfaction even though this is not our motive. For mothers who are always busy with the cares of the family helping others outside the home is a wonderful form of therapy. So why not give it a try?

## THE GIFT OF SPEECH

The tiny child groping for words never fails to delight us: we all derive pleasure from the stories of our children and their funny sayings. How quickly real speech arrives, bringing proper communication between the child and the world.

Maybe it's not until the baby uses a word he shouldn't that we realize our responsibility in this matter. We all want the best for our child so we try to avoid ugly phrases and words and relate things he knows to things he doesn't, in order that he may learn more quickly and understand more fully:

When it seems he'll never stop talking, it's good for us to remember the tremendous joy and the stimulus he's getting from constantly using his wonderful discovery. I'll never forget the time when one of my chatter-boxes found she could even talk underwater.

Speech has to match many occasions in life. Why, sometimes the future of the world balances on a few words, and men of vision plead with their voices for the leaders to speak together, in order to avoid more trouble.

In a smaller way, many problems can be solved if people meet and talk to one another, instead of brooding over an insult (or imagined insult) or injury. A sulky silence can be even more cutting than a ding-dong row. If we find we use this weapon we should realize how ugly it is - have we ever really considered the fact that it leaves our antagonist no defence and closes the path to renewed friendship.

The young ones should be encouraged to speak frankly of their interest and problems, and when they do, we parents must be prepared to give the time to listen to them. Quite often they need our guidance at a time that we feel is most inappropriate, but if we let the opportunity slip we may never get the chance again. So, don't you all agree, that if we are there and ready to listen, when they want to talk to us, we will cultivate a deep understanding of our children.

We parents will be doing well, if we can show the young how to respect their gift of speech and use it for its highest purpose, to unite, to delight and to praise God.

#### TOGETHERNESS

When we think of a family we think of a group of people, united under the common bond of love - and - who find happiness and contentment from just being with each other, This is an ideal towards which we must all strive.

When young couples marry they share many common interests and this is good; but as the children begin to arrive it requires more of an effort to keep up these combined pastimes. Unfortunately, we don't always organize ourselves to make this effort, but it's really rewarding to enjoy things together, because, if we are together only when we are working, we don't see the complete person.

When we foster this companionship in the beginning of married life, as each baby arrives, there will be that mutual interest and consideration between husband and wife to pull together. And don't we appreciate it when we are completely snowed under after a week of wet weather, or when we are not feeling really well and Dad lends a helping hand in the kitchen or laundry. When the children are growing, we must encourage them, by planning activities such as bush picnics, days at the beach and many other outings to give a little of themselves towards making everyone's day a happy one. Even if everyone doesn't participate in every activity, they could lend a helping hand with the preparations, show interest in their big sister's school dance or new dress, brothers' football matches, or the littlies birthday parties. In this way, if they have learned to give a little of themselves, a united family will usually result, because of unselfish consideration for their brothers and sisters.

When the time comes, and they develop strong friendships outside the family circle, we will have prepared them well. By enjoying each other's company in the home they make better companions for their friends, and they have more to give, because they have developed a more outgoing personality. A wise mother will then encourage her children to bring their friends home. Even if we haven't a great deal in the way of worldly goods it's so much more lasting if we have companionship and friendliness, one towards another

#### ENCOURAGING CHILDREN TO HELP

Recently, when speaking to a mother of a fairly large family, I was amazed to find how many small tasks she did for her children which they could quite capably do for themselves. I then realized how often we hear the plaintive cry of many mothers "He won't do a thing around the house' or "She's so untidy and there's always a row if I ask her for help."

This is a great pity, and if this is the case in our homes we have only ourselves to blame. For a home to be a happy one all members must pull their weight. "Do your children help you?"

A child from his very junior years will delight in fetching and carrying. He will respond immediately to a few words of praise and it will not be long before he has learnt to put his toys back into their box. There are so many jobs even the pre-school child can do - bringing in the mail, putting out the milk bottles and bread bin, setting the table.

These are very minor tasks but they can be the beginning of teaching a child a sense of responsibility towards his home. They are his jobs and he should do them. As the child develops, so he can do a wider variety of work about the house. There are always beds to be made, washing-up to be done and even a little girl can wield a duster. For the boys, as well as taking a turn at washing up, there will always be some gardening that can be tackled, a garbage can to be taken to the street, or shoes to be cleaned.

Many mothers seem to think that children who have reached senior school years, or who are at Tech. or University, and have to put in long hours at study, should be exempt from helping in the home. This attitude is wrong, for, whilst we realize that their studies are important and we will do all we can to assist them, they cannot expect to be passengers in the home, they must pull their weight. They can often lend a helping hand with a younger brother's or sister's homework, do some ironing and be able, if the situation arises, to cook and serve a meal. Girls particularly, in these years should take charge of their own clothing and the boys too could iron a shirt.

Anything that our children have learnt in their own homes will stay with them through life, and sharing in the responsibility of the smooth running of their home will help to make them better husbands and wives in the future.

#### "HOME DUTIES"

There are many vocations in life for the woman of today but I believe that marriage is the most exciting career that a woman may choose. It is for the woman to provide stability in marriage, to make the home a haven of peace, an oasis in a troubled world, a centre of love.

Woman accepts in marriage a challenge to merge her own interests with those of her husband, supporting him in decisions, helping to bring to the surface of both partners virtues which have been stifled or undeveloped. She strives to provide a solid foundation for the daily mutual attack on problems that may arise - to give mutual support in financial difficulties - to seek after knowledge and use it in the many callings of a wife. (We write Home Duties on the Census Sheet but do we ever stop to think how many accomplishments this term covers - nurse, psychologist, cook, economist, cleaner and advisor.)

The wife has to face with courage, as the family grows, the fact of the ever shrinking purse. With one person's earnings, she must contain her own desires for personal adornment, discipline her own inclinations.

The husband needs to be able to feel within himself that he is a person of worth. He needs all the support and understanding his wife is able to give him. There are very many occasions where a man's success can be attributed to the help of a devoted wife. She can lift him when he is depressed, boost his morale, and every where possible encourage him. He can so often be frustrated and even humiliated at work, but when he comes home, if a wife, with love and kindness, can restore his self confidence and enable him to face the next day she has really proved herself in her vocation. Together they can develop loyalty, making allowances at all times for the frailty of human nature. This is a call to much self-sacrifice, but who can remember words we heard on the day we were married - "Sacrifice is often difficult and irksome, love can make it easy and perfect love can make it a joy".

#### DISCIPLINE - AN ACT OF LOVE

The other day a parent said "He never strikes his child except in self-defence". Let's not get to that stage with our children.

Firstly, discipline should be an act of love. It should seek the good of the child or sometimes the good of the family. No mother would hesitate to reprimand a small child playing with lighted matches. Even though it's unpleasant, the discipline is really an act of love - thinking, willing and doing for the good of the child.

The origin of the word discipline is from disciple - a learner - and childhood is a time for learning - the learning of virtue. When a child becomes mature he no longer needs parents' discipline because, we hope, he has learned self-discipline. Growing children, especially teenagers, should be told the connection between the deed and the punishment if it isn't obvious, and, punishment for all ages is better given immediately - but never out of anger. Eighty percent of the time, mother will have to do the punishing because she is on the scene, and it's only rarely, and in important matters, that she should invoke the phrase "Wait until your father comes home."

To be consistent, parents should discuss their children's behaviour frequently and agree on the method and the measure of discipline, long before it is ever needed.

In complex situations the child ought to have a chance to defend himself, to present extenuating circumstances, to give his side of the story. he should also be given time to report on himself, and always be encouraged to own up. Possibly one of the first big hurdles a child will have to cross in life will be to tell the truth and take the punishment. When this occurs, we should take the first available opportunity to praise him for his courage, (I'm sure we all know how hard it is).

There are many methods of discipline. The most common are a show of disapproval, suspension of rewards or privileges, and corporal punishment. But the most successful discipline is based on a truly happy home. When a parent's ordinary mood is loving, the child feels deeply deprived when he incurs disapproval. Parents who are unable to create an atmosphere of enjoyment, fun and humour with their children soon find that a child can't be successfully disciplined without the strictest measures. In order to make a child behave one has to create a difference in atmosphere between one's mood of approval and disapproval. Children need discipline because it gives them guides to act upon, they look for it, want it and are lost without it.

#### APPRECIATION

We never really appreciate what our parents have done for us until we are doing the same for our own children. Then it can come to us with quite a shock the sacrifices they have made for us and we

immediately feel a strong sense of gratitude. What a pity we couldn't have shown this years ago - but unfortunately most of us are not built that way.

Gratitude is not a virtue that comes easily. Basically we are all selfish and so it's easy for us to accept all that is done for us without ever a thought of anyone else. We must make a conscious effort to be aware of what others do for us. This is especially true in marriage when we can tend to take each other for granted.

We should endeavour to make our children aware of what they owe to others, in particular what they owe to their father. It may not, for them, always be immediately obvious, and it's up to us to draw their attention to this, so that they will realize all he is doing to provide for them. Then there are many occasions each day when brothers and sisters can show some little sign of gratitude to each other for a kindness done.

The same is true of their teachers. Children can often develop a habit of always criticizing them or taking them for granted. A word from us can help our children realize that they are working for their welfare and that they should feel grateful for this.

We all have so much in this life for which to be thankful - our health - our families and friends - the opportunities we have been given - and it's here that we should remember to thank God for His help during the day, and it's here too that we have the chance to train our children in this way. When something pleasant has happened and they are bubbling over with the news we can use this as an occasion for saying - "Did you remember to thank God". This is a habit that can grow with all of us, and one which we can carry through life, remembering that counting our blessings and being grateful for them is a wise philosophy.

#### HELPING THE FAMILY WITH A DISABLED CHILD

There are many ways we could help the family with a handicapped child.

Firstly, we must learn about these unfortunate handicaps, especially about mental conditions. The excellent magazine articles are helpful and the T.V. programmes can make us realize how much help is really needed. We need courage to face the fact that handicapped children can occur in any family.

Perhaps, now, at least some of us could use the knowledge we have and do something about it. We may think "I don't really know that woman; she may resent it if I speak to her" - but usually, that's not so.

Given the chance, most people are only too happy to unburden themselves a little, and there are few mothers in the world who do not like to talk about their children. There are still some parents who are so bitter about a child's disability. They find it so hard to accept that they withdraw from all social contacts unless the kindness and support of their neighbours prevent it.

So, when we see a handicapped person, we could say to his mother, or whoever is looking after him, something like "He looks a real trier" or "You do make your daughter look pretty" - or even the time honoured "Does your little bay go to school yet:?" Now the mother feels she is not being overlooked, that there is somebody willing to share her burden, somebody who does not pretend the child has no handicap but who accepts him, first as a person, then as a person with a handicap.

Some people may manage to look after a disabled child and give mother a little time off. The helper will be surprised at the comparative ease of minding a child for a little while, and the mother's relaxed face will more than recompense for the time and effort that her kindly neighbour spent.

Suppose we don't know anybody in this position! There are many ways of helping - we can find out the name of a nearby auxiliary, save up and go to a function now and then.

Our imagination will suggest other ways to help the "special children" and the families to whom God gave them. If we can't do a lot, many of us can do a little.

If each of us is just a little kinder, a trifle more understanding to the people we meet each day, we are building our share of a better world for all the human family.

## AWARENESS OF GOD

If we talked to our little ones about God, they will then come to know Him and love Him. This also applies to us as adults. If we are to have an awareness of God, we also must talk to Him..

There are so many things during our day that we can talk to God about, aren't there? There may be someone who is sick or dying who needs our prayers, one of our children may be in trouble at school or work, even just unhappy with a classmate or workmate who is being unkind.

We may have financial worries, or a husband who is thinking of changing his job and needs guidance to make the right decision; - a member of the family may be particularly difficult to get along with and we feel our patience is wearing a bit thin. - We could ask God to give us strength to carry out a task that we know is going to be unpleasant. It may be even an operation that has to be faced. - God is our helper and if we can only remember; - Call on Him, we will find the things that were troubling us will become less irksome and we will be more able to face the worries that come to all of us at some time during our life.

God is present always to share our joy, as well as our sorrow, our happiest moments as well as our saddest, and if we can look around us and be thankful for all He has given us we will grow closer to Him and learn to accept life patiently under His will.

When we talk to God it is not necessary to drop everything and kneel down - we can talk to Him at any time- when we are stirring the custard or doing the ironing. Prayer is talking to God with love and the only way to come to love a person is to know Him. The easiest way to get to know anyone is to talk to Him so it must follow that if we talk to God we will come to love Him.

It is not sufficient to pray only when we are in a church, so, if we have been forgetting to ask God for help in our daily needs let us begin now and always remember that nothing is too unimportant to pray about, we are never really alone, God is always there with us and we can always turn and talk to Him, knowing He is the perfect listener. So, if anything goes wrong, don't get annoyed, talk to Him about it.

## ARE YOU A GOOD MOTHER?

The vocation of motherhood is such an all embracing one and it needs to be worked at all the time. There is just never a slack minute for us mothers if we are going to do our jobs properly.

The first quality we think of when talking of motherhood is being loving and sympathetic to our children. We may say of course I love my children and so we do, but this has to be shown in a real and positive way - not just by having freshly laundered clothes ready for them to put on, and

wholesome meals prepared for them, although these things are important, but by being very much aware of their needs, - their needs for our physical presence, their needs to be able to talk to us about everything knowing we will be there to listen to them.

Being a mother is not easy - we all make mistakes - perhaps we are too hasty in our judgements of our growing sons and daughters - we are impatient of their crazes - we are intolerant of their friends' constant 'phone calls or visits because we don't want our routine disturbed. It may be a good thing to sometimes take stock of ourselves for at times we can become a bit dictatorial as we do have a large say in the running of our own homes, and we can, over the years develop the habit of being too demanding of the different members of our family.

This isn't to say we shouldn't expect co-operation from our children. We've all along been trying to instil habits of obedience in them and we've a perfect right to expect them to carry out their allotted tasks. I think a mother is being foolish if she does the job her child has neglected to do. We often feel like doing this to save arguments, but our children are never going to learn to become responsible if they don't start accepting responsibility in their own homes.

A good mother doesn't smother her child with her attention. She accepts the fact of his growing up and of his need to develop interests of his own, even though these may be quite foreign to her. Possessive mothers don't help anyone. The good mother will teach her children how to organize their time - how to put work before pleasure, starting in their junior years when homework must be done before time is given over to play. Likewise, she will teach them how to handle money. Especially as they grow older they must be taught to save for things and not expect Mum to supply their every want.

To be the perfect mother is not possible, like the mountain climber most of us may never reach the top, but at least we can say that we died climbing.

## THE DISTURBED CHILD

What professional help is available for those of us who may have children who are showing signs of some disturbance, either physical or emotional?

If you have a child who comes into either of these categories the first step towards righting the situation is to recognize that he has a problem, but, that you do not have to handle it alone, for now with the growth of social services in our community, there is a way open for us to seek advice and help.

Many children are slow to speak or show marked speech defects which often have emotional overtones. The way is now open for parents to seek the aid of a qualified speech therapist at the large children's hospitals in our cities. She will in many cases be able to cure the child's defect and if counselling is necessary for the parents, be able to put them in touch with the appropriate agency.

For asthmatic children too, there is the opportunity for them to attend physiotherapy sessions at the leading public hospitals, while the Asthma Welfare Association conducts swimming classes in pools in many parts of the metropolitan area. You will all know of the School Medical and Dental Service which is available to all school children. In addition to dealing with straight out physical ailments the School Medical Service now has established Child Guidance Centres all over the Metropolitan area. These are staffed by trained psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers, and are free to all who need them and may be contacted through the Department of Education. The Mental Health Association of N.S.W. is a group of people, both professional and non-professional, who are

interested in research into the maintenance and improvement of the mental health of the community. Much of their work is carried out by the group method. The purpose of the parent group is to allow parents, usually mothers, but quite frequently both parents, to attend, to meet others in the same position and with the same interests and problems. By general discussion of topics related to child-rearing they gain insight into their children and their own behaviour. They gain support from each other and reassurance that their problems are not unique.

These are only some of the wonderful practical assistances that are available to us so, if we need them let us take advantage of them and be grateful for them.

#### THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR LOVE

We all know that the young child must have love in order to develop fully - but whilst we know this do we always put it into practice. He must feel loved from the moment he is born. No amount of things given to the child are a substitute for love - great big teddy bears, a beautifully furnished nursery, cars, tricycles, walking dolls, clothes following the latest fashions. It's not possible to give a child too much love, - too much real love. Children thrive on it. They soak it up the way the earth soaks up rain.

Usually we learn to love by being loved. To awaken this response of love in our children we must love them. The child must see and feel our love if he or she is to develop this ability to give and receive love himself. And this is so important for happy adult living. Having experienced real love all through childhood our children will have developed the capacity for what psychologists call inter-personal relationships - true friendships which add so much to the happiness of adult life for all of us. We must teach them to give and accept love by showing our love for them now.

Children who have gone astray or who are difficult, often find it hard to understand when we try to win them back with love and kindness. In most cases their conduct will become worse than usual, which really puts our patience to the test, but it's been proved that in the long run love will win, so we should persist in showing confidence, even when we are repeatedly disappointed. If we can encourage and praise, we will find that the child gains self-confidence and the courage to face life. We should try to give the greatest care, love and attention to the child who happens to be the most difficult at any given time. Again, this doesn't mean giving in to their every whim, or pampering them. It means loving them sensibly.

Love must be expressed -consistently and often in our homes and the atmosphere of affection built up. In this way we do away with the loneliness of growing up. Surrounded by love a child blossoms and develops into a well adjusted, normal child, happy, safe and secure in the love of parents and family.

---

Nihil Obstat: BERNARD O'CONNOR, Diocesan Censor. Imprimatur: + J. R. KNOX, Archbishop of Melbourne. 22nd December, 1967.

---