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THE SEX PROBLEM!

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A CHALLENGE AND AN OPPORTUNITY

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Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

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Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C.

SEX mania is prevailing in our country today, and Catholic parents realize that something must be done quickly to protect our young people from this menace. Fathers and mothers are alarmed over the growing immorality of the young. They are asking anxiously: What can we do to save our children from the contamination of vice?

This anxiety on the part of Catholic parents represents both a challenge and an opportunity. Our people must now attack the evil at the root. They must drive out naturalism, and be consistent in practicing the Gospel of Christ Crucified, and that not only at the Communion Railing and in the Confessional, but also in the heart of the home, in the market place, in the shop, in the office, in the press, and in the thousand other ramifications of our American life. But such consistency is impossible without complete character education of both young and old.

The sex mania of our day is but an indication of a general weakening of character. It is futile to treat the symptom if we do not attack the root of the evil. To safeguard our young people against the allurements of sex, we must give them the protection of a strong Christian character. Adequate training in chastity can be ac-

complished only in union with complete Christian education. While training in chastity is an important part of education, it is nevertheless but one part and perhaps not even the most important part. Training in chastity must form an integral part of moral education from the earliest years and cannot be postponed until sex reveals itself plainly to the growing child. The sum and substance of Catholic training in chastity is this: give a solid religious training in general, especially in the use of the Sacraments; begin early to instruct the mind as to self-control in general, with simple applications to the sex instinct, while replying frankly to sincere questions in private; and try fully to instruct the child individually whenever the occasion requires.

Not An Easy Job

General character training is the essential phase of training in chastity. This theory of education was practiced by the Catholic mother who trained her ten-year-old boy to abstain from cookies between meals because Christ wished him to do something hard, and because by doing what was hard he would grow up to be a strong man. Little wonder that this mother lived to see the day when her boy grown to stalwart manhood of thirty, had the strength to say "No" when tempted to sin by another man's wife. Too many of our countrymen are moral weaklings and have their wishbone where their backbone ought to be because during their plastic years they were never compelled to do what was hard. Training in chastity will never be an easy job. The Sixth Commandment will always remain the Difficult Commandment, and to develop the moral power needed to withstand the temptations of today we must draw upon all resources of nature and grace.

Indirect methods of character education will accomplish a great deal. Parents and teachers must make skillful use of substitution and sublimation in the control and direction of the sex instinct. Our boys and girls must be shown that they can do what they are determined to do, that the spirit can control the flesh, and that they need never despair of attaining the high destiny of man. Their sense of shame, innate in fallen humanity, must be transformed into the protective power of genuine Christian modesty. Control of the imagination, manual labor and active sports are valuable helps. I agree with Agnes Repplier: "The children to be pitied, the children whose minds become infected with unwholesome curiosity, are those who lack cheerful recreation, religious teaching, and the fine corrective of work. A playground or a swimming pool will do more to keep them mentally and morally sound than scores of lectures on sex hygiene."

Ignorance Is Not Innocence

While the protection of youth from the allurements of sex is a question of power rather than of knowledge, we cannot accept the view that ignorance is innocence. On the contrary, ignorance may be blamed for many a tragedy. A certain amount of sex instruction is needed, and the Holy Father in his *Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth* insists that it be given cautiously and sensibly, at the opportune time and according to the needs of the child, by those who have the right and duty of imparting the information. Though priests and teachers must do their duty in this regard, parents undoubtedly have the first obligation. But the disquieting question will not down. Do Catholic parents perform that duty? Four years ago I asked the following question of 500 pastors: *Is it your impression that Catholic par-*

ents give the necessary sex instruction early enough to their children? If not, why not? Replies were received from 363 pastors; of these 320 replied, "No," implying that it was their belief that Catholic parents did not fulfill that duty by their children.

The pastor of a large parish in the East sent along this note:

You will render a much needed service if you will do something that will make our Catholic parents bestir themselves. Not all parents seem to realize to what frightful dangers their children are exposed at the present time. Children are seduced at so early an age, while they could be saved if they were instructed betimes at home. They contract the habits of impurity before they are aware of what is happening to them. The confessor cannot do everything.

Why the Silence of Parents?

The reasons generally given for the parents' neglect of their duty can be grouped under six heads: (1) Parents do not know how to instruct their children; (2) they do not realize the need of the instruction; (3) they are too timid about discussing the subject with their children; (4) they think that the priest should take care of the matter in the confessional; (5) some parents believe that the teachers might give sufficient information in a general way in school; (6) too many parents believe that children may be left to themselves in the matter, that somehow or other they will find a way out of the difficulty themselves.

A few years ago Dr. Ellamay Horan sent a form letter to Presidents of sixteen Catholic clubs in Chicago, asking them to inquire at their next meeting how generally mothers were prepared to perform the duty of

giving sex instruction to their children. Five hundred ninety-seven mothers were present at the club meetings and only 193 confessed that they "knew how to instruct their daughters in matters pertaining to sex and marriage." One of the Presidents added this remark to her report: "Mothers would welcome information or instruction on how to approach this subject correctly."

Any priest can verify these facts for himself. Let the priest tell a girl to ask her mother for the proper information and in 95 per cent of such cases he will receive the reply: "I could never talk to my mother about such things." And if asked why not, the answer would most probably be: "My mother could not understand me," or, "I asked her once and she was shocked, gave me a hard look and a curt answer." Indeed, most parents belong in this matter to the "Let me alone" club and are satisfied if they are not asked to furnish the information to their children. Many a parent feels like the mother who admitted: "I had sleepless nights full of fear and anguish and have prayed that my child would never come to me and ask me about these things."

Our questionnaire returns show that fathers as a rule are too shy and timid about the matter, and many boys, too, would resent their fathers' talking about the subject. We believe that, on the whole, mothers are better fitted for the task, and while, of course, it would be desirable that the girls be instructed by the mother and the boys be instructed by the father, the mother may well undertake to instruct both the boys and the girls.

Who Instructs Our Catholic Youth?

While too many of our Catholic parents are shirking their duty, the agents of the Devil are up and doing. From whom does the average Catholic boy receive his

sex instruction? A priest with a long experience of teaching in Catholic high schools reports that on an average more than 90 per cent of our Catholic boys receive their information on sex from foul sources. In any group of 100 boys investigated by this priest, never more than six or seven stated that their first instruction in this vital matter came from their parents, teachers, or confessors. Should we then be surprised if the subject of sex is so rarely seen in its proper light by our Catholic people? First impressions are generally the most lasting, and if the first impressions are vile the mind may never come to know sex as an instinct given us by God in trust and for a noble purpose. How much would be gained for the cause of God if we could get the masses of our Catholic people to learn the sublime aspect of sex as treated, for instance, by Professor Hildebrand in his book, *Defense of Purity* (Sheed & Ward, New York).

All parents will probably agree theoretically that it is their duty to instruct their children betimes, but most of them will still shirk the performance of the embarrassing task. A flagrant illustration is that of a Catholic orator who went up and down the country urging the duty of sex instruction upon parents, but who could not get himself to instruct his own children. When we come to analyze the reasons for the parents' inability to give the necessary instruction, we find that many lack both the accurate information and the proper vocabulary. Ninety-eight per cent of them never received the proper information themselves, and hence cannot impart it; and, secondly, the terminology with which they are familiar is either vulgar or obscene, and they naturally feel embarrassed about using such language in the presence of their children.

Catholic Literature on Sex

Much would be gained if we could get all our Catholic parents to read some Catholic literature on the subject. We now have adequate Catholic literature in the field, and there is no need for consulting any but Catholic books on the subject. Non-Catholic literature on this delicate subject, though it be written with the best of intentions, can never measure up to our ideals of chastity. This non-Catholic literature ignores the all-important supernatural aids of prayer, confession, and Holy Communion, and, what is worse, will often urge what is a crime in the sight of God. Hence in writing my little book, *Sex Education and Training in Chastity* (Benziger Brothers, New York), I took special pains to list on pp. 192-194 the excellent Catholic literature we now have on the subject. We now have available a Catholic book for every kind of need in this field, and most of this literature is sold at so low a price as to be within reach of even the slimmest purse.

There is, for instance, the pamphlet, *Watchful Elders, a Word to Parents and Educators about Educating Children to Purity*, written by Father Kilian J. Hennrich, O.M.Cap., and published by the Bruce Publishing Company of Milwaukee. The booklet is intended as a guide in instructing the little ones. If parents cannot persuade themselves to present its contents in their own way, they should be induced to read it with their children of the proper age. But if they cannot get themselves to do even so little, they may give the booklet to their children to be read, in the presence of father or mother, before the dawn of puberty. The titles of other books and pamphlets will be appended to this article so that the reader may select whatever he may need for his particular purpose. We urge all adult Catholics to read widely in the

Catholic literature on the subject. They will thus obtain the information needed to correct the pernicious errors so prevalent today.

Adequate and satisfactory information given at home will be among the best means to prevent the children from talking about the subject with their playmates and school companions. Efforts should be made by parents to create the proper tone in the home by insisting that certain subjects are family matters which should not be talked about outside the home circle. Such family affairs are money matters or intimate things in general, and information about the mysteries of life should be included in the category.

It is well to keep away from young children lifelike illustrations, or photographs, such as are found in books of human anatomy or in non-Catholic books dealing with sex education. Some writers recommend the use of diagrams, since they explain all that is necessary without the danger of stimulation that might come from illustrated medical books. However, even diagrams may easily be copied and cartooned, and moreover recall the suggestive, crude drawings so commonly seen by, and passed around among, children of elementary school age.

Answering the Child's Questions

Given the proper relationship between parents and children, the latter will ask questions as soon as their curiosity is aroused. Since this curiosity is legitimate, parents should answer the questions frankly and truthfully from the beginning and by thus encouraging mutual confidence, the child will little by little acquire all the knowledge necessary before puberty comes. Sex knowledge that is imparted in childhood is generally received without shame or avidity, being then of no special emotional significance. Hence parents will avoid

any later mutual embarrassment by answering frankly all the questions asked by their children.

Our inquiries among parents and priests have produced no convincing reason why parents should refuse to answer even the youngest child when he asks: "Where do babies come from?" An attempt on the part of the parents to ignore the question may silence the child and drive him elsewhere for information or let him suspect that there is a mystery that the parents do not wish to discuss.

What harm could ever come from frankly answering the question by saying: "Baby comes from God. And God sent with him an angel, who will stay with baby, day and night, and watch over him to keep away danger." If the child persists and wishes further information, further information should be given frankly. Worse than ignoring the question would be the practice of telling the child: "Children must not talk about those things." Such an answer would only stimulate his curiosity and drive him to draw the secret from forbidden sources.

Our investigation reveals that the majority of parents still seem to believe in the magic of the stork story. Eighty per cent of mothers who were interrogated recently by a social worker still believe that the story of the stork should be told to their children in answer to their first question, or even before they ask any questions. However, solid arguments may be quoted against the practice. The child should be told the truth from the very beginning. There can be no blessing upon a lie. The end does not justify the means. There is no need of a fairy tale in this matter. The account that the child grows in a nest beneath the heart of the mother and is then born amid pain is so precious a story that no fairy tale could be half so beautiful.

The evidence that we have examined proves that the stork story has done a great deal of harm in that it represents one of the bad features of the hush-hush policy that has been prevailing with regard to the mystery of procreation. We think that the stork story should be condemned on several points. It allows the mother to dispose with a joke of what may be a serious question on the part of the child, and offers the parents a ready opportunity for shirking the duty of properly informing their children. The stork story may also create the impression that in sexual matters the child must turn to others, as the parents will not tell him the truth. The telling of the story may even render it impossible for the parents to give the child at a later date the information that would satisfy him. The child who has been giving credence to the story for some years will be shocked when he learns the truth, and will be impelled to investigate for himself so mysterious and fascinating a subject. The vile form in which the real facts may later be presented to the child by bad companions may harm the parents in the child's eyes, and the story of the stork will confirm this unfavorable impression, as the boy or girl may suspect that the consciousness of guilt prevented the parents from telling the truth.

The Sublime Plan of God

There is no question of ever giving sex information without at the same time stressing the incentives to chastity. What should be stressed is the sublime plan of God in all that pertains to reproduction, the reasonableness of God's law, also that there can be no question of calling certain parts of the body "bad" when, in fact, no parts of the human body are "bad." The young people must be made to understand that the knowledge of

the mysteries of sex is not wrong, but only the abuse of the knowledge is evil. They should be told of the answer of the Immaculate Mother of God to the Angel: "How shall this be since I know not man?" Mary was instructed in these matters, and the knowledge cast no shadow upon her immaculate virtue. Reference may also be made to the words of the Hail Mary: "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

The boy or girl should be told that when the angels fell, God might have immediately created innumerable beings to fill their places in Heaven. He chose rather to associate man in that wonderful work; He would, as it were, confer His divine creative power upon fathers and mothers. Just as He governs the entire world through Love, so these new inhabitants of Heaven would be the result of the love of father and mother, of husband and wife.

The adolescent has, as a rule, heard disgusting remarks about the act whereby a new being is conceived, that it is disgraceful, and so forth. But the act is, on the contrary, truly sublime. God Himself coöperates most intimately, the parents creating the body while He immediately creates the soul. How could we have the saints or even the Blessed Virgin without this act? Parents should, however, explain clearly why the act is permitted only in the married state.

Need of Individual Instruction

It will always remain one of the most difficult problems of the training in chastity to induce each and every parent to do his duty by his children. As the young can be taught fully only in private, the parents are the natural instructors. They know their children best, and will understand just how to adapt the instruction to

their individual needs. They should be made to recognize that it is easier by far to guide a child in the ways of goodness than to bring him back once he has stepped aside from the right path. There was a time when some Catholic parents really thought it sinful to bring up this subject with their children, but from our inquiries we are inclined to think that such erroneous views no longer obtain, and that most of our parents are simply too timid about undertaking what will always remain an ordeal.

It may be well to mention that our Catholic parents need not be finicky about the form of their instruction or the phrasing of what they will tell their children. Even though they should not be familiar with the choicest words, their instruction would be given with the proper intention and would proceed from chaste lips, and hence would be immeasurably superior to the instruction that their children might be receiving from vile sources. The crudest teaching of Catholic parents is always better than silence, for silence on their part will generally compel their children to drink in the infection from the street. Parents may be induced to do their duty if they recall their own plight in this matter when they were children—and they may rest assured that the plight of the children at the present time with the universal corruption is undoubtedly greater. Catholic parents in America are too hesitant about instructing their children in the matter, and we must be prepared to answer all kinds of objections.

Are the Children Too Young?

A frequent objection is that the children are still too young, and that the instruction will be given later. To convince parents that this excuse is frequently a mere

defense reaction, we might ask them just when they intend to impart the instruction, and we shall discover that the parents are only shirking an unpleasant duty by procrastinating. We must therefore bring home to parents that procrastinating will only delay the duty, and, while increasing the danger of corruption for the children in the interval, will render the task all the more difficult at a later time. The younger the child, the less sex-consciousness will there be on his part, and consequently the less embarrassment for both parent and child.

The only safe rule that can be given as to the time for giving the instruction is to say that the instruction must be given as soon as necessary. It is better to give the instruction a year too soon than one hour too late. In our day and country the instruction is needed much earlier than most parents imagine. Miss Tracy, a policeman of Worcester, Mass., admits that nine-year-old children have told her things about sex which she did not know at forty. Still, we must not allow the reports of the police to determine the rules for dealing with the average child. It is important that we ascertain just when sex problems begin to appear in the child's life. Records show that interest in sex first began as early as six and as late as 18. Dr. Hirschfeld, an investigator, is authority for the statement that 22 per cent of children commit the solitary sin from the 5th to the 11th year. The interest in sex probably begins earlier in life now than formerly.

A Safe Rule

The only safe rule to follow is to study each child individually and to give the information just as soon as the individual requires it. A fuller statement of this

rule is to give the information, first, in accordance with the symptoms of curiosity; the child's curiosity in sex matters is legitimate and he has a right to have his questions answered frankly and sincerely. Secondly, give the information in accordance with the child's physical development. Here watchful parents may have to anticipate questions on the part of the child. Another wise rule tells us to give all information needed so that the child will not be helpless when the changes, either physical or psychical of adolescence, come into his life, and secondly so that the information will not come first from the wrong source.

The Rev. Dr. Paul H. Furfey, who has written several helpful books on educational topics, advises in his book, *You and Your Children* (Benziger Brothers, New York):

Further instruction on these matters should be given before puberty. This commonly occurs between the ages of thirteen and sixteen—probably somewhat earlier in girls than in boys. Before this time the child should be informed about the physical side of marriage. This is admittedly a difficult subject to face, but it is essential that it be discussed. At the same time the child should be taught the nature and dangers of solitary sin. The girl should be told frankly about menstruation and the boy about seminal emissions. Other instructions may well be postponed until adolescence, at which time the growing child should be told about the nature of venereal disease, about the physical dangers involved in promiscuity, and about the social evil.

All the evidence available would seem to prove that no definite rule can be laid down to cover all cases. Every single case must be treated individually. The important

thing is that our Catholic parents be convinced of their duty in the matter, and then we may safely commit the choice of the proper time to their judgment. Some parents have found it advisable to offer direct opportunities to their children for the asking of questions, for example, in connection with their examination of conscience with regard to the Commandments when preparing for their first confession. Subsequent confessions would then provide further opportunities. In this way parents may train their children to come to them for whatever information they wish to have.

What Not to Say

While we must warn our Catholic people, in the spirit of the Pope's *Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth*, "not to descend to details, nor to refer to the various ways in which this infernal hydra destroys with its poison so large a portion of the world," we may not grow weary of impressing upon fathers and mothers the fact that their children will get sex information in spite of hesitating parents, and that in getting the information from the wrong sources they get the wrong quality in the wrong quantity, with the result that their attitude is altogether wrong, and they may suffer shock and moral injury which years or even a lifetime may not be able to efface.

Even savages have realized the need of instructing the young in the intimate matters of personal life. Indian squaws in British Columbia have continued up to the present time their ancient custom of calling the Indian maiden aside to a solitary wigwam at the time of the first symptom of puberty in order to give her some kind of instruction in "sex hygiene." Is there less need in a Christian family for timely instruction?

How the thing is said is more important than *what* is said. The information should be given naturally and spontaneously. The Rev. Dr. John M. Cooper reminds us in his booklet, *Sex Education in the Home*, that children are perhaps even more sensitive to tone-impressions than are adults. Hence he rightly recommends that the tone of voice be serious, kindly, sympathetic, reverent. The language should border on the matter-of-fact, but be tempered with the sense of the sacred. The tone should not betray nervousness, embarrassment, or tense and suppressed emotion. Nor should it be colored with the hush of mystery.

The Instruction Must Be Definite and Specific

Parents and priests should always be specific in their instructions. Much of the catechism instruction on the Sixth Commandment is probably useless because of its being so vague and indefinite. A boy was justified when he declared after one such instruction: "Well, I really know as little now as before." The instruction consisted almost exclusively of "Don'ts." Let parents and priests explain clearly the concrete situations that will face boys and girls so that they will, at the moment of temptation, recall the warning of their father, mother, or confessor.

A soldier wrote to the priest who had conducted a retreat for the young men before they left home: "I often heard the song that you referred to in one of your talks when you brought out plainly its vileness. The other soldiers laughed at the song, and I might have laughed along if you had not warned me betimes. But whenever that song was sung, I remembered what you had said about it, and I could not sing along or laugh with the crowd."

Another soldier got, by mistake, into a French tavern of questionable character. He remembered: "Just the

situation that Father ——— spoke about. I cannot stay here." And he returned to the street. The instruction of the priest had given him a clear idea of the danger he would face, and when he was confronted with the danger his subconscious mind recalled to him both the warning of the priest and his own resolution made at the time.

The sin may still be alluring despite the best of instructions, yet at the same time the young people will recognize that what looks so tempting is plainly labelled as something vile, and hence there is before their mind not only the prohibition "Don't," but also the resolution they made when they heard their parents' warning: "I will not do this." There may be a struggle, but the young people have been prepared for the fight, and with the help of grace they will win more certainly than if they had been brought face to face with the danger without any forewarning. In this way we shall be giving to our young people the necessary vigilance that Pope Pius XI speaks of in his *Encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth* as being so necessary in our day: "Today more than ever they should be forewarned and forearmed as Christians against the seductions and errors of the world." In the matter of chastity to be forewarned is often to be forearmed.

However, prohibiting alone is not a sufficient protection. Here prohibitions are sometimes worse than useless. They arouse the sporting instinct. Hence, instead of merely warning about the dangers of sin, we must bring out the charm of chastity. A boy will scorn what is vile if he is deeply interested in what is ideal and chaste. The most important information is not the instruction about the animal nature or even about dangers, but the knowledge of how the almost infinite power of the soul, aided by grace, can triumph over what is low and vile.

An Important Difference

Many sins committed by adolescents could probably be prevented by giving both girls and boys proper instruction about the sex instinct. Young people are generally ignorant, with harmful results in consequence to both boys and girls, of the essential difference of the sex instinct as found in man and woman. The common notion has it that the sex instinct is the same with all people, and that it differs only in intensity. Biologists and psychologists have done well in exposing this wrong notion and in distinguishing two factors in the sex urge: (1) the psychic factor—the craving of the soul for companionship, understanding and response; (2) the physical factor, which is inherent in the body and which craves the sensuous phase of sex.

It is important for our young people to know that it is one of these two factors that predominates in each of the two sexes. It is in keeping with the function that God has assigned to man in marriage that the physical factor should be developed most strongly in him, while the same factor lies dormant or latent in the majority of girls during their teens or early twenties and often for life.

Dr. Maurice A. Bigelow states the difference thus: "The sexual instincts of young men are characteristically active, aggressive, spontaneous, and automatic, while those of women *as a rule* are passive and subject to awakening by external stimuli, especially in connection with affection." It is important that both the adolescent boy and girl should know of this difference in the two sexes. Briefly, it might be explained to them that love in the boy is chiefly physical, while in the girl it is chiefly psychical.

The average girl has no idea of the vehemence of the

boy's passion. All that she is conscious of is her urge to love and to be loved in return. Parents must bear this in mind when girls are apt to be at a loss to understand why they are so severe in forbidding her certain liberties with a boy which to her seem perfectly harmless. The girl is prone to think that her parents do not wish her to have any innocent pleasures, and she thinks herself misunderstood seriously. She believes that the boy has the same innocent intentions as herself, and she cannot understand what harm there could be in kissing and embracing. It is significant that Goethe has Margaret sing in his *Faust*:

My heart is pining
After him.
Ah! could I enfold him
As I would!
On his kisses
Would I die away!

This is all the girl has in mind: she wishes merely to display her affection; she wishes nothing more and expects nothing more. Such is probably the experience of the average girl who is so eager to have a boy friend and to go out with him. And on the other hand, the boy has no knowledge of the girl's position. He does not know that the girl is different from himself, and when the girl is affectionate he concludes that she is just as passionate as he himself, and that she is feeling the same physical urge as he.

If this difference of the sex instinct in men and women is brought home clearly to adolescent boys and girls, they should be able for themselves to answer any questions that will come up about kissing, petting, and flirtations of all kinds. They will have at least the knowledge of

what is proper. The knowledge, of course, will not necessarily give them the strength to do what is proper.

Religion the Chief Factor

For the strength to do what is proper we must fall back upon religion as representing the chief factor in building a strong character. Moral codes or ideals pass in the individual life through four stages: they must, first, be known; next, admitted; then, accepted; and lastly, lived. Throughout all these stages, religion has much to say and much to do. It makes right ideals known. Through Faith it gets them admitted. Through the doctrines of Faith it supplies the motives for accepting ideals. Through grace it provides the supernatural means for living the ideals.

Among the religious aids, Confession and Communion are most important. Cardinal Newman wrote: "It is the boast of the Catholic Church that it has the gift of making the young heart chaste; and why is this, but that it gives us Jesus Christ for our food, and Mary for our nursing Mother?" A special fruit of Holy Communion is the aid it gives in fighting off the temptations of impurity. Holy Communion is indeed "the bread of the elect, and the wine springing forth virgins" (Zach. ix, 17). Saint Don Bosco made splendid men of some 200,000 boys, of whom 6,000 became zealous priests. He used to say: "I know only two educational instruments—Holy Communion and the rod, and I have given up the rod and use only Holy Communion." Our Catholic young people who receive into their hearts the Virgin Christ in Holy Communion day after day can be pure. Thousands of them are remaining pure.

The Religious Survey conducted at Notre Dame University in 1924-1925 dealt more specifically with what

Holy Communion accomplishes, and the answers given by the students are a revelation of the miracles wrought by the Holy Eucharist. For instance the answers to the question:

Has Frequent Communion Lessened Your Temptations?

Yes	417
No	40
Somewhat	23
It has made resistance easier.....	11
It has increased temptations.....	10

The following question and answers are likewise significant:

Has It Made You More Careful to Avoid Sin?

Yes	488
Somewhat	5
No	10
I can't say.....	4
I don't think so.....	2

Fruits of Holy Communion Among College Students

The remarks made by the college students themselves are even more impressive and more significant than figures. We find the following remarks in answer to the request: *Please state frankly your own experience with frequent Communion:*

Daily Communion has transformed me from a spineless jellyfish into a man.

It has invested me with a holy strength for use

in persistent combat with evil and temptation. Glancing backward I see a record of advance against a vice that exactly follows my increase in devotion towards the Blessed Sacrament.

Daily Communion has entirely broken my habit of profanity.

Frequent Communion has made me realize that genuine happiness exists on this earth only when a man's heart is fed with the Body and Blood of Our Blessed Lord. Arguments against this idea are only means of self-deception.

It has given me the power to banish impure thoughts, for which I had a seemingly unconquerable desire before I began daily Communion.¹

Teaching Self-Control and Self-Denial

One of the most important habits to be formed in children is to train them to be moderate in their wants. There is here no thought of denying them joy and pleasure. No, childhood should be filled with joy. Joy is the child's birthright. Yet even the very young child should learn that no one can satisfy all his wishes, and that he must be habituated to moderate his wishes lest he grow miserable in later life over the fact that he cannot get everything the heart desires. It would be conducive to this end to have parents and teachers remember the

P

equation: $H = \frac{P}{W}$. H stands for happiness; P, for what

W

you possess; W, for what you want. The more you reduce your wants, the more certainly will you find happiness in what you possess.

¹A selection of student testimonials, *Frequent Communion for College Men*, has been made and is distributed by Notre Dame University.

A boy or girl who has had every whim gratified while a child, will be habituated to yield to every urge, and will not hesitate to ignore even moral considerations if they stand in the way of satisfying some sensual impulse. The boy, however, who has been trained to abstain cheerfully from the cookies between meals, will be developing the basis of the habit that will assist him in saying "No" to the beautiful woman tempting him when he is thirty. He will learn how to find happiness in self-control and will therefore never imagine that he will be ill if he cannot satisfy his sex urge.

When we consider how alluring are the temptations of sex, we realize the urgent need of training the young in habits of self-control. There was ample reason for Archbishop John L. Spalding to appeal to mothers: "O mothers, you whose love is the best any of us have known, harden your sons, and urge them on, not in the race for wealth, but in the steep and narrow path wherein, through self-conquest and self-knowledge, they rise towards God and all high things."

More necessary than initiating the children into the mysteries of sex is it to acquaint them with what Bishop Sailer calls "the strategy of the Holy War." Parents will do this if they train their children every now and then to deny themselves some favorite article of food, or to accomplish some heroic conquest of laziness, or to exercise themselves in ignoring pain. The children will thus get iron into their blood. They will be trained early to exercise themselves spiritually, that is, to practice asceticism, for asceticism means spiritual exercise. They will be laying foundations for the standards that stand eternally: the real test of character is not what we have, but what we are; and our real self is tested not by what we want to *get*, but by what we can do without.

It has been observed that whatever makes a man

struggle with himself strengthens him. One of the best results of such practical discipline is to create a kind of physical and nervous tradition of the supremacy of the spirit over the body and its weaknesses. John Stuart Mill, who certainly cannot be charged with any prejudice in favor of Christian asceticism, has justly observed that those who have never been accustomed to deny themselves permissible indulgences cannot be relied upon to abstain from gratifying their non-permissible desires; he also expressed his belief that the day was coming when children and young people would be systematically trained in asceticism and taught, as they were in antiquity, to overcome their desires, to brave dangers and willingly to endure pain—and all this as a mere educational practice.

The Christian realizes that the poorest education that teaches self-control is better than the best that neglects it. Professor Foerster relates how, in his course of giving moral instruction to the young, he spoke with boys and girls of twelve on the question: "What opportunities are there in the school for employing your wills?" The children were full of suggestions and took a remarkable interest in the topic. It was a surprise and a revelation to them that it was possible to use the school tasks to increase their strength.

On such occasions Professor Foerster was always quite astonished to see how totally new it was to the children to look at the task of performing, for example, disagreeable school work from the point of view of will-gymnastics. The children were surprised to learn that precision, neatness, and self-activity with regard to a task would bring with it an increase of will power and endurance in every other sphere, and that carelessness in one thing would infect the performance of others. But, once the idea had been brought home to them, they soon realized

that the new theory coincided with their own past experiences.

Growing in Moral Strength

If a child is taught to deny himself things that he likes to eat and drink, he will be training himself in moral independence. It is not difficult to arouse the enthusiasm of young people for such little acts of self-denial—or shall we call them, for the sake of the young idealists, “acts of heroism”? Let the recreational leader try, say, on a hike, to put a little will-gymnastics into practice by encouraging the boys to resist thirst and fatigue. He will be surprised at the interest which such acts of self-conquest will arouse. Parents must ally themselves with the higher self of the child. Children are growing creatures, and instinctively resist all mere repression. Self-control should therefore be represented as an act of *growth*, of strength, of freedom; it must be made evident that the apparent repression is only a step towards a higher life and a more concentrated energy. Through the conflict of the higher self with the bodily desires, a man’s higher self attains freedom—otherwise it remains captive. These suggestions are merely first steps. Parents must proceed to what Professor Foerster calls “the science of self-control”; they must show how will-power is built up by a gradual process of practice on the smallest things, and how every act of self-conquest in one sphere of life makes the battle easier in other spheres.

If we represent this struggle for self-conquest, in the proper way, to boys and girls, we shall find their hearts glowing with enthusiasm. This is offering them temptations to right-doing. It is sport of the highest order that will appeal to them. They will discover that aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport that

the world affords. In the war for the control of our emotional nature, the offensive is the best defense of the higher nature. To take the offensive is the best defense—that is the simple principle underlying the work of self-discipline. He who passively waits for the temptations to come from his lower nature is sure to fall. The sensuous nature should, from the very beginning, be severely disciplined and trained to obedience. To encourage the voluntary practice of self-conquest before the age of puberty is practical and thorough-going training in chastity.

By training our young people along these lines, we shall make them truly free. We shall give them a conception of that true liberty which is the enjoyment of our privileges without trespassing on the rights of one's soul, of our neighbors, or of God. Obedience to law is liberty. "All creative liberty," says Mr. Chesterton, "is the liberty to limit ourselves." We must train the young people to obey, not their impulse, but the principle. The instincts are there before we begin our training, and will remain after the young people leave our hands. Our instruction cannot change the instinct, for instinct exists prior to experience and independent of instruction.

Ideals of Chastity

To withstand the allurements of present-day paganism, our young people must be given the challenge of idealism. This precisely is the objective of the Holy Father and of our Bishops in their crusade for decency. In this crusade they are following the example of the Fathers of the Early Church who in the face of a decadent civilization pleaded for the miracles of Christian chastity. While pagan Rome reveled in debauchery, Christian Rome gave us the Agneses and the Cecilians and the Sebas-

tians. These Christian heroes did their part to save the world from ruin because, amid the debauchery of pagan Rome, they dared to be different. For instance, when Agnes was tempted to sin by the son of the Prefect of Rome, she had the courage to say, "No," and thus proved herself different from the average girl of her time. And because she was different, 300 millions of Catholics revere her today as a Saint and as a glory of womanhood. For sixteen hundred years she has inspired girls the world over to remain pure, and the very dungeon where she was tempted to sin, a place of shame in ancient Rome, is now a shrine and a house of prayer, with the miracles wrought by her fortitude depicted on the walls. Had Agnes been common like other Roman girls, no one would today even know the name of the Roman maiden. But because she dared to be different, she is still an inspiration to all our girls to be different today and by being different to save their own soul and at the same time show to our distracted world the only way out of the misery of sin.

When France was growing decadent in the eighteenth century, one French nobleman remarked to his companion: "Let us be different; let us be distinguished." That was true nobility: *noblesse oblige*. They were true noblemen for not doing what everybody else was doing. Similarly, our Catholic boys and girls must say to one another, and often whisper to themselves alone: "Let us be different; let us be distinguished; we are the children of the saints; we must keep the tradition of the saints in a world that has lost its head and that is threatened with the ruin that is always the wages of sin."

Catholic Literature on the Sex Problem

The best way to drive out darkness is to open wide the doors and windows to let in God's sunlight. Similarly, to correct the pernicious doctrines that are being shouted from the housetops, we must make known God's views on this important subject. Fortunately we now have available a plentiful supply of Catholic literature to meet all needs.

First on the list is *Sex Education and Training in Chastity* by the Rev. Felix M. Kirsch, O.M.Cap., Ph.D., Litt.D., published by Benziger Brothers, 26 Park Place, New York, N. Y. (\$3.00). This book of 540 pages has rightly been called a Catholic encyclopedia on chastity. With the help of this book parents, priests, teachers, and social workers would seem to be well equipped to meet every need in the field. The book answers in detail all such questions as to when the sex instruction must be given to the child, who must give the instruction, what must be said, and how it must be said. Individual chapters deal with the control of bad thoughts, bad talk, the solitary sin, and the association between the sexes. Other important sections deal with the education for marriage and Catholic character education. The author is at home in psychology and biology, but rightly insists that while the natural helps must be employed it is the supernatural aids of prayer, Confession and Communion that are most effective. While this book thus meets every need of the mature reader, there are other publications for particular needs.

For instance, *Watchful Elders* by the Rev. Kilian J. Hennrich, O.M.Cap., M.A., published by the Bruce Publishing Co., North Milwaukee Street, Milwaukee, Wis. (40 cents), instructs parents how to give the necessary sex information to children. The pamphlet contains

further material that may be used in early and late adolescence, and deals also with particularly difficult cases.

Safeguards of Chastity by the Rev. Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M., published by St. Francis Book Shop, 1615 Republic Street, Cincinnati, Ohio (25 cents), offers reverent instruction on chastity for adolescent boys. The author suggests that fathers read and explain to their adolescent boys those portions of the book that pertain to their age and condition. *Helps to Purity* by the same author is a companion volume for adolescent girls.

The Heart of a Young Man or Talks on Personal Purity by the Rev. Lionel E. Pire, C.P.P.S., published by F. Pustet Company, 14 Barclay Street, New York, N. Y. (25 cents), will prove useful to both parents and teachers. A teaching Brother who has used the book for several years with high school boys, reports that the young people have been greatly helped by the information given by Father Pire.

I'm Keeping Company Now! by the Rev. Fulgence Meyer, O.F.M., published by The Paulist Press, 401 West 59th Street, New York, N. Y. (5 cents), deals in a clear, helpful way with the temptations that assail young people during the period of courtship. The author presents telling evidence to prove that God's law still holds in our day, and shows at the same time how prayer, Confession, and Communion make possible the practice of the holy virtue even during the time of greatest danger.

The Difficult Commandment by the Rev. C. C. Martindale, S.J., published by P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 12 Barclay Street, New York, N. Y. (25 cents), deals with the subject of self-control in a way that will appeal especially to young men. The same author has edited a companion volume for young women, *Into Their Company* (25 cents).

Plain Talks on Marriage by the Rev. Fulgence Meyer,

O.F.M., published by St. Francis Book Shop, 1615 Republic Street, Cincinnati, Ohio (25 cents), is a booklet for people who are married, or who are about to be married. The author, who has had many years' experience both in teaching theology and in preaching missions, offers practical help in the difficult problems that confront married people today.

Birth Control by the Rev. John M. Cooper, D.D., published by the National Catholic Welfare Conference, 1312 Massachusetts Avenue NW., Washington, D. C. (25 cents), is an excellent manual on a difficult subject for married men and women.

In Defence of Purity by Dietrich von Hildebrand, published by Sheed & Ward, 63 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y. (\$1.50), should be read by all mature Catholics for its clear exposition of the Catholic philosophy of sex. The book will prove an inspiration to both the married and the unmarried.

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