

THE IDEAL OF THE CATHOLIC FAMILY

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INTRODUCTION

“We need a Crusade of Catholic families” said Archbishop Lefebvre, in his jubilee sermon of 1979. Yes, more than ever, we must christianize the home in order to save society. Satan is attacking the family from all sides. We hope that this little booklet will be helpful for many parents to realize the beautiful ideal that God is expecting them to aim at.

The booklet contains a conference given by a priest of the Society of St Pius X in Australia and New Zealand. The text has been slightly revised for publication. We also added 3 articles of interest, as well as a small bibliography and a few prayers.

A few words about these 3 articles. Cardinal Newman has wonderfully summarized the spirituality of 3 great teachers of the Church: St. Benedict, St. Dominic and St. Ignatius. Each corresponds to a period in history: roughly to the Dark Ages, the Middle Ages and the Modern World. But the Church now had all 3 saints in her treasure. “She did not lose Benedict by finding Dominic, and she has still both Benedict and Dominic at home, though she has become the mother of Ignatius.” Each of these schools has a distinctive spirit and parents will be able to profit from their particular wisdom.

The Benedictines are characterized by their love of the liturgy, this divinely inspired poetry, as well as for their simple and cheerful way of life. The Abbot is the father who calls his monks his children. The text chosen “Blessing your children” will illustrate this quite well. The Dominicans have always been great theologians and their order gives the first place to the contemplation of Truth. “Christian education” will help parents to see the importance of culture for the formation of the mind. And to finish, the Jesuits have always been practical men, zealous for the good of souls. The kings often had sons of St. Ignatius for advisers, because of their prudence. “How to be good parents” will give you insight into your moral obligations towards your children.

We would like to finish in asking our beloved Archbishop Lefebvre to pray so that these pages will help you. He himself came from a wonderful Catholic home and he inspired his sons in the priesthood with the zeal of the apostolate of the family. The ardent desire of his heart was to “restore all things in Christ”. This will not take place unless all of us, priests, fathers, mothers and children strive to become saints. From Heaven, where we hope he is now contemplating God, Whom he loved so much, Archbishop Lefebvre will pray so that we may one day join him in eternal happiness.

THE CATHOLIC HOME

Dear parents,

St. Therese of the Child Jesus, called by Pope St. Pius X “the greatest saint of modern times”, wrote in one of her last letters: “The good God gave me a father and mother more worthy of Heaven than of earth.” These words are inscribed over the graves of her parents, Louis and Zélie Martin, behind the basilica of Lisieux. The Church is now considering their cause for canonization. It is clear from this example what a tremendous influence can be given to children in a truly Catholic home. At the source of the greatness of St. Therese is the conjugal union of two whole-hearted Christians. Cardinal Mercier said: “How glad I am to know that she is the recompense of an exemplary family. We must never weary of repeating that everywhere.” Yes, dear friends, there is no doubt that upon the way you raise your children will depend the way they will spiritually grow up. I will try during this conference to talk about the Catholic home.

Where to start? I think we should first put before our mind our ultimate goal: Heaven. The whole world, as you know, was created for the glory of God: the stars, the mountains, the trees and the birds. We too have been created for the glory of God, but we do not glorify God and find true happiness unless we become saints. After all, a saint is just someone who has died in the state of grace and has finished to expiate his sins in Purgatory and is now in Heaven. Your children are given to you as a sacred trust and you will have to render an account for their immortal souls. Catholic parents, you must absolutely realise that the last end of man is supernatural. We are all called to eternal beatitude to seeing God face to face in Heaven. The ultimate goal of Christian education will therefore be to secure for our children this tremendous reward. Everything else (health, money, success etc.) does not really matter. This is why Queen Blanche de Castille could tell her son, the future king St. Louis of France: "My son, I would prefer to see you dead at my feet than to know that you were in the state of mortal sin." When we think about it, is not eternal damnation the only real evil? Let us therefore look at our family as a Catholic should look at it, ie. in the light of the theological virtue of Faith.

Now that we have set before our eyes the ultimate goal of Christian education, we can better understand the importance of a truly Catholic atmosphere in our homes. The home has always been something sacred, even in pagan times. The Greek poet Homer wrote a whole book about the story of Odysseus coming home.

The Romans also considered the hearth a holy place. They had invented all kinds of domestic divinities to guard the different members of the family at every stage of childhood, adolescence and maturity. For every act of home life there was a special mythological deity to be invoked. But of course the institution of the family was completely supernaturalized only with the Incarnation, when God Himself chose to have parents on earth. Jesus is truly the son of Mary since she gave Him his human nature. Joseph is the husband of Mary and therefore by virtue of his marriage he has a certain paternity over Our Lord. Jesus is indeed born from the Holy Ghost of the immaculate flesh of Our Lady over which Joseph had true dominion. Since their marriage was especially ordained by Divine Providence to receive and bring up the child, Jesus is the fruit of the holy union of Mary and Joseph, not as born of it but in it.

So we have a father, a mother and a child. The Holy Family is the perfect ideal for all Christians. Dear parents, look at Nazareth. See the beauty of this home where everything was centred on God. Jesus, Mary and Joseph are giving us a model of Catholic family life. When we contemplate their virtues of humility, obedience and charity, we understand the secret of the peaceful joy we see in their hearts.

It is always striking to see in the lives of the saints the role of their parents in the first years of childhood. One only has to read the life of Mrs Sarto, the mother of St. Pius X or of Mamma Margherita, mother of St. John Bosco to understand this. Children do not first receive their religious formation from books or priests, but from living the life of a Catholic home. The parents are the main channels for the first (and the most important) transmission of Christian spirituality to these young souls. A little child will grasp the first notions about God in very simple ways: He will understand the goodness of God when he sees the love of his mother, always kind and patient. He will understand the providence of God when he sees the concern of his father, earning money to put bread on the table etc.

The example of the parents is so important, not only for young children but especially for teenagers, since these are inclined to question authority. If you want your children to practise obedience, then do not quarrel in front of them. If you want them to learn charity, do not gossip about your neighbours. If you want them to love to pray, then be yourselves men and women of prayer. St. Therese said of her father during night prayer: "I had only to look at him to know how the saints pray." When I was a teenager I remember once walking into my father's bedroom and seeing him kneeling at the foot of his bed. This sight helped me tremendously to persevere in my Catholic Faith.

We must stress that not only the example of the parents but everything in the home exerts an influence, good or bad, on the soul of the child. Just as our bodies are influenced by the material atmosphere in which we live - by its heat and cold, by the germs or dust which it may hold - in the same way our souls are influenced by the spiritual atmosphere in which we live - by its Catholic standards or its non-Catholic standards. And we are now reaching the crux of the matter. It is a sad truth that some parents do not have this Catholic atmosphere in their home. On the contrary, the spirit of the world is allowed to prevail for the spiritual ruin of the members of the family. In reality these homes only bear the name of Catholic but do not have the inner substance which would make them truly Catholic. For instance, you walk in the children's bedrooms and you see indecent posters of movie stars, instead of the crucifix and

pictures of the saints. The children play with ugly “monsters” instead of with beautiful toys. The conversations are distasteful etc. Parents who deliberately neglect their duty of providing a Catholic atmosphere in their home are seriously failing in their vocation.

Dear friends, there is no doubt that if everything in the home is organized in conformity with the teachings of the Church, everyone will be greatly helped to live in the state of grace. On the contrary, if in the home are found worldly influences or occasions of sin, it will be difficult for everyone to secure their eternal salvation. However we must point out that in spite of a Catholic atmosphere in the home, some children stray from the path of virtue. Accidents sometimes happen. But in this case the parents are not responsible and in no way to be blamed for the spiritual loss of the child. They have done their best to raise him as a Catholic. Also there are many homes where it is very difficult to establish a Catholic atmosphere, in spite of much good will, especially when one of the parents is not a Catholic. This is a painful situation and would need a separate conference to deal with this subject. The Catholic wife is certainly hindered in her desire to sanctify her home by the fact that her husband will disagree and often refuse to co-operate with her policies. In this conference we are dealing with a family where both parents are Catholic. (We must note that with prudence, tact and gentleness, it is still possible to achieve much even within a mixed marriage). But now that we have introduced the topic of the conference, I am sure you are now anxious to hear in what exactly consists this Catholic spirit which must penetrate the family.

In the beginning of this century, a South-American priest, Father Mateo, started a world-wide crusade which was extremely successful. He received the blessing of Pope St Pius X who even asked him to devote his life to this crusade. Our Lord had told St. Margaret Mary at Paray le Monial: “I will bless every home in which the image of My Sacred Heart shall be exposed and honoured.” Fr: Mateo started a crusade to re-establish the social reign of Jesus Christ throughout the whole world. He had understood that to christianize society, we must first christianize the family. This zealous priest strove to conquer souls to the Sacred Heart through the Enthronement of the King of Love in the homes. You already know about this beautiful Catholic devotion and many of your families received the visit of the priest for this purpose. Well, it seems that we have here the answer to the question: When is a Catholic atmosphere established in a home? When everything is submitted to the reign of Our Lord, True God and True Man. And I mean everything, not only our prayers but even our recreations, our meals, our clothes, our conversations etc. The Enthronement is not the simple blessing of a picture and a reading of an act of the consecration. It is the beginning of a new life, a life of love for the Sacred Heart. Nothing in the home should displease Him. Jesus is the King of the family and must be honoured as such.

So we see that all these are connected: Social reign of the Sacred Heart - Catholic atmosphere in the home - Sanctity of its members and their eternal salvation - Glory of the Most Blessed Trinity. Jesus is the Mediator between God and men, the Head of the Mystical Body. As the beautiful books of Dom Marmion explain, we are the adopted children of God through Jesus Christ. St. Paul tells us: “Be ye followers of God, as most dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. For you were before darkness, but now light in the Lord. Walk ye as children of the light, for the fruit of the light is in all goodness, and justice, and truth”. The Godless world around us is plunged in a terrible darkness. Catholic families must be like little oases of light, where true Christian love is practised, where Jesus can “take refuge” from His enemies. It seems that one of the first notions we have to clarify in speaking of the Catholic atmosphere is the notion of love. Maria Von Trapp wrote in the preface to the story of her family: “While writing down the memories of a family, it astonished, amazed, almost overwhelmed me to see how much love - genuine, real love - was stored in one short lifetime: first, God’s love for us His children, the leading, guiding, protecting love of a Father, and as every real love calls forth love in return, it couldn’t be any different here.” The Catholic home must therefore be permeated by supernatural charity. But it is very important to grasp what true love is, since it has often been misunderstood in modern times.

St. Thomas Aquinas gives us the definition of love: “To love is to wish the good of the beloved.” And he means what is truly good for the person, which is not always what the person would like to have. An example will illustrate this truth: A mother gives some medicine to her sick child to cure him. The child does not want the medicine since it tastes bitter. The mother will actually force the child to drink the medicine, since she loves him and wants him to be restored to health. The same thing is true in the education of children. Too many parents have a false conception of

love. Out of weakness, they do not discipline their children, they do not correct their defects, they give in to their caprices. It is a tragic mistake. In the long run, this kind of education will turn out little monsters of selfishness, used to “getting their way” in everything at home. True love is strong. Parents should also realize that they are dealing with natures wounded by original sin. Children all have evil inclinations to laziness, disobedience, unkindness etc. And these must be firmly checked even from a very young age. Otherwise you will spoil your children. It is awful to see some parents allowing their children to indulge every whim and fancy. Others seem to be afraid of exercising their authority and yield to their little ones as soon as they throw a tantrum. In these kinds of homes, children are the ones in control. They do what they want. They help themselves in the refrigerator without permission. They do not have to clean their bedrooms or help Mum and Dad around the house. They have no table manners, no politeness, no respect for adults. I think that it is the worst thing you could do to a child: to let him grow up without self-restraint. Parents who are not disciplining their children certainly do not have a true love for them.

Let us now pass on to another subject: Family prayer. It is clear that every individual has the obligation to pray. We must all lift up our souls to God to adore Him, to give Him thanks, to make reparation for our sins and to ask graces for our needs. These are the four purposes of prayer. God made us. He is our Creator. So we should recognize His Sovereignty through prayer. But God also made the family. Therefore the family should, under its own roof, openly pray to God. Let us imagine a family where everyone is saying individual prayers in their own rooms. Well this is not enough. All the family members should pray together as a social unit. St. Thomas More, a great model for Catholic husbands and fathers, was a wonderful example in this regard. Even when he was suffering from the King’s determination to divorce his lawful wife Catherine of Aragon, he always called all the members of his household for their daily prayers. There was a lot of heartache, especially when his wife Dame Alice did not understand his refusal to take the oath of supremacy. If St. Thomas More had not prayed daily with his loved ones, no doubt he would not have had the courage he needed to die a martyr. This brave Catholic understood the need of family prayer. Our Lord told us: “Where two or three are gathered together for my sake, there I am in the midst of them.” Parents, pray the Rosary with your children. It was one of Our Lady’s most pressing requests at Fatima. Let us obey our good Mother.

Catechism is extremely important and alas, it is sorely neglected in many families. I think that parents have been used in the past to depend on Catholic schools for the religious instruction of their children. Now that we no longer have good schools available, it is up to the mothers to teach the Faith to their children. And you should start when they are very young. Fr Kelly has a good summary of the different stages in the development of the spiritual life of the little ones:-

“In your child’s first year, you can sprinkle his bed with holy water and sign him with the Sign of the Cross. By the middle of his second year, he can learn to sing little hymns and to recognize pictures of Baby Jesus. In his third year, you can teach him that God made the universe and help him to see the Creator in flowers, birds, and other living things.

When your child is four, he is old enough to attend Mass with you and to sit quietly. When he sees you pray, he will understand that people go to church because God is nearer to people there than elsewhere. He may learn prayers which he will say throughout his lifetime - prayers at bedtime, the Lord’s Prayer, the Hail Mary. In his fifth year he can begin to say morning and evening prayers as a regular procedure. Now he can be taught the difference between moral right and wrong - for example, he can understand why he should not steal. In his sixth year, before he attends elementary school, he should be able to make the Sign of the Cross and to bless himself with holy water. He will do these things as a matter of course if he sees you doing them.”

When your child is able to memorize questions and answers, then you should follow a good Catechism textbook to prepare him for his first Holy Communion. And then you can continue with more advanced material. It is a great mistake to stop religious instruction when children are still young. We need to continue to give them strong convictions so that they may be able to stand firm in their teenage years.

Beside Family prayers (Morning and Evening prayers, Angelus, Grace before and after meals) and Catechism, there are many ways of helping your children to know, love and serve God. Make the most of all the religious events like first communions, baptisms, Name days (feast of the saint after whom the child has been named) etc. Of course the liturgy affords the greatest opportunity for bringing religion into the home. It helps so much when the children can

see that the feasts of the Church are an essential part of family life. Each family should develop its own little customs and practices I do not have the time to deal adequately with this aspect, but there are many good books, pamphlets and magazines on the subject. They will explain to you about the Advent wreath, the Christmas manger, the Lenten chart, the Easter eggs etc. Dom Gueranger, in his "Liturgical Year", in explaining the family customs for the Epiphany, advocates a return to the "simple faith of our forefathers." He stresses the importance of "blending the happiness of the home with the sacredness of religion." Let us make the effort to rediscover these beautiful traditions. The Church has inspired in Catholic countries a wonderful treasure of hymns, songs, cooking recipes, stories and games to celebrate feast days. I know of no better way of getting children to love their Faith. They can see that the Church is a good mother and desires the happiness of her children.

Now I would like to point out an error frequent among Traditional Catholics. It is the neglect of the natural order. St. Thomas teaches that "grace does not remove nature but perfects it." It means that parents have the duty not only to develop the supernatural virtues (faith, hope, charity, infused moral virtues) but also to develop the natural virtues (politeness, honesty, courage) in the souls of their children. In particular I would like to stress the importance of the formation of the intellect. It is certain that the seeds of the interior life will grow better in a naturally wholesome mind. Some examples will make this principle quite clear.

How can you expect your teenagers to appreciate the divine poetry of the liturgy (like the beautiful prayer of the Exsultet sung during the Easter Vigil) when they were never used to the nursery rhymes and simple children's verses when they were little children? How can you expect them to enjoy Gregorian chant if they never sang the simplest folk songs when they were younger? How can they read the lives of the saints and enjoy them when they did not read in the first place, good books like "Treasure Island" and all the children's classics? Charles Peguy a great Catholic writer used to say: "Between culture and faith, there is in no way opposition, but on the contrary profound acquaintance." In other words, Christian Culture refines the sensibility of the soul and creates an atmosphere conducive to the blossoming of the spiritual life. Once again, if you read the story of the family of St. Therese, you will see how the Martin parents were concerned about the education of their children: stories, poems, songs etc. They were often playing with their children, taking an interest in their games. Yes, we can repeat this truth again and again: To be a Traditional Catholic is a whole life and not just going to the Latin Mass.

I must admit that parents have an extremely difficult job in our day and age since the enemies of the Church have launched a terrible assault on Catholic homes. It is a real war on the part of Satan to try to plunge into hell the souls of your children. Let us be vigilant. Alas some of you are still very lax in this domain. Since this is important, let me give you a little bit of concrete advice: First of all, throw away your TV. Or use it only to show old movies with a video cassette recorder. (And even this should be done with moderation, e.g. when the weather is bad, as a special treat for a birthday, or as a reward, and not constantly). Too many parents allow their children to watch TV whenever they want, several hours a day, without any control. There is of course the danger of bad programmes (impurity, violence, worldliness, etc.) but there is also another danger, no less harmful to children.

John Senior, in his excellent book "The Restoration of Christian Culture" points out the two principal defects of TV: its radical passivity, physical and imaginative, and its distortion of reality. Besides, TV is addictive and it slowly becomes like a drug which controls the minds of people, and little by little makes them stupid, unable to think for themselves. Fr. O'Connell says it humorously: "It is beneath the dignity of a human being to sit glued to a TV hour after hour like a hypnotized rabbit." As a priest I can tell you that on children's summer camps you can immediately tell who is a heavy TV watcher and who is not. "TV kids" manifest signs of erratic behaviour, have difficulty in concentrating, are quickly bored when not entertained, are unable to play in a creative manner, and worst of all, show a dislike for prayer and recollection.

I do not want to make this conference too long so I will be brief concerning a couple of other points: Rock music is to be banned from your home. You have to choose: either Satan or Our Lord. We cannot be neutral. There is no in-between. There are 2 camps, 2 armies, 2 "banners", as St. Ignatius puts it in his "Spiritual Exercises." Now Rock music is definitely in the devil's camp. Read any good book dealing with the subject and I guarantee it will convince you. So be logical. I remember once staying with a traditional Catholic family. They gave me the bedroom of their 15 year old son. There was on the wall a beautiful picture of the Sacred Heart which made me happy. I glanced then at

the cassettes on the desk and I was shocked to see that they were AC/DC tapes, one of them with the famous song “Hell ain’t a bad place to be.” This is a perfect example of what should not happen in a Catholic home. The same thing is true of books. The other day I was visiting a family, and I came into the room of one of the children, and on the shelves were all the “Baby-sitter’s Club” and “Sweet Valley” series (the cheap teenage romance novels). No wonder our girls become “boy-crazy” if they read only that kind of book. Dear parents, do not give rubbish to your children! It is your duty before Almighty God to surround these precious souls entrusted to your care with goodness, with truth, and with beauty. But once again, do not forget to give good example. Fathers, do not expect your sons to take an interest in good reading if they see you spending your whole week-end watching cricket on TV and never reading any good book! Mothers, do not expect your daughters to appreciate Catholic novels if they see you relishing silly magazines like “Woman’s Day” and “New Idea”! Let us be honest. A good rule of thumb is never to allow in our homes something Our Lord and Our Lady would not approve of.

Before concluding, I would like to mention the need for simplicity. The modern world has saturated us with false values. And so we clutter our homes with all kinds of machines, appliances and gadgets designed to make life more convenient and more pleasurable. This is not the true goal of man. We were not created and redeemed by the most precious blood of Jesus in order to worship microwave ovens and personal computers. We can use these modern devices, but with moderation, not becoming too attached to them. As St. Paul says: “They that use this world should be as if they did not use it.” Let us love little things, let us have the spirit of poverty. Often I asked myself when I saw vocations in such a family: What was the characteristic of this home? And I found out that an important element was a generous spirit of sacrifice. Children were taught to forget themselves in order to help their neighbours (eg. visit to the sick or to the poor) Parents through their life were showing that happiness consists in doing things for God, in order to please Him. So when the children grow up, and the idea of a religious vocation comes to their mind, there is no problem in accepting the idea. The essence of the vocation is the gift of oneself. In a home where generosity and sacrifice is taught instead of worldliness and enjoyment of comfort, vocations are more easily fostered.

Dear parents, do not get discouraged. Yes, to establish a Catholic home is difficult. It is a heavy responsibility, a daunting task. But it is also a beautiful vocation with its great joys and consolations. Have confidence in the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Sister Lucy of Fatima said: “The Immaculate Heart of Mary is my refuge, especially in the most difficult hours. There I am always secure. It is the heart of the best of mothers; it is always attentive and it watches over the least of its children. How this certainty encourages and strengthens me! In Her I find strength and consolation. This Immaculate Heart is the canal by which God makes the multitude of His graces gush into my soul.”

Let us consecrate our families to the loving Heart of our Heavenly Mother. Our Lady wants Her Divine Son Jesus to be known, loved and served in our homes. She will watch over us and lead us to our eternal home in Heaven.

BLESSING YOUR CHILDREN

Can anything in a Christian family equal in beauty the sight of children who, from the youngest to the oldest, present themselves each night with reverence before their father and mother to receive their blessing before retiring to rest? This touching ceremony ennobles a family, and consecrates authority; natural affection ignites a spark of the love of God, and the domestic hearth becomes a threshold of Heaven! God grant that this pious custom may be ever maintained where it already exists, and be adopted where, either through neglect, or the chilling effect of a Protestant atmosphere, it has hitherto not been practised!

A blessing imparted in the name of God is more than a good wish: it is also a prayer. Such a solemn invocation of the authority of God, made by a parent for his children, cannot fail to be efficacious. The Holy Ghost Himself makes Ecclesiasticus say: The father’s blessing establisheth the houses of the children (ch.ii.11).

The sign of the Cross was still unknown in the time of the Patriarchs.

The day had not yet dawned when the Man-God, by dying the ignominious death on the Cross, was thereby to change that sign of foolishness into one in which the great St. Paul, and all Christians after him, were to glory. The Patriarchs of old, in blessing their children, extended their hands over their heads. With such a rite did Abraham bless Isaac, and Isaac his son Jacob, and Jacob his twelve sons. Under the Old Law, only the fathers had seemingly the privilege of giving their blessing to their children; but under the New Law, - ever since, through Mary, women have

been raised to a loftier condition; and ever since one of their sex “blessed among all women” (Luke i.28) was found worthy to become the Mother of God, the right of blessing their children has been conferred also upon mothers.

The history of parental blessings presents many edifying examples, for our admiration and imitation.

The fathers and mothers of the Martyrs used to give their blessings to their sons and daughters as they lay in chains in their prisons; and these blessings filled them with a renewed courage to suffer more for Christ.

In the history of the Fathers of the Church, we read that the saintly Macrina daily blessed her grandsons: one lived to become the great St. Basil, and the other St. Gregory of Nyssa. Nonna, the mother of St. Gregory of Nazianzus, also blessed her son; and from a child she consecrated him to Jesus Christ, by placing his little hands on the sacred Scriptures.

St. Louis, King of France, when about to die on the African coast, addressed the following words to his son, who stood by his deathbed: “My dear son, I give you all the blessings which a good father can give to his son.”

St. Francis of Sales reverently knelt every night at the feet of his parents to receive their blessing; until the day, when, having received the episcopal consecration, these Christian parents knelt in their turn before their son, to receive his blessing.

The historian of St. Jane Frances of Chantal, speaking about the manner in which she educated her children, proceeds thus: “Shortly after supper, this pious mother used to withdraw with her children to make them say their night prayers, of which a *De Profundis* for the soul of the late Baron, their father, formed a part that was never omitted. After a few moments devoted to the examination of conscience, she made them say aloud and all together the short prayer: ‘In manus tuas commendo spiritum meum’ - Into thy hands I commend my spirit (Luke xxiii.46) - after which she blessed each with Holy Water and the sign of the Cross, and made them undress with modesty.”

The writer of the life of Saint Thomas More makes the following remark: “In our country, children are wont to ask on their knees, at morning and at night, the blessing of their fathers and mothers. This is the common usage in England. But I must confess that when grown up, married, or raised to some high dignity in the Church or in the State, children generally give up this pious practice, or at least it is retained by but few.” The more remarkable in this respect was the faithfulness of Sir Thomas himself. During the whole of his father’s lifetime, and even when he was holding the office of Chancellor of England, Sir Thomas never failed to come every night to ask him reverently for his blessing.

In monasteries, at night at the hour of Compline, when the monks are dismissed to their cells, the Abbot, who stands to his subjects as a true father, making the sign of the Cross over them, pronounces the words: ‘May the Almighty and merciful God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, bless and guard us.’ And in like manner, in the morning at the hour of Prime: “May the Lord bless us and defend us from all evil and lead us to eternal life.”

This parental blessing instils into the hearts of children a greater and purer love for their parents. Their filial affection daily grows by this impressive rite, in which the parent stands before the eyes of his children as the representative of God, and as the minister of His Divine Blessing. He performs essentially an act of authority. This cross which you have traced on the forehead of your children, O fathers and mothers! changes their natural love for you into a more spiritual dutifulness, and helps to insure forever their respect and veneration for you.

Under the influence of your blessing, the child will also learn to treat his body with respect. May it not suggest, in a critical moment of temptation, that it would ill become this brow, which but this morning, or this night, was blessed with the sign of the cross, to have reason to blush under the silent, but scrutinizing look of a father or mother, when the time for the next blessing has come round? The time of this blessing is also a most favourable time for acknowledgement of faults, for pardon, for solemn and serious advice; the blessing should be withheld in case no signs of repentance are shown for some fault committed in the course of the day.

Finally, this blessing is not without its beneficial effects upon him who confers it, for it must needs make him better, more Christian-like, more holy. When a parent sees his children bowing down before him, it brings home to him the great fact that he, also, as well as the Bishop of his diocese, or the Priest of his parish, has in a certain sense the care of souls, and that he owes his family the good example of a lively and practical Faith, and that he must be to them the pattern of all Christian virtues; for it is written: “The Just that walketh in his simplicity shall leave behind him blessed children” (Prov.)ox. 7).

Let, then, this blessing recover the place of honour it held in all Christian times! Fathers and mothers! confer it in the simplicity of the rite of old, and of better days. When after night prayers, or before retiring to their rest, your children are come to you to wish you a good night, place your left hand upon their heads, and with the thumb of the right hand trace the sign of the Cross upon each forehead either silently, or saying: "May God bless you, my child;" or, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Perhaps you are not rich; it may be you have no great fortune to bequeath to your children; but what you have at least to bestow upon them in the inheritance of your blessing; and far more profitable than riches is eternal salvation.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

The purpose of my talk is to think over with you some of the ways in which parents may play their part in the Christian education of their children. This important topic has many aspects which can be developed. But, as a Dominican, I must speak on the parent's share in developing in each child a deep respect for the things of the mind, for the work of the human intellect. The work of the intellect is to grasp truth, to grasp the meaning of things as they are in the reality of their own being, to come always nearer to seeing things as they must be in God's sight. It may be the Divine Knowledge of God as He has revealed it to us, or the natural knowledge of the universe He has created, or the world of ideas by which the human mind strives to understand the purpose of existence - why the world is, what we are, what are our real powers, what are the relationships between things and men and the unseen world. Whatever it be, the unspoiled human intellect seeks this knowledge and yearns for it, because even when it does not know it, it is always seeking the greatest reality, God, the source of all Truth.

The modern world has little taste for this thirst for truth. Too often, insensitive and blind to the inner meaning of things, it asks only "Of what use are they to us?" It degrades everything by commercializing it. It scorns those who have no material gain to show for all their study. There is nothing wrong with putting our knowledge to practical use. The Holy Family at Nazareth had to do so daily. The grave mistake is to forget the higher value of knowledge, to let our minds be tainted by the materialistic outlook around us; even sometimes to encourage our children to adopt this attitude. That is why I am dwelling on a point that may at first, seem to have little to do with education in the home.

I can see in country life and the country home great possibilities for keeping alive a right love of knowledge. The country child has the great advantage of living from his earliest days in close contact with natural things, with things that have come straight from the hand of God. "Everything that is, is more than it is," and the child can gain real knowledge from the company of living and growing things. Natural things exert an almost incredibly strong influence on the child mind, which can surrender its whole being so fully to what it sees and loves - a fleet of ducklings on a pond, a calf on its rickety legs, a moonlight walk to turn off the windmill, the tall trees always in their place. (Parents who live in the city can take their children to the country on week-end outings. Bushwalks as a family can be organized in nearby National Parks. Gardens can be planted in backyards).

Contact with natural things can hardly fail to give real knowledge and at the same time to guard and guide the spirit of the child, giving it a sense of true peace and true grandeur which it need never lose. In your own minds, now perhaps you are seeing again what used to give you a special joy or comfort, reassurance or inspiration. The meaning and purpose of these natural things is something a child can understand, and at the same time he is led, almost, unawares, to see God through them. Thus is developed a sense of wonder at the mystery of being that could be a most precious possession for life.

This power to see the creatures of God as the symbols of His goodness and beauty, if rightly developed, is a means of enabling the child to enter more fully into the spirit of the liturgy, that is, the Church's public worship of God. It would help him to see the significant way in which flowers and candles, oil and wine and bread and water are used in the Sacrifice of the Mass and in the Sacraments. And although I cannot dwell on the thought now, it would be worth your while to think deeply about the educative value of the Church's liturgy, all Her ways of giving worship to God, and bringing man to God. This seems a long way from so-simple-seeming a subject as the study of nature; but all real knowing has such far-reaching effects.

By encouraging children to read and to reflect on what they read, parents can also strongly influence a child's attitude to learning. But the books must be worth reading, for you cannot develop a taste for what is good, nor the

power to seek and find the beauty or truth of what is written if the book is of poor quality. There is now a great wealth of good books for children and young people. It would be difficult to over-estimate the value of helping your children to love reading. Some great educators do not hesitate to state that the test of the well-educated person is the quality of his reading. Can he really read a great book? If you could bring back to your home the custom of reading aloud to your children (or their reading to you) and of letting them try out their powers of thinking and discussing with you, you might help to make our country a land of genuine culture. But the right book is the important thing and it is your responsibility to do all you can to get them, plenty of them - Saints' books, nature books, stories, fairy and folk tales, stories of real life. But remember there is a world of difference between a genuine fairy story as found in Hans Andersen's Tales and some pixie story by Enid Blyton.

Before I leave this problem of developing a deep respect for the things of the mind perhaps I should mention the right attitude to take towards the children's progress in their studies. A Catholic parent should never be tempted to ask - What is the good of all this study of poetry or history or Latin - it won't help you to get a job - nor is it wise to use, as a spur to urge children to work, the argument that they will not get on in the world.

Again, keep always in mind the truth that children differ very greatly in natural gifts and aptitudes. What is needed is to find what one can really do and do it as perfectly as we can. How much more sane and balanced is the personality of the child who is not for ever being harried by unfair comparisons with what other children can do. Often we are so anxious for the success of our children that we forget the harm we may be thus doing to their characters their attitude to life. Rather should we train our children to do their best and to rejoice sincerely in the gifts and success of others.

When I come to consider what it means to have given a child a love and appreciation of what is beautiful in life, in art, in music, in literature, I could wish I had a poet's power to convey in a few words, a whole world of meaning. It is indeed "fatally easy to think we have educated a child when we have trained him to think, to acquire masses of useless information, to do many useful things." We could do all this and leave his inner spirit untouched or dulled. Someone has written that "modern education has produced a world, completely out of tune with beauty, unaware of it, and incapable of seeing it, reverencing it or producing it." The ugliness of much that we see in big cities - advertisements on hoardings, factory buildings, radio programmes, comic strips and popular songs and dance music, that are utterly empty of all loveliness and graciousness - these are evidence of wide-spread disregard for beauty, and to quote a great Catholic writer, "The dismissal of beauty is a dangerous thing for humanity."

It would scarcely be too much to say that in dismissing or belittling what is beautiful we are dismissing God. For God is Beauty as well as Truth and Goodness, and "all the beauty we can see is but an addition to the store through which we become aware of God."

I know some may be tempted to think that all this talk of beauty and art is too impractical, too much far away from the business of everyday life - or that the country home cannot do much about it. But a Catholic should never let himself think like that. He should know that to be a complete person, means to be able to see and to feel, to imagine and even to create what is beautiful. I cannot go into this any further, much as I would like to. I shall say just this:- the home can do more in this matter than the school. Like love for our Holy Faith, appreciation of the fine and lovely things of life comes from constant association with beautiful things themselves and with people who have a genuine love and understanding of them. So it is for parents to help their children in this vital matter. Simplicity, neatness, colour, brightness, and good taste can make the house and garden lovely without great expense. A few really good pictures by great artists can help to form the children's taste. There are, for example, so many of Our Lady by artists such as Fra Angelico, Botticelli and Raphael, that it seems a shame to have instead, ones that are unworthy of Our Lady's beauty and dignity. Children take great notice of pictures in the home and I know I can recall vividly all the pictures in our home. Hence the importance of having lovely ones and of encouraging the children really to look at them - and to make their own, to draw and paint and make things. Much of a child's future happiness and goodness depends on what the home and the school have done to help him to discover and develop his special creative powers, his capacity for making something beautiful.

It seems harder to discover what can be done at home to foster a love of poetry. There are collections of works of genuine poets (ie. not just writers of verse for children) which are produced in such a way as to captivate the attention. If these could be read aloud and talked over, it would be a good beginning. The attitude of the adults to poetry has a

great deal to do with the child's response to it.

To develop appreciation of good music is both easier and harder - easier because modern people will listen more readily to music than to poetry; harder because so much music is heard that is utterly worthless, if not vulgar and degrading. Positive efforts are always best in this as in all education. You can find ways of knowing what is good; and by wise choice of radio programmes and the playing of records of good music the home can set to right standards for the children before their taste has been spoiled. If it is at all possible, some members of the family who have the gift should learn to play the piano or other musical instrument. They can then give great joy to the others.

I could say much more, but I daresay you are thinking that I have said enough. Still I think you will see from the above, that one of the defects of the modern education of girls is that it is too similar to a boy's education. Training in art and music, in subjects such as history and great literature, in all that would make for good taste in dress, speech and home decoration and management would do more to fit a girl to be a Christian mother and the mistress of a Christian home.

HOW TO BE GOOD PARENTS

It is not easy to be good parents today. One may go further and say that it is never easy to be such, because parenthood begets very serious obligations, and fallen human nature rather rebels against being obliged to anything.

It is good then to review the principles that underlie the obligations of parents towards their children. The fourth commandment of God reads: "Honour thy father and thy mother." Implicit in this commandment is the law that parents must rightly fulfil their obligations towards their children. To fulfil these obligations, parents must know and ponder on them often.

Principle 1. The authority of parents is a delegation of the authority of God, through which they are to direct their children first towards Heaven and secondly, towards a useful happy life in this world.

The means to achieve these ends are threefold: 1) The knowledge of God, attained through faith and reason; 2) observance of God's laws, made known through the teachings of Christ and his Church; 3) the use of prayer and the sacraments.

Principle 2. The authority of parents will never be effective unless it is exercised against the background of manifest love.

God never commands human beings without at the same time showing His infinite love for them. It was this love that inspired Him to die in the cross.

The love of parents must be manifest, so that the children will see that the same parents who command them, love them whole-heartedly. The love of parents is made manifest only through sacrifice, respect for the human nature of their children, companionship and a deep interest in their studies, the work, the play and the spiritual progress of their children.

Principle 3. The authority of parents will rarely be effectively exercised unless it is backed up by their good example.

In all moral and spiritual matters, the example of parents should be the first teacher of their children; explanations, commands, prohibitions, corrections are of little lasting value unless the good example is there.

Principle 4. The authority of parents must be exercised with full recognition of the differences of treatment required by the differences of temperament, sex and age of their children.

Every child born into the world is a distinct human personality, with its own particular disposition and temperament, with the special characteristics of its sex, and with a need for different kinds of treatment as it advances more and more toward maturity

Basic to the needs of all children, however, is that they be trained to respect the authority of their parents from their earliest years. Parents who let their children have their own way throughout childhood will never win them to obedience in later years. It is hopeless to try to direct a child toward good and to rescue it from evil by beginning to exercise authority only when the child is advancing into its teens.

At the same time each child must be looked upon as an individual boy or girl, and is subject to growth and development requiring changes of approach on the part of parents as the child advances toward greater and greater

maturity.

Thus the father will be on guard against trying to deal with his daughter in the same manner as he directs his sons; and the mother will beware of trying to mould a son's character according to the same pattern as that of a daughter.

Thus both parents will study to learn the individual temperaments of their children and to direct them accordingly. They will come to realize that a moody child needs encouragement and the building up of self-confidence; an extrovert child needs discipline, order and frequent correction; a child with a tendency to want to dominate others needs praise and at the same time humility; a lazy or phlegmatic child needs frequent prods administered with patience and understanding. Despite all this no child can get along without respect for parental authority instilled at the earliest age.

As the child grows into its teens, the authority of parents gradually expresses itself more often in suggestions rather than in sharp commands. Too many parents make the mistake of commanding a fifteen year old to do things in the same manner as they would a five year old child.

Principle 5. The authority of father and mother must be mutually exercised, each contributing what is most natural to their particular role.

The mutual exercise of parental authority means that neither one will abdicate authority, nor delegate to the other the making of all decisions concerning the direction, correction and punishment of the children. By the design of nature a father leans towards justice and severity, the mother towards mercy and leniency.

Yet decisions must appear to the children as coming from both parents, the one always supporting and upholding the other when the decision has been mutually made.

Principle 6. The authority of Christian parents must be exercised with full recognition of the fact that false, dangerous and bad standards of conduct are approved and tolerated by many parents in the world today, and they must, therefore, band together to reject all such standards.

The good parents have to resist the mournful appeal of their children: "Other parents allow these things; why should not my parents allow them to me?" Parents are bound to use their own knowledge and experience to guide their children towards what is good and away from what is bad, no matter what popular modes of juvenile conduct may be.

A number of clear examples of what is right can be set down:

1. Recreation outside the home.

Parents are bound to know 1) where their children, (including teenagers) go for recreation; 2) with whom, they go; 3) how long they will be away from home.

2. Recreation in the home.

Parents have an obligation to welcome the friends of their children into their home for informal and formal gatherings, because this is the only adequate way in which they can get to know the kind of company their children keep. Further, they are obliged to chaperon and take part in such gatherings.

3. Steady company-keeping

Is lawful only when marriage is considered possible and desirable within a reasonable period of time, which may be estimated at about a year or so. The second reason is that no child can acquire a worthwhile high school or college education if it is distracted from its studies by an immature love affair.

4. Sex instruction

Parents have the prime responsibility for seeing to it that their children are not only properly informed on matters of sex, but prepared to meet the problems that will arise in this matter.

Serious thinking about these matters against the background of the principles set down above, will reveal to them what sort of programme will be the best for the eternal and temporal interests of their children.

PRAYER FOR THE HOME

Visit, we beseech Thee, O Lord, this home, and drive far from it all snares of the enemy; let Thy holy Angels dwell herein to preserve us in peace and let Thy blessing always be upon us. Through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.

PARENTS PRAYER FOR CHILDREN

Lord God! Thou has called us to the holy state of matrimony and hast been pleased to make us parents. We recommend to Thee our dear children. We entrust them to Thy fatherly care. May they be a source of consolation, not only to us, but chiefly to Thee, Who art their Creator. Be watchful, O Lord; help and defend them.

Grant us the grace to guide them in the way of Thy commandments. This we will do by our own perfect observance of Thy holy law and that of our holy Mother, the Church. Make us conscious of our grave obligation to You and bless our efforts to serve You. We humbly ask this blessing from the bottom of our hearts, for ourselves and for the children whom Thou least been pleased to give us.

We dedicate them to Thee, O Lord. Do Thou keep them as the apple of Thine eye and protect them under the shadow of Thy wings. Make us worthy to come, at last, to heaven, together with them, giving thanks unto Thee, Our Father, for the loving care Thou hast had of our entire family, and praising Thee together through endless ages. Amen.

A Consecration to the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph..

O Jesus, our most loving Redeemer, who having come to enlighten the world with Thy teaching and example, didst will to pass the greater part of Thy life in humility and subjection to Mary and Joseph in the poor home of Nazareth, thus sanctifying the Family that was to be an example for all Christian families, graciously receive our family as it dedicates and consecrates itself to Thee this day. Do Thou defend us, guard us and establish amongst us Thy holy fear, true peace and concord in Christian love: in order that by conforming ourselves to the divine pattern of Thy family we may be able, all of us without exception, to attain to eternal happiness. Mary, dear Mother of Jesus and Mother of us, by thy kindly intercession make this our humble offering acceptable in the sight of Jesus, and obtain for us His graces and blessings. O Saint Joseph, most holy Guardian of Jesus and Mary, assist us by thy prayers in all our spiritual and temporal necessities; that so we may be enabled to praise our divine Saviour Jesus, together with Mary and thee, for all eternity.

We need a Crusade for Catholic families. You Catholic families, consecrate yourselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and to the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Oh, pray together as a family! I know that many of those among you already do so, but may there always be more and more of you who do so with fervour! Let Our Lord truly reign in your homes!

Cast away I beg you, anything which seeks to limit the number of children in your family! There is no greater gift that the Good God can bestow upon your homes than to have many children. Have large families; it is the glory of the Catholic Church.

Everywhere the large family was the joy and prosperity of the Church. There are that many more chosen souls for heaven! Therefore, do not limit, I beg you, the gifts of God; do not listen to these abominable slogans which destroy the family, which ruin health, which ruin the household and provoke divorce.

And I wish that, in these troubled times, in this degenerate urban atmosphere in which we are living, that you return to the land whenever possible. The land is healthy, the land teaches one to know God, the land draws one to God, it forms peaceful characters, and encourages the children to work.

And if it is necessary, yes, you yourselves will teach your children at home. If the schools corrupt your children, what are you going to do? Rather that your children be poor, rather that they be removed from this apparent science that the world possesses, but that they be good children, Catholic children who love to pray and who love to work, children who love creation which the good God has made.

ARCHBISHOP LEFEBVRE

Sermon of His Sacerdotal Jubilee

23 September 1979 Paris France
