

The parent-educ...  
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# THE PARENT-EDUCATOR

New Series, Volume I

PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

A Religious Discussion Club Text with Outlines



PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT

CONFRATERNITY OF CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE

1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W.  
Washington 5, D. C.



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## FOREWORD

Most Rev. Christian H. Winkelmann, S. T. D.,  
Bishop of Wichita

It is most gratifying to note the generous response on the part of the clergy and the laity to the general program of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine. In the last decade a crusade has been launched to make "Christ and Him Crucified" better known to the masses. Today, the scope of this work has been broadened to such an extent that the leaders in this movement may well be encouraged by the results achieved and the coöperation received.

For decades our devoted Catholics were content to leave the religious instruction entirely to the Church and the school. Many parents considered themselves free from all obligations if they sent their children to the parochial school and a Catholic high school, and generously supported the Catholic system of education. The burden of double taxation was cheerfully borne in order to give their children a sound religious education. The duty of being the first and most important religious teacher of their offspring rarely came to their mind. The home, as a result, did not coöperate with the Church and school, and in this trinity of educational work the home is the foundation. This *laissez-faire* attitude on the part of many Catholic parents has brought about disastrous results. Again and again Catholic educators have pondered



over the questions: What is wrong with our Catholic schools? Why are so many of our promising pupils today no longer a source of honor to us? Why do so many of our former pupils prove unfaithful and disloyal to Mother Church? These and kindred questions perplex many priests and teachers who are giving their entire energies to our Catholic schools.

There is but one answer for these perturbed souls. It is not the fault of the Church or the school — it is the fault of our homes. Our homes have failed to coöperate with the school. We have Catholic schools, but the materialistic and neo-pagan spirit of our times in too many cases has permeated Catholic homes; and the saving teachings and admonitions of the Church are stifled in the hearts of the young by a lack of sincere coöperation on the part of parents, the divinely constituted teachers of the child. While the utmost care is bestowed on the child to promote its physical and intellectual growth and progress, the spiritual life, the divine life, is largely ignored.

In view of this prevailing trend of thought this volume, the new series of *THE PARENT-EDUCATOR*, is most timely. Catholic parents are again reminded of their exalted position in the family, and of how, as co-creators of their offspring, they must coöperate with the Creator's will in building strong religious characters. The twofold purpose of all catechetical instruction is brought out in the present study: intelligent presentation of our beliefs and the building of religious life. Our schools achieve both purposes, but parents must coöperate more generously in the home for the attaining of the second object.



The first two chapters of this splendid brochure offer timely material to priests for matrimonial instructions. Those aspiring to the privilege of parenthood should be duly apprised of their responsibility and the manner in which they can best promote the spiritual life in the family. This information will be welcomed by all parents having the weal of their children at heart. Homes that welcome God's children will be grateful for the helpful instructions contained in this booklet.

Real pioneer work was done by the Parent-Educator groups that contributed the remaining chapters. We may not overlook the fact that these discussion groups had few suitable texts to assist them in doing their work. Their contribution is, therefore, the more remarkable, and merits in consequence our profound appreciation and gratitude. Their initiative will undoubtedly encourage others to emulate their example by forming discussion groups in which religious life in the home will be studied and present-day family problems will be solved.

This small *vade mecum* of practical information should stimulate Catholic parents to organize similar discussion clubs in urban and rural centers. The Catholic Church need then entertain no fear for its future progress in our country. And Catholic homes will serve as a bulwark against the onrush of Communistic propaganda.

## INTRODUCTION

During recent years we have become increasingly conscious of the shortcomings of our system of religious education. We have become conscious, too, of the unique importance of the home as an educational institution. It happens, however, that we have usually gone about the business of improvement by trying to create new agencies and by initiating new methods. Much better results might be obtained if we could arouse parents to an adequate discharge of their obligation as the religious teachers of their children. Thus to arouse them would help to forestall trouble and make later remedial action unnecessary.

Pius XI, in his encyclical letter on *The Christian Education of Youth*, awakened the Christian world to a renewed conception of the responsibilities of parents. In response to the Pope's appeal, Catholics all over the world have displayed a new interest and activity in this matter. Several European countries have organized annual conferences to discuss the rôle of the family in religious education. In this country the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has met with gratifying success in its effort to make Catholic parents realize that they are the divinely appointed teachers of their children. One of the means employed by the Confraternity has been the organizing of Parent-Educator groups made up of fathers and mothers who meet to discuss their problems and to seek correct solutions.

As these Parent-Educator groups require assistance in the solving of their problems, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine has established a standing Committee whose function it is to provide such assistance. This Committee takes religious education in the home as its exclusive field, and does not enter into the study of what may be done or what should be done by the Catholic school or by the pastor. Its duty is to aid parents in solving problems connected with the religious education of the child at home.

The chief objectives of the Parent-Educator Committee therefore are:

1. To impress Catholic parents with a due sense of their unique and God-given obligation to give their children a religious and moral education;

2. To prepare brief, simply written leaflets and pamphlets which will enable even untrained fathers and mothers to impart religious instruction to their children easily and well;

3. To encourage and assist the formation of small groups of parents who meet to discuss the actual problems which they encounter in carrying on the religious and moral training of their children;

4. To discuss and give publicity to solutions for the practical problems confronting the Catholic parent-educator. At an annual conference which takes place during the National Catechetical Congress, the Committee invites both questions and constructive suggestions from all who are interested in the vital subject of religious education in the home; and in addition the Committee wel-

comes questions and suggestions sent at any time of the year to the Parent-Educator Committee, National Headquarters of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue, N. W., Washington 5, D. C.

\* \* \* \* \*

As time goes on other studies made by parent-educator groups will be distributed to the Catholic parents of the United States. But the principal publication will be a yearly volume of *THE PARENT-EDUCATOR*, prepared to facilitate religious group discussion.

Since the need of outside help is greatest in homes where parents — perhaps through no fault of their own — have had limited religious instruction, the Parent-Educator Committee is very desirous of circulating its publications in these homes. Experience shows, however, that even parents who have been graduated from Catholic schools and colleges frequently need outside help; and the Committee offers its services to them also. Most of all, the Committee hopes to distribute its publications widely among the Catholic parents living in the ten thousand parishes and missions of the United States that are without parochial schools.

Each year the National Parent-Educator Committee designates a topic for study. The topic chosen for the year 1941 is *THE VIRTUES*. It has been selected with a view to encouraging Parent-Educator groups to discuss their experiences in teaching children to practise the virtues, report the difficulties encountered, and their solution, and state the kind of assistance which would be most helpful to parents engaged in teaching the virtues in the home.

## CHAPTER I

### THE PARENT AS EDUCATOR

Most Reverend Edwin V. O'Hara,  
Bishop of Kansas City

#### EDUCATION IN THE HOME

If the program for Education of Youth is to receive a Catholic orientation, it must have as one of its pillars a Catholic understanding of the rights of the parent in the field of education. Still more important, if our young people are to receive a Christian education, Catholic parents must understand and fulfill their duties as educators. This paper undertakes to present the basic Catholic position in regard to the rights and duties of parents as educators.

Permit me first to establish the authoritative teaching of the Church on this subject, and then to draw the practical conclusions which require special attention today.

In the great encyclical letter on *The Christian Education of Youth*, issued by Pius XI on the occasion of his Sacerdotal Jubilee, our Holy Father dealt with the subject in an authoritative manner, defending the Catholic doctrine with telling passages from St. Thomas Aquinas, Leo XIII and the Code of Canon Law. I will quote a single passage here and refer you to the papal document itself for its fuller treatment.



“The Church’s mission of education,” says Pius XI, “is in wonderful agreement with that of the family, for both proceed from God and in a remarkably similar manner. God directly communicates to the family in the natural order fecundity, which is the principle of life, and hence also the principle of education to life. . . . The family, therefore, holds directly from the Creator the mission, and hence the right, to educate the offspring, a right inalienable because inseparably joined to the strict obligation, a right anterior to any right whatever of civil society and of the state, and therefore inviolable on the part of any power on earth.”

The Holy Father points out that this right, like all human rights, is not absolute, but must be exercised in pursuance of the end for which God created the soul of the child. “It must be borne in mind also,” concludes Pius XI, with a reference to the Code of Canon Law, “that the obligation of the family to bring up children includes not only religious and moral education, but physical and civic education as well, principally insofar as it touches upon religion and morality.”

*Discussion Aids.* What should the program for the Education of Youth have as one of its pillars? What must Catholic parents understand if children are to receive practical religious education? What does this article undertake to present? What encyclical of Pius XI is referred to? What is said of it? How is the Church’s mission of education in agreement with the family? Show why the family has a right to educate the children. What reference is made to civil society and the state? To what



end must the right of the family to educate, be exercised? What does the obligation to bring up children include?

### THE PLACE OF THE FAMILY IN EDUCATION

The fundamental Catholic teaching concerning the primacy of the family in the field of education is a doctrine strikingly in harmony, as Pope Pius XI observes, with the traditional American principle expounded with convincing eloquence by the Supreme Court of the United States in the famous Oregon School Case. "The child is not the mere creature of the state," said the Supreme Court in that memorable decision. "Those who nurture him and direct his destiny have the right, coupled with the high duty, to recognize and prepare him for additional duties" (June 1, 1925).

So far, we see that parents have from nature and from God a right to direct the education of their children. With this theory the greater part of the civilized world is in agreement today. The governments of Russia, Mexico and Germany form an unholy trinity of secularist absolutism which denies these fundamental rights of parents. Nor must we forget that the forces of secularism in our own country, though checked by the decision of the United States Supreme Court in the Oregon Case, are more active than ever in promoting their anti-Christian theories. The Holy Father has laid down the sound principles which must be defended and propagated as the very Charter of Christian and parental liberty.

*Discussion Aids.* What is the Catholic teaching as to the place of the family in the field of education? What

was the decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in the Oregon School Case? What is the attitude of the world today toward the rights of parents to educate their children? What should be the attitude of Catholics? What theories are being promoted in the United States today? Where do we find sound principles?

#### THE DUTY OF PARENTS TO TEACH

We come now to a further question: Does the Catholic doctrine of the educational mission of parents mean only that parents have an inalienable right to choose the teachers of their children; or does it imply also that the parents themselves have duties as teachers?

In opening this discussion, allow me to reproduce a pregnant passage from the famous encyclical letter of Leo XIII, *Sapientiae Christianae*. Though this letter on *The Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens* was written in 1890, the principles of Christian wisdom it inculcates have grown more timely with the flight of years:

"Parents," says Leo, "hold from nature their right of training the children to whom they have given birth, with the obligation superadded of shaping and directing the education of their little ones to the end for which God vouchsafed the privilege of transmitting the gift of life. It is then incumbent upon parents to strive manfully to have and to hold exclusive authority to direct the education of their offspring, as is fitting, in a Christian manner; and first and foremost, to keep them away from schools where there is a risk of their drinking in the poison of impiety. In this regard indeed there are to be found in many

countries Catholics worthy of general admiration, who incur considerable outlay and bestow much zeal in founding schools for the education of youth. It is highly desirable that such noble examples may be generously followed, where time and circumstances demand; *yet all should be intimately persuaded that the minds of children are most influenced by the training they receive at home.* If in their early years they find within the walls of their homes the rule of an upright life and the discipline of Christian virtues, the future welfare of the state will in great measure be guaranteed."

Discussion Aids. Do parents discharge their duties by supplying teachers for their children? By sending them to a Catholic school? What does Leo XIII say of the rights of parents? Of their obligations? What schools are to be avoided? What is said of schools in many Catholic countries? What training has the greatest influence on the minds of children? What will guarantee the future welfare of the state?

#### PARENTS MAY NOT RESIGN THEIR DUTIES AS EDUCATORS

Pope Leo's teaching is plain. Parents have not only the right to choose teachers for their children, but they have the duty of conducting the moral and religious education of their children themselves, and not merely through the agency of other teachers. Granted that they may call in the aid of religious teachers, they may not normally resign their own function as religious and moral educators, even in favor of priests or brothers or sisters,

not to speak of lay instructors. "Those who would tear civilization away from Christian discipline," says Leo, "seek to corrupt the family which is the cradle of civil life. Parents," he continues, "have not only the right of training their children, but the superadded obligation of shaping and directing the education of their little ones for God's purposes." In other words, Christian schools do not supplant, but only supplement, the work of parents as religious educators. The parent remains the chief religious educator and the home remains the chief school of religion.

*Discussion Aids.* What is the teaching of Leo XIII regarding parents as educators? Are parents relieved of their obligation of education in the home when their children are provided with other teachers of religion? What is the cradle of civil life? What is said of schools hostile to religion? What institution supplements the work of parents as religious educators? Who are the chief religious educators?

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES (select a religious practice and promote it in your home during the week):

1. Discuss with your children their religion lessons for the week.
2. Consider daily one thought from Chapter I and relate it to your life.
3. Discuss with the other members of your family the teaching of Church and State regarding the home.
4. Encourage parochial school attendance.

## CHAPTER II

### THE PARENT AS EDUCATOR, *Continued*

#### GRACES OF THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY

That the parent is the chief religious educator and the home the chief school of religion is evident from the very graces bestowed by the Sacrament of Matrimony. By the Sacrament of Holy Orders, which is a sacrament ordained for a social purpose, a man is made a priest and given power over the natural and Mystical Body of Christ, power to celebrate Mass and to forgive sins. By the Sacrament of Marriage, also a sacrament ordained for a social purpose, a man and a woman are made husband and wife and given a right to the graces to educate their children as Christians. As Leo XIII said in his encyclical on *Christian Marriage*: "By raising marriage to the sacramental dignity there has been vouchsafed to the marriage union a higher and nobler purpose than was previously given to it. By the command of Christ, it not only looks to the propagation of the human race, but to the bringing forth of children for the Church, fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God."

"The primary purpose of marriage is the procreation and education of children for the glory of God," says Noldin. "The effects of matrimony, inasmuch as it is a sacrament, are: an increase of sanctifying grace for the contracting parties, and a right to actual graces necessary



to the marriage state; this includes the grace to educate children well." The sacramental graces enabling husband and wife to educate their children are the distinctive prerogatives of parents as educators. These graces bespeak the will of the Holy Ghost that parents should personally concern themselves with the religious training of their children.

*Discussion Aids.* Compare the graces bestowed by the Sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony. To what does the Sacrament of Matrimony look? What is its primary purpose? State the effects of matrimony inasmuch as it is a sacrament. Are parents inclined to excuse themselves from their parental obligations? In what ways? What does Leo XIII say of the responsibility of parents?

#### ATTITUDES TOWARD PARENTS AS EDUCATORS

In this discussion regarding parents as educators many persons will be tempted to say: "Why waste all this time? Every Catholic knows that parents are expected to train their children in religion. But every person of common sense knows, too, that most parents are incapable of performing such a duty, except in the most elementary fashion, and that, consequently, the most sensible thing is for parents to turn the duty over to priests and brothers and sisters, who will do the work much more competently. For practical purposes, Catholic parents who send their children to Catholic schools may consider their consciences clear if they pay the tuition and keep an eye on the sort of companions their children associate with outside of school hours. You cannot ask parents to do the impossible. They



have to earn a living and support the Catholic school; that is all they can be expected to do in these times. They have neither the time nor the ability to act as educators for their children. It is a question of division of labor. Let parents support the Catholic school, and let the sisters take care of the religious education of the children. As for those parents who send their children to the public schools, they are even less capable of teaching religion; and as for their children being brought up Catholics, it is a forlorn hope. To be brief, the only available instrument for religious education in our day is the Catholic school, and any talk about parents as educators is not merely a waste of time — it is worse than a waste of time, because it will distract our people from the one great work which a century of labor on the part of zealous bishops, priests and religious, coöperating with the laity, has accomplished, and which still needs our undivided attention.”

One must take issue with this entire statement as being lacking both in Catholic principle and in practical effectiveness. Hark back to the words of Leo XIII, who, while praising the self-sacrifice which establishes religious schools, does not hesitate to issue the warning that it is within the walls of their homes that the children will receive the most lasting influence toward an upright life and the discipline of Christian virtue. Let us not be deceived into underestimating the function of parents as educators, or into thinking that any substitute can be found which can relieve them of the exercise of that function without detriment to religion and society.

*Discussion Aids.* State the attitudes expressed regarding education by parents. Are parents excused from their duty to teach religion in the home because of numerous other demands on their time? Does the religious education received by children at school or church duplicate the religious education in the home? Why does the Church accept no substitute for education of children by parents?

#### THE BASIC SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN LIFE

It may be readily granted that there is an imbecile fringe in the great circle of Catholic families where the religious and moral training of children within the home is hopeless, and in these cases the children would be better off removed from their parents' influence. I acknowledge with the greatest regret that there is a vast section of so-called Catholic families in which parents never speak to their children of religion, in which family prayers are unknown, and even individual prayer is never indulged in, except in haste and almost half-ashamed secrecy. One need not yield in loyalty to the principle that every child should be educated in a religious school, and yet may maintain that the religious school is being asked to assume a task beyond its possibilities until the Catholic home is recalled to the exercise of its function as the basic school of Christian life and discipline. The school has its place in this reconstruction of the Christian home, but it alone is not adequate to the task. There must be a frontal attack by every agency of religion against parental indifference and incompetence in the field of religious education. Parents must be warned to stir up the graces which

they received in marriage for the religious education of their children. They must be taught their responsibilities and must be led to assume those responsibilities with courage.

The task is indeed herculean. The battle front extends over a vast sector. The message must be brought to millions of homes. There will be a temptation to find easy solutions, to be satisfied with reaching 50 percent of the children who are now in our Catholic schools, and to defer the hope of remedying the home situation until these children grow up to be heads of families. Fatal procrastination! The grace of Christ for the religious training of children has been confided to every home founded in the Sacrament of Marriage. The spark is still there, slumbering under the most unpromising embers or seemingly burnt-out ashes; but it is there, ready to be fanned into a sacred flame on the domestic altar. There are difficulties, but when the essential interests of Jesus Christ are concerned, there are no insuperable obstacles.

*Discussion Aids.* What is lacking in the religious life of many homes? In what school should every child be educated, if possible? Why is religious education necessary in both home and school? What is said of the sacramental grace of matrimony? Of coöperation with this grace in overcoming obstacles?

#### A FERTILE FIELD FOR CATHOLIC ACTION

The most extensive, and at the same time the most fertile, field of Catholic Action in America and in the world today, is not the reconstruction of industry, or of

politics, or even of the schoolroom. The most fertile field of Catholic Action today is the renovation of the Christian spirit in domestic society. And for this crusade we need, not a Peter the Hermit calling men to leave their homes to rescue the tomb of Christ from the infidels, but rather the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth. Parents may follow in the steps of Mary and Joseph in developing the lineaments of the Christ-Child in the children committed to their care, without leaving the four walls of their own homes.

The practical program for enlisting millions of fathers and mothers as parent-educators is not to be found in one formula. I do not advocate a particular panacea, but I can tell you that the home is not so far gone that its recovery is hopeless. There is a vast army of devout Catholic parents who are looking for a call to the colors, whose hearts beat with new courage when they see the banner of family Christian education raised aloft. During the past few years, in several scattered dioceses, there have been literally thousands of families studying diligently and with profit the little volume prepared under the auspices of the Parent-Educator Committee, and they have been improving the methods of giving religious instruction in the home. It seems to me that among the agencies that will fruitfully be engaged in recalling the Christian home to its high responsibility as a school of life and religion, will be the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, organized by command of the Holy See in every parish. The Confraternity not only enrolls the most zealous parents, but provides them, through contact with the pastors and con-

secrated teachers of religion, with the ablest guides in leading parents to an appreciation of their duties and their opportunities. Of all the activities of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, its insistence on the responsibility of Catholic parents as religious educators of their own children, and its efforts to provide practical assistance for parents in the fulfilment of their sacred duty, will constitute its most basic contribution to the religious Education of Youth.

*Discussion Aids.* What is the most fertile field for Catholic Action today? Discuss the fields mentioned as less important. What is needed in this crusade for the Christian home? Who must be the chief crusaders and where is their work to be done? What is said of the recovery of the home? What is said of the response of Catholic parents? What means are suggested to restore the Christian spirit in the home? What is said of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine? By what authority is it organized? Who enroll in the Confraternity? What is the basic contribution of the Confraternity to the religious education of youth?

#### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Introduce family prayer in your home.
2. Encourage greater devotion at private prayer.
3. Coöperate more fully with the graces received in the Sacrament of Matrimony.
4. Promote active membership in the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine.



## CHAPTER III

### PREPARATION OF PARENTS FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE HOME

Most Rev. John A. Duffy, Bishop of Buffalo

#### THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE HOME

One of the greatest dangers that threaten modern America is the lessening of religious influence in the lives of its people. The record of her infant days is a story of ideals and principles clothed with religion; in her struggling youth she was esteemed of nations as a Christian exemplar; in early adult life she still regarded religion and morality as important elements in the permanent structure of society. But today, although the statutes remain, an analyst points to the danger signals already visible on the American horizon, and a non-Catholic commentator adds: "Unless the Churches can christianize men and women, the world is going back to barbarism." More and more each year Christian principles are being relegated to the limbo of the undesired: the last generation witnessed the rapid fall of America down the scale of nations; and the decade just passed saw the criminal and the racketeer ascend to shameful prominence in our national life.

In no dark and ugly corner do we find the breeding of this dragon that pulls down our standard of security. It cannot be traced to the halls of legislation, nor do its



unmistakable imprints lead to the door of the classroom. Although many agencies have contributed to the decline, nevertheless it is unquestionably true that the finger of major responsibility must be placed upon the home. "Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their childhood" (Ecclus. 7:25).

Discussion Aids. What is one of the greatest dangers to modern America? What is the religious record of early America? What does a non-Catholic predict for the world? Tell of the change in our standards of security. To what is this decline in standards mainly due? Discuss the quotation from the Old Testament.

#### VICARS OF CHRIST REMIND PARENTS OF THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Vicars of Christ in their uninterrupted line have continuously reminded the home of its responsibilities. Our present reigning Pontiff, Pius XI, in a very special manner has devoted himself to recommendations for its greater stability. His letters on *Christian Education* and *Christian Marriage* are masterful efforts to build up the defenses of its frontier. He reiterates that it is the school of schools, and that the "lamentable decline in family education" can be remedied only by the more effective discharge of the obligations of the parents within the home. "It is certain," he says, "that by the law both of nature and of God this right and duty of educating their offspring belongs in the first place to those who began the work of nature by giving them birth, and they are indeed

forbidden to leave unfinished this work and so expose it to certain ruin." Regretting that parents have little or no preparation for the discharge of the fundamental duty and obligation of educating their children, he implores "pastors of souls by every means in their power, by instructions and catechisms, by word of mouth and written articles widely distributed, to warn Christian parents of their grave obligations. And this should be done not in a merely theoretical and general way, but with practical and specific application to the various responsibilities of parents touching the religious, moral and civil training of their children, and with indication of the methods best adapted to make their training effective, supposing always the influence of their own exemplary lives." "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. 12:3).

It is my privilege at this time to make suggestions for the carrying out of our beloved Pontiff's injunctions in providing this instruction for parents; but in a paper of this length one can do no more than restate the parental task, enumerate the principles to be applied in faithfully discharging this duty and indicate practical steps toward equipping the parent for the task of successfully leading the little ones to Christ.

*Discussion Aids.* How have the Vicars of Christ reminded parents of their responsibility? What great letters regarding the family has Pius XI written? What is the remedy for the "lamentable decline in family education"? Why have parents the right and duty of educating their offspring? How does the Holy Father ask the "pastors

of souls" to warn parents of their obligations? What reference is made to practical application and methods? What quotation states the reward of parents?

## PARENTAL DUTIES

Young children, children unskilled in the ways of the world, are jewels that must be kept in a perfect setting — the home — lest the thief of irreligion encroach upon the parents' domain and despoil them of their richest treasure; they are talents, as the Holy Father calls them, that must be worked with and returned "to God with interest on the day of reckoning": a work which is not complete until the child is properly educated. The care of the natural wants of the child falls upon the shoulders of the parents, and this duty is not properly discharged until they have provided their offspring with food, shelter, clothing and protection during the years of the little ones' inability to care for themselves. Shall we deny the same responsibility where spiritual things are concerned? Have parents fulfilled their duty when they have provided merely for the natural wants of their children, neglecting the wants of the soul, the more important part of man? Proper safeguards must be provided for the children from their earliest years; good example must be constantly before their eyes; religious and moral training must become a living thing in their existence, a part of themselves, a principle that controls their actions. "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8). Unless the parent becomes the angel with the flaming sword at the portals of the

educational paradise, outside influences will soon ravish the sanctity of the home and despoil the sacredness of its position.

The admonition of Cardinal Gibbons in *Our Christian Heritage* can well be quoted here as an accurate summary of the responsibility placed on the shoulders of parents, especially mothers: "Let Christian mothers recognize their sublime mission. Let them bear in mind that to them is confided the most tender portion of the flock of Christ, which on that account should be watched with greater care. On them devolves the duty of directing the susceptible and pliant minds of their children, and of instilling into their youthful hearts the principles of piety. It is theirs to plant the seed of the word of God in the virgin soil, and when the more experienced hand is required to cultivate it, the ministers of God will not be wanting in developing its growth."

Discussion Aids. What does the Holy Father call children, and how must they be returned to God? Discuss the duty of parents to meet the child's natural wants; his spiritual wants. What safeguards must be provided for children from earliest years? What is said of outside influences? What does Cardinal Gibbons say of the mission of mothers? Of the duty of mothers? Of the seed they must plant?

## HOME TRAINING

The home training must provide the child with the fundamental equipment to cope with the difficulties of this life, and prepare him properly for life in eternity.

Whether the home accepts or neglects its sacred responsibility, in that measure do the mother and father lay the foundation of all future religious knowledge, with a corresponding effect upon the product of the home.

The pupil in the home must be taught that he has a destiny, *a sublime end*, a purpose in life that cannot be attained by making his aims earthly. It is the doctrine of Christ that man is born not only to be an inhabitant of earth, a member of society, but rather to become a child of God — to know, love and serve Him on earth and be happy with Him forever in heaven. Since man is destined to an eternal life, he must obtain more than a mere secular education, for secular education does not carry him above the plane of earthly and secular things. His must be an education that speaks to him of the eternal God, of his sublime destiny, of his moral obligation to serve God and to seek the happiness and the company of the blessed in the life to come. The physical, civic and secular training which is essential to his well-being here on earth must be given as well; but the training of the intellect must not be at the sacrifice of the formation of the heart.

There can be no effective training without *discipline*. The Apostle of the Gentiles instructs fathers: "Rear them in the discipline and admonition of the Lord" (Ephes. 6:4). Pope Pius XI states: "'Folly is bound up in the heart of a child and the rod of correction shall drive it away' (Prov. 22:15). Disorderly inclinations then must be corrected, good tendencies encouraged and regulated from tender childhood, . . . the mind must be enlightened



and the will strengthened by supernatural truth and by the means of grace. . . ." Discipline, however, must not be too rigid, too autocratic, nor must it be inconsistent; it must be in keeping with the child's capacities and his understanding. Discipline must be devised so that it does not become a repression policy which stunts the growth of initiative and freedom and incites to rebellion, but rather teaches a self-control which will produce a respect for the rights and privileges of others, in youth and later in man's estate.

From the very beginning religion should be presented to the child *as a service of love*; his thought of religion, immature as the thought may be, should bring him in touch with religion as a bond of love existing between a kind and loving God and a faithful and devoted creature. Never should the realities of hell be portrayed to the child of tender years, for the important seed to be planted in the young mind is that God loves us and possesses a special love for little children; hence the doctrine of fear should not be used. One mother reveals that her children never had any childish fears of a storm, because lightning and thunder are "God's fireworks," and never did they fear going to sleep alone in the dark, for "my own big angel was guarding the bed with his wings spread out."

Discussion Aids. What must home training provide? How is the foundation laid for future religious knowledge? For what end is the child created? Why is not secular education sufficient for life? What is said of the training of the intellect? What does St. Paul say of dis-



cipline? What does Pius XI say? What must parents guard against in disciplining children? What must discipline teach? How should religion be presented to the child? What is said of fear?

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES (select a religious practice and promote it in your home):

1. Discuss with your family the thoughts in this article on our purpose in life.
2. Strive to overcome the fault that hinders you most in setting a good example in your home.
3. Practise patience in disciplining your children.

## CHAPTER IV

### PREPARATION OF PARENTS FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION IN THE HOME *Continued*

#### CHARACTER FORMED IN FIRST YEARS OF LIFE

The training of the children must be begun in the home. Some psychologists assert that the most important period in an individual's life is completed when the child reaches his seventh birthday. "The moral man," says De Maistre, "is perhaps formed when seven years old; and if he was not trained on his mother's knees, this will be his lasting misfortune, as nothing can make up for that education that he should have received." "If anyone have no care of his own, and especially those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." Sister Mary, I. H. M., reporting her study in the *Journal of Religious Instruction*, states that the average child can have some knowledge of God as a Creator at three, although children can and do know God at two years; some at the age of three will speak of heaven as a place where good children go after death, and can also express a number of moral ideas. School children at six have clear notions of religious duty and are thus influenced by religious motives.

However, although psychologists only reiterate the statement of the Angelic Doctor when they assert that

character is formed in the first years of life, they are on insecure ground when they hold that the child's destiny is practically or totally fixed before he is seven years old. It is true that character formation must begin before seven, but it is likewise true that it can be molded and influenced during many years after seven. But the fact remains that no matter how broad the school's work, the home is the first educational institution.

*Discussion Aids.* Why must the training of children begin in the home? Tell what De Maistre says of moral training. What does Sister Mary, I. H. M., say of the child of preschool age? Is it true that a child's destiny is practically fixed before he is seven? When must character formation begin? When is character molded and influenced? What is the first educational institution?

#### HOME INSTRUCTION BY PARENTS

Home instruction is the work of the parents, particularly of the mother, as Cardinal Gibbons remarked. A child with maternal love and companionship as his guides begins his education under the most favorable circumstances, for when the mother initiates the religious training of the child, she binds his first religious memories with the bond of filial respect and love, a condition that can never be attained in the school. When the child lisps his first baby words and becomes interested in things outside himself, the religious mother is prompted to tell him of the Baby Jesus, and to aid him in saying the Sacred Name; she speaks to him of the Baby's Mother, how good, how beautiful, how loving! There is stirred up immediately

an interest because of the kindred relationship. The child wants to know more about this Baby and His Mother. In these ways the child reciprocates by actively coöperating with the mother.

The child's habits, attitudes and character are largely formed before the Church has had an opportunity, through her established educational system, of bringing religion into its life; and the home's responsibility becomes all the more grave in the revelation that children can and do know God at the age of two years. Hence, the pastor, according to the Holy Father's instruction, must seek to supply the parental deficiency, and the parents must enlighten themselves as to the best means of discharging this duty before God and their own conscience.

*Discussion Aids.* What are the fruits of parental instruction? What condition can be attained at home but not in the school? How may a mother begin teaching religion to her child? What is said of "kindred relationships"? Why has the home a grave responsibility for pre-school religious training? What are the Holy Father's instructions regarding parental duties?

#### EQUIPMENT OF PARENTS

To discharge their duties properly and to establish in the home the preventive work which will forestall the remedial action which now prevails, parents must possess a certain equipment, and suitable means must be provided in the parish units for presenting such training.

That the parents may be properly equipped, it is necessary that they should know what material to present and the best means of doing it effectively. The material that should claim attention will depend in a large measure upon the ability of the child and the circumstances that envelop him. His attention must be directed to thoughts and words concerning God, His creative works, trust in Him, our dependence upon Him, and the reward for goodness. This will provide the opportunity of presenting a few elementary truths (for complete truths are not even required for First Communion), and will lead to a knowledge of God and responsibility before God — the foundation of all religious life.

It is in the tender years when the religious sense begins to unfold that many parents endeavor to make education Christian through the arts, pictures, stories, God's works, projects — the work of the child's own hands — and through prayer, which lifts his mind as well as his tongue to the praise of God: an appeal to the child through sense and feeling to inculcate religious truth.

That the child may acquire the spirit of Christ that will urge him to continue his religious practices in the face of all difficulties, the parents first of all must have absorbed much of Christ's spirit, for "no one can teach without himself being full of the subject." This requires on their part an earnest effort to acquire personal holiness, Christlike patience — Christ living in them, made present by a life of personal prayer, a life filled with the consciousness of grave responsibility, a life of faith. Thus, having studied the Ideal and having made Him their own,



it becomes much easier to present Him to the flesh of their flesh, bone of their bone.

*Discussion Aids.* Why must parents be equipped to instruct their children in religion? How may the parish aid parents? To what must the child's attention be directed when teaching him of God? What is the foundation of all religious life? Discuss helpful religious instruction materials and their use. How does the parent assist the child in acquiring the spirit of Christ? How may parents *prepare* to assist the child in acquiring the spirit of Christ?

#### HOME ENVIRONMENT

The home environment should be that of a "well-ordered and well-disciplined Christian family," one designed to give the best thoughts and to inspire only the noblest actions; for no amount of after-training, no matter how perfect it may be considered, can eradicate the defects or entirely allay the impressions obtained in a bad home environment. No parent can set a bad example and then expect the child to follow his counsels. The Holy Father states that the environment during the period of the child's formation should "correspond with the end proposed," and that "education, as a rule, will be . . . more efficacious in proportion to the clear and constant example set, first by the parents, and then by the other members of the household." Good example thus reflected in the shadows of the home fireside will forever be associated with the affectionate sentiments of parental love and will be a determinant in future conduct.

An excursion outside the home—to the parish church,

to visit the home of the Baby Jesus, during which time the mother will reveal more of the Divine Child — will be a religious landmark in the life of the child. Christmas affords a beautiful occasion to link all the previous thoughts together in a birthday party for the Infant Jesus. Thus at an early age the proper version of Christmas becomes a living part of the child's life. The simple faith and earnest devotion of such a mother grow upon the consciousness of the child, so that the mother becomes a symbol of things pure and holy; she stands before the child as a living example of what he must become. Parents who fail to make use of their opportunities in unfolding the mysteries of God to their children are missing one of God's rewards for their sacrifices.

This thought brings us to story-telling. Stories are the child's life. Even though story-telling is the gift of few, nevertheless all parents can acquire a proficiency that will enable them to perform this important task well. Even two-year-olds can enjoy a story, especially the story of the Christ-Child, for the Infant appeals to them and they get the notion that the Infant had many things in common with themselves. The results will be that they will feel closer to God. The story of the shepherds, the story of the Three Kings, of Herod's hating the Babe, etc., are narratives that the child will relish and never fail to cherish dearly. "It is better to die without children than to leave ungodly children" (Ecclus. 16:4).

The daily home occasions have been suggested to the mother as a medium of instilling religious truth. If the church bells should ring, their purpose and their signi-

ficance may be explained to the child while the household routine continues; if the priest should call at the home, the child's curiosity may be appeased by explaining to him Whom the priest represents; if someone in the neighborhood dies, the future life may be taught; if there are very poor people in the community who have become the object of the family's kindness, a lesson in charity and unselfishness may be discussed with the child; when around in the garden or abroad for a walk, nature presents an abundance of object lessons; and the life of Christ is a very treasure-house of events that the parents may use in developing their children's knowledge of Christ and love of God.

Discussion Aids. What is said of home environment? What of the example of parents? How may example affect future conduct? Give examples in which the mysteries of God may be unfolded to children. What is said of story-telling? Give examples of stories that interest children. What is said of ungodly children? Give examples of "daily home occasions" when religious truths may be instilled.

#### PARENT EDUCATION THROUGH PARISH SOCIETIES

In carrying out the instructions in the Holy Father's letter on *Christian Education*, might not pastors of souls bring to the societies of their parishes, which are composed largely of parents and married people, the task of undertaking this duty? Might they not formulate for these existing groups the catechisms, the practical helps to accomplish this work within their own homes? Instead of

Holy Name Societies, Rosary Societies and Altar Societies with chiefly financial responsibilities, might they not have the preparation of parents for religious home training as their principal objective? Might not the Holy Name men become bulwarks in the home for the religious training of their children and thus bring about leadership which is so important for the promotion of the cause of Catholic Action? Will such not enhance the societies' spiritual value? Surely this would be one means of bringing back to the home the influence and the prestige which it is fast losing, as other agencies encroach upon its sanctity, for it would place the fundamental education for eternity where it belongs — in the home.

To facilitate the education of parents along the lines which have been suggested, nothing would contribute more to the success of the pastors' work than to have leaflets prepared by those familiar with the steps to be pursued, to put into the hands of the parents. They could be produced very inexpensively and because of a large printing could be sold for a penny or less. These leaflets could contain suggestions to the parents as to what to say to the child, when it could be said most advantageously, and how it could be said most effectively. As to the Catechism in the hands of the parents, we feel that the time for this is not before the child's school life has actually begun.

We may conduct our parochial schools, we may organize confraternities and sodalities for the instruction of youth, as many as we will, but, in the words of a sainted prelate, "if the home fails in its duty to the child, the

child will fail in his duties to himself, to society and to God." But with the restoration of the home to its rightful position in the training of the child, we may confidently expect religion to assume its place of influence in society; and with the parents thus elevated to the pedestal where their efforts determine the lives of men, they will be returning to God with interest those talents which they held in sacred trust.

*Discussion Aids.* What suggestions are made for promoting Christian education through parish societies? How can you further such activity in your parish? What should be the result of such parent education? Present the suggestion given for the distribution of inexpensive leaflets supplying parents with religious instruction aids. What is said of the use of the Catechism? What does a "sainted prelate" say of the home's duty to the child? Why is the restoration of the home so necessary?

#### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Visit the parish church with your children and tell them of the Divine Child's love for us in making the church His home.
2. When the Angelus bell rings explain its purpose and recite the Angelus with your family.
3. Help your children to realize the satisfaction that comes from pleasing God.
4. Discuss with your pastor a plan to aid parents in fulfilling their duties.



## CHAPTER V

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN BY PARENTS IN THE HOME: THE PRESCHOOL CHILD

Mrs. Dorothea McCarthy Rock, Ph. D.,  
Fordham University

(This paper comes as the fruit of discussion by a group of mothers who studied the special problems involved in the education of very young children. It draws attention to common difficulties and it submits a number of considerations deserving of careful attention; but it does not undertake concrete solutions.)

#### IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESCHOOL PERIOD

The preschool period is, in many respects, the most important period in the child's religious and moral education, since the beginnings of many of the child's habits and attitudes regarding God, the truth, his fellow-men, property rights, etc., are well established during this time. Long before he goes to school the child absorbs from the attitude of his parents, habits which predispose him either toward an eager acceptance of, or an antagonism toward, the religious instruction he will later receive outside the home.

The Church has always recognized the importance of religious training in these early, impressionable years. She

insists on placing the prime responsibility for the child's religious instruction on the home. Moreover, since our Holy Father has given Catholic children the privilege of receiving the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist as early as seven years, and since a primary grasp of his religion is and should be expected before the child receives these sacraments, it is clear that a very large proportion of the child's religious training must occur before school age, and therefore during a period when the home is not only the predominating, but almost the sole, influence.

Yet little has been done in a definite, constructive way to assist parents in the carrying out of this most important duty. Just as the young mother needs help from the doctor and the nurse at the well-baby clinic in learning how to care for her child's physical needs, so she needs help from the clergy to show her how she may best provide for his spiritual life. Even among well-informed Catholic parents there is a great need for help in scientific techniques for presenting religious truths to the very young child in ways that are meaningful to him at each stage of his mental development.

*Discussion Aids.* Why are preschool years so important a period of life? What is the purpose of this report? What habits and attitudes may be established during preschool years? What effect does the parent's attitude toward religion have on the child's future instruction? Where does the Church place the responsibility for the religious instruction of children? How does the reception of Holy Communion at an early age emphasize the parent's responsibility? When is the home almost the

sole religious influence? What assistance to parents is suggested in this report? Within your group, discuss the ways in which you have presented religious truths to the preschool child.

#### CHILD TRAINING AND CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT BASED ON THE TEACHINGS OF THE CHURCH

There are many secular organizations giving excellent help and suggestions to parents, Catholic as well as non-Catholic, regarding other aspects of the child's development and training. Many of the problems which they encounter, however, are primarily moral in character, and their methods, even though based on sound psychological principles and good common sense, are entirely lacking in any religious note, and on this basis are often severely criticized. Catholic parents desperately need methods of child training and character development based on the teachings of the Church, which make the religious aspect the point of departure. We need also to make use of sound psychological approaches adapted to the child's intellectual level.

In other words we need some assistance and suggestions from specialists in parent education and child care and training on methods of approach and effective techniques in the teaching of religion to young children. Specialists have usually regarded this as the function of the Church, and try to avoid any intrusion into so delicate a field. But on the other hand, the average religious teacher has had little first-hand contact with children of preschool years, and often fails to grasp their limitations

and needs during this period. Many Catholic mothers felt that some means should be worked out, through the co-ordinated efforts of persons well-grounded in Catholic doctrine and persons trained in child psychology, whereby parents will be assisted in the more effective carrying out of this important duty.

While the details of such a program would have to be worked out by a joint committee of experts in both fields, a few points discussed by the committee might serve to illustrate the type of coördinated program hoped for.

*Discussion Aids.* What is said of child development and training in secular organizations? What is lacking in secular parent education organizations? On what must character development and child training be based? What urgent need of parents does this report point out? What limitations of preschool years make the teaching of religion difficult? What is the suggestion of this report to aid parents in teaching religion to the preschool child?

#### LIMITATIONS OF CHILD'S VOCABULARY

One of the chief problems is: How can the parent give the child simple, truthful explanations of religious concepts at an early age in such a way that he can grasp their meaning and have a groundwork on which later elaborations, paralleling his mental development, can be built without causing conflict? One serious obstacle encountered is that of vocabulary and terminology. Good pedagogy demands that the limitations of the child's vocabulary should be considered in presenting new material on any subject. Too frequently this matter is neglected

in religious instruction, and unfamiliar terms and words are often used without definition, or are explained by other terms which are likewise unknown. The parent who knows his religion in adult terms and tries to explain it to the child finds that the child does not understand his language. He tries to simplify. The simplification sounds strange to his own ears and he begins to wonder if his interpretation is sound doctrine. But why should this translation be a problem for the individual parent? Should there not be an official solution at hand?

Closely related to this same problem is the need for simple, short prayers in words the child can understand, which might precede the learning of the Lord's Prayer and the Hail Mary. It was also pointed out that the child needs to be taught how to pray, how to formulate in his own words a simple prayer of love, of thanksgiving, of sorrow and of supplication, according to the occasion, in order to form a habit of prayer which should be his comfort and joy throughout life.

The power of a good example in religious training is perhaps the most clear-cut instance of the value of a psychological method in this field. Take for example the matter of truth-telling. How, for instance, can the parent who evades his child's questions and answers with only half-truths, expect his child to be thoroughly honest and truthful on all occasions? Experience shows that the parent who fails to keep promises made to children, or who constantly makes threats that are never carried out, is weakening the child's confidence in him. There is little reason to expect truthfulness in a child who has lived



in such an environment of bad faith. Obviously we have here a combination of moral and psychological factors which might be most effectively dealt with together. It is of course possible to teach a child to share his possessions and to take his turn by mere example and by direct, verbal instruction without any spiritual appeal, and thus to form desirable social habits. But how much better and more easily could such habits be inculcated with the added spiritual incentive of religious unselfishness!

Discussion Aids. What is a chief problem raised by the committee in this report? What is a serious obstacle in teaching religion to the preschool child? Discuss and list religious textbooks and materials suitable for the religious instruction of the preschool child. Ask your pastor to check your list. What is said of prayers for the preschool child? How may the preschool child be taught to pray? What is said of the habit of prayer? Show the importance of the good example of parents. What is said of truth-telling? Of the parent who fails to keep promises? What is said of the spiritual incentive of the virtue of unselfishness?

#### THE BASIS OF RELIGION IS LOVE

Another consideration is the question of general motivation in religious teaching. The basis of all our religion is love, love of God and love of one's neighbor. The child's experience of filial love, which he should have in the Catholic home, is an excellent starting point for his comprehension of the broader concepts of love in religion. Emphasis should be placed on the motive of love of God rather than on fear of God and His punishment.

Psychologists have shown that rewards are usually more effective than punishments in learning, and that fear motivation is often unwholesome. The laying of emphasis on the positive and constructive features should lead to a higher type of religious motivation as well as to a better mental attitude.

May we sum up our findings by affirming that there is really urgent need of a coördinated program which will enable parents to present the teachings of the Catholic religion in a simplified form suited to the preschool age and harmonized with the principles of scientific psychology.

*Discussion Aids.* What is given as the basis of all religion? What may be a starting point for the broader concept of love in religion? What is said of fear and God's punishment? What is said of emphasizing the positive aspects of religion? What were the conclusions of this committee's study of the preschool child?

#### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Place a picture of the Christ-Child or the Holy Family in the children's room. Use the picture in telling stories of the home at Nazareth.
2. Teach your children to offer their hurts and pains to God; to offer them to make up for when they or others have hurt Him.
3. Make a visit with the children to the Blessed Sacrament where Jesus waits to come to us in Holy Communion.
4. Strive to overcome the fault that deters you most in giving a good example in the home.

## CHAPTER VI

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN BY PARENTS IN THE HOME: THE ELEMENTARY-SCHOOL CHILD

Mrs. Frederick W. Rice, B. A., New York

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF HOME INFLUENCE IN SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

There are two premises fundamental to any discussion of the problems involved in the home religious training of the elementary-school child:

The first is the grave responsibility incumbent upon parents for the spiritual development of their children; the second is the unequalled importance of parental example.

The parent is directly answerable to God for the proper training of the child; and no element of the training process is so essential as the parent's own good conduct. The influence of the home is tremendously important in every phase of the child's life; but in the spiritual sphere it is preëminent. The value of a Catholic education in a Catholic school can be easily nullified by the lack of Catholic home influence.

Moreover, "the essential education in boyhood or girlhood is done by character on character. It is the effect of a person on a person. We are alive and what moves us most are living things. As children we are most af-

fectured by the human beings we meet with and especially those with whom we come into closest contact when we are young children" (*The House of Gold*, by Father Bede Jarrett, O. P.). Especially is this true of the age group with which we are dealing now — the children of elementary-school age, the age when the child begins to observe most keenly and to reason about what he observes.

What does this mean for those of us who, as parents, are charged with the responsibility of guiding the spiritual development of our children through this formative period? A small group, all of us mothers with children ranging from infancy to college age, have been discussing and considering our problem together. We came to no startling conclusions nor were we able to work out any comprehensive solution for the age-old difficulties which confront every mother. However, we formulated several ideas which seemed helpful to us, and we pass them on to you in the same spirit in which we discussed them — as one mother to another.

*Discussion Aids.* What is the first point considered in this report? What is said of home influence? What may lessen or even destroy the value of a Catholic school education? What is said of parental example? Give the example quoted. By what are children most affected? When do children begin to observe and reason keenly? What is the purpose of the report of this committee?

#### THE ALL-PERVADING LOVE OF GOD

In the first place, it seems peculiarly the function of the mother to inspire in her child a sense of the all-per-

vading love of God — a love which it is so very natural for the child to return. This love of God should form the whole pattern of his life. It should be the reason for and the means of developing the character traits which prepare us all to face life as Catholics and children of God. When the child does wrong he should be made to feel that he is hurting a loving and merciful Father rather than enraging a stern Ruler of the universe.

The first step in this direction may well be to teach the child the example of the life of Christ. The story of Bethlehem carries a note of beauty which appeals to the fancy of the child. The Child-Christ in the manger establishes a sympathy with all other children. The Boy Christ, obedient to His parents, is a figure which they can comprehend and appreciate. Through his knowledge of the God-Child of Bethlehem, the Blessed Mother, the Saviour on the Cross, the Father Who is in heaven "where we shall go some day," the child begins to understand the great truths of his religion, the infinite goodness and wisdom of God, and above all, the love of God for each one of us.

Toward the same end will go the reading of the lives of certain saints whose activities and sacrifices for God appeal to the hero-worshiping sense of most children. A number of short lives particularly well suited for children have appeared recently. *Six O'Clock Saints* and *More Saints for Six O'Clock* (published in this country by Sheed and Ward) are examples of this type of material. Robert Hugh Benson's *Alphabet of the Saints* is another intended especially for young children.



The reading of carefully selected sections from the Bible, the Old Testament as well as the New will familiarize children with the text and significance of Sacred Scripture. Several mothers in our group found that this appealed to children from the age of nine or ten as a special devotion for Lent or Advent. The rereading and discussion of the Sunday Gospel at home serves to bring it to the attention of the child, who is apt to miss its significance when it is read at Mass.

Discussion Aids. What seems peculiarly the function of the mother? What should form the whole pattern of the child's life? What treatment is suggested when a child does wrong? What may be the first step in presenting the truths of religion to the child? Give examples. What is said of presenting the lives of the saints to the elementary-school child? What books are mentioned? What books of *Lives of the Saints* have you used? What is said of reading the Bible? Of rereading and discussing the Sunday Gospel at home?

#### THE LITURGY; INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY PRAYER

We Catholics are fortunate in having for our children the liturgy, which appeals so much more strongly to children than do the sermons and prayers of the Protestant denominations. The Mass and various devotions and ceremonies make a deep impression on the child who knows the significance of each part. This knowledge comes easily and naturally when given little by little by the mother as she and her children attend church together. At a surprisingly early age, children can be taught to use

the Missal intelligently (about ten or eleven years, in the fifth grade), and this knowledge also comes more easily under the mother's supervision at home, or whenever the opportunity arises for the mother and child to attend Mass together.

To the average child of today, individual daily prayer is more attractive than family prayers, but there are certain family devotions which serve as a unifying bond within the family circle and leave a precious memory for after life. Joint prayers in any family emergency, the rosary during October and May, simple devotions at certain other times, carefully planned in order to reach all members of the family without tiring the younger ones — all these help to make religion an integral part of the home environment.

This brings us to a point which seems particularly important — namely, that parents and children should receive the sacraments together frequently and also attend the various parish devotions together. It is not enough to see that the children go by themselves.

In the last analysis, of course, every mother must plan for her own child. However, we offer these suggestions humbly realizing our own limitations, but hoping to draw out from other mothers ideas which will be more helpful to all of us.

*Discussion Aids.* Why should the liturgy appeal to children? What suggestions are made for presenting the meaning of the Mass and various devotions to children? What is said of the use of the Missal? Of the value of individual prayer? Of family devotions? How should

family prayers be planned? What is said of parents and children receiving the sacraments together?

### CHRIST, THE GREATEST INFLUENCE IN EDUCATION

To quote again from Father Jarrett: "And so we come back, as we must come back, to Christ our Lord as the greatest influence in education. In education you can only give to the child what you have yourself. We all have the responsibility to serve God and love God and those responsibilities are all the greater in a father or a mother because of their children. They have now a new obligation. They are fathers and mothers. They have responsibilities for the child. Yet they can only give what they have got. . . . You can't inspire unless you are inspired. You cannot move people unless you are moved. You cannot teach them beauty if you don't see beauty. You can only establish it because it is first in your own heart. You cannot give light without light. You cannot give fire without fire. So with your children about you, remember that you can only give what you have got and that you yourself must be first moved by His character before you can move others by telling them of it."

*Discussion Aids.* What is the greatest influence in education? How does one prepare to educate the child? Why has a parent an added responsibility to serve God? What have you gained from this report?

### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Interest each member of the family in the life of his patron saint.

2. Reread and discuss in the family the Epistle and Gospel of last Sunday.
3. Provide the members of the family with an *Ordinary of the Mass* or a *Sunday Missal*. Encourage intelligent use of the Missal.
4. Promote more frequent reception of the sacraments as a family group.

## CHAPTER VII

### RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OF CHILDREN BY PARENTS IN THE HOME: THE HIGH-SCHOOL STUDENT

Mrs. John S. Reilly, M. A., New York

#### GRADE-SCHOOL EDUCATION IN RELIGION WHOLLY INADEQUATE

What can parents do to protect the Catholic faith of their children of high-school age attending non-Catholic schools?

You parents can hardly avoid this issue. If your children are sent to non-Catholic schools, you are faced with the clear duty of seeing that they keep the faith of their fathers — intact. You cannot hope to pass this obligation over to anyone else. It is inescapably the function of parents to guarantee the religious belief and background of their children.

The religious instruction of the children is far from complete and should not be stopped when they enter a non-Catholic high school. You should uphold and support the efforts of your parish to continue instructing your high-school children along religious lines. Encourage your boys and girls to attend religious discussion clubs or other activities of the parish for their benefit, or see that they are instructed in their own religion in and



through the high school itself, as is now permitted by law in not a few states.

The problems of parents with high-school students in a way resemble, and in another way differ from, the problems of parents who have children at non-Catholic primary or grammar schools. Parental example in the pious practices of religion and an atmosphere of tranquil, devout Catholicity at home still have their deep effect. But the age is now reached where reasonable and informative discussion is more acceptable to children than the laying down of precepts by their parents. Our parental rôle is better played from now on by our attitude than by our words. Our attitude should strongly show forth that we ourselves are entirely secure in our beliefs, entirely serene in our faith, and entirely loyal to the Church. But we are required also to speak when our children ask us to give them intelligent reasons for the faith that is in us. Be ready for them when they look to you for the facts about their religion, and those great facts will speak for themselves.

The insistent demand of our American-bred children of high-school age, as I know them, is for independence: the right at least to begin to conduct their own experiments, lead their own lives, make their own decisions, use their own judgment. Parents ought clearly to understand that this is an entirely normal and logical development — not necessarily an indication of defiance or rebellion on the part of these young people, but more often a natural and decidedly important part of the process of their growing up. This phase in our children's lives calls em-

phatically for patience on our part, for tolerance in allowing them to express their youthful point of view and for persevering effort to understand and help them.

*Discussion Aids.* What is the responsibility of parents whose children are attending non-Catholic high schools? What must be guaranteed these students? What is your duty toward promoting the religious instruction program of your parish? What are the laws of your state regarding religious instruction during school hours? For gaining a unit of credit which may be applied for graduation? What is said of the example of parents? Of informative discussion at this age? Of the parents' attitude? Of the parents' preparation to give intelligent reasons for their faith? What are the normal demands and attitudes of high-school students? What virtues does the wise parent exercise in educating high-school students?

#### DISCUSSION OF RELIGION IN THE HOME

When high-school children bring home a question about religion, it is an important event. The answer may not be deferred or lightly passed over. We should encourage them to bring their questions home, sympathize with their difficulties and stimulate religious discussion in our family circle. We ought to be able to guide our children and to indicate or to find for them the Catholic answers and the Catholic point of view on important spiritual and intellectual matters.

All this implies a certain amount of self-education for Catholic parents. We should make ourselves intelligent about our religion. We should be aware of the controversial subjects most likely to arise in our schools, so that

we may provide antidotes and ammunition against attack. Not only should the better Catholic periodicals be available in our homes, but we ourselves should read them regularly and faithfully in order to become saturated with the Catholic attitudes on the questions of the day. And we may further help ourselves by forming discussion clubs for parents where we may exchange our anxieties and problems for those of other serious-minded and conscientious Catholic fathers and mothers. An outline could be prepared sketching the difficulties which the Catholic boys and girls of the community meet at school and bring home to their families, and this outline might well be a subject for study by the parents in such a club. General discussions of the possible dangers to Catholic children's faith ought certainly to contribute to our own wisdom and our fortitude in handling the problems which may arise in our own family.

*Discussion Aids.* How may children be encouraged to bring up religious questions at home? What is said of the self-education of parents? What use should be made in the home of Catholic periodicals? Is your diocesan paper read and discussed in your home? What is the advantage of membership in a religious discussion club? What dangers to the faith confront the Catholic youth of your parish? How can you aid your pastor in meeting this issue?

#### HONESTY AND SINCERITY FOSTER CONFIDENCE

Intelligent parents give the strongest proof of their intelligence when they recognize and acknowledge their

own intellectual shortcomings. When you do not know the right answer, the best answer, to a question asked by your son or daughter, admit your ignorance at once and diligently seek the answer. Do not give a second-rate answer or an inadequate or incorrect one simply because you are unwilling to admit to your child or to yourself that you do not know. A poor answer will do more to turn your child away from you and to lose that precious confidence placed in you, than if you were to refuse to answer altogether. There are sources of right information, and these you must know and consult. One such useful source of Catholic information is the Catholic Encyclopedia. If you do not own one and cannot buy it, you can usually find it in your local public library, or in one not far away. Advise your children to seek their answers there.

To stimulate interest in their devotions there is nothing more helpful than the use of the Missal at Mass. The color, the variety, the beauty, the unending interest of our liturgy can be brought home to the expanding and sensitively responsive intelligence of children of high-school age through following the Catholic calendar and the prayers proper for every Mass they hear. Parents ought to provide each child with a Missal, show him how to use it, and establish the family habit of following the Mass rationally. The use of the Missal is an excellent remedy for adolescent distractions or indifference at church. Family prayers ought also to be an established custom, especially in every household where the children are at school under non-Catholic educational auspices, if not every morning or evening, then at least once or twice a



week. And in all moments of family exaltation or distress, family prayers should be resorted to, and the habit of instinctively and immediately turning to prayer, well begun in the early years, should be continued through those high-school years when difficulties arise for parents and children to be solved only by divine assistance.

*Discussion Aids.* What should parents do when unable to answer a question about religion? What is the danger of a second-rate answer? Discuss sources of right information available in your community. Is there a Catholic encyclopedia in your public library? Do Catholic high-school students know local sources of right information? How may interest in religious devotions be stimulated? How may intelligent use of the Missal be promoted? What should be an established custom in every home? How may the habit of prayer be developed?

#### DEVELOP AN APPRECIATION OF CATHOLIC CULTURE

It is essential for us parents to remember in dealing with these children of ours that the high-school age is apt to be an age of extreme sensitiveness, expressed either by highly conspicuous behavior or by a tendency to slink out of sight and remain unnoticed altogether. Children of this age are torn by the longing to appear well in the sight of their contemporaries. They yearn for the praise and approval of their teachers and their fellow-students. They therefore conform rigorously to the conventions laid down by their young group, and above all things they dread appearing or behaving in any way different from their fellows. The Catholic student in a non-Catholic high



school is well aware of his differences from the rank and file of his schoolmates, and these differences far too often make him feel inferior and ashamed. This is a very dangerous feeling for a young Catholic. It is highly important that his parents should impart to him a sense of deep pride in his faith and in his Church, and a conviction of his superior status as a Catholic. If at school he absorbs a Protestant or non-religious culture which is in a sense alien to his own, he should at home be kept aware of the high traditions of Catholic culture, the part the Church has played in fostering and preserving learning and the arts, and in furthering and sponsoring the great discoveries of science, and her rich contributions to philosophy. Catholic commentary on current events, Catholic contemporary achievements in science, in literature, in art and in history, the biographies of great Catholics, lay and cleric, should be part of the family conversation and of the family atmosphere. This is done not for the development of a boastful, complacent attitude in our children, but simply to give them a knowledge of what is certainly their heritage. Such knowledge, once assimilated, should uphold them in a serene inner consciousness of the superior cultural values of their religion, as well as of its higher spiritual values. Our children should be absolutely secure in their faith, undisturbed by any challenge they may hear or sense, ready to hold their own in argument, but never initiating a religious quarrel.

*Discussion Aids.* What characteristics of the high-school age should be recognized by parents? Why do high-school students conform to the conventions of their

group? What may be done to counteract the non-religious culture of the secular high school? Why should parents impart to their children a sense of pride in their faith? What is said of the high traditions of Catholic culture?

#### DEVELOP AN AWARENESS OF THE PRIVILEGES AND MERITS OF THE FAITH

To sum all this up: From the angle of parents the dangers faced by young Catholics of high-school age in non-Catholic schools are not so much dangers of propaganda or of misstatement. These, where they are serious enough, can be met by the methods I have outlined, that is, by open, intelligent discussion at home, and by seeking the truth at its source. The real dangers are more insidious and subtle than these. They may be called psychological, and have to do with the young boy's or young girl's gradual persuasion that to be a Catholic is to be different, socially unacceptable perhaps, or culturally inferior. It is in this sense of shame, so torturing to the self-conscious and ambitious adolescent, that the gravest menace to the religion of our Catholic boys and girls lies. Of the possibility of this state of mind in your children you Catholic parents should be thoroughly and calmly aware. It must be dealt with delicately, restrainedly, understandingly, prayerfully, and with all the parental wisdom you can summon to your aid. You are called upon to strike a happy balance between too great sternness and too great laxity, to allow your children to participate heartily in all the activities of their non-Catholic school-mates, except where these may or actually do endanger

their Catholic principles. Prepare your young people to be alert to detect wrong or distorted ideas expressed in school about the Catholic faith, but help them to realize always that most of the misstatements made about Catholics and Catholicity are made through ignorance, not through malice. By persuading your children to explain rather than to fight, you Catholic parents will do much to build up a relationship of confidence, of mutual tolerance and better understanding, a much more helpful, satisfactory and profitable relationship, between non-Catholic teachers and the Catholic children who must so often be confided to their care.

When you know beforehand that your children are destined for a non-Catholic high-school or preparatory-school education, make your preparations well ahead to meet the difficulties these young Catholics of yours will encounter. Let them enter a non-Catholic school well-grounded and well-instructed in their faith, enthusiastic in the privileges of their Catholicity, strong in Catholic ideals, full of fortitude for the trials and minor persecutions and sacrifices which every Catholic is called upon at one time or another to meet and make. With this foundation, and a strong desire to convince others (especially through example) of the merits of the Catholic religion and to help them to know it better, I believe Catholic boys and girls of high-school age will thus be better able to resist during their schooling, and to remain unaffected by, attacks upon their faith, whether those attacks come from without or originate in their own troubled young hearts.

*Discussion Aids.* What are the chief dangers to faith in a secular high school? How may obvious dangers to faith be coped with? What are the most subtle dangers to faith? How may these subtle dangers be handled? What is the cause of most of the misstatements about the Church? How may parents prepare children to recognize and intelligently answer misstatements? What preparation should fortify children deprived of a Catholic high-school education? What is said of the privileges of the faith? Of convincing others of the merits of the faith?

#### RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

1. Discuss in the home Catholic current events.
2. Establish the custom of family prayer.
3. Promote reading of the diocesan paper by calling attention to articles in the current issue.
4. Volunteer (to your pastor) to organize a religious discussion club for youth.





