

Christ In The Home

Booklet 3. Part 2.

By Raoul Plus, S.J.

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Daily Meditations on Marriage and Children: Education to Virtue.

EUCCHARISTIC EDUCATION. (1) It is Jesus!

A FATHER wrote the following incident to a friend:

“You are acquainted with my little boy. The other day his sister who is fifteen asked him, ‘Bernard, what is the difference between Holy Communion and blessed bread?’ That could have been a stickler for a little fellow only six-and-a-half. ‘Oh,’ he answered quickly, ‘they are not at all alike. Blessed bread is just bread and Holy Communion is our good Jesus.’ The child has never had formal catechism lessons, but he has observed about him the practice of Christian life; he has heard his mother tell him upon returning from church that she had received Holy Communion; that is all.”

However the child acquired his correct ideas, it is evident that with a knowledge of this kind he is ready to make his First Holy Communion.

The Church requires the child to know the difference between the Blessed Eucharist and ordinary bread. Relative to this point the bishops of Belgium state in their “Practical Instructions” that “the child has sufficient knowledge and has met requirements if he knows according to his capacity that in the Eucharistic Bread there is the true living Body of Jesus Christ with His soul and His divinity, glorious as He is in heaven.”

By way of supplementary explanation, the Instructions add:

“It suffices to have him know that Jesus Christ died for us upon the Cross before ascending to heaven; that He wanted to remain among us in the Host in the tabernacle; that He deigned to make Himself the food of our souls; that it is the priest who changes the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ when he pronounces the words of Consecration during Mass and that from this moment on, the Host is no longer bread but it has become the living Body of Jesus Christ; that Jesus is hidden in this Host; that when one receives Holy Communion he receives God into his heart and that, therefore, he must before receiving, cleanse his soul from all stain of sin.”

Moreover, the Instructions further observe that in addition to the knowledge of the Eucharist as already described, the child ought to know and understand to the best of his ability:

That he has been created by God;

That this God, the Creator and Sovereign Master of all things is the One only God;

That there are Three Persons in God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit;

That the second Person became Man for us, suffered and died upon the Cross to save us;

That the person who with the grace of Jesus Christ does good by observing the law of God will be rewarded by God in heaven;

While the person who does evil by disobeying the law of God and who dies in the state of mortal sin will be deprived of the vision of God in heaven and will be punished eternally in hell.

It is important to note the stress laid upon the two phrases, 'according to his capacity' and 'to the best of his ability'.

The Church does not demand a profound knowledge; she requires only a knowledge proportionate to the age of the child. It is not necessary for him to know bookish formulas by heart; nor is it sufficient for him to learn by heart explanations, which he recites like a parrot. The child should understand — according to his capacity, yes — but he should truly understand.

EUCCHARISTIC EDUCATION. (2) I Want Jesus!

BESIDES the knowledge of the truths of faith, which the child should have according to his age and intelligence, the Church requires of him the desire to approach God in the Eucharist before admitting him to his First Holy Communion. Diocesan statutes state:

“It is essential that, knowing the infinite love which brings our Divine Savior to him and the desire Our Lord has to give Himself and to unite Himself with him in Holy Communion, the child should on his part desire to approach Jesus and give evidence of his veneration and his love for Him.”

This sufficient devotion supposes:

“The pious recitation of the prayers essential for the Christian: The Our Father, the Hail Mary, the Apostles' Creed, the Acts of Faith, Hope, Charity and of Contrition and dispositions of reverence toward the Holy Eucharist.”

At what age can these conditions be realized?

Canon Law avoids setting a mathematical age. It states:

“All the faithful of either sex who have attained the age of discretion, that is to say, the age of reason, ought to receive the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at least once a year, during the Easter season, unless on the advice of his own confessor and for a reasonable cause he be justified in differing for the time being from the accomplishment of this precept.” (Canon 859 of the 1917 Code.)

We can readily understand that because of differences in intelligence, receptivity of soul, educational environment, and the catechetical instruction obtainable, the age required for First Holy Communion can vary. It is up to those charged with the spiritual care of the child to determine whether he has attained the correct age. Children attain it sooner than we might think in many cases.

If parents want to stimulate a desire for Holy Communion in their child, is it not evident that they themselves must have an ardent hunger for It? A mother who seldom receives Holy Communion will hardly be able to instill in her little ones a desire to receive Jesus. Should she none the less succeed in imparting to them a burning desire for Holy Communion, how will she then prevent their astonishment at her own lack of eagerness to communicate? What is good for the children is good for mamma, too, isn't it?

All things considered, is it not also true that what holds for the mother holds equally for the father?

Certainly, there may at times be sufficiently justifiable reasons why papa and mamma cannot receive Holy Communion so often as their children and the reasons can be given to the children. However, it is well to remember that a child uses admirable logic. He will not accept as a precious treasure something which no one around him appears to appreciate.

Further, there is nothing that so convinces and draws him as example.

EUCCHARISTIC EDUCATION. (3) To Love the Mass.

IT WOULD be a mistake to limit the Eucharistic knowledge of the child to an understanding of the Real Presence and the nature of Holy Communion.

As soon as possible and in proportion to the unfolding of his understanding, the child should be initiated into the Mystery of the Eucharistic-Sacrifice, or in other words, he should be given an intelligent appreciation of the Mass. This naturally supposes that those instructing him have complete and correct information on this vital subject — unfortunately, this is not often the case.

It is easy to explain even to relatively young children — as was evidenced in the Children's Crusade — that Our Lord did not want to limit the offering of His immolation on the Cross to a single day, to Good Friday only.

Because sins were going to continue to swarm the earth, it was fitting — although certainly in itself not necessary, but assuredly fitting — for Our Lord to repeat (or re-present) His one sacrifice, His one elevation between earth and heaven, to put Himself as a screen — the screen of His nail-pierced Hands and open Side — between the justice of God perpetually outraged and the sins of humanity.

Consequently, before dying, Our Lord gave to His Apostles and their successors the power to change bread and wine into His Body and Blood, the power to offer Him anew in the one sacrifice, the power in each Holy Mass to lift him up again between earth and heaven.

Since every day is marked by sin and the betrayal of Judas, by the crimes of men, by forgetfulness and ingratitude without name on the part of so many people, it is fitting, says Bishop Bossuet, that every day be a Good Friday.

Our Lord in every Mass has again in the hands of the priest the dispositions of complete sacrifice that were in His Heart at the moment of the First Eucharistic Offering and which He kept throughout His Passion and His agony on the Cross.

In this way will the Offering of His Sacrifice be perpetuated.

It is not a different immolation from the immolation of Holy Thursday at the Last Supper; it is the same. Nor is it a different immolation from the immolation on Calvary. There it was a bloody sacrifice; at the altar, in the Mass, it is an unbloody sacrifice. The form alone is different.

In order to stress the identity of the Mass and the Sacrifice of the Cross — for it is a dogma that they are one and the same sacrifice — the Church provides carefully that at every Holy Mass a great number of details recall the immolation of Jesus on Calvary.

The priest may not celebrate Mass unless there is a crucifix above (or at least near) the altar. The altar stone beneath the altar cloths is marked by five crosses, which recall the five Wounds of Our Lord. (It is no longer COMPULSORY for there to be an altar stone for the valid celebration of Mass.) All the objects the priest uses and the vestments he wears have reminders of the cross.

There should then not be too much difficulty for the child if he is alert to become well informed about the ineffable mystery of Christ's renewed or rather continued immolation. Then he will get the habit — and a very essential habit it is — of receiving Holy Communion not only to receive but also to give; not only to benefit by the Living Bread but to unite himself with Jesus in the very act of His perpetuated Sacrifice.

EUCCHARISTIC EDUCATION. (4) Grace.

SHOULD children be led further in their Eucharistic education than the phases discussed so far? That is, should they at such an early age be introduced to the subject of grace, particularly the ineffable grace given to the world through the Sacrament of the altar?

It may be advisable to wait a bit before introducing them to the subject of grace but it should be kept constantly in mind. We ought not take it upon ourselves to dispense to these little Christians only a part of Christianity.

Before we can penetrate to the depths of the Eucharistic mystery, we must understand the great doctrine of our incorporation in Christ: Our Lord, in order to restore to us the divine life which we lost by original sin, was not satisfied to redeem us from without by paying our debts with the merits of His life and sacrifice; He wanted to make us one with Him which, as I have already understood in my meditations, is the culminating point of Christianity. Our Lord in order to re-divinize us made us one with Himself.

Thanks to the bloody grafting Our Divine Lord was willing to endure for love of us on Calvary, we were made capable of being joined, set and established as branches of the Living Trunk. Baptism made this sublime incorporation effective for each of us.

Since Calvary, then, we are of the body of Christ — Christ's mystical body: Jesus plus us. "I am the Vine, you are the branches."

A beautiful and strictly logical consequence follows: Just as the Divine Redeemer dying on the Cross offered Himself as Head of the whole human race, so in this pure oblation He offers not only Himself as Head of the Church to the Heavenly Father, but in Himself, His mystical members as well.

Since Calvary, Jesus is not separated from His members. A person passing through a door does not first put his head through and then fifty feet later bring through the other members of his body; he goes through as a unit at one time.

Is it so difficult to get our little Christians to understand that? Naturally, we will attempt to explain it to them only after we have made them conscious of what their baptism means to them and the splendor of their status in Christ.

We tell ourselves too easily that it is difficult and under this satisfying pretext, we neglect to give the young the relish and the knowledge for their splendor which they are actually capable of enjoying.

'I will teach my children as soon as possible to find in the Eucharist Christ's great plan for proving His love.' "He has made us one with Him. In the act of sacrifice through the hands of the priest, whose word alone has brought Him to be present on the altar, the Faithful themselves with one desire and one prayer offer to the Eternal Father the most acceptable victim of praise and propitiation for the Church's universal needs."

EUCCHARISTIC EDUCATION. (5) Our Own Sacrifices.

WE OUGHT to get the children into the habit of going to Holy Communion not only to receive, although that in itself is a tremendous privilege for “Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man you shall not have life in you,” but most of all to give. We have considered this point before, but it is worthy of much thought.

How can we expect to enter into a true union with One who is both the Immolation and the Immolated if we do not strive to nourish the spirit of sacrifice in the very depths of our being? To join together two beings one of whom is in the state of sacrifice and the other not, one who is imbued with the spirit of generosity and immolation and one who is not, would be but a juxtaposition of two totally different beings. Is that union?

The spirit of sacrifice then, is the prime disposition we should foster in ourselves if we wish to profit the most from the Eucharist. The priest at the Offertory puts a few drops of water into the chalice. We must pour our whole selves into the chalice to be offered.

The desire to give, much more than the desire to receive, should move us. To offer our generosity, to understand the call to sacrifice, to a united sacrifice, that is the Eucharistic spirit.

If only we could inspire all our religious practices and activities with this disposition which means so much to us when we are participating in the highest act of worship possible, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.

For how many is their whole life of prayer only their prayers of petition! They are in difficulty, they need something and they hold out their hand, “Lord, give me...” Such a prayer is not forbidden, but that is not all there is to prayer.

“Prayer,” says the Catechism, “is the raising up of our minds and hearts to God...” Why? In order to adore Him, to thank Him, to beg His pardon and to implore His graces.

The petition for graces comes last in the order of prayers. First and foremost is the prayer of Adoration, it is our homage ascending to God. It is toward Him and not toward ourselves that our souls are to be directed in prayer. “I praise You, O God, for Your great glory.” That is the fundamental sentiment of the ‘Gloria in Excelsis’ (‘Glory to God in the Highest’). “My soul does magnify the Lord” is Mary’s exultant prayer, the Magnificat.

In the prayer of Thanksgiving, there is some thought of ourselves but we are secondary. We pray because we have received a gift from God. We thank Him for His beneficence. This kind of prayer could be much more frequent! There are so many who are in the habit of receiving without ever so much as a “Thank You.”

In the prayer for Pardon, he who prays is surely present in his prayer; he has sinned; it is of himself he speaks. The prayer is excellent just the same, but it is only third in order of excellence.

How much prayer would there be left in the lives of most Christians if their prayers of Petition were omitted from their worship of God?

How do I stand in this matter of prayer? Is it my principal effort to interest God in my affairs rather than to interest myself in Him?

I ought to broaden my concept of worship. I will teach my children to petition, to implore, to thank, but above all I will teach them to adore.

TRAINING TO PURITY. (1) First steps.

THE child is naturally innocent. Moreover, if baptized, it possesses with infused faith a special quality of innocence, which comes to it from the presence of the Holy Spirit in its soul.

We must avoid any diminishing of this innocence. It is a great mistake to think that because the child is innocent, “it doesn’t understand,” and consequently to take no precautions; to be lacking in vigilance over the child’s bathing and dressing, to let it run about without clothes, unsupervised before its brothers and sisters.

The adults of the family, too, should avoid any immodesty either in posture or dress before the little one; they should keep out of its way pictures of questionable decency. True, at the time, the harm may be slight or even negative, but the child has eyes and a memory; it registers everything, stores it all away.

Only when the child is still a baby should it be allowed to stay in bed after it is awake. Great care should be exercised for bodily cleanliness to prevent the formation of bad habits that might result from discomfort. It is best to separate the sexes for sleep and to give the children a bed that is not too soft.

As the children grow older, we must be vigilant over their choice of playmates. We should protect them from any pictures, statues, advertisements or entertainment that can disturb them. We are wise if we keep the children busy even to the point of fatigue, but a fatigue in keeping with their age and strength. Never should we praise children for their beauty, especially little girls. We ought also to inspire them to absolute confidence. In addition, we must seize every opportunity to show them positively the grandeur of purity.

People sometimes attempt to rear children as if they were without sex. Children are either little boys or little girls. Long before the awakening of their sex instincts, in fact from their babyhood, their personality is distinctly individual and gives foreshadowings of fatherhood or of motherhood. Sex, although its characteristic functions do not become active until the onset of puberty, impregnates the whole physical and moral being from the beginning. Consequently, it is important to foresee long in advance the unfolding of that providential power which is still dormant yet capable of being influenced beneficially or detrimentally at this early stage according to the wisdom or the folly of its training.

It would be well, then, to heed the strong injunctions of a one-time educator: “We must never forget that certain organs of the child which still serve him only in the processes of elimination will become for him during adolescence the seat of the powerful passion of the flesh and that then certain acts, looks, attitudes which now may be only vulgar or immodest can easily be after the awakening of sexual urges impure and perverse. Further, such acts and attitudes can arouse unhealthy and troublesome sexual excitation prematurely and during the crisis of adolescence turn spontaneously into the development of a vice which seems to be rooted in the soul from its budding forth, so truly is habit second nature; and habit is difficult to break even in early childhood.”

We should not, however, be satisfied with a purely negative training to holy purity, a training made up for the most part of wise precautions. There is need, too, for positive training in this beautiful virtue. This positive training will in part consist of education in true facts, a discreet and chaste explanation of the functions of the generative organs according to God’s plan; an explanation as

complete as the age of the child permits or requires. The duty of giving this instruction falls largely upon the mother who only too often finds herself inadequately prepared.

TRAINING TO PURITY. (2) The Whole Person.

IT IS a fact that even very young children become curious about the difference of the sexes as well as the mystery of generation and they express their curiosity with embarrassing candor and directness in blunt questions: "Where do babies come from?"

In general, no one is better qualified than the mother to give the initial instructions and information delicately, without wounding innocence or troubling and shocking the child's keenly susceptible soul by confronting it too brusquely with disturbing new concepts. It is better for the father to instruct the boys. Parents have the grace of state; furthermore, they know or they ought to know how to speak to their children and exactly what to say according to what the child already knows or does not know, according to its impressionability, its probable emotional reaction, its intelligence, its imagination.

The initial instruction must always be strictly individual, never group instruction.

Such instruction should be given early enough, in time, but never prematurely. Rarely should a mass of information be given at once, but nearly always imparted progressively. One must never give any false information, but neither is one obliged to tell all there is to be told at one blow. Only such knowledge should be given as is necessary to clarify the present difficulty, to satisfy the child's curiosity at the time. Later when occasion offers to complete the information, it can be completed.

The introduction of the child to the facts of life must be made with simplicity, without excessive preambles and beating about the bush, objectively without clumsiness; they must be presented as something quite natural but explained in an atmosphere of earnestness, dignity and respect. There must be nothing affected or borrowed in one's manner or tone, only calmness and a natural everyday voice uncolored by emotionalism. The child, however, must be made to realize that he has been given no new subject for chatter with his playmates and friends; if there is something he wishes to speak of later regarding his new information or if there is something he does not understand, he will always be able to ask mother or father about it; he should speak to them about it.

A very sensible mother concluded the instructions she gave her little one with these few words: "What I have just told you is a secret, our secret. Now that you know it, give me your hand and promise me that you will not question other people about it or ever speak to anyone else about it, but only to me."

A little child will be flattered by such a mark of confidence and being naturally pure will sense the reason for this recommendation as clearly as if it had been expressed.

In addition, if the child is used to living in an atmosphere of filial trust and abandonment, of respect for itself, of training in sacrifice, supernatural generosity, daily contact with the invisible world through prayer and love of God, its instruction will prove singularly easy.

We cannot overemphasize the fact that "training to purity must be set in the framework of a solid all-round training of the will, the conscience, the emotions, the imagination and the whole body." To enlighten the child regarding sex will serve for nothing and can even be harmful if it has not first been established in fidelity in the light of spirituality, and in energy of will.

In other words, formal training to purity must be preceded by training pure and simple. It will be possible to speak clearly to a child who lives in an environment that is deeply impregnated with Christianity. In his tranquil soul, innocent and disciplined as it is, useful initiations can take place with profit and without causing any trouble; his delicate conscience will understand; his refined and mortified emotions will yield readily to the requirements of modesty, and he will not be stimulated to an unhealthy curiosity.

TRAINING TO PURITY. (3) The Mystery of Life.

SATISFYING the child's legitimate curiosity is not of itself a sufficient antidote against evil; the nascent passions aiding a precocious corruption in which the mind could effect a premature awakening of troubling instincts could very easily be the starting point of impure habits. It is essential that with or preferably before we enlighten the child's mind on sex, we inspire him with a love for moral beauty and develop in him a generous will.

When we have done this, how should we proceed in teaching the child the mystery of life?

There are two aspects to the lesson: to explain the role of the mother in generation, which is relatively easy; to explain the role of the father which is more delicate and which should consequently be given much later.

For the explanation of the first phase of this lesson, there is no better starting point than the Hail Mary, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

"How beautiful it is," said little Guy Pierre de Fontgalland to his father one day, "how beautiful it is that little Jesus, wishing to come to earth like us, hid Himself for nine months within His mother, in His mother's womb! How beautiful it is! I learned that today when I said the Hail Mary; I understood it. How little Jesus must love us to do that for us!"

In "Formation de la chastete" (Formation in Chastity) by E. Ernst, we read an example of how easily and simply a mother went about the instruction of her child. "Where do babies come from?" queried her seven-year-old son. She answered with a story:

"Your father and mother love each other very much. Therefore, they wanted a child with all their hearts. You know that little children come from God: He created the first man and gave all people life. But when He wanted to make another man, He made use of parents and He put love into their heart. He makes the little baby grow from a tiny little seed, which he leaves hidden for almost a year in a dark little hiding place. You know flowers, plants and even big trees come also from little seeds. (It is good to call children's attention to that fact very early as it makes a good background.) Now each grain must first of all remain some time in the dark earth. The seed of the child has been placed by God's plan in the womb of the mother; that is its hiding place. That is where you, too, remained quite near my heart and God made your body and soul. How? No one really knows but God Himself. You grew until you were big enough to be taken in my arms.

"Even though the mother suffers great pain and may be in danger of losing her life when the baby comes into the world, she is glad to bear it all for love of her little one. Besides, her joy is greater than her pain. Parents thank God for His gift and promise Him to take good care of the child and rear it well."

There will be no difficulty if these instructions are given before puberty when the opportunity arises.

The need to give the facts about the father's part in the marital act is much less pressing. Such details can be given when adolescent boys or girls ask specific questions on this point revealing that the problem is uppermost in their mind or when lack of knowledge if delayed would cause them troubles of mind or soul; even when the subject is not on their mind or causing them any difficulty, it may still seem advisable to instruct them by way of preparation for life, as for example, before they go away to school or enlist for military service, or take a vacation job or any similar occasion. How much better a revelation made with delicacy and love than a brutal shock to conscience through conversations, reading or impure pictures!

After giving the necessary details about the physiological aspect of marriage, parents should never fail to lead their child's mind as quickly as possible to a consideration of the glorious purpose of generation — a participation in the creative power of God.

TRAINING TO PURITY. (4) Life is Sacred.

EVEN though there may be cases where it seems advisable to give all the necessary explanations in a single sitting, in general it is better to spread the lessons over a well-spaced period of time and to grade them according to the development of the child, its suspected temptations, and its needs of soul.

Wise are parents and educators who show concern for the child, foresee its needs, guess its worries, answer prudently and discreetly its silent or expressed questioning. They need much self-sacrifice and intelligence; but it is their role in life — the most beautiful part of their role.

After impressing the child with the fact that everything in the mystery of the origin of life is sacred, divine — the union of the parents, the generation of the child, which gives another elect soul to God and another member to the Mystical Body — is there any need to call attention to the gravity of the desecrations that the perversity of men perpetrate against it?

Certainly, such an idea should not be a starting point in our explanations; the child's first ideas about the origin of life must not be mingled with the concept of sin. The idea of magnificent grandeur should dominate! Later on, at an opportune time and as the need arises, we can explain how contrary to God's plan it is to interfere in any way with the generation of life whether through selfishness or fear of suffering; we can point out how God has surrounded the use of the reproductive organs with special protections; we ought to emphasize the safeguarding character of modesty and call attention to the tremendous thought of God's divine presence within us, making respect for our bodies imperative since they are living temples of the Holy Spirit. We will tell them, too, that God punishes severely the wicked use of the creative power He has entrusted to His creatures, spiritually by loss of grace and by hell and often corporally by disease.

What we must avoid above all is to give the children a sort of obsession in regard to these matters. It is much better to divert their attention from this subject than to concentrate it there. One writer aptly says, "The best sex education is the kind in which sex holds the least place possible." Another, "The sacred work of nature must be enveloped by the triple veil of modesty, silence, and obscurity."

We must say enough to enlighten the child, to silence his curiosity, but refrain from saying more than necessary, which would excite further curiosity and trouble. We should approach the instruction from its noblest side so that the thought of the mystery of life will always be linked with the thought of divine splendor. We need to pray much so that the child by means of our efforts and despite dangers from within and without will remain faithful in purity always, faithful to the grace

of his baptism; constant in living by the light of faith. That means we cannot limit ourselves to purely natural explanations, but must steep our teaching in dogma — the divine life of the Christian, his incorporation in Christ.

From these religious principles, we can show that it is not enough to have a beautiful ideal; we must live out this ideal, an ideal that is both human and Christian. The necessity of Confession, direction, and frequent Holy Communion, in achieving the ideal ought to be stressed.

It is primarily in this endeavor that the words of Our Lord have special significance: “Without Me you can do nothing.” And again, “The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” It is folly to expose oneself to temptation and wise to moderate one’s love of comfort and pleasure, to learn how to conquer oneself. Better still is it to learn how to spend oneself in the service of others. Nothing is a better protection against failings in self than the gift of self to others. The first beneficiary of the apostolate is the apostle himself. We ought to encourage youth to join in one or other of the special Catholic Action groups of the Apostolate such as a C. Y. O. (Catholic Youth Organization) group, a Sodality, or Catholic scout work. It will help discipline the body while training the soul.

READING.

LAMARTINE’S mother wrote in her diary on June 19, 1801:

“I was thinking again today about the danger of light reading. I believe that I would do well to refrain altogether from it; it would be a sacrifice at first, a sacrifice that would certainly please God since such reading is one of the most dangerous pleasures in the world. Besides, when I am taken up with this distracting kind of reading, serious and useful reading wearies and bores me; yet, I certainly need it to become capable of instructing my children. For their sakes I have finally decided to deprive myself of the pleasures of frivolous reading.”

Parents should exercise care in their own reading. They, too, must avoid all that could sully their souls and rob them of virtue. They can go even further and like Lamartine’s mother give up reading that consumes the precious time which could be spent in useful reading. One needs to know so many things to rear children! Making due allowance for needful and useful distractions, one ought always to choose reading matter that will enrich the mind and foster the qualities needed for the delicate ministry of parenthood.

What good fortune to be helped in advance by one’s children:

“For their sakes, I am finally decided to deprive myself of the pleasure of frivolous reading.”

But the parents’ reading is not the only problem. There is another, the children’s reading. What great imprudence is evident in many families where all sorts of reviews, magazines, newspapers, and books definitely unfit for children are left lying about in their way; where unwise freedom of the library is granted and children can ferret out books that are often harmful to their morals and Christian convictions.

Jean Jacques Rousseau’s story is well known. Born a Calvinist of parents who could scarcely be called commendable, he met with nothing but disturbing examples in his early childhood; however, he manifested a singular purity in resisting all interior and exterior temptations to corruption. He became a Catholic later and felt himself drawn to the priesthood. But his superiors decided at the end of a few weeks that he definitely did not have the makings of a good priest in him.

Some time after he left the seminary he was perverted morally by his benefactor, Madame de Warrens, who by most culpable relations shamefully debased the youth she called “Little one” despite her claim of wanting to act as “Mother” to him.

Awakening to a realization of his condition, Rousseau wrote in 1738: “O my God, pardon the sins I have committed up to this day, all the evils into which I have fallen... Accept my repentance, O God... I will remember that You are the witness of all my actions... I will be indulgent toward others, severe toward myself; I will resist temptations; I will live purely... O my sovereign Master, I will spend my life in serving You.”

But unfortunately a library was opened to him and he “perused books with a sort of frenzy,” with no direction, no discernment. He fell under the influence of Diderot, and became a recruit for the Encyclopedists.

We know the rest. His story should incite us to serious thought. On what does the orientation of a life depend? An unlocked door, momentary forgetfulness, negligence — and a soul is perverted forever!

The conclusion is evident: Never to have bad books in the house. What good comes of them?

If for purposes of study or other reasons, books which might prove dangerous for the rest of the family are absolutely essential, they must always be kept in a locked place. Children are curious, so too are the help. Harm is quickly done!

TRAINING OF THE EMOTIONS.

MANY parents are too soft in the training of their children. In order not to pain their offspring, they give in to their every whim. If the little one wants to be kissed, it is kissed; more often than not, its desire for the kiss is anticipated by the parents to satisfy a desire of their own and to shower upon the little one proofs of an exaggerated tenderness. Should the child want a piece of candy, or an object to examine, the parents rush to give it; they give him everything he wants or they think he wants.

What is the result? A child incapable of self denial; a child who seeks only one thing, the satisfaction of his little cravings. What a great danger for later life!

Father Viollet, director of the Association of Catholic Mothers, speaking at its convention in 1929 said:

“Consider a mother who has obeyed all the corporal whims of her child; she has in so doing prepared for all the child’s future falls. The little one lives as it were only by the senses of taste and touch. If a mother satisfies every sensual desire of the child in the delight of the palate and bodily comforts, she unconsciously makes it a slave of its desires; are we not correct then in saying that she herself has paved the way for the child’s powerlessness later to control its sexual life?

“When sex urges appear, it is only a matter of a change of place for the sense cravings: The desires that in the child were but the hankerings of its palate will spread at the age of puberty to the other parts of the body. If the child has not been accustomed from a young and little age to control his sense of taste and touch, how do we suppose he can escape becoming the slave of sexual sensuality? This is a point that cannot be overlooked.”

Some parents are too demonstrative toward their children. Of course, there is no question of forbidding all marks of affection so natural on the part of the parents for their children and the children for their parents; that too would be an extreme. It is simply a matter of moderating tender caresses, of keeping them in their proper measure, well-ordered.

Just as it is essential for children to be reared in an atmosphere of joyous confidence, loving simplicity, harmonious companionship penetrated through and through with mutual love, so too it is essential to avoid excess in demonstrations of affection, endearing expressions, caresses and fondling. Excess in this, just as excess in any other respect, is a defect. It is easy to fall into such excess. Canon Dermine, a very understanding man, made this comment:

“Parents, older brothers and sisters, maids, governesses, friends of the family are inclined by the attraction of their own feelings to shower babies with hugs and kisses. These immoderate manifestations, although they have nothing indecent about them, are not without danger, for they nourish in the child a need for tenderness and a sort of sensuality which can easily become a predisposition for the awakening of the passions. Here moderation should be the rule.”

The training of the children begins in the training of the parents. They ought to moderate their own feelings if they do not want their children to give evidence later of some dangerously exacting needs. There is one kind of glutton who stuffs himself with food and sweets; there is another who is consumed by a need for caresses.

Let us be moderate ourselves on these points so that we can teach the children to be moderate. Training is built on wise and intelligent moderation.

THE CHILD AND LAZINESS.

IT HAS been said that a great difficulty in child-training is to know when to caress and when to whip.

While it is true that many of the child's faults arise from his physical condition, we should not exaggerate that fact; however, until we have proved that the fault is not the result of a physical state, an embrace is of more value than a whipping.

But here is a child whose faults are moral not physical, nor is there a psychological difficulty involved; he is sensual, he lies and he steals. There is nothing for it but to use restraints and punishments, without, however, neglecting wholesome encouragement at any manifestation of good will.

This is all very simple in theory, but the practical application of it is not always easy especially when the fault in question happens to be laziness. When a normally intelligent child dawdles at his work; when in spite of all efforts to stimulate him with high motives of courage, hope of reward and similar attractions, he persists in his inertia, chances are that he has something physically wrong with him or he is suffering from poor hygienic conditions. There was, for example, the little boy who appeared to be disgustingly lazy. One day, however, an attack of appendicitis made an operation imperative for him. Six months later, the child was at the head of his class.

Another child was in a classroom that was overcrowded and the atmosphere was so vitiated that he had difficulty breathing. He was sent to the country and immediately his work habits improved.

Whipping in either of these two cases would have been no help in curing the laziness of the children; all that was necessary was to make conditions favorable for work.

But there are truly lazy children; theirs is a moral laziness:

They won't work at all because they don't have the least bit of energy. The Catechism defines laziness as "an excessive love of rest which makes one avoid every painful duty." That is exactly what it is.

Now people who work do so either through a taste for it, through self-respect or because of duty. The problem, then, with the really lazy child is to try to stimulate in him a liking for work or awaken in him a legitimate self-respect or develop in him a sense of duty.

Stimulate a liking for work:

Sometimes children dislike school work especially because their beginning lessons in a subject were poorly taught. The child was repulsed by initial difficulties. That is often the case in mathematics.

"My son is getting along all right," a mother explained, "but he is a little weak in Greek." The fact was that the elements of that language had been badly explained to him. A clever professor took him in hand, showed him that Greek was easier than Latin once the first difficulties of the alphabet, the declensions, and the conjugations had been conquered. The boy won a first in Greek.

Awaken a legitimate self-respect:

Some children prefer rest and comfort to all else. The last place bothers them very little. They seem to have no ambition; they are utterly indifferent to success. We need not fear to humiliate them but we must be vigilant not to discourage them. The dunce cap worn too often frequently produces a real dunce. We must be ingenious to find a way to make that pupil succeed in something at least once. This could be a good starting point; then, if nothing comes of it, punishment should follow. We are, it must be remembered, considering the case of a child who does not succeed, not because he lacks the means, but because he does not work.

Develop a sense of duty:

"You ought to work because papa and mamma wish it and God asks it." Bring into play a filial spirit and love of God.

Parents must know correct child psychology. They are the ones who have given him his physiological being. It is up to them to examine whether anything in his physical condition explains his inertia at work; they are in a better position than anyone else to determine this. If the deficiency is psychological, they have the responsibility for seeking into its cause and supplying the appropriate remedy. It is up to them, without substituting their own activity for the child's to teach him how to will by stimulating his will.

LAZY CHILDREN.

CHILDREN who do not work or who work badly are of several types.

There are sickly children: Here the remedy is up to the doctor.

There are poorly endowed children: They are not exactly ill; people can be in splendid health without being very intelligent. Some children have little talent. Rare are the parents who have the courage to recognize it; they are ashamed, and wrongly so, of the weak instrument their offspring

has received. They ought to pity the child whose mind is less keen, as they pity the child who is crippled or in weak health. Besides, with patience they can sometimes achieve excellent results.

Then there are children who are badly trained by their parents or poorly taught by their teachers. They have been allowed to acquire habits of disorder and caprice or they have been roughly treated, overwhelmed with tasks beyond their ability to the point of being crushed by their work; they have been taught neither discipline nor a good method of work. In their case, poor pedagogy is to blame.

Finally, there are the actually lazy children: They are sufficiently endowed, sufficiently healthy to do normal work, but they refuse to apply themselves, go at their work grudgingly and seek to do the least possible amount of work.

Such evil is frequently traceable to an early childhood marked by too soft a training, an inadequate training in effort and endurance. The child did not start early enough to use profitably the opportunities to exercise liberty, to assume responsibility and to attack work. The parents acted for him instead of trying to form him. They lacked skill in transforming play into work and work into play. They gave him toys which offered him no chance to use his intelligence, his constructive bent, his imagination and creative powers. And whenever they held out the prospect of school life to him they led him to regard it as a task or punishment: "If you are not good at home we will send you to school soon," instead of "If you are good, we shall be able to send you to school and you will have the joy of beginning to work."

The child who is poorly trained will get accustomed to cutting his life up into two parts: the principal part belongs to pleasure with the other part thrown in from time to time — those boring moments assigned to work. He should have been impressed with the idea that work is the law of our whole life; it is the unfolding and the extension of our powers and if it brings with it a certain amount of labor, it also brings with it a greater amount of joy which results from overcoming difficulties, acquiring new knowledge and opening up additional possibilities for advancing farther into the field of truth. Recreations, games are but opportunities to relax and to stretch out into the open as it were to grasp new strength for further work.

Work should be presented not as a drudgery but as a conquest. Very early in life, the child should be led to envision his future career or mission: "If you want to become an engineer, a sailor, then..." Or "You will be a mother maybe and you will have to keep house." They should see that papa and mamma find pleasure in work and better still that work pleases God. We must all of us sanctify ourselves in the duty of our state at each moment whether we like it or not. If we like it, so much the better. If we do not like it, then we ought to put greater generosity into it and offer our suffering for a worthy cause, such as the missions, the sanctification of priests and religious, one's family and many similar good intentions.

Care should be taken not to overdo the reward idea, especially rewards promised as a prize for work requested; that develops calculating hearts. Ask for work for the reasons previously indicated and wait for an opportunity to give an appropriate recompense on some other occasion; it will be so much more a prize since it will be unexpected.

TRAINING IN SINCERITY. (1) Imagination and Lies.

THE CHILD is exposed to two sorts of lies: the lie of which he himself is the victim; the lie of which he makes others the victim.

The child has an imagination that never ceases its activity. His first contacts with the world have been with dream powers; he knows nothing yet of reality being much too little to grasp it; he makes a world for himself, a world in which he is king and lord. Even later, when he does begin to get in touch with reality, he will use it only as a springboard to project himself into the stars. Dream and reality overlap in his little head without harming each other; they merely embellish each other and he will not be able to recognize the line of separation. That accounts for so much fantasy in his conversation and the astonishing liberty he takes with what we adults hold as true.

Weighed by our standards, it is clearly evident that the child's stories sound to us like downright inventions. He himself will be taken in by his own game. He will distort with delight, improvise the strangest scenes without shame. Will he always be able to distinguish whether he is the dupe of his imagination or not? Whether he is sincere or not? He is a wonderful builder of castles in the air and he will often endeavor to persuade those about him with the solidity of his edifices. Shall we call him a liar?

Certainly not, rather an actor, an artist, a poet.

Parents and educators know well how advantageously they can utilize this power of recall and creation that children have. Consequently, they know no better way to amuse them and keep them quiet than to tell them stories — stories that are entirely fictitious, tales of magic, picturesque legends in which ghosts, fairies or devils play enchanting roles.

Let us not carry water too generously to the fountain. Yes, certainly, we can tell the little ones charming stories but with moderation. Make the children want them; however, avoid killing their effect by telling too many in close sequence. Children must be able to think over the stories, mediate on them, and through them discover life as it is. If the stories resemble each other or follow in too close succession, the child's imagination will jumble everything; the profit is considerably lessened.

One precaution is vital: The stories, which will surely always be very appealing and not without some suggestion of complication and mystery, must definitely present virtue in a beautiful light; otherwise, the child will be occupied, entertained and kept interested but he will not be educated or inspired. Since he is possessed of uncompromising logic, he will be quick to draw dangerous conclusions if he sees vice rewarded; and the unpleasant results may not be slight. From this standpoint, some puppet shows are not so innocent as they appear. We must not be pharisaical but we must know how to foresee danger. With children, everything is important.

Even one or the other of La Fontaine's fables have questionable merit for children. Fortunately, with these fables, the children are much more interested in the activities of the characters than in the moral demonstrated. As one child put it: "Fables are entertaining; it is a pity though that there must always be a tiresome closing at the end." He was referring to the final two or three lines, the author's moral tag, which pointed out the lesson to be taught.

Let us not forget that the most beautiful stories are not made-up stories, but stories that really happened. "Did that really happen, mamma?" What a joy to be able to answer yes to that question. Why not take the bulk of our stories, if not exclusively at least mostly, from the lives of the saints, from the Gospel stories? Where can anything more wonderful, more truly wonderful, and at the same time more authentic, be found?

TRAINING IN SINCERITY. (2) Lies and Deception.

THERE is another kind of lie possible for the child, one that has moral significance, and that is the lie told with the actual intention of deceiving.

He may categorically deny his guilt when accused of a fault he has actually committed, or he may invent falsehoods through vanity. In the first instance he is seeking to exonerate himself; in the second, to make himself more important.

Often the reason the child tells the first kind of lie is that the punishment he gets for his little pranks and misdemeanors is out of all proportion to his offense. So many parents punish under the influence of anger that cruel words, exaggerated expressions and sometimes mean acts escape them. The child unable to resist by strength seeks to escape by deceit.

Sometimes the child lies for the sole satisfaction of excusing himself; not to mention the case, which is not at all fantastic, where the child lies for the sake of lying through an unhealthy tendency, which is fortunately rare. In cases of this kind, the little offender must be shown how ugly such a fault is, how unworthy of him and how saddening for his parents.

Wise indeed was the mother who used the following technique on her four-year-old daughter the first time she tried to deceive her.

“My little girl has lied to me. This is the first time that anyone has lied in this house; therefore my little one may not have any dessert today because she deserves to be punished and mamma will not eat either because she will not be able to; she feels too sad.”

Even when children are older, such a method is good. A certain colonel had entrusted his sixteen-year-old son with the honor of keeping the flag of his regiment in his room; he took the privilege away from him as a punishment for a small lie.

The following counsel ought to be adopted as principles of conduct by those who want to inculcate an appreciation of sincerity in their children:

1. To create and to maintain an atmosphere of loyalty, of uprightness and of utter truth in the home. To instill a horror of sham, of pretense, of playing-up through policy. To encourage simplicity in everything; to take it for granted that no one will seek to pass for what he is not; that if one has done wrong he will admit it. To refrain from upbraiding and to tolerate no tattling. To praise another for his truthfulness particularly if it cost him something.
2. Never to set an example of lying or give any encouragement to lying. No bluff: “When the teacher asks you if you did your homework all alone say yes.” None of that!
3. Never to give a child the impression that we believe him to be a liar, but rather to manifest confidence in him. That will encourage him to be truthful and develop his self-respect.
4. Never to demand any immediate avowal of faults in the presence of others.
5. Never to laugh at any clever little lie told by the child to get out of facing up to a mistake or fault.
6. Never to lose an opportunity of praising for honesty and reproving for duplicity.

The last and most important of all advice is to inculcate in the child the sense of the Divine Presence. Help him to realize that God is everywhere, as the proverb puts it, “God sees a black ant on the blackest marble in the blackest night.” Above all, help him to understand that God dwells in the depths of his baptized soul. “You are a living ciborium. You can deceive your parents, your

playmates, your friends. God accompanies you everywhere: Be firm out of respect for the divine Guest who does not leave you.”

TRAINING IN SINCERITY. (3) Positive Appeal.

THE best way to encourage a child to be truthful at all times is to use strong positive appeals.

1. Appeal to personal dignity and pride: General Christophe de Lamoriciere, the famous commander of the Papal Army in 1860, used to say, “I shall die without ever having told a lie.” And little Guy Pierre de Fontgalland, “I have never lied; I have too great a horror of untruth.”

Beneath the doorway of the Church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin, at Rome there is an immense slab of antique marble on which is drawn a face with a wide open mouth — The Mouth of Truth, La bocca della verita. Legend has it that it closes mercilessly on the fingers of liars. The biographer of the Empress Zita, the last Empress of Austria, whose cause for beatification has been introduced, relates that when she was a little girl she used to plunge her fingers into the bocca, positive of withdrawing them intact because as she explained, “I have never lied.” Is not the reproach, “you are a liar” one of the most devastating?

2. Appeal to Courage: The story of George Washington and the cherry tree is a classic. We all know it. The father appreciated his son’s courage and praised him with the words: “Your honesty is worth more than the most beautiful cherry tree.”

According to Pierre Corneille, the great French dramatist, to be honest is to be a gentleman:

He who calls himself a gentleman and lies as you do, Lies when he says it, and will never be one. Is there vice more vile, is there stain more black More unworthy of a man...

3. Appeal to Love for Peace: Corneille wrote his play “The Liar” to show that he who deceives others is not happy. Once he has entangled himself in the web of deceit and dissimulation, he needs a good memory for all the tales he has invented. What if he were to give himself away, reveal his deceit? That must be a constant worry.

How truly psychological was the answer of the individual who responded to the question, “Are you really telling the truth” with the statement, “I never lie; I am too busy; lying would befuddle me too much, get me too involved.”

Truthfulness is further a guarantee of success. Sincerity is the best policy; we mistrust one who is known as a sly fellow, a dissembler, without integrity. We are not wary of an upright person. To be honest is the best way to be clever.

In general, a frank admission of guilt disarms. Madame Acarie, an outstanding Christian of the seventeenth century, (she was later beatified as Blessed Marie of the Incarnation) often said to her children, “Even if you would turn the whole house topsy-turvy and destroy it, but admit it when questioned, I should pardon you; however, I will never pardon you the smallest lie. Even if you were as tall as the ceiling I would get some women to help me hold you rather than allow a lie to slip by without punishment; nor would the whole world together succeed in getting me to pardon you.”

‘The conclusion is evident. I will strive to give my children the Gospel principle, “Let your words be yea, yea; nay, nay”.’

The example of that upright soldier General de Maudhuy, commander of the Tenth Army in the Great War, could well be an inspiration for me; he composed the following soldier-prayer for his boys of the French Scouting movement, “My Lord, Saint Louis, Sir Bertrand du Guesclin (Marshall of France during the Hundred Years War) and Sir Bayard (who died in 1524 and who was known as “the good Knight” Pierre Terrail) obtain for me the grace to be brave like you and never to lie either to myself or to others.”

HONESTY AND TACT.

TO TEACH children to be honest and at the same time to develop in them a feeling for the requirements of tact so that they learn to keep to themselves opinions which might wound or embarrass others is a delicate undertaking.

While a child may occasionally be given to lying, he is, unless perverted, much more inclined to speak the truth. He will blurt it out regardless of place or circumstances. Has he not often won for himself the epithet ‘terrible’ for no other reason than his disconcerting honesty? “Godfather, are you going to stay a long time this evening?” “Oh, just about the usual time. Why?” “Because, Mamma says there’s just no way of getting you to leave.”

It is necessary, but not easy, to make the child appreciate where sincerity ends and indiscretion begins; to teach him, without dulling the luster of his honesty, that it is not always good to say everything just because it is true and that politeness and even charity require us to practice self-restraint and not give free rein to the expression of all feelings.

In his play “The Misanthrope,” Moliere (1622-1673) gave us the character of Alceste, who on the plea of honesty, flung the unpleasant truth about others into their very face. He succeeded not in converting them but in bringing shame upon himself and wounding seriously the self-respect of those he insulted with his intemperate frankness.

Always to mean what one says is not the same as saying all one thinks or all one knows.

Human beings are called to live together in society and there can be cases where social life requires that words, those external symbols of thought and feeling, be used outside of strict material meaning or even contrary to it. We should not call such statements lies or we will create a disturbing confusion in the mind of the child who must be thoroughly convinced that a lie is never justifiable.

Much of the difficulty will be cleared away if we make the child understand that the purpose of speech is not only to express the truth but also to foster life in common. We must insist that lying is absolutely forbidden but likewise explain that to defend one’s secrets against the curious, one’s purse against thieves is a legitimate act, which need not involve a lie.

Catholic morality is the morality of truth and honesty; but being human and social, it is also the morality of prudence, of justice and of charity.

IS SELF-ACCUSATION OBLIGATORY?

WE HAVE seen the difficulty and the necessity of giving the child a correct notion of the consideration due to politeness and charity in the true spirit of sincerity.

There is yet another difficulty: Many do not sufficiently distinguish the exact limits of sincerity or rather the degree of obligation to speak the entire truth.

“There is no obligation to speak the entire truth to one who has no right to know it. We can use words in their usually accepted meanings: we can allow circumstances to modify the meanings of words: we can allow the hearer to deceive himself.”

Saint Thomas a Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, had to flee from the anger of Henry II, the King of England. He was pursued by the king’s emissaries. As he rode along on a horse with neither bridle nor saddle, he was stopped by armed men. “Are you possibly the Archbishop of Canterbury?” “Well, my friends,” he answered, “look and judge for yourselves whether or not this is the equipage of an Archbishop.”

“Deceit and sharp practice!” some will protest. Not at all. Simply a clear knowledge of the exact extent of the duty of truthfulness.

Take a case more directly concerned with education. Here let us presume that those who question have a right to the truth, the parents for example. There is even in this case a principle intervening which does not allow them to push their right to know the truth by demanding an avowal of guilt.

And this principle, which all moral theologians recognize and which is founded on great wisdom, is that no one is obliged to accuse himself. It is up to the accusers to prove the guilt and to punish accordingly if the guilt is proved. If the culprit does admit guilt, it should be a reason for lessening the punishment. But to make self-denunciation a necessity is excessive.

Consider the case of a little child suspected of a fault. “Did you do that?” he is asked. According to correct morality, he cannot be forced to accuse himself. If the child says the whole truth, perfect! He is not obliged to. When he does, he is generous, doing more than he must; he has a right then to marked leniency. “A fault confessed is half pardoned.” But one oversteps his power by commanding him to hide nothing, by telling him that he sins if he does not accuse himself. He does the better thing in accusing himself but commits no fault in not accusing himself; he is guilty of an imperfection but no sin.

Certainly it is better to accustom the child to admit the truth at all times, but to make it a formal duty in every case is to urge the law beyond reason and to confound a generous attitude with an obligatory attitude. One of the most essential points in the formation of the child’s conscience is to teach him to discern what is commanded from what is simply though earnestly counseled.

TRAINING TO CONFIDENCE.

CONFIDENCE is necessary. Nothing is so sad as those chasms which divide parents and children, causing them to lead lives practically isolated from each other, with no contact of soul, no intimacy between them.

Difficult moments will come, temptations will arise, decisions will have to be made and action determined. If children have no confidence in their parents, to what dangers they will be exposed!

But this confidence is difficult to get.

One important reason for the difficulty arises from the physical or moral temperament of the parents and of the children. The parents must know how to vanquish their little ones’ fears, consent to their advances and not be afraid to give in.

Sometimes this confidence is blocked by other reasons, which parents only too often overlook. There are for example, parents, who because they are not sufficiently supernatural, openly show

more affection for one child than another or give fewer marks of affection to one child. The child who believes himself slighted may turn inward and become sullen and jealous.

Again, there are parents who are unbalanced in their punishments or fail to be just. There are others who are woefully ignorant of psychology and as a consequence, seriously wound the self-respect of a child. He retaliates by closing up his heart.

A mother once laughed at a candid confidence her little boy revealed to her. He was hurt. "Papa," he said, "I don't love mamma anymore." "What's that! Is it possible? Why not?" "Why?... Well, that's just how it is. I don't want to tell her anything anymore... never anymore."

The father tried in vain to reason with him but he remained obstinate. "No, that's the end. I don't love mamma anymore!"

It may have been mere caprice and doubtless it was; time would probably clear it up. Yet, who knows?

Like all fragile things, the child's heart is easily scarred. And as with all things that have been marred, it is not easy to restore the luster, to efface all the blemishes.

Parents who want their children's confidence must know how to listen, to listen untiringly. They must be able to show interest in their triumphant little stories as well as in their grievances. They may never ridicule them, never rebuff them through irritation or nervousness, and never deceive them.

They must know how to read their children without trying in any way to force an entry into their hearts or consciences; rather, they must be clever at inviting a confidence, dispelling a cloud, evoking a smile, creating a diversion in case of a mishap or tempest. They must show understanding always and make the children feel that they can tell them everything. Not that they approve of everything, but they take everything into consideration; if then adjustments are called for, they make them; if rewards are merited, they bestow them. And when they must punish they do so with only the good of the child in mind so that, if the age of the child warrants it, they will explain the reason for their actions.

If in spite of all this, a child still persists in being withdrawn and uncommunicative, reserved as a hermit, there is nothing else to do but pray. Parents should not grow discouraged. Of course, they should try to discover whether this reticence is the result of temperament or conscience worries. It might even be necessary for them to turn to someone else for help, someone who will be more successful because more competent. In many cases, this could be a priest. It is a great mistake for parents to want to be the only recipients of their children's confidence. The child, the adolescent must be able to confide in someone. If we are not the one, and someone else is, let us accept the fact humbly. Such renunciation is very meritorious especially for the mother.

"ALL MY TRUST".

"I GET all my trust from my mother," (Saint) Joan of Arc used to say.

The Venerable Pauline Jaricot, the foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, could say the same. Every evening her mother used to gaze into her eyes to read the story of the day's fidelities to God's law which she had explained to the little girl with much unction.

Something similar took place in the training of the boy Augustine in Joseph Malegus's "The Master is Here: "Never did his mother reprimand him for his failings without reminding him that he had grieved Little Jesus. 'It makes Little Jesus sad when you stamp your foot because you want to go home; when you refuse to leave the table so that it can be set just because you are busy doing a water color in your Christmas drawing book'."

Each day he was expected to learn two Catechism questions:

"Every morning after breakfast in Big Catherine's kitchen, mamma heard the recitation of the two Catechism questions she had explained the evening before. Tiny sister Christine balancing herself on her yet unsteady legs used to pull at mamma's dress. That would be just the time when the baby would set up a howl in his cradle.

"Mingled with this morning hubbub were the words of Theology. They were difficult and impressive words. They were like the words grown-ups use when they don't want little children to understand what they are saying. It is true that mamma put other words in their place to explain them."

"Happy the man to whom God gives a saintly mother!"

This line from the verse of Lamartine will always be profoundly true!

Who can tell the mother's great power to make the Faith take root in the mind of the child and to plant seeds of the most beautiful virtues in his heart. And will we not have to give primary credit to these first lessons of childhood for whatever remains of trust in the mind that has reached maturity and for whatever generosity exists in the souls that have been buffeted by life? The forces of mature age owe much to the lights and inspirations of early age.

Maurice Le Sage d'Hauteroche d'Hulst, (Monsignor d'Hulst) in one of his famous conferences at Notre Dame in Paris referred to this idea: He said that when a man wants to justify his moral principles he will search his past to find their origin; he will discover that they seem to trace back farther than the beginnings of his conscious thought; they will seem to him as submerged in that distant past when his life was still bound closely to that of his mother and he was as yet unable to sustain himself without the tenderness of her supporting arms.

Should it happen that a child loses his mother at an early age, her memory will remain and protect him. But if she lives what a help she is above all if she has a great soul, a soul that knows how to watch and to pray; to watch without being too obvious about it; for she will not want to awaken haughty resistance; to pray more silently still without however neglecting her duty of good example in prayerfulness.

[Blessed] Frederic Ozanam writing to a friend stated that he seemed to benefit almost every moment by the nearly constant presence of his mother.

'Let me as a mother examine my conscience. By bringing children into the world, I have accepted a sublime mission. To give birth to children is in itself something wonderful. But to rear children, how much more difficult! How close to God I must be to lead all my little ones or my big ones as the case may be to the heights of the divine and to help them live on this high plane.

'I must grow. I must educate myself. I must acquire what I lack.'
