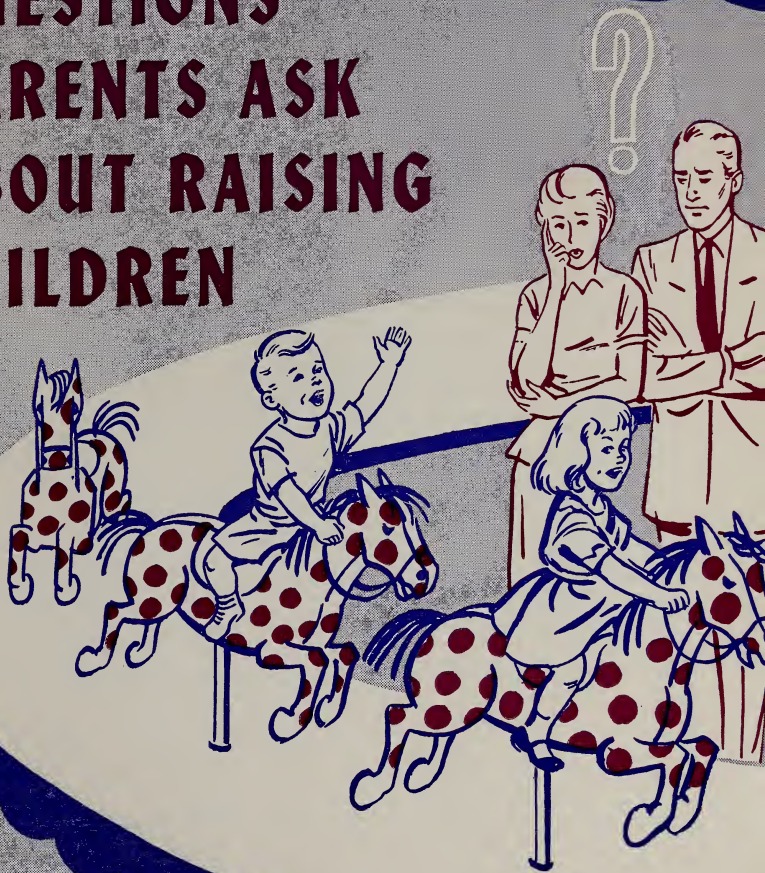


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QUESTIONS PARENTS ASK ABOUT RAISING CHILDREN



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by

Donald F. Miller, C.S.S.R.

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What Is the Best Plan for Raising Children?

HOW TO RAISE children properly and successfully is a question that absorbs the mind of every conscientious mother and father. It would be fatuous to suggest that the question can be answered briefly, or even at great length, with anything like adequacy. Without too much trouble one could list a thousand or more books dealing with various phases of the answer. It is a topic that requires continuous reflexion, study and prayer on the part of parents.

However, a good deal of very important material may be set down in a single article. Putting up a building is a long and involved process; but the most important single part of the process is the drawing up of a good blueprint or plan. Raising children properly is a much more involved and a much longer process; but again the most important single factor in the process is the possession of a good plan.

Many parents lack such a plan. They don't know just where they are trying to lead their children, or, if they do have some vague ideas of what they want for their children, they don't know what are necessary means for helping the children reach the goal. Others have the wrong plan for their children; they are leading them toward something that will make failures out of their children.

The importance of planning and planning rightly for the children one brings into the world cannot be stressed too strongly. It is part of the responsibility of possessing intelligence to set about all important tasks with a plan. The human mind is capable of looking forward into the future, of adjusting present decisions and actions to what

is expected in the future, and of carrying out any project according to a design. The Creator, who makes children almost completely dependent on their parents for the direction their lives will take and the formation of their characters, expects every mother and father to proceed in the training and rearing of their children according to a plan. And He Himself has revealed the principles on which the right plan must be drawn up.

Here, then, will be presented the general outline of objectives that Christian parents should have before them as they supervise the growth and development of their children. These are the things which they should be constantly and consciously desirous of fulfilling in their children. Without presumption it may be said that parents who will make this simple outline of child-rearing goals the absorbing concern of their minds and the inspiration of all their efforts will make few, and none of them major, mistakes, in the upbringing of their children. The "how" will come easy to them, if they have the "whither" clear in their minds.

1. The general and only absolutely necessary goal: to rear a child so that it will want and work for and ultimately win the happiness of heaven.

This is the supreme destiny for which God creates, with the cooperation of parents, every human being born into the world. This is the essence of the responsibility that He imposes on parents when He makes a child dependent on their authority, their guidance, their inspiration and instruction for many years of its life. The parents must, in union with God, want one thing more than anything else for their child, to facilitate, by every means in their power, its attainment of heaven.

This objective must be subject, in the minds of parents, to two important considerations. The first is the fact that parents cannot force the free wills of children who have developed beyond the use of reason, to choose the road to heaven, any more than God forces anyone into heaven. The second consideration is the fact that there is no power on earth more capable, by God's own design, of conditioning the free will of human beings for making the choice of what leads to heaven, than that of parents over their growing children. So great is this power that it is an axiom that parents can make children what they want them to be.

The consciousness of this general and necessary objective of child-rearing can be intensified in parents by frequent reflexion on two points. The first is that God directly and immediately created the soul of their child; that without the soul which He created, their child would not even live; that what God wants for the soul, which is heaven, must be of first importance to its parents. The second point is that the soul of the child is immortal; it had a beginning with God's creation, but it will never have an end. It becomes far more important to parents who are conscious of the immortality of their child to help it be happy in eternity than to attain any degree of success or prosperity in the few years it will have in this world.

This first aim of parents preserves them from unreasonable grief over handicaps God permits their children to suffer in respect to prospects in this world. Sickness, early death, lack of talent, even retarded mentality, heart-wrenching though they are to parents, can never destroy entirely the peace of parents who know that their children were created primarily for heaven, and that these misfortunes not only do not interfere with, but often make more certain, the children's attainment of that goal.

2. *The general means to the necessary end of leading a child toward heaven: forming it into a true Christian.*

There is only one means of attaining heaven for all human beings: it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. In their supreme desire for their child's happiness in heaven, therefore, parents will want it to be fashioned and formed into a full participator in the merits of Christ which offer salvation to all men.

Three things enter into the making of a good Christian, and not one of them will be neglected by good parents.

The first is *knowledge*. Christ has to be known before He can be accepted; and His teachings, His commandments, His directives, have to be known. Good parents begin to make Christ known to their children at the earliest possible age, first through habits of reverence formed even before the child is capable of understanding the reasons for them, and then, with the first dawning of reason, by implanting the first ideas and motives that make for faith and confidence in Christ and complete submission to His will. This first introduction of a child to the knowledge of Christ is never delegated to others by good parents; it is felt as their most highly prized privilege and accepted as their greatest parental responsibility. Deepening and broadening the knowledge of Christ in their child continues through all the years up to maturity.

The second is *moral virtue* or *Christian integrity*. Good parents want their children to have acquired as many Christian habits even before reaching the age of reason as possible. This, they know, makes the practice of virtue so much more easy when its foundations are later learned and understood. They know that the first sanctions that influence the conduct of a child are the favor or disfavor,

the reward or punishment, meted out by the parents. They use this power that is theirs to instill the Christian way of reacting to things, of dealing with others, of coping with their own desires. And as soon as it can be done, they begin to inculcate the realization that Christ's will and Christ's favor or disfavor, should be the measure of all conduct.

The third is *the sacramental life*. Christian parents train their children to look back on their baptism as the greatest event in their lives, and forward to their first Communion and confirmation, as events of tremendous significance. These with the other sacraments, are spoken of often to the children as the means whereby one lives as a child of God. Parents who understand this themselves and live a supernatural life through the sacraments, will have little difficulty translating its meaning into terms comprehensible to the growing child.

While working towards these objectives, parents remain always mindful that their children have inherited, with all human beings, the effects of original sin, and that a mother and father are neither to be surprised nor discouraged over the fact that they meet resistance to their efforts at times, and that the children do not always measure up to the high ideals and the beautiful plan they have in mind for them. In view especially of this fact, they remember that they cannot expect to make good Christians out of their children by force, dictatorship or excessive severity, the use of which would only cause later reactions of rebellion. The one great medium of instruction and training that God has placed in the hands of parents is love. When their love is evident in all that they do for their children, even in administering punishment, they will succeed in carrying out their plan. If they do not work through love, or if their love is not clearly

manifested to the children, they will fail in whatever they try to do.

3. *The subordinate goal of child-rearing: a happy and successful earthly life for the child.*

This goal is called subordinate because it must be strictly secondary to and dependent on those outlined above. The failure of many parents, both to prepare their children rightly for their adult lives and to find satisfaction for themselves in what they have done for their children, must be traced to the fact that they have made these subordinate goals primary in rearing the children. They want their children to be rich or successful or happily married, as if these were the only ends worth living for. They learn only by experience that they are empty and worthless goals except in subordination to the true and ultimate purposes for which every human being is made.

But so long as the first and necessary ends of life are given foremost consideration in child-rearing, parents should plan to prepare their children for happy and successful temporal lives. But even here they will have clear ideas of what the words "happy" and "successful" mean. These ideas of Christian parents will differ greatly from those of many secularistic parents of today.

The word "happy" to them will not mean that they are to think, or to permit their children to think, that anything near perfect happiness can be attained in this world. Perfect happiness is only to be found in heaven, and wise parents will early establish this conviction in the mind of their child. But relative happiness can be attained on earth, and it is best represented by the word "peace." Peace means harmony of order between things and parts of things. The right order that makes for peace in human

lives is threefold: between a man and God; between a man and his fellow-men; and between the various parts or powers of his own being. Parents who want their children to be as happy as possible ceaselessly try to build their happiness on this three-fold foundation: the humble recognition of God's authority and submission to His will; justice and charity toward all their fellow-men; and control, through reason, free will, and God's grace, of all their appetites and desires.

The word "successful" is not, for wise parents, a synonym for "rich" or "popular" or "famous" or "powerful." They teach their children to believe that the only true success is that by which they will be enabled to render the most service to their fellow-men. The money they make, the friends they gain, the compensations they receive, will all be represented as the by-product of service to others; the service itself will be represented as the only real objective and the source of the most solid joys.

Thus, if parents encourage the wishes of a child to become a nurse or a doctor or a lawyer, it will be through the motive that any of these professions will give it wonderful opportunities to help others; *never* through the primary motive that a profession will make them rich. If their children take jobs in factories or offices or any of the trades, the parents will encourage them to become more and more proficient in whatever they do, to study to advance themselves, primarily because the better the work one can do, the greater are the personal satisfactions that come from it. The rewards of more money for better work need not be covered over or minimized; but they should be represented as secondary, though all but infallible, results of putting more and more effort into the doing of a good job.

Especially if their children show an inclination toward becoming priests or religious, will parents encourage them intelligently and warmly, knowing that in no vocation can they be surer of the happiness and success in service described here. For in these vocations the danger of living for money and worldly ambition, and of being thrown out of right relationship to God or fellow-men, is at a minimum. That is why good priests and good nuns are the happiest people in the world.

These principles, we know, are anathema to many parents. There are many who know of no motive to offer their children for studying hard, aiming at a profession, working diligently at a job, except the motive of making more and more money. Such children join the ranks of America's teeming thousands of materialists, who eventually may acquire a large slice of material prosperity only to find their hearts empty and unhappy and, in too many cases, their souls irrevocably lost.

By following this blueprint, parents can people the world with exemplary Christians, good citizens and great leaders in society, in the professions, in business, in the trades. To follow it in rearing a child, of course, a parent must have already adopted it as the plan for his own life. There are too many who have never heard of it. But even for these, it is never too late to begin. Fortunately, unlike old and useless buildings, lives can be made over. Anybody can start following the blueprint presented here, today.

What Are the Rules for Being a Good Mother?

MOTHERS are honored during the month of May, both by the celebration of Mother's Day, and by the universal acceptance of the entire month as belonging to Mary, the patron of mothers. To the truly humble of heart honors received are always an incentive to sincere self-examination. Mothers should be no exception to this rule. For all that they are endowed with strong instincts of self-sacrifice in behalf of their children, and made beautiful by the possession of the greatest natural love that human beings can achieve, there are wide areas in which they can make themselves unworthy of honor, either through ignorance or selfishness or evil. Every good mother should want to know whether she is failing in her trust in any way.

There are six subjects on which mothers of growing children should be willing to examine themselves frequently. They cover the whole range of their responsibilities and duties toward their children. To fail in one of them means to endanger, in some way, the character or happiness of a child. Therefore a series of questions under each heading is here presented to mothers, for the purpose of helping them to recognize and eliminate any faults or failings that may have entered into their training of their children. The mother who finds that she is not guilty of even one of these common failings may be counted a good mother indeed.

I. *Correction*

1. Do I correct my child in the heat of anger, using violent and intemperate language obviously inspired by passion and personal feeling?

2. Do I make no distinction in the severity of my corrections, as between small and trivial faults and the more important evils into which my children may fall?

3. Do I use physical punishment with excessive frequency and unusual cruelty against my child, thus making its fear of me far greater than its love?

4. Do I fail, because of inordinate love or soft-heartedness or sloth, to punish my children when this is the only means to teach them an important lesson?

5. Do I show favoritism toward one of my children over the others, especially in the matter of correction and punishment?

6. Do I use fearsome threats and terrifying warnings as a means to correct my children, forgetting that such threats can leave deep scars on the character of a growing child?

7. Do I ever so much as hint, to say nothing of actually expressing to my children, that I am sorry that they were born, not realizing that even though I do not mean it, this can have a fearful psychological effect on a child?

8. Do I use any form of bad language in correcting my children, even possibly cursing them and using the holy names irreverently?

9. Do I ever, in the presence of my child, speak to others of its faults or bad conduct as amusing or humorous?

10. Have I defended my child against people who complained about its actual faults or misconduct?

11. Have I tried to show my children, even in the midst of correcting and punishing them, that I was solely interested in their welfare, and that I was motivated far more by love than by anger?

II. *Schooling*

1. Have I made my children realize, without any chance of doubt or discussion, that the only right schooling for them is to be obtained in a Catholic school?

2. Do I back up the authority of the school by insisting that my children must be obedient, respectful and well-behaved, and warning that they will be punished at home if they need punishment in school?

3. If my child complains about the treatment it receives from teachers, do I take the child's part at once and let it know that I have no use for its teachers, thus encouraging it in rebellion and misbehavior?

4. If problems arise from my child's conduct at school, do I consult with its teachers to learn their side of the story and to find out whether I am failing to train the child properly at home?

5. If the child has home work to do, do I insist that it set aside a certain time and get the work done, or do I permit it to do whatever it pleases?

6. Do I take an interest in my children's progress at school, congratulating and rewarding them for good reports and trying to help them improve when the reports are not good?

7. Do I permit my children to choose their own high school, or do I let them know from the beginning that this comes under parental authority and that there is to be no choice other than a Catholic high school if such is at all available?

8. If there seem to be reasons for sending my children to a public or non-Catholic grade or high school, do I re-

member that such reasons should be submitted to the judgment of my pastor?

III. *Religious instruction*

1. Do I take it upon myself to instruct my children in the essential truths of religion and morality, beginning with the simpler things almost as soon as they are able to reason?

2. Do I say nothing about religion on the ground that the children will be taught all they need to know about that in church and school?

3. Have I taken my children, when very young, into a church, and explained to them the altar, the tabernacle, the statues, the communion rail, the crib at Christmas, etc.?

4. Have I myself taught my children, even before they started to school, to make the Sign of the Cross, to recite the Our Father and Hail Mary, and to say morning and night prayers and prayers before and after meals each day?

5. Have I explained over and over again the fundamental reason for which a child should obey the ten commandments, viz., that this is God's will, the first way to love Him, and the means of avoiding hell and winning heaven?

6. Have I been alert to know when my child needed instruction concerning sex, and prompt to supply it or to see that it was supplied by a responsible person?

7. Have I trained my child to respect priests and Sisters, or effected the opposite by frequent criticism and disrespectful language concerning those consecrated to God?

8. Have I begun as early as possible to teach my children the importance of attending Mass every Sunday, of receiving the sacraments often, and of helping to support their church?

9. When the children are studying the catechism, do I ever go over the questions and answers with them?

IV. *Recreation*

1. Am I deeply conscious of my responsibility to know where, how and with whom my children spend their leisure hours?

2. Do I insist on meeting my children's friends and playmates by inviting them into my home, and on learning something about their background and reputations?

3. Do I permit my child to leave the home for long periods of time without asking where it is going, what are its plans, and without asking for a report of what it was doing after its return?

4. Do I make any effort to provide the means and interests for my child to find its recreation about the home?

5. Do I permit unlimited or excessive attendance at movies, not realizing that the best authorities on what is good for children state more frequent attendance at movies than once in two weeks is dangerous and harmful to children?

6. Do I take the time and interest to see to it that my children do not attend any dangerous or unsuitable movies?

7. Do I encourage healthy, outdoor sports for my children, such as swimming, baseball, ice-skating, etc.?

8. Do I try to instill into my children the importance of good sportsmanship, and rebuke them seriously for any display of bullying or selfishness or quarrelsomeness among their companions?

V. *Example*

1. Do I realize the tremendous importance of my own example as an influence on the characters of my children?

2. Do I use evil language, or tell suggestive or obscene stories within the hearing of my children, even though I would punish them for doing the same?

3. Have the children ever seen me partially or totally under the influence of liquor?

4. Have I ever bragged, in the hearing of the children, about how I cheated someone, or took revenge, or lied or stole?

5. Have I neglected any serious religious obligations to the scandal of my children?

6. Do my children ever hear me taking part in gossip and detraction concerning absent persons?

7. Do I quarrel and argue heatedly with the children's father, either repeatedly or on occasion?

8. Do I show spitefulness, hatred, or sulkiness towards others?

9. Do I complain and grumble about the hardness of my life, and let the children know that I am sorry that I ever married?

10. Do I speak to the children about the faults of their father, and thus lessen their affection and respect for him?

11. Do I practice strict modesty in appearance, dress and actions before the children?

VI. *Vocation*

1. Am I convinced of the truth that God has a specific vocation in store for each of my children, and that it is my task to prepare them well for it, and not to interfere with it when it becomes clear?

2. Have I permitted myself to become selfishly opposed to the thought of my son or daughter being called to a priestly or religious vocation?

3. Have I actually placed obstacles in the way of a son or daughter who wanted to follow a higher vocation, or refused my consent to it?

4. Have I trained my children, from their early high school days, to the right ideas about company-keeping and marriage?

5. Have I permitted or encouraged puppy-love company-keeping to my children in grade school or high school, when they could have no idea of marrying within a reasonable period of time, and when they could only run into dangers against chastity and neglect the important years of their education?

6. Have I instilled in my children, from early years, a knowledge of the difficulties and dangers connected with mixed marriages, and tried to make them want to keep company with and marry none but a person of their own faith?

7. Have I objected to boy or girl-friends of my children solely because I did not happen to like them, even though there could be no valid objections apart from my dislike?

8. Have I tried to prevent any of my children from marrying because I did not want to give up their companionship and help?

9. Have I shown jealousy of the husbands or wives of my sons and daughters, criticized and complained about them to the latter, or made demands on my children that were inconsistent with their duties to their partners?

10. Have I ever given a word of advice to a married son or daughter that could be interpreted as encouragement to commit sin?

What Are the Rules for Being a Good Father?

ONE OF the bad features of modern civilization is the fact that the work by which most fathers support their families is done outside their homes. For some this is hard and gruelling work, leaving them little energy and strength for the task of being a good father. For others, such as those who travel to make a living, or whose work calls them away from home for long periods of time, the job of helping their wives to raise their children becomes the most incidental of side issues. For all present day fathers, there is a tendency to divide the work of home-making and children-raising into separate compartments: the father brings in the money and that is just about all; the mother is expected to manage the home and to care for and raise the children practically alone.

No matter what excuses may be made by or for fathers who take little part in the administration of their homes and the raising of their families, it must be said boldly and frankly that this is an abuse, an evil, a curse, and a cause of many of the weaknesses and failures in modern homes. For many fathers, there is no excuse; they have used their jobs as a cloak for sloth and laziness in regard

to their duties at home. For others, where there seems to be some excuse, there is an obligation to find a way to get around the excuses instead of permitting them to stand in the way of their active participation in the important tasks of a home.

The obligation of a father in his home may be listed under six heads, each one of which offers good material for the consideration of any prospective father, and for the self-examination of any actual father.

I. *Provider*

Of course, the first obligation of a father is that of providing the economic necessities of his family. Even in regard to this function of a father, there is a wide range of abuses that tend to weaken the foundations of a home. These abuses often are practiced by fathers who consider themselves wonderful providers for their families; indeed, we are not even considering, in this connection, fathers who won't work, who move from job to job with constant insecurity, or who make it necessary for their wives to work in order to feed and clothe their children.

However, there is a whole list of abuses that seem to be approved in many circles because they are practiced so widely and so smugly taken for granted by many fathers.

1) There is the father who never reveals anything about his actual income to his wife, and never permits her to have a word to say about money matters. There are many wives who have not the slightest idea as to whether their husbands earn \$50 a week or \$500 a week. This is a secret carefully guarded and kept from them. As a result they have no idea how to buy for the present or to plan for the future. A wife and mother has a right to know exactly how much her husband is earning, and

should be taken into his counsels on the economic planning for the home.

2) There is the father who doles out a certain amount of money to his wife every week, usually a just barely adequate sum, on which she is to provide necessities for the home, for herself and for the children. It is surprising how many fathers think this a decent and equitable way of running their homes. Their wives are like unsalaried servants. It is possible to hire people to do the necessary buying for one's home, and such people usually have to be paid a salary. Some men marry a wife and then expect her to act the part of a hired servant, but they give her nothing over and above what is required for necessities. A wife should be a sharer of her husband's income, not a servant held to account for every penny she spends.

3) There is the father who spends freely and lavishly on his own amusements but who says he cannot afford recreation money for his wife and children. He is the man who thinks that because he earns the money, he is the only one who has a right to spend it freely and to enjoy it, and that his wife should be happy if he pays the essential bills and lets her buy the basic necessities. A conscientious husband knows that his wife has a right to spend just as much of his money for her personal pleasure as he does for his own. The ideal thing is that both share in whatever pleasures money can buy.

The foundation for a happy home is the elimination of such abuses and the making of a full and equal partnership out of the relation of husband and wife.

II. *Teacher*

A father and mother, combined, are the first and most important teachers of their children. Neither may resign or evade this function if their children are to be properly raised. Every other teacher is in some way subject to the teaching authority of the mother and father over their children, and may be called a delegate of that authority.

Many fathers have completely abandoned their duty as teachers of their children. Even in so many explicit words they say that they are leaving all that to the mothers and to the school. They cannot be bothered. They are too tired when they come home from work to concern themselves with what the children are learning or should learn. Or they spend as little time at home and around the children as possible.

Nature will take revenge on the father who will have little or nothing to do with the training and upbringing of his children. That is because nature has provided a set-up in which a father, with a minimum of effort, can have a profound influence on the characters of his children. It is nature's arrangement that every normal child admires and looks up to its father; it has made the child ready to accept almost anything from the example and teaching of its father.

Therefore every father, no matter how limited his time or how wearing his work, should make some definite effort to teach his children. He can teach simple and fundamental lessons of morality. He can, once in a while at least, go over a catechism lesson with his children, or over other lessons they are learning in school. He can teach his boys the elements of the virtue of purity and

his girls modesty and refinement. He can teach them little tricks of certain trades he may be familiar with, or even how to play certain games. This is one of his jobs, and neither the mother nor the school can substitute for what he is designed to do.

Some fathers use only one means to teach their children, and that is to scold and abuse them for their faults and mistakes, especially faults that interfere with their peace and selfish comfort. Or they lay down such severe rules of conduct, and punish infractions so violently, that their children are stunted rather than helped in their growth. Correction is a part of the teaching function, but it is of absolutely no value unless it be accompanied by positive effort to make a child intelligent and good.

III. *Court of Appeal*

Because the mother is with the children most of the time while the father is away at work, she should be able to enlist his cooperation in training them by using him at least as "a court of appeal." In cases that require special punishment, she should know that the lesson can be most effectively brought home to the erring child by leaving it for the father to administer. In doubtful matters she should be able to count on his showing an interest in the problem, and in exercising his judgment to assist her own. The father himself should be ready to act as such "a court of appeal," either to administer a proper punishment or to decide an issue that perplexes his wife.

Some fathers do not want or permit their wives to leave any unfinished business of the home for them. They isolate themselves entirely from the business of training the children. "Oh, ask your mother," is the only response they ever give when a child asks them for a permission. They don't want to hear anything about the children's

faults and mistakes, will take no part in correcting or punishing them, and are only ready to complain about the mother when their child's faults become notorious. In other words they leave a job that nature intended for two persons in the hands of the mother alone and then blame her if it is not done perfectly. The fact that a father must be away from the home and children much of the time is no excuse for his abdicating all authority over them.

At the same time a good father will not permit himself to become a dictator or tyrant over his children. He has no right to make all decisions and to administer all corrections and punishments without considering the mother's views at all. Nor should he ever contradict the mother's decisions without first consulting her. That would be to make her job an impossible one. Tyrannical fathers (not few in number) usually find that by early adolescence their children have no love left for them at all.

IV. *Companion*

It is not difficult for a man whose work keeps him active in the business or professional world to reach a point where he has little or no desire for the companionship of children, even his own. He has his adult associates and friends; he has his work to think about even when he is at home; he has the papers, magazines and books to read, and so he comes to feel that he should not be expected to "waste his time" with the children. "Don't Disturb Daddy" is the slogan around his home, and that means "Don't let Daddy see or hear you around."

Children might just as well be orphans, if their fathers never have time to spend with them. Such children are orphans, for all the good a father will be to them when they need him. It is through companionship that a father

gains the confidence of his children, proves that he loves them, and opens the way for their asking his advice when they are in need. Every father should play games with his children; should take them to places of amusement; should take walks and rides with them. Only thus will he earn the kind of love that even the worst of fathers would like his children to have for him.

V. *Substitute*

One of the most neglected of all the duties of fatherhood, arising from the separation of the duties of husband and wife, is that of sometimes substituting for the wife in taking care of the children. There are fathers who will spend any amount of money to provide nurses, companions and baby-sitters for their children, when the mother needs or wants to get away for a little while, but who will never assume the obligation themselves. There are others who will not spend anything to have anybody stay with the children at any time, but who expect the mother to be with them at all times. The thought never strikes them that at least now and then the mother should be permitted and encouraged to spend a free evening, or to have a vacation. They themselves have plenty of leisure and a hundred different ways to spend it; but their wives are expected to be on the job at all times.

The problem columns of the daily newspapers are filled with stories of mothers whose husbands never think of suggesting or permitting that they leave their home for a bit of relaxation now and then. Such men are blindly thoughtless and selfish.

It is in substituting at times for the mother in caring for the children that a father has the opportunity of fulfilling many of his other duties towards them. If he permits their mother to go to a show or visit friends or

to attend church services of an evening, while he stays home with the children, he is bound to become a good companion, a good teacher, a good adviser, for his children. He thus accomplishes two good things with one stroke: he gives his wife needed relaxation, and he draws closer and closer to his children.

VI. *Adviser*

As head of the family, the father has the obligation to guide his children toward manhood and womanhood, and to stand by as an experienced adviser when important decisions are to be made. He should know, of course, that he has no right to decide absolutely and finally what his children shall do with their lives. It is not for him to determine whether a son or daughter should marry, or enter the religious life, nor even whether they should adopt one career over another. Every human being must select his own vocation, with light and help from God; every human being must, in the final analysis, adopt a line of work that is in accord with his tendencies and capabilities, and not with those of his father.

But in making all such important decisions, every young man and young woman should be able to look to a father for good and sound advice. Sometimes such advice will prevent an inexperienced youth from making a bad mistake. For example, a girl may have fallen in love with a man whom any experienced person could certainly judge unfitted for the tasks of husband and father. The girl's father should be the experienced person capable of convincing her of the folly of marrying such a man. When a son or daughter shows a leaning toward the priesthood or religious life, it is the father's task only to present the difficulties and rewards, the obligations and privileges of the vocation, in such a way as to make the final decision intelligent and wise.

In these important matters he must remember, however, that he is only the adviser. He may never dictate a course that he prefers, nor forbid a choice of vocation or career that does not appeal to him.

Above all, he will find out, when it comes to advising one of his children in the choice of a career or vocation, whether he has been a good father or not through the years. If he has been a good father, his advice will be considered and appreciated and used for good. If he has not, his children will neither present their problems to him nor consider his advice when he deigns to give it to them.

How to Get Children to Obey

Problem: We have three children—the oldest one not yet six years old. We have been hearing so many complaints from parents of older children on the score that their children do not obey, are hard to manage, are obstinate and irreverent, that we are afraid to see our own children grow older than they are. What can we do to make sure that they will not turn out to be unmanageable later on?

Solution: It is surely not too early to begin thinking gravely about the attitude you want your children to have toward you through all their adolescent years, and to take steps to insure it. In fact, we hope you have been doing plenty about it already.

The secret of the proper training and upbringing of children is this: From earliest childhood onward, demand obedience, but always be sure to give more love, more interest, more care than you demand. The important thing is to impress upon the mind of the growing child that, no matter how often you may have to demand hard things in obedience, your love and interest and generosity far outmeasure the hardship of obedience. If you demand obedience while at the same time the child is not acquiring a deep impression of your constant love and concern, the day will come when it will feel perfectly free to hurt you by disobedience. If you do not demand obedience, thinking that to let the child do almost entirely as it pleases is the best proof of love, you will rue that some day when you will have on your hands a spoiled and selfish son or daughter. The principal mistakes of fathers and mothers are either not demanding enough obedience from infancy on or in demanding obedience while not giving the unformed mind of the child sufficient proof of unselfish love and concern.

A still shorter directive might be this: Win the confidence of the child, without sacrificing obedience, and it will never break your heart. That sounds easy in words, but it requires a lot of doing. Selfish parents cannot do it; gadabout parents seldom accomplish it; frivolous, worldly-minded, sophisticated parents are almost incapable of it. But parents who adjust their attitude toward their children to the changes in the latter's age, parents who make themselves the companions of their children at any age, parents who give all their knowledge and experience to their children as the latter are capable of receiving it, never fail.

Should Children Be Spanked?

Problem: My husband and I disagree on what seems to me to be a very important part in the training of our children. He does not believe in any sort of physical punishment whatsoever. He maintains that the best child psychologists hold that the most effective punishment is that of taking privileges away from a child. While I agree that this is effective in many things, I still believe that there are times when a moderate spanking is called for, to be given usually by me, and on rare occasions and for more serious things, by the father. Who is right?

Solution: A dabbler in domestic difficulties must watch his words when speaking on this matter, because it is so easy to be misinterpreted. However, without fear of the fulminations of the "best child psychologists," I am ready to state categorically that the elimination of all physical punishment from the training of a child is not a good thing.

Let it be added immediately that the administration of physical punishment can be and sometimes is a bad thing. If this method of correction is used either 1) too often, or

2) to the accompaniment of evident anger and ill-temper, or 3) to an extent that is the equivalent of cruelty, it very probably will not only not effect true correction in a child, but may awaken inhibitions and psychological quirks that will last a lifetime. Some parents take up the rod unreasonably often and in unreasonable anger with resulting cruelty; then when the child grows into adolescence and youth they wonder why it is totally lacking in confidence in them or love for them.

Excluding such extremes in the matter, we believe that there is a place for bodily punishment, in the form of spanking and the like, in the rearing of a child. It should be reserved for more serious faults, accompanied by sufficient explanation to make the child realize that its purpose is to make memorable the lesson that is being taught, and should hurt without harming. It should also be put across that it is a very unpleasant thing for the parent, and that the necessity of administering it in no wise diminishes the parent's love for the child. We have said that its use should be reserved for more serious faults, which would include persistent small faults which nothing else has seemed sufficient to cure. And on very rare occasions, in the case of very serious faults committed by boys, punishment should be reserved to the father as being something so unusual that it cannot but impress the mind of the child forever. All this comes back to the axiom that all modern child psychology has not disproved: "Spare the rod and spoil the child."

Should Children Be Paid for Chores?

Problem: "We have had quite a discussion with some of our friends about the question of paying our children for chores they do for the family. There are not many chores that the children can be asked to do in our family, and, with all the activities in connection with their schools, their scouts, their sports, etc. there is not much time left for them to do chores. They wash and dry the dishes now and then; they baby-sit for us; they cut lawns in summer. For such jobs we give them anywhere from 25 cents to a dollar. Some parents argue that they should do these things for nothing. Has this question ever been discussed by experts?"

Solution: Experts provide the principles on which a problem like this can be settled. The most appropriate principle is that children should be taught from earliest childhood to take some active part in the work of keeping up a home and running a family. Their contribution may be small, but it should be looked upon as important. In their own home, and under the motivation of family love, they can best learn to share responsibility, to make sacrifices, and to love to do things for others. This training will have a profound influence on their adult lives.

It would seem to be part of this principle that children should be trained to do things in and for the home out of love, and not on the basis of a kind of wage-contract. The best work that is done in the world is done for love. Parents who have made it a practice to pay their children for chores done will not be able easily to change their system. In fact, they will find, when they try to change it, what a mistake they have made. Children who have been brought up to expect a stipend for washing dishes or for baby-sitting will not learn quickly to do it cheerfully for love.

This is not to say that children should never taste the sweets of a material reward for things that they do. But instead of being a specific amount of money expected, and eventually demanded, for a specific task done, it should be unexpected gifts at various intervals, preferably on occasions like birthdays, holidays, etc. Better still is the practice of having family outings or treats in recognition of chores done for the family by the children. Thus the work that is done as a part of the family is rewarded through the whole family's enjoyment. There are too many people in the world who count the value of everything in terms of money. Many of them learned this as children.

“All the Kids Are Doing It!”

Problem: We have five children, the two eldest of high school age. The most difficult of all our problems is that of answering the children's argument, over something we refuse to permit, that “all the other kids do it”; or that “other mothers and fathers let their children do so and so; why can't we?” In scores of issues the argument is flung at us: if we insist that they be home from a party at a given time, if we forbid them to go to dubious places of amusement, if we ask them to help around the house, other people's children are made a proof of our unfairness. Have you any suggestions?

Solution: This problem has been presented to us in many forms by many different parents. It cannot be doubted that it creates one of the major difficulties of serious-minded parents in the upbringing of their children. And it is safe to say that the rapid spread of irresponsibility among children is due in large part to the fact that parents are too easily swayed by the argument: “Others are permitted to do this; why can't we?” Sometimes the

example of only one child in a neighborhood, whose parents do not care whether it ends in a reform school or not, leads other more well-intentioned parents to give their children more rope. They do not need much, figuratively speaking, to hang themselves.

Our first suggestion, to meet this situation, would be that parents make a part of their instructions to their children from the earliest age, the fact that they live in a country that is predominantly pagan; that even many Catholics are poor Catholics; that many of the things that are done both by parents and children are dangerous and foolish; that sincere Catholics have an obligation of being different than the majority. This kind of instruction can be developed into a healthy sense of responsibility; so that the children gradually come to feel that they are helping others when they stand up against their bad example or dangerous liberties. Without a background of such instruction, begun very early, it is difficult to carry out a consistent program of discipline and watchfulness without frequent rebellion.

The second suggestion is that parents try harder and harder to make themselves sufficient motive for the children's obedience, even when they are asked to do things that few other parents ask. Parents are often to blame for the rebelliousness of their children; they give little of themselves, of their time, interest, practical love, and then complain that the children don't seem to want to obey. Parents worth loving seldom have too much trouble with disobedience.

How Often Should Children Go to the Movies?

Problem: My husband doesn't like it that I permit our older children (8, 10 and 12 years old) to go to the movies quite frequently. I have been permitting them to go at least once, and most of the time, twice a week. All the neighbors' children seem to be under no restrictions in this regard, which makes it difficult for me to refuse mine. Moreover I must admit that it provides me with a bit of welcome relief to have the children spend two or three hours at a time someplace where I do not have to worry about them. My husband says that the movies are bad for the children. What do you think?

Solution: Your husband is on the side of the angels this time, and also on the side of the experts who have made studies of the effect of frequent attendance at the movies on small children. It is agreed by practically all of these latter that a steady diet of movie entertainment for growing children gives them a false view of the realities of life, is harmful both to their eyes and to their undeveloped emotional natures, deprives them of opportunities for far more salutary and self-improving outdoor activities, and sometimes plants in their minds suggestions of evil and even teaches them ways and means of carrying it out. All these dangers are intensified by the regularity with which you permit your children to go to the movies, because it is all but impossible for parents to make sure that their children will see only the better, or at least the harmless, movies if they permit them to go regularly once or twice a week.

This is not, however, a problem that can be dealt with on a negative basis alone. It is probable that for all your husband's aversion to the movies as regular entertainment for the children, he has failed to apply positive principles

of correct child-raising that would eliminate much of the appeal that the movies have. And you yourself, with your love of "two or three hours of relief from the children" are clearly thinking of yourself more than of the children's needs. It is possible for parents to give their children so great an interest in games, outdoor activities, sports, hobbies, useful and creative habits, that the movies will compete very little for their time and interest. This takes time, which many parents are not willing to give today, but it saves worry and heartache in later years. The movies should be left as an extraordinary source of recreation, and every movie the children are permitted to see should be carefully checked and looked into beforehand.

How Important Is a Splendid Home?

Problem: My biggest sin is pride over my children and a feeling of bitter resentment because I cannot give them the things they deserve. They have good looks, culture, personality, and a great respect for God. But our home is humble and they will not ask their friends here because we do not have the money to entertain. In this world people are not judged by their characters but by their position in society and their contacts with people. For that reason I feel that all my labors are wasted and my children's lives spoiled.

Solution: You do well in admitting that pride is your besetting sin, but you do not so well in analyzing it and combatting it.

It is obvious from your letter that somewhere you have picked up a very erroneous view of what is important in life, and the sad part of it is that you have passed on this wrong notion to your children. That you have such a wrong notion is evident from your words: "In this world

people are not judged by their characters but by their position in society, etc.” It may be true that some people in the world judge others only by their influence and contacts in society, but the judgment of such people is not worth a snap of one’s fingers. Anybody whose opinion is worth anything at all judges others by their character and goodness because that is the only way that God judges them. If it were not for this there would be nothing decent or noble left in the world.

That you have passed on your erroneous notion of what is important in life to your children is evident from the fact that they are too proud to invite friends into their home because it is humble. I suspect that it is you who have impressed on them the “humbleness” of their home and the importance of putting up a rich-looking front to their friends; ordinary young people, rightly trained in the true values of life, are never ashamed of their homes.

I suggest that you ponder seriously the following truths, and try to inculcate them into your children’s hearts. 1) People who look down on those whose home is humble and who can put up little show of social prominence are not worthy of the friendship of decent families. 2) Despite all the social climbing ambitions of some foolish Americans, the most important things in life will always be character, love of honest work, humility, loyalty, friendliness and love. 3) Those who love God and serve Him and try to become saints will never be ashamed of poverty, will always have friends whom they will not hesitate to bring to their home, and will not be left uncared for by God. Such are they who will be truly great Americans.

Co-operation of Parents in Correcting Children

Complaint: My wife has a different idea than I have about the way in which our children should be raised. I believe in old-fashioned discipline, in making them obey "or else." She lets them get by with things, takes their part when I rebuke them, and in general, seems to me to be spoiling them. Is there anything that can be done to correct this situation?

Solution: The question of the upbringing of children is one that calls for intelligence, tact and cooperation on the part of both mother and father. We believe that this is one department of married life in which there should be a definite plan agreed upon by the parents as soon as the time for training a child has arrived, and then adhered to throughout. Too often there is no plan, but all discipline is left to the moods of the moment, with permanent harm to the child.

The purpose of a plan is not only to provide certain guiding principles of conduct for the mother and father, but also to effect a compromise between their differences of temperament in so far as these affect the child. Thus a father may be temperamentally inclined to over-strictness and a mother to over-indulgence, or vice versa. In talking things over they will find this out about each other and each will be able to make some compromise that will tend to establish a middle way between extremes.

Where there has been no plan and therefore no fusing of temperaments in this matter, there will always be disagreements. In general it may be said that the father must guard himself against an attitude that may arise solely from the circumstance of his being seldom at home

with the children during the day. When he does come home he is often tired or touchy or worried. This will lead him to expect too much; if the children are noisy, or argumentative with one another (as children always are), or not prompt to concur with his wishes, he is liable to accuse his wife of neglecting their training. This does not necessarily follow; the father is acting on feeling rather than on knowledge.

When the mother actually does pamper the children, the father should not start an argument in the presence of the children but should await a favorable opportunity to talk things over. There is no greater harm than that which comes from giving the children evidence of divided authority.

What Are Late Hours for Teen-Agers?

Problem: How long should teen-agers be permitted to stay out at night? Are parents justified in setting a time—say 12 o'clock—at which they must be home? Would it not be a serious sin of disobedience if, contrary to an express order, they stayed out an hour or two beyond the time they should be at home? These are questions we've been discussing among ourselves without much light being shed on them.

Solution: They are all good questions, and important ones. They signify the fact that somebody is thinking about these problems which, in this era of excessive freedom for young people and positive neglect on the part of many parents, gives rise to hope for the future.

How long should teen-agers be permitted to stay out at night? Parents certainly have the right to set a deadline in this regard, and together with the right, something of an obligation. In exercising the right and fulfilling the

obligation, they must use prudence and wisdom. For example, early teen-agers, i.e., from 13 to 16, should be dealt with firmly and inflexibly in this regard. A time should be set and insisted on from the beginning of their going out evenings for entertainment. There should be no shilly-shallying or vagueness or indecision on the part of the parents; if fidelity is insisted on from the beginning, few difficulties will arise. It is parents who follow no set principles or norms from the beginning who meet with rebellion when they try to enforce a rule. With older teen-agers, i.e., 16-20, parents become a bit more flexible. For example, when they are attending a party or social affair that is well-chaperoned, they can be given a little leeway about the time for leaving the party, with strict orders, however, that they must come straight home when they do leave.

There is an old-fashioned habit still practiced by some parents that can be recommended to all, despite the fact that it is often considered unnecessary and foolish by their own children. It is that of staying up at home and waiting for their children's return. Yes, there are plenty of objections available to it, such as the loss of sleep involved, etc., but all the objections are outweighed by its psychological and real value. Too few parents realize how often their children are led into their first sins by reason of the double fact that nobody cares what they are doing when they come home from a party and that a quiet house with everybody in bed and sleeping makes a wonderful rendezvous for violent temptation. Many a young person gets home from a date at 12, according to orders, and then right at home succumbs to serious sin.

If parents have seriously insisted on a deadline to be made by their teen-agers in returning home from dates and parties, certainly the latter would be guilty of a grave

sin of disobedience if they were to disregard it. The great dangers involved make this a matter on which parents can bind seriously in obedience. We repeat, however, that prudence must be exercised; not the excessive and inconsiderate severity that would do more harm than good.

Must Parents Teach Their Children?

Problem: I have had an argument with my neighbor. She, a mother like myself, maintains that I am bound to teach catechism to my children. I maintain that I am not well enough equipped to do that properly; that this is a task for experts, like the Sisters and priests in school. Moreover, I claim that our duty as Catholic parents is fulfilled by the fact that we support our Catholic schools, on top of the public school system, just in order that the children may learn their catechism from good teachers. Am I not right?

Solution: Alas, I am afraid that you are wrong, so wrong that there is going to be a vast difference between your children and the children of your neighbor. You are right in this, that the children do need expert teachers of catechism in the course of their education—that means teachers who will make the study of catechism permeate all the other studies of a growing child. That is reason enough for every sacrifice that can be made in behalf of Catholic schools. However all this is only supplementary to what should be done at home. The first lessons should be learned at home, because the strongest and most lasting impressions are made on the heart of a child when it learns things from parents whom it loves. The finest schools and teachers in the world cannot make a single lesson seem as important to a child as when that lesson comes as the natural manifestation of a parent's love.

You say you are not equipped to teach catechism adequately to your children. Perhaps you are not equipped to give all the fine points, as they will be given in school. But if you are a Catholic, surely you know why you are such; you know the fundamental truths of your faith, about original sin, and the birth and death of Christ on the cross, and the meaning of the Sacraments, and the judgment that is to come for all. All these things you can inculcate, beginning with the first curious questionings of your children when their reason begins to dawn.

It is hard to understand how any genuine Catholic parent can be content to leave all religious instruction of children to the school. A genuine Catholic (I am not speaking of the indifferent, lax, worldly-minded, wait-till-I'm-dying sort of Catholic) esteems his faith as the greatest privilege ever bestowed on him. It would seem to me that such a Catholic would instinctively determine that no one else but himself would hand on that privilege to his children. If he doesn't, it is hard to be sure that the children will ever truly esteem it as the privilege it really is.

Obligation of Catholic Schooling

Problem: Several months ago you stated in an article that "it was a mortal sin for Catholic parents not to send their children to a Catholic school if they are able to do so." Would you please answer the following questions: 1) In the study of my religion I never heard of this law. Is it a local law in Missouri? 2) What rights do Catholic parents have about removing their children from Catholic schools for reasons which they feel to be legitimate, e.g., when they have been able to get no cooperation from the teacher or principal? What about Catholic schools that have incompetent lay teachers, with whom a child cannot get along?

Solution: The law forbidding Catholics to send their children to any but Catholic schools, when such are available, is by no means a local law, but a universal law of the Catholic Church and is No. 1374 in Canon Law. It reads: "Catholic children shall not attend non-Catholic schools, neutral schools, or mixed schools, that is, schools that are also open to non-Catholics. Only the local ordinary (bishop) is competent to determine, in accordance with the norm of the instructions of the Holy See, in what circumstances and with what safeguards to overcome the danger of perversion, attendance at such schools may be tolerated." Canon 1372 also deals with this matter when it states: "All the faithful are to be so reared from childhood that not only shall nothing be offered them opposed to the Catholic faith or moral propriety, but also that religious and moral training shall be given the most important place."

This command of the universal law of the Church was spelled out still more clearly for American Catholics by the Third Plenary Council of Baltimore, which stated that "Catholic parents, who have the right and the obligation under the natural and the divine law to insure for their children a Catholic education, cannot be permitted to provide a merely secular education for them." Therefore the Council commanded parents "to protect their children from such education by sending them to parochial schools." All Catholic moralists have interpreted the words of Canon Law and of the Third Council of Baltimore to bind Catholic parents to send their children to Catholic schools, when they can do so, under pain of mortal sin.

The second question of our inquirer is answered by the second part of Canon 1374 as quoted above. Only the local ordinary is competent to decide when an exception to the law is to be made. Of course parents who have no access

to a Catholic school are not bound by the law. Those who are within reach of a parochial school but who feel that they have reasons for not sending their child there, or for taking their child out of the Catholic school, must submit their reasons to their pastor, who in many dioceses is delegated to act in the bishop's name. If he seems to be lacking in understanding, they may have recourse to the chancery office, or the bishop himself.

Education at Home

It is a well-known principle of Catholic teaching that the first right and responsibility of educating children rests on the parents and must be exercised in the home. Sometimes the question is asked: "Since the school does so much in the way of educating children, what is left for the home to do?" The answer is that the school can do little or nothing for a child unless the following things are done in the home.

1. There must be conscious realization on the part of parents that the example of their lives is the first exercise of their obligation of educating their children. If they are quarrelsome, profane, immoral in speech, irreligious and pagan in word and deed, they are forming their children's characters in the same mold. If they are kind, self-sacrificing, religious, prayerful, and morally upright, they are laying the foundations of a solid education for their children.

2. There must be positive exercise of their teaching authority in the matter of implanting in their children's minds the basic elements of religious truth. The parents should personally teach, as soon as their child can grasp it even partially, the first lesson of the catechism: "Who made me?" "Why did God make me?" etc.; the facts

of the fall and the redemption; and the stories of Jesus and Mary.

3. The parents are responsible for directly teaching their children what is right and wrong and for giving them the proper religious motives for doing what is right and avoiding what is wrong. It is from parents that children should first learn that swearing and lying and stealing and disobedience and anger and revenge are wrong. It is from parents that they should learn that these things are wrong primarily because they offend God and must be punished by Him.

Over and above these things, there are many others that parents may teach their children. But these are the essentials. A child is severely and sometimes hopelessly handicapped if it starts out in the best school in the land without having been taught such things by its mother and father.

The Parent-Teacher Relationship

Problem: Our oldest child is having a great deal of trouble with his teacher at school. She punishes him so frequently and gives him such low marks for conduct that we feel he is being made a scapegoat for other children's faults, and that the teacher in charge of his classroom has taken a dislike to him. In such a case would it not be wise to take him out of this school (a Catholic school with Sisters in charge) and to send him to a public school?

Solution: From what you tell me, I think it would be exceedingly unwise, and even wrong, to take your boy out of the Catholic school without further and serious investigation. Here are some of the points you may have overlooked entirely in judging the teacher's attitude toward your boy.

First of all, you may have multiplied the teacher's problems with your boy by blindly accepting his interpretation of the teacher's attitude toward him, by taking his part when he was punished, and by making derogatory remarks about his teacher in his presence. Children are clever enough to know when they can get by with things because there is someone who will always take their part. Many parents have been responsible for the fact that their children have adopted habits of misbehaviour by defending them, or at least taking their part, when punishment was meted out. Try the old trick of telling your boy that if he is punished at school, he will be punished again at home, and see if that doesn't make a difference.

You say nothing in your letter of having consulted with your boy's teacher as to the reason for his frequent punishment. It is certainly unfair to a school and its teachers to judge them solely on the basis of what you hear from your own child. Be humble enough to accept the possibility that your child may be a mischief-maker; be sincere enough in your desire to help the child, to call on his teacher and principal and learn their side of the story. You may find out things that will shock you, and at the same time show you where you have been failing to give your child the right attitude toward obedience and good conduct at home.

In rare cases it does become evident, after consultation and investigation, that a teacher is at fault, either because she is lacking in understanding of a particular child, or because she is a victim of nerves and unfitted for the classroom, or because she has taken a dislike to a certain child. In such cases Catholic parents can and should have recourse to the pastor, who has full authority over his school, laying the case before him and enlisting his advice and aid. In no case should a Catholic child be taken out

of a Catholic school without consultation with the pastor and without his permission.

Catholic Parents of Public School Children

It is well known that there are millions of Catholic children in the United States who cannot attend a Catholic school because there is none attached to their parish or in their neighborhood. Parents of such children have a very special and serious obligation to make up for the lack of religious instruction in the school the children must attend. The obligation takes these forms:

1. They must use their parental authority to see to it that the children regularly attend the catechism classes arranged by their pastor, and the vacation school of religion if one is held in the parish during the summer months. It is beyond all doubt that parents who callously and continually neglect to send their children to catechism classes are guilty of a serious sin of neglect toward their children's religious education.

2. They must use their parental interest and love to talk frequently to their children at home about the important truths of their religion, to go over catechism lessons with them, and to encourage in them the habit of receiving the sacraments often and worthily. All parents, even those with children in Catholic schools, are bound in some measure by this duty. However, it is especially binding on those whose children hear nothing about their religion in school.

3. They must try to build up in their children's minds a strong and intelligent conviction of the truth of their Catholic religion to offset the danger of their gradually coming to accept the heresy that "it doesn't matter what you believe, or to what religion you belong." At the

same time they must inculcate in their children a deep respect for the religious convictions of others, and un-failing charity toward all their neighbors, no matter what their religious beliefs.

By these means, parents who cannot escape sending their children to secular schools will do as much as they can to carry out their obligation of providing a good religious training for them. At the same time they should never give up the conviction that nothing can fully take the place of a Catholic school education, nor the desire to be able to provide one for their own children.

Children and Holy Communion

Problem: I seem to be working at cross purposes with the Sisters in school. They are everlastingly urging my children (they are eight and ten) to receive Communion frequently. I do not let them receive frequently for two reasons, first, because I don't want them to look on it as a routine matter, as they almost certainly will if they go whenever they attend Mass; secondly, because I want them to realize that they must be worthy to receive Communion. Therefore if they are disobedient to me, or if they quarrel with one another, I tell them they may not receive Communion until they go to confession. I feel that I know the children better than the Sisters do and that I should be the judge in this matter.

Solution: I am afraid that you have imbibed a couple of false notions somewhere along the line, which are influencing your whole attitude toward this matter. First of all, Our Lord Himself was conscious of the danger of the spirit of routine infecting those who would receive Communion often, and He knew that this would apply not only to children but to adults as well. He nevertheless gave us His Body and Blood under the form of bread, even of daily

bread, that despite the sense of routine, we might still receive Him often. Furthermore you are forgetting that Pope Pius X, in urging daily Communion for both adults and children, answered the objection that this might encourage a spirit of routine by saying that Communion is efficaciously and fruitfully received so long as one receives in the state of sanctifying grace and with a good intention. He said that it is the desire of Christ and the will of the Church and the need of the faithful that all receive as often as they can, even though they are not always filled with fervent and soul-stirring emotions. Personally, I think that the danger of routine of which you speak in regard to the children would be greatly minimized if you would give as much thought and instruction to the task of making the children realize the great privilege of Communion as you have evidently given to keeping them away from it.

For your second objection you have even less solid ground on which to stand. You have no right to make venial sin (obviously the kind of sins you attribute to the children) a barrier to Holy Communion when the Church herself explicitly teaches that venial sin should not keep one from receiving this powerful Sacrament, yes even that Holy Communion will be a help to the overcoming of venial sin. You are even hurting the children when you teach them the false doctrine that a small disobedience or a momentary quarrel makes them unworthy to receive. They will grow up to be always afraid of frequent Communion. True, you should by no means teach them to disregard or make light of venial sins; you may tell them how sad it is for children who receive Communion often not to overcome even slight temptations; you should insist that they make an act of contrition for small sins before they receive; but you should not go farther than the Church and Our Lord Himself and insist that a venial sin makes

one unworthy to receive Communion without confession. Again, if you would use the time and energy you have used in the past to keep the children from Communion in explaining the right attitude in which they should receive, you would make this Sacrament a powerful means of sanctity in their lives.

Who Decides a Child's Vocation?

Problem: I am not a wife or husband, but I have a problem that has to do with mothers. I am 26 years old. I studied for six years to be a priest and then, at the advice of my confessor and director, I left the seminary. My mother has never reconciled herself to my leaving, nor to the priests who advised it. She continually accuses me of some secret scandalous action that is supposed to have turned me away from the priesthood. She shows outright ill-will toward the girl I am going to marry. Her whole attitude to me is very bitter. Would I do wrong if I were to see my mother but rarely, in order to avoid the unpleasantness that always arises when we are together?

Solution: There is need of sympathy and patience toward such a mother, because of the possibility that her frustrated desire to have a son a priest may have grown into a mental fixation that not even a psychiatrist could cure. In any case a 26 year old man whose mother continually berates him and opposes his impending marriage would be justified in reducing his visits with her to a minimum consistent with elementary charity. He should pray for her the more, however, because she badly needs prayers.

The sad state to which this mother has come will be avoided by other mothers if they will keep themselves mindful, from the time their children are born, that not their will but God's will must decide their vocations.

Good Christian mothers may pray that one or more of their children may be given a vocation to the priesthood or the religious life, but they would do a grave wrong if they tried to push or force a child into such a vocation. It is equally wrong for them to show signs of bitterness when a child has tried and failed to reach the goal of the priesthood or religious life. It is not a part of either the rights or duties of a mother to oppose her own will to the decisions of her children's spiritual directors. Vocation is a matter that must be decided on the basis of a child's own conscience, free will, inclinations and abilities, and not on the wishes of the child's mother.

When Should Steady Company-Keeping Begin?

Problem: I am an old fashioned mother who believes that boys and girls should not keep company until they are old enough to begin thinking about marriage. Therefore I have made a rule for my own children that they should not have steady "dates" until they are seventeen at least, which seems young enough to me. But I seem to be all alone in this. The children are everlastingly quoting the example of other boys and girls who are allowed to go steady at 15, 14 and in some cases even 12, I am even ridiculed sometimes by other mothers and fathers who say it is good for the children to get acquainted with one another early. Am I all wrong?

Answer: You are one of the wisest parents who have written to us since we began this series of articles on the problems of husbands and wives. The formation of and connivance at puppy-love affairs is one of the most dangerous and detrimental things that parents can engage in. Its dangers are twofold: first, that adolescents, just awakening to the meaning of passion in themselves, and surrounded

by hordes of unprincipled and undirected adolescents who already believe that the passions are there to be exploited, will be in great danger of falling into sin—the kind of sin that seldom starts without continuing, that engenders habits that become stronger with the years while the character grows progressively weaker and more debased. The second danger is that all the money and interest and energy spent on the education of the adolescents will be so much waste, if they are to squander their opportunities and divide their attention by concentration on company-keeping, puppy-love-making, and abortive courtship. No sane and moral minded parent has ever given an adequate refutation of the principle that regular company-keeping is only lawful for those who can reasonably think of marriage within a reasonable time. Certainly high-school students are excluded from those who can reasonably think of marriage within a reasonable time.

It is of course, a difficult thing for children, who see numerous examples of the violation of this principle around them, to understand why their parents are so strict with them. However, parents can offset this difficulty

1) by earning a loyalty from their children through close association, self-sacrifice and understanding, that will make them obey their parents against the whole world, if necessary; and

2) by the studied effort to fill so completely their adolescent children's lives with interests and hobbies that it will be small loss to them not to have "dates."

A Daughter's Marriage to a Divorced Man

Problem: We have a daughter in her twenties who, to our intense sorrow and shame, is insisting on going through a marriage ceremony with a divorced man. We have done everything in our power to prevent this, but it has all been in vain. Now we want to know what our duty is, first in regard to attending the ceremony and wedding breakfast, and secondly, in dealing with our daughter after her bad marriage. Must we stay away from the ceremony and breakfast, and are we to sever all social relations with her as long as she lives with this man?

Solution: It is difficult to think of any reason that could justify a Catholic mother and father in attending a mock marriage celebration of this kind. Their daughter is committing a grave sin and one that effectively bars her from communication with the faithful in the true Church. In ordinary cases, there would be great scandal if the mother or father or both attended the wedding, thus giving the impression that they do not consider it sinful or invalid. The same reasoning holds for the wedding breakfast. Furthermore, the presence of her mother and father at such a ceremony or celebration would almost surely make the daughter feel less conscience-stricken for her sin, and more content to remain in her sinful state. Therefore a truly Catholic mother and father would not think of lending their presence to such a tragic occasion.

As to how they should act toward their daughter after the invalid marriage, circumstances will have to decide. This principle certainly must be observed: that they may never by word or action appear to condone the daughter's sin, nor her remaining in the state of sin. Beyond that, it is their task to adopt a course of action which in their

honest judgment will most effectively lead to the girl's repentance and reform. If it seems to them that by staying away from her entirely they can more quickly and effectively bring her to her senses, then that course should be adopted. If it seems that by retaining some contact, by holding or winning her confidence and by kindness and sympathy they may lead her back to God, then that course should be pursued. The important thing is that they never take her situation for granted as one that nothing can be done about, and that they never give the impression, either to the girl or to their relatives and friends, that they approve of the evil. Their daughter's soul is at stake; they must by prayer and every other means in their power, try to save it from the awful state it has chosen.

How to Give Sex Instructions

Secular magazines and periodicals have been interesting themselves more and more in the problem of when and how instruction in matters of sex should be given to young people. As in most topics that have a moral angle, there is much confusion of thought, not to say impractical and harmful philosophy current on the subject. Here are two Catholic principles to be borne in mind:

1. Public non-religious discussions of sex matters for indiscriminate groups of boys and girls in class room or other gathering places do more harm than good. There are two main reasons: 1) because this subject needs a religious background if a boy or girl is to acquire not only knowledge of it but a binding sense of moral responsibility as well. The most dangerous fallacy in the world is that which assumes that scientific knowledge of sex matters will prevent tampering or experimenting with sex; 2) because such public discussions go far to remove the sense of privacy and modesty

from sex matters which nature has designed as one of the most powerful protectors of youth. When that is broken down by making the subject as commonplace as arithmetic, sin can easily become commonplace and uninhibited too.

2. The primary obligation of supervising sex instruction belongs to the parents. It is for them to judge when a boy or girl needs it or will profit by it; it is for them to bind up the subject with religious principle; it is for them to add practical guidance and advice in accordance with the particular environment of their children. If they feel incapable of discharging this duty, they may delegate it to another—pastor, confessor, teacher—but they should insist that the instruction be given not publicly or in common with others, but personally and privately, and with the moral and religious angles always dominating.

These two rules are sufficient to save most boys and girls from the danger of false notions given them by others, and the equal danger of being led by their own ignorance into sinful ways. Nowadays above all Catholic parents should take their obligations seriously. There are a thousand ways in which children can become misinformed and misled in this all-important matter.

What to Tell a Child about the Birth of Babies

Problem: Our oldest child is a boy of eight and I am about to have another baby. We are wondering whether we should tell the eight-year-old boy how the new baby will come into the world, and if so, how we should tell him. We have told him that he is to have another baby brother or sister and he has asked how we know that and who is to bring the baby. Could you give us any advice in this matter?

Solution: A boy of eight will usually be well satisfied with a few simple, straightforward truths in a matter of this kind. There is no need to resort to "stork stories" or to attribute the new baby to the generosity of the doctor, as is so often done. It is easiest and most effective just to tell the child that God always entrusts a new baby to the body of the mother, where it begins as a very tiny thing and grows until it is big enough to be born. Thus you have an opportunity to explain the reason for the mother going to the hospital or taking to her bed when the time of birth arrives. It can also be explained in brief that a mother has to suffer something for the great privilege of having a child, and that therefore the oldest boy must be as good and kind and helpful as possible while she is recovering from that suffering. Ordinarily this much will satisfy an eight-year-old child.

It sometimes happens that the curiosity of a child goes somewhat further and he asks how it is that God selects certain persons to become mothers. This offers an occasion for a first general instruction on the meaning of marriage. It is enough to say that when two people marry God gives them means of becoming a mother and father, but that it is always God who creates the soul

of a new baby. If these general truths are told the child with an air of finality, it will be rare that he will push the discussion to greater lengths. It will help, too, if there are younger brothers and sisters, to tell the oldest one that you are telling him a secret that the others are not to know till they grow older. The fact of being taken into exclusive confidence will overshadow any lingering curiosity and make him satisfied with the general answers given.

A Child's Question about Birth Control

Problem: "How should parents answer a child who asks the question: 'What is the meaning of birth control?'"

Solution: The way of answering this question should depend entirely on the age of the child and the knowledge of sex it has already received. For children under 12, who have shown no need of detailed instruction about sex previously in their lives, the question may be answered in a truthful but general way somewhat as follows:

"Birth-control is a sin committed by parents when they deliberately and selfishly refuse to let God send them children." This can be further explained as follows: "God made the state of marriage as a means for bringing children into the world and continuing the human race. Sometimes God Himself sees fit not to send any children to a married couple, through no fault of their own; for that reason, you should never think or say that married people are committing the sin of birth-control because they do not happen to have children. But in other cases, God wants to send them children, and the husband and wife refuse to accept them. It is such people who are guilty of the sin that is called birth-control."

Such an explanation will usually be sufficient for a young, normal child, who as yet is in no way preoccupied with details about sex. If, in a rare case, further questions are asked by the very young, a parent may tell the child that all this will be explained in due time, and can so express this postponement that the child will feel honored with a great confidence rather than moved to unwholesome curiosity.

For children in their teens, the above question can be one of the spontaneous and God-given occasions for a valuable little instruction on marriage and its obligations. Few teen-agers, in these days of open discussion in magazines, newspapers, etc., are without some knowledge of the subject, but there are none who do not need to have their ideas corrected, amplified to a certain degree, and, above all, transformed into principles and convictions by their parents. Obviously, parents themselves need to be both well-informed and faithful to conjugal chastity to do a good job of handing on the right attitudes and convictions to their children. The spread and continuation of many of the sins against sex may be put down to the inability and unwillingness of parents to transmit the true ideals to their children.

Should Babies Be Taken to Church?

Problem: Should we or should we not take small children or babies to church with us on Sunday? Some pastors are very impatient with young mothers when their babies create a disturbance in church. But sometimes we cannot get to Mass or to other services ourselves unless we take the babies along. Is it better to stay home than to take the baby when this cannot be avoided?

Solution: That this question has been seriously considered is evident in the fact that most new Catholic

churches being built today have what is sometimes called "a crying room," i.e., a place behind glass in the rear of the church where mothers with babies can hear Mass without fear that the crying of the babies will disturb priest or parishioners. In bigger churches the room is even equipped with a loud-speaker so that the mother can hear the sermon.

This is a wonderful solution to the above problem, but does not help mothers whose parish churches have no such room. For them, circumstances must be deciding factors in this matter.

First of all, as to obligations: mothers who have very small babies or children who they know will be restless and noisy and unmanageable in church, and who on certain Sundays have no one to stay at home with the children while they go to Mass, are excused from the serious obligation of attending Mass on those Sundays. However, they have an obligation to try ordinarily to see that there will be somebody who can stay with the babies while they go to Mass. With the best of will, though, occasions can arise when this cannot be arranged.

If a mother has found by experience that she can take, say, a child under two or three to church, with little danger that the child will disturb others, her conscience would tell her that this is surely the thing to do when there is no one to stay at home with the child. If on a rare occasion the child does become noisy, she can retire with it to the vestibule. In country parishes, where there may be only one Mass on Sunday, we have often seen mothers and fathers with a whole string of children from seven down to a babe in arms at Mass, with scarcely a sound out of any of them. Some parents seem to know how to train children, even the youngest, to behave in

church. They and the children will certainly be blessed greatly by God for their family worship of Him.

If a mother does come to church with a small child, and in the middle of the sermon it begins to wail loudly, she should not wait for a reminder from the priest, but should at once take it to the vestibule. It is not prudent or charitable to let the child's loud crying compete with the words of the speaker and for the attention of the congregation.

Is Adoption Advisable in This Case?

Problem: Is it wrong to adopt a child when you are still physically able to have children of your own? My husband is forty-one and I am thirty-eight. We have two boys, six and two years old. I would like another baby; my husband is in agreement to a point. He thinks it would be better to adopt a baby, about two years old, than to have one of our own. His reasons are: 1) My last pregnancy was complicated, and he wants to avoid a repetition of that. 2) We would be sure of having a girl this time. 3) We would avoid the worry and care of a newly-born baby. 4) We are too old to have a third child of our own. . . I personally want my own baby rather than an adopted one. What do you think?

Solution: The vast weight of moral and spiritual principles all tend to advise you to take no thought of adopting a baby while it is still possible for you to have one of your own. Your husband's arguments are not cogent, and they are outweighed by some important considerations.

First of all you cannot decide you are not going to have a baby of your own without great risk of sin. If there is any thought in either of your minds that you would

prevent conception by any sinful form of birth-control, you would by that very fact enter upon a course of sin that would vitiate the apparent good work of adopting a child. If your intention were to avoid parenthood by abstaining permanently from the use of your marriage privileges, which abstinence is not evil if it is mutually undertaken for a spiritual motive, you might be expecting too much of yourselves and might fall quite often into the sin of contraception. If you intended to avoid parenthood by the use of rhythm, with the approval of your confessor, you would have no absolute assurance that you would not have another baby, and would also be taking a chance, over a long period of time, of falling into sin.

Your husband needs to be reminded of the fact that, while to his way of thinking and feeling, it does not much matter whether a child being raised in his home is his own or another's, it does make a great difference to the mother who has the immediate and constant care of the child. It is very callous and even cruel of a husband to disregard these feelings. Of course a husband has some reason for concern if his wife had great difficulty carrying her previous child, and has a right to see that this is taken into consideration by consultation with good, Catholic doctors. But a small or doubtful danger of complications should give way to both the desire to avoid sin and the natural desire for one's own children.

Requirements for Baptismal Sponsors

Problem: I am expecting my fourth child in a couple of months. I have already written to two of my relatives, who now live in a distant city but expect to move back here before my child will be born, asking them to be the new baby's sponsors in baptism. I had thought they were good Catholics, but I just recently learned from the mother of one of them that they have not made their

Easter duty, nor do they go to Mass or receive the sacraments. Under those circumstances would it be right for me to have them as sponsors for the baby? If not, how can I get out of it now without hurting their feelings? What are the duties of baptismal sponsors these days?

Solution: The Canon Law of the Church requires that sponsors of a child in baptism have the intention of assuming the office and the duties of a sponsor. It also defines the office of a sponsor as that of taking a "perpetual" spiritual interest in the one for whom he was sponsor, and endeavoring, as opportunity presents itself, to help that one carry out the solemn promises of baptism, which, in the case of a baby, are pronounced by the sponsors in its stead. Practically speaking, this means that a baptismal sponsor should pray especially for his spiritual child; keep in touch with the child as it grows to manhood by spiritual remembrances or gifts on anniversaries or feastdays; and be ready to utilize any opportunity for giving spiritual encouragement or help when it is needed.

Clearly, then, a non-practicing Catholic can have little capacity for or interest in doing even these simple things that are included in the office of a sponsor. Therefore Catholic parents would defeat the very purpose of sponsorship if they invited lapsed Catholics to stand up for their children.

Sometimes, however, the occasion of a baptism can be used to bring slipping Catholics back to their duties. For example, in the case presented here, the mother should talk to the couple whom she has asked to be sponsors about what this office means, and why she wants only good Catholics as the sponsors of her children. This may be sufficient to bring them back to the sacraments

and start them on the right path again. But if they show no interest in giving up their neglect of Mass and the sacraments, it should not be too difficult or painful to tell them why it would not be right for them to assume the sponsor's role.

May Divorced Persons Be Baptismal Sponsors?

Problem: Does the Catholic Church permit a divorcee or a woman who is waiting for her divorce to become final to be sponsor for a child's baptism? One priest told me that if such a person did not have permission from the Church to get a divorce, she could not be a baptismal sponsor. But a neighbor of mine quoted another priest as saying that there was no rule of the Catholic Church forbidding a divorcee to be a sponsor in baptism. Which is the right answer?

Solution: As in so many cases like this, both answers are correct if they are understood rightly. The law of the Church forbids Catholics to select as a sponsor for their child anyone who has committed a grave public offense against the law of God or of the Church, such as would make ordinary Catholics consider them unworthy to be a sponsor in baptism. The law does not specifically exclude divorcees from being baptismal sponsors because such persons may or may not be guilty of a grave public offense.

All informed Catholics know that it is a serious sin for any Catholic to institute proceedings for obtaining a civil divorce without first obtaining the permission of their bishop. If the family, friends and neighbors of a Catholic divorcee all know that she sought the divorce without asking her parish priest to obtain the necessary permission of the bishop, or that she did so when the permission had actually been refused, she could rightly be considered

to have committed a great public offense, one that could be interpreted to make her unworthy to be a baptismal sponsor. However, even in this case, if the woman repented of her sin, made a good confession, and tried to repair her wrong-doing as her confessor advised, she would make herself eligible for being a baptismal sponsor.

All informed Catholics also know that the Church, through the bishop of a diocese, sometimes grants permission to Catholic wives or husbands to institute civil divorce proceedings when there is obviously no hope of a reconciliation between them and their partners, and when there is a grave reason for seeking the economic or legal protection that a divorce may give. A Catholic who has obtained such a permission incurs no moral guilt and no justified public stigma by actually seeking the divorce. (Of course such a permission never includes the right to attempt a second marriage while the partner is still alive.) But such a person, if she possesses all the other required qualifications, may be a sponsor for baptism.

Thus the first priest in our correspondent's problem was considering the case in which a divorcee had notoriously sought a divorce without the permission of her bishop and who had not repented of her sin. The second priest was considering the case of a divorcee who had permission to seek a divorce, or who had made a good confession and amends for having sought a divorce without permission. Thus explained, both priests gave right answers.

The Fate of Unbaptized Children

Problem: Does it seem just on the part of God that He should deprive of heaven and the beatific vision a child who, through its parents' fault and not its own, or through nobody's fault, died without baptism? I am a convert, and before I became a Catholic, I lost one of my babies who had never been baptized. It hurts me to think of that child being punished forever.

Solution: The first thing you must do is to put out of your mind the thought that the child is being punished forever. It is Catholic teaching that unbaptized infants are not punished, but are granted a happiness in full accord with their natural faculties and capacity.

As to the justice of God, it is not impugned by the fact that He does not admit unbaptized souls to the beatific vision, because the beatific vision is an extraordinary and completely gratuitous gift of God, in no way a right or just due for human beings, for the bestowing of which God can set down whatever conditions He sees wise and good. And even from our finite and limited viewpoint it is not difficult to see good reasons why God made baptism, the condition for attaining heaven, dependent, in the case of children without the use of reason, on the interest and zeal of the mother and father or guardians. God made man to His own image and likeness; in so doing, He delegated many God-like functions to human beings. He gave them their responsibilities of charity in its many forms. To the same parents to whom He gave the tremendous power of procreation, and the delegation of His own authority over their children, He gave the responsibility for the spiritual welfare of those children till they come of age and can choose for themselves. The fact that children are dependent on

their parents in this regard is one more sign of the unspeakable dignity and God-like nobility with which God clothed human beings.

Furthermore, God signified the union and solidarity of the human family by permitting the sin of the first parents, Adam and Eve, to involve the whole race; that same unity and interdependence is carried out in His making children dependent on their parents for baptism.

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