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# *What Parents Should Tell their Little Ones on Sex*



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# WHAT PARENTS SHOULD TELL THEIR LITTLE ONES ON SEX

By the Convert from Anglicanism  
REV. DR. L. RUMBLE, M.S.C.



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For Copies Address  
**RADIO REPLIES PRESS**  
St. Paul 1, Minnesota

Imprimatur ✠ JOANNES GREGORIUS MURRAY  
*Archiepiscopus Sancti Pauli*

Paulopoli die 18a Decembris 1949

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RADIO REPLIES PRESS  
St. Paul, Minnesota

PRINTED IN U. S. A.

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# WHAT PARENTS SHOULD TELL THEIR LITTLE ONES ON SEX

By Rev. Dr. L. Rumble, M.S.C.

## PREFACE

*To all parents it is more than ever necessary to put the question today: Are you preparing your children to meet the world they will have to face? Such a question, of course, raises many problems. But there is an outstanding problem, carrying with it immense possibilities for good or evil, happiness or misery, both in time and in eternity.*

*That problem has to do with the subject of morals, and above all with sexual behavior. Here we have one of the most violent battle-fields in the modern world; and if parents do not teach their children God's plan for mankind, the children will soon fall victims to those who are only too eager to teach them the devil's plan.*

*One thing is certain. Sooner or later your children are going to learn about sex. They ought to. They must. The only question is whether they will learn about it in the right*

*way, or in the wrong way. Which way rests with the parents? And don't say that it doesn't matter much how they learn about it, so long as they do learn about it. Consequences can be drastic.*

*This little book has been written to help Catholic parents in the fulfilment of their very real duty. It aims at being as clear and brief as possible. It won't drown the whole subject in a deluge of words which result only in bewilderment. It won't shirk necessary and factual explanations, however delicate they may be.*

*But it does ask to be studied as a whole, so that its later pages are read in the light of the earlier ones, and of the principles they describe—principles which must be applied throughout the whole process of enlightenment in the practical teaching of the children.*

## PART ONE

### *General Principles*

#### **The World of Today**

Firstly, what kind of a world is it that your children will have to meet? It is a world in which multitudes of people have lost their religious convictions and Christian moral standards, standards which are widely disregarded even if acknowledged at all.

Immorality is glorified in our newspapers and books, by blatant advertising, in commercialized entertainments on the stage, or in films, or over the air. Every effort is made to stimulate excitement and to destroy Christian values. The result is a breakdown of morals, the destruction of family life, crowded divorce courts, a wave of sex-crimes against small children, and an outbreak of juvenile delinquency which are a worry even to the irreligious world itself. Not that the irreligious world is worried by any sense of guilt before God. It is worried only by undesirable social consequences. Still, if only for that reason, it looks round for remedies.

Now we Catholics agree with the world that a remedy is needed. But we can't agree with

the kind of remedy it proposes. For it is obsessed with the idea that all can be put right by sex-instruction alone. It has the strange idea that if only children are taught the facts of life, beginning with nature-study and working through to human physiology and biology, they will get over their timidity and false modesty. They will become matter-of-fact and sensible, and will want to behave decently.

That such instruction alone will remedy anything, we deny. It won't make children want to behave decently. It may succeed in teaching them merely new ways in which to behave indecently. For it overlooks the fact that **knowledge is not virtue**.

If **knowledge alone** were enough, then doctors, medical students, and nurses, who know all the physical facts of anatomy, biology, and reproductive processes, should be the most moral body of men and women in the world. But they are not. As a group, they are neither better nor worse than any other group.

Again, mere sex-instruction provides no sufficient motive for being good. If children were made familiar with everything to do with sex-relationships, and taught the reproductive process in animals, it is of little use telling them



that they mustn't behave as animals unless you can tell them **why not**. But that's a moral problem, to which the religionless world has no sufficient answer. It is definitely not a sufficient answer to speak of the dreadful consequences and hideous diseases which so often result from loose conduct. There are ways of avoiding those; and, in any case, "If you can't be good, be careful" does not mean moral improvement in anybody.

Another thing entirely overlooked by the religionless reformer is the fact of **original sin** which has warped human nature, and given it such a propensity towards evil that knowledge without will training and the grace of God is useless.

Finally, the world seems to take it for granted that the **virtue of modesty** does not exist, that there is nothing improper in itself, and no reason why we should not deal with any topic in any company. But modesty is a God-given instinct intended to safeguard chastity. To destroy that barrier is to leave the door wide open to vice.

### **Necessity of Instruction**

In the face of these objections on our part, the world professes to be very puzzled. "Aren't

you interested," it asks, "in preserving your children from moral disaster?" We are, and far more interested than the world itself. "Do you then believe simply in a policy of silence, on the score that the children will get to know the facts of life anyhow?" We reply that we do not believe in a policy of silence, but that we do object to children getting to know the facts of life "anyhow." We want them to get to know what they need to know in the right way and from the right sources. We Catholics have our own program and our own methods of educating to purity and preparing children to face the realities of life.

Here let us insist that sex-instruction is part of that program, even though it be only a part. Children are quite naturally and lawfully curious about life's reproductive processes, and should be told the truth frankly, yet prudently. It's not a question of destroying innocence, but of **dispelling ignorance**—and precisely for the sake of preserving innocence. It is almost criminal to allow children to go out into the world today unprepared for the onslaught of sex and the strain imposed upon self-control by modern friendships and social laxity.

A knowledge of the facts, given under the best of conditions, may prove a source of temptations; but a child taught to love God and trained in the practice of virtue will be able to master such temptations. On the other hand, ignorance of the facts can lead to disaster even in religious and conscientious children. A girl who does not know that wrong advances are leading towards something which is allowed only in marriage is ill-equipped indeed to face the life awaiting her in the world. So, too, the boy who has not learned that his conduct must be based, not on blind instinctive feelings, but on an intelligent understanding of what is involved, and on religious principles dictating Christian behaviour, is equally ill-equipped.

But all this gives rise to the practical problems with which we are here concerned. Who is to tell the children? What should the children be told? When is the information to be given to them? How is one to go about the business of telling them? All such questions need to be answered; and they will be, in due course, in this booklet. But first let us review briefly our Catholic principles on this whole subject.

## Catholic Principles

For the guidance of Catholics in this matter many decisions have been given by the Holy See, defining what our approach to it must be.

Those decisions may be reduced to five basic requirements.

(1) Children must be given a sound religious instruction, urged to be faithful to prayer, to assistance at Mass and in regular reception of the Sacraments of Confession and Communion, and have instilled into them a deep personal love of Our Lord and of Our Lady.

(2) The highest esteem must be developed within them for the ideals of modesty and for the positive virtue of holy purity.

(3) They must be taught to avoid the occasions of sin, dangerous reading, indecent amusements and bad company.

(4) They must be made to realize that a Christian life is impossible without habits of self-restraint and self-denial.

(5) They should receive factual sex-instruction individually and gradually from their parents.

To a Catholic, all these requirements should be almost self-evident. To neglect any one of them is to court disaster.

No merely natural means can preserve chastity. The world itself has long since had evidence enough that **driftage from religion** and a **breakdown in morals** go together. But there are none so blind as those who will not see. Catholics, however, are not left in doubt. Their Church tells them plainly that their main weapon is still a sound religious and moral formation. Man is not merely an animal. He is a "child of God," and must learn to live as a child of God, subordinating animal pleasures to spiritual ideals.

As regards chastity in particular, all Papal Encyclicals insist that we dwell far more upon the **positive virtue** than upon the **opposite vice**. We must instil a great esteem and love for angelic purity, making the children realize how God loves it, how Our Lady and all the Saints exemplified it, how all good people respect it, and how it safeguards our true dignity as children of God.

At the same time, we must make it clear that virtue is not merely the admiration of a beautiful ideal. Virtue supposes victory over temptation and watchfulness against all that could corrupt it. To practice the virtue of purity we learn to practice custody of the eyes,

to watch over our imagination, and our thoughts and words and actions, avoiding dangerous occasions that could lead to sin.

Habits of self-denial are necessary, for it is impossible to live a pure and chaste life if one is quite unmortified and given to unrestrained self-indulgence in all other departments of one's existence. There is no escaping the need of some degree of Christian asceticism or efforts at self-conquest.

Finally, the responsibility of giving factual instruction in sex-matters belongs to the parents. The sense of reverence for a good father and a good mother creates its own impressions; and children who have been properly instructed by them turn away with resentment and disgust from any cheap remarks on the subject by outsiders. That is why Pope Pius XI implored priests to use every means, by words and writings widely publicized, to instruct Christian parents both in general and in particular regarding this matter, explaining the best methods to be adopted by them in the fulfilment of their duty. This small booklet is based directly on that request. But let us first pay attention to the advice of the present Holy Father.

## Advice of Pope Pius XII

The instructions of Pope Pius XI were recalled in a particular way by his successor on October 26, 1941, when Pope Pius XII granted an audience to a group of Christian mothers in Rome.

“With the discretion of a mother and a teacher,” he said to them, “and thanks to the open-hearted confidence with which you have been able to inspire your children, you will not fail to watch for and to discern the moment in which certain unspoken questions have occurred to their minds, and are troubling their senses. It will then be your duty to your daughters, the father’s duty to your sons, carefully and delicately to unveil the truth as far as it appears necessary; to give a true, prudent, and Christian answer to those questions, and set their minds at rest.

If imparted by the lips of Christian parents, at the proper time, in the proper measure, and with proper precautions, the revelation of the mysterious and marvellous laws of life will be received by them with reverence and gratitude, and will enlighten their minds with far less danger than if they learned them haphazard from some unpleasant shock, from

secret conversations, from over-sophisticated companions, or from sly and guilty reading—the more dangerous as secrecy inflames the imagination and awakens the passions. Your words, if they are wise and discreet, will prove a safeguard and a warning in the midst of the temptations and the corruptions which surround them.”

In those words of the Holy Father we have the principles upon which to base our answer to the problems enumerated above; namely, who is to do the instructing, in what way, when, and how much information must be given.

### **Duty of Parents**

The Pope declares clearly that it is the duty of parents to win the confidence of their children, so that the children will feel that they can go to them in any and every difficulty without fear of reproach and rebuff.

Unfortunately many parents are either unable or unwilling to do their duty in this matter. Even doctors and married women who have been trained as nurses not uncommonly shirk their obligations. Is it not a shame for a girl to have to say, “I couldn’t speak of that



to mother. It would be easier to tell anyone else." A little boy who in all innocence asked his mother, "Mummy, what do you do to get babies?," received a slap in the face with the admonition, "Never dare ask questions like that again!" One married woman told me that she had never received from her own mother any answer to her questions on the subject except the stock reply, "Always remember that if you play with fire you'll get burnt!"

Children who are left completely unenlightened are allowed to worry over things happening to them which they cannot understand, and which leave them a prey to false shame, fear, scruples, and even to secret vice. They just don't know how to deal with sex-inclinations on a sound and healthy basis as these gradually manifest their claims. A vast amount of preventable human misery is due to this. Or the children will pick up what they can as best they can, getting their information from other and wrong sources, with even more disastrous consequences.

The duty of instructing children in these matters is clearly, therefore, that of the parents.

## Manner of Approach

It is absolutely essential that sex-knowledge be given to children with as little embarrassment as possible, and in a spirit of reverence for God's ways. The more simple, natural, and matter-of-fact such instruction is, with no trace of emotional disturbance, the better. If parents stammer, and seem awkward and confused, the child feels at once that there's something wrong, and tends to avoid bringing up the subject again.

At all costs, the confidence of the children must be retained. No parents should ever ridicule or snub a child for any question on this subject. Every question should be answered, if not at once, the same day if possible, should circumstances require postponing the explanation.

Another thing of the utmost importance is sympathy and understanding in correcting wrong behaviour. If children say or do things we know to be wrong, we must base our correction, reproaches and punishments on their degree of knowledge, not ours. And we must be slow to believe them really guilty. To be severe or to punish a child beyond the child's sense of wrong-doing makes it believe what it

thought to be a slight fault something shockingly bad. That is often the beginning of nerves, unreasonable dread, despondency and despair. Patience, kindly advice, and sympathetic help are much better than severe punishment out of all proportion to the child's sense of guilt. And they are certainly the only way in which to teach love of the virtue of purity!

In answering the questions of children, the Pope insists that parents should give a true, prudent, and Christian reply, thus setting their minds at rest. Earlier in the same discourse he had said, "Do not give them wrong ideas, or wrong reasons for things. Whatever their questions may be, do not answer them with evasions, or untrue statements which their minds rarely accept." When a child asks where babies come from, it is asking the most natural question in the world. If parents tell lies and say that "the stork brought them," or that "they are found down rabbit burrows," or that "one buys them from the doctor who brings them in his little black bag," the children may seem satisfied and put off for the moment. But the lie is eventually discovered, and the parents are not trusted again in such matters. The children henceforth look elsewhere for information.

If, however, explanations to children must always be true, there is no need to explain the full truth at once. Pope Pius XII speaks of instruction "at the proper time, in the proper measure." Sex-knowledge must be given little by little right through the child-life, as each child is ready for it. The knowledge must therefore be given **gradually and individually**. As far as possible, sufficient information should be given to satisfy a child's curiosity without unduly increasing it. If a child asks for more than it is yet prepared to receive, parents can say, "You are too small yet. Ask me another time when you are bigger, and I'll tell you all about it." The child will probably be satisfied with that because it feels that it will know in due course, and will be prepared to dismiss the subject for the time being.

### Stages of Instruction

To the question of when parents should begin to give sex-knowledge to their children, the answer is that they cannot begin too soon. They may, however, wait for the child's first innocent inquiries.

Before the age of five or six, when the child wants to know, "Mummy, where did I come from?" it will be enough to say, "God gave

you to me." And it is important that the child's first thought of its origin should be the thought of God. Consciousness of being "God's gift" to its parents affords the only sound basis for all later instructions.

But from the age of **at least six** onwards the child should have the definite knowledge that it was formed by God within its mother. It is simple enough to say, "When God gives a new baby, He puts it inside mother in a tiny room just under her heart where she can love it and keep it warm and safe until it is big enough to be born." And it can be explained to the child that the words of the Hail Mary, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus," means that Jesus was first placed in the tiny room under Mary's heart until He was able to be born and laid in the manger. This linking of the explanation with words already familiar to the child, and the fact that it has been told where the baby comes from, will generally satisfy curiosity for the time being. The lines along which gradual and continuous instruction in reproductive processes can be given we shall see later.

By the age of **twelve**, children should have arrived by such gradual instruction at the knowledge of the fact that a baby starts from

a tiny egg in the womb of the mother, an egg which would not grow into a baby unless a little seed is planted in it. The mother provides the egg and the father provides the seed, because it is God's plan that the baby should come from both a father and a mother.

Girls by the age of **twelve** should have had their menstrual periods explained to them, the right towels to use and how to adjust them, tying or pinning them on externally and never using internal pads which are good neither from a moral nor from a health point of view. To say the least, the process of adjusting internal pads can lead to undesirable reactions, whilst doctors have warned against unhealthy discharges resulting from them.

By the age of **fourteen** boys should have had explained to them the reason for the awakening of physical feelings and for the possible discharges during sleep from time to time, a perfectly natural thing to be accepted without worry, though never to be deliberately caused.

Both boys and girls should already have been warned that it is wrong and sinful to cause pleasant feelings by rubbing or handling themselves immodestly. If not warned, they may discover for themselves the ability to procure

such pleasures, and develop habits which are easily formed but not so easily abandoned. If unwanted feelings arise, they should be taught to say a prayer, ignore them, and divert their attention to something else or turn to some other and more interesting occupation.

During these years of both physical and psychological changes parents should be watchful, and not leave it to children to ask their advice first. Many children will be too timid to do so. Pope Pius XII exhorts parents to notice "certain unspoken questions" that have occurred to their minds. Wise parents should anticipate their children's difficulties. Addressing Christian mothers, the Pope said,

"When new desires begin to disturb the serenity of your children's earlier years, remember that to train the heart means to train the will to resist the attacks of evil and the insidious temptations of passion. During that period of transition from the unconscious purity of infancy to the triumphant purity of adolescence, you have a task of the highest importance to fulfil. You have to prepare your sons and daughters so that they may pass with unfaltering step through that time of crisis and physical change without losing anything of the joy of innocence, preserving intact that

natural instinct of modesty Providence has given them as a check on wayward passions.”

By the time they have reached school-leaving age, and in any case by the time they have reached **sixteen**, both boys and girls should have had the marriage act explained to them. Some may doubt the wisdom of explaining the facts to them so soon. But the answer to that is that it may already be too late even then. The children may have already found out in wrong and harmful ways.

In this matter, **verbal explanation** is much better than giving the children literature to read for themselves. That, of course, can be given also. But verbal explanations should come first, encouraging the children individually and privately to ask any questions they wish about it. If preparatory training has been what it should have been the children will be quite ready at sixteen for this stage in their instruction, so that they will then be reasonably well-informed as to why God created the two sexes, the differences between them, how He intends them to unite in marriage, and by what actions they will be enabled some day to have children also.



## PART TWO

### *Practical Program*

#### Supervision

This is not a booklet on child-training in general, but one to help parents to teach their children the facts of life. But again and again it has been suggested that such knowledge will be useless without the disciplinary formation of children in every phase of their lives.

Of itself, all the knowledge in the world of sex cannot be a preservative of virtue. Obviously it cannot counteract the wave of sex-crimes against small children, of which we spoke in the opening paragraphs of this booklet. All that parents can do to prevent their own children from being victimized by criminal perverts is to keep them under strict supervision, not allowing them to go out alone, and drilling into them repeatedly that they must not **speak** to, nor **accept gifts** from, nor **go anywhere** with **strangers**. However, proper sex-instruction and due training in the home will at least prevent boys from adding to the number of "criminal perverts," and help to

preserve girls from the loss of virtue through their own later irresponsible conduct. So much at least can be hoped from it, as regards the diminishing of sex-crimes.

That, however, is merely a negative aspect of the subject. What is needed and can be obtained is a sane and balanced outlook, a profound reverence for the provision God has made for the transmission of human life, and a sense of duty in the matter which will prove a guiding principle of the utmost value.

Whilst speaking of training in the home, one point needs stressing, the supervising of the **behaviour between brothers and sisters**. From their earliest years boys should be taught to respect and protect their sisters. Little boys who are trained to extend the courtesy of "Ladies First" even to younger sisters are acquiring habits of reverence for the opposite sex which will not easily be forsaken in later life. And the girls will learn to respect themselves, if parents make clear to them that such privileges are not meant to be food for their vanity and pride. But the whole question of relationships between brothers and sisters, affecting so many aspects of daily life, sensible and Christian parents will have no difficulty in solving for themselves.

## Confidential Talks

As has been said, sex-knowledge must be given to each child little by little right through life. Some of it can be given to children collectively, above all the earliest preparatory ideas set out below. But more advanced ideas can be given only individually, as each child is ready for them.

In the latter case, the child who receives the information must have impressed upon it the duty of talking about such things with parents only, and of never speaking of them to others. There are ways of making even small children understand that the holiest of all powers given to men and women by God is that of being able to cooperate with Him in the production of new life.

Now we don't talk of holy and sacred things in a nasty and vulgar way. They are desecrated by coarse, irreverent, suggestive treatment. To drag such a subject in the mud is an insult to all decent manhood and to all pure womanhood. The boy who has a new bond of trust and confidence with his father, or the girl with her mother, will quickly realize this, and will both appreciate the new degree of responsibility and be loyal to it.

Let us, then, turn to the instructions for children according to their various stages of development.

### **Tiny Tots**

Even with the tiniest of children, first lessons can begin by teaching them to respect their little bodies. Even as you teach them the very names of their members, impress on them the fact that they all belong to God.

“This is your little foot; these are your little legs; that’s your little hand; those are your little arms—and all of it is your little body. And it is you who live in it, though there is someone else who lives in it with you. God is everywhere. There is no place where God is not. So He is in your little body too, just as if He was living in a little house with you. So you must always keep the house nice and clean and sweet for His sake. Even your little hands are God’s as well as yours, so you should wash them whenever they are dirty because He likes them to be kept nice and clean. Say to yourself sometimes, ‘These are God’s little hands as well as mine, and I must keep them clean for Him.’ ”

In other lessons children should be taught not to let their fidgety little fingers play with

any openings in their body. Our eyes and ears and nose and mouth and all delicate parts which lead into our bodies from outside must be protected. A boy once put a pebble into another boy's ear, and a doctor had to be sent for to get it out. But it caused a lot of trouble, and afterwards the boy became deaf. We must never play tricks with any of these special places in our bodies, or handle them.

Children should be taught also not to want to be fondled or petted or cuddled by strangers, or even by friends. "People who always want to fondle children, or tickle them, or kiss them too much are not really nice people, and you should try to keep away from them." Tell the children to show that they don't like it.

The most elementary notions of birth can be given in very simple ways to children up to eight years of age. We put little seeds into the ground, and then the sun comes to warm the earth, and the kind warm earth hatches out the seeds, and up come the baby plants. Hens sit on their eggs to keep them warm till little chicks hatch out of them. Kittens come from eggs too, but the mother-cat keeps her little kitties inside her where they are nice and warm and cosy till they are big enough to

hatch out and live by themselves. Little human babies come from eggs too, and mother has a little nest-place inside her and under her heart where she can love them and keep them warm until they are big enough to hatch out and live by themselves.

### **Children from Eight to Ten**

The story of plant-reproduction can be told again and again to children from eight years onwards, in increasing detail beginning with the simplest references to father-flowers and mother-flowers. Technical terms such as "pistils" and "stigmas," "stamens" and "anthers," and "fertilization" can be used in later stages of the talks. Beginning with plant life will get the children used to ideas of sex-distinction, fatherhood and motherhood, the entrance of the male element through a tube or channel into the body of the female, and the formation of new life, without associated ideas of the more intimate union proper to animal reproduction.

The story can be made as fascinating as a fairy-tale for young children, even for very little ones.

Things which do not live and grow can never have children, or make other little ones

just like themselves who will live and grow too. A red brick stays just as it is. Bricks are not alive. They don't grow. And they can't have other little brick-babies just like themselves. No brick can ever be a father or a mother. But God gave to all things that live and grow a wonderful power—the power to have children who would live and grow up to be just like themselves!

Take the lovely flowers we have in our garden. They live and grow. So God lets them have children too. But you can't have children without a father and a mother. So there are father-flowers and mother-flowers! But how do they have babies? Here is how they have babies.

In some flowers the lovely colored petals grow out from a little fat pod. And in the little fat pod there are tiny white specks called seeds. We could even call them eggs. Now down through the pod there is a little tube or pipe which leads to the seeds. We can call flowers like that "girl-flowers."

But there are other flowers which send up little rods amongst their beautiful petals, and the rods are covered at their tips with a soft golden dust we call pollen. These flowers can be called the "boy-flowers."

Of course the plants in a garden can't walk about and meet each other. But God has His own marvellous way of doing things. He makes the flowers fill themselves with tiny drops of honey so that the busy little bees will come to them, and fly from flower to flower to carry the honey home to their hives. When the bees go to the "boy-flower" their hairy little legs get covered with pollen. Then they fly to the "girl-flower," and some of the pollen falls into it. Little grains of pollen travel down the tiny tube into the seed-pod and there join themselves to the seeds and give them the power to live and grow. So the seed-pod becomes a little nursery where the "mother-flower" has her babies inside her because the "father-flower" gave them life. When the "mother-flower" is ready, the pod breaks open, and the seeds fall into the ground. There they hatch out in the warm earth, and take root, and grow up themselves; and they are just the same kind of flowers as their father and mother were!

Isn't it good that God made the flowers like that! It would be sad if we saw a plant covered with lovely flowers but knew that we could never have another plant like that, and no more of its lovely flowers! Yet that is what



would happen if it could never have any children or baby plants to grow up just like itself. We know how sick people in hospitals love flowers, and how they thank God for them when friends and visitors bring them some. And we should thank God for them also, and for making them able to have families of little plants so that we can always have their beautiful blossoms.

*(On a later occasion, with children up to ten, we can go on from the story of the "flower-babies" to the story of the "fish-babies.")*

We know that plants cannot walk about and meet each other. And of course they don't really love each other because they have no heart and no feelings. But let us turn to the fish who can move about from place to place, though their home is in the water, perhaps in some lake or river, perhaps in the ocean.

Remember that we said that God has given the power to have children to all things that live and grow. Well, then, fish are living things, so they too can be fathers and mothers, and have little baby fishes.

There are "girl-fishes" and "boy-fishes"; but though they have hearts, they never really love each other any more than the plants. Fish

are cold-blooded, and don't seem to have any feelings at all in the way we do! How, then, do they have babies?

When "girl-fishes" grow up, a special pocket inside their bodies begin to fill up with thousands of little eggs. The pocket inside the "girl-fish" is called the "ovary," and a little tube leads from it to an opening underneath her body so that she can let the eggs out when they are ready.

Now, although fish do not love as human beings do, God has put into every "girl-fish" something that all mothers have, a special care for her babies. So when it is time for her to lay her eggs she swims to some sheltered place where the water is calm and lays them in a still pool of water. There she knows that the baby fish will be safe when they hatch out. Then she swims away and leaves them.

But what about the "father-fish"? The fish-children must have a father as well as a mother. Well, here is what happens. In every "boy-fish" there is a kind of sponge which makes tiny little seeds, and that too has a special tube leading to an opening under his body. When the "mother-fish" has laid her eggs, the "father-fish" swims into the pool and spreads the seeds over the eggs. These seeds join with

the eggs and "fertilize" them, or make them able to live and so turn into little "fish-babies." Then the "father-fish" swims away and leaves them.

Soon the little ones are hatched and begin to grow; and when they are big enough they swim out into the deep water, or even down the rivers into the rough ocean to live their grown-up lives.

So God, who made all living things, gave even to the fish the power to keep their own kind of life going. If they didn't have that power, there would be no little fish to take the place of the big ones; and when the big ones had all died of old age there'd be none left! How we should thank God that, when He made living things, He gave them power to give life to other living things like themselves, each kind having its own babies!

### **Children from Ten to Fourteen**

Fish do not seem to care much for their babies, but birds are much better. The "father-fish" and the "mother-fish" seem even to be strangers to each other; but little birds "pal-up," and live and work together, and build a house for themselves and their children when it is time for them to have babies. They make

a nest of twigs and line it with nice soft warm feathers in the midst of which the "mother-bird" lays her eggs. But let us see what they have to do in order to have babies.

The little "mother-bird" has a little pocket inside her body where her eggs are made. It's a kind of small inside "nest," and it has a little tube or passage-way leading to an opening at the end of her body.

Now with birds the chick has to be put inside the eggs before they are laid. It's not like that with the "mother-fish" who lays her eggs first. How then does the chick get inside the egg before it is laid? There's only one way.

Inside the "father-bird" there are little seeds or "sperms" which must be joined to the egg inside the mother before the shell forms round it. For this, the "father-bird" has also a little tube at the end of his body which runs out from it like a small pipe or tiny tap. When it is time to have babies, the "father-bird" flies to meet the "mother-bird," and puts the small pipe into the mother's passage-way leading to the little nest inside her where she keeps her eggs. We speak of that as "mating." Then the father's seeds or sperms travel through to the eggs and join with them. They are then "fertilized" or ready to grow into baby birds.

A shell is built round them, and then the mother lays them in the nest the two birds have built of twigs and feathers.

But there is a lot to do yet. The "father-bird" and the "mother-bird" take it in turns sitting on the eggs day and night for nearly three weeks, giving them protection and warmth, until the nestlings are hatched. Of course, the "mother-bird" does most of the nursing. But the "father-bird" works hard too, looking for food from morning till night, and bringing it home to feed the hungry chicks. And how hungry they always seem to be, squawking and shrieking nearly all the time until they are able to fly themselves and find their own food!

That is the way God gave to the birds the power to hand on life itself so that they would never die out altogether, and leave us without their lovely chirping and singing and all the happiness they give us. And many birds, of course, provide us with food. God meant that too. Faithful hens lay far more eggs than are needed for their own family of chicks, and we may have the extra ones for ourselves. On special days also, as on Christmas Day, or on a birthday, or on Thanksgiving Day, we may have roast duck or roast turkey. But we

couldn't have that if God had not given to all birds the power to have babies, little chicks to grow up just like the "father-birds" and the "mother-birds" they came from in the first place.

*(On a later occasion with children at this stage we can go on from the story of bird-reproduction to that of animals.)*

All that has been said of birds is true of animals also, except that animals do not lay eggs and hatch out their babies in a nest. The babies are really "hatched" inside the "mother-animal."

Inside the mother there is a different kind of "pocket." It is like a bag which is able to stretch and become big just like a balloon when one blows air into it. There is also a tube or passage-way running from this pocket to an opening at the end of the mother-animal's body, just as with birds.

The father-animal, just as with birds too, has a little tube like a small hollow pipe at the end of his body, which can be put into the opening of the mother's tube or passage-way.

When the time comes for babies, tiny eggs are formed in the inside pocket of the mother-animal; then, because all babies must have both

a father and a mother, she meets with a father-animal who joins his body to hers so that the sperms or seeds can go from him through the mother's passage-way to the tiny eggs waiting for them. As soon as the sperms meet the eggs the eggs are "fertilized" or made alive, and they begin to grow inside the pocket, which is a kind of special room like a warm nest in the mother's body. As the babies grow, the walls of their "nursery" stretch and the room gets bigger and bigger to make space for them, until they are big and strong enough to live outside. All the time they are growing the food the mother eats feeds them too. At last, when they are big and strong enough, the passage-way leading to the outside opening in the mother's body stretches wide, and one after another the babies come along it and out into the world for themselves! That is called being "born." All babies that come into the world like that are said to be "born." Those that come out of eggs which have been first laid in a nest are said to be "hatched."

Little kittens and puppy dogs and calves and foals and all other baby animals are "born." And for the first few weeks, because they are too small to find food for themselves, the mother-animal stays with them and feeds

them with her own milk which God made her able to give them until they are big enough not to need that special help any more. So we have often seen little kittens snuggling up against a mother-cat, so happy as they draw the milk from her by sucking away at the little button-teats on her body; and she is happy too, purring all the time, and so proud of her babies.

### **Children from Fourteen to Sixteen**

When we ask where human babies come from, there is much that is the same as with animals, but much that is different. Because human beings have bodies like the animals, God lets them have babies in the same wonderful way. But human beings are not merely animals. They have intelligent souls made in the image and likeness of God. They can think and speak and laugh. They can know and love God. And they have a conscience which tells them what is right and what is wrong. The lower animals do things only by a kind of blind instinct, and they don't understand things as we do.

But let us take the way in which human beings have babies, a way which is almost the same as that of the lower animals.



NOTE: The supposition is that these instructions are to be given privately and personally to children individually. But it is well that both the boy's side and the girl's side should be explained to each child. Partial knowledge can breed unhealthy curiosity, boys wondering about girls, and girls about boys. As much more depends upon how it is said than upon what is said, the instructions should be given verbally, the parents themselves creating the atmosphere of Christian modesty, of respect for human dignity, and reverence for God.

Firstly, how do boys differ from girls? There's no difference in their souls, for their souls are equally made in the image and likeness of God, their true Heavenly Father. And He loves them all alike. Girls are not more pleasing to God just because they are girls; and boys are not more pleasing to God just because they are boys.

The difference between them, then, is in their bodies; and when they are born there is only one way to tell the difference, and that is to see whether the little baby's body is made so that the child, when it grows up, will be able to become a father or able to become a mother. If it is able to become a father, it's a boy-baby; if it's able to become a mother, it's a girl-baby.

But how are their bodies different, so that a boy can grow up to become a father, and

a girl can grow up to become a mother? That we shall see.

We know that, in order to live, we have to eat and drink. We take into our bodies through our mouths perhaps bread and butter, and meat and vegetables, and tea or coffee or cocoa or just plain water, and we call that eating and drinking. Inside us, the body takes all that it needs to keep healthy and strong from what we eat and drink, and what is not wanted is allowed to pass out from it through two special openings lower down. To get rid of the waste-matter is just as natural as taking food and drink in the first place, and children are trained to go regularly to the toilet and develop proper and healthy habits. Waste water comes down through a channel leading to the opening in the front, and food that was not wanted through a channel leading to the opening at the back.

Now it is in the front opening that boys and girls are different, and the doctor or the nurse looks there as soon as a baby is born to see whether the tiny tot is a boy or a girl. If it is a girl there is a very small opening, like a tiny groove, which leads inwards. But if it's a boy, instead of an opening like that, there is a little hollow tube or pipe through which

the water can pass. God wanted them to be like that so that, when boys and girls grow up, they too will be able to become fathers or mothers.

But there are other differences as well. Inside every girl, so that she can have children of her own later on, there are two main things. Firstly, there is a "womb," or a little room or nest in which a baby can be formed. Secondly, there are what are called a pair of "ovaries," or little egg-making organs or glands, one on each side of the womb and connected with it by small tubes or pipes called the "Fallopian Tubes." No eggs are made while a girl is still a little child, but when she is between eleven and fourteen years of age the ovaries begin their work; and after that, every month, a tiny little egg leaves the ovaries and travels through the fallopian tubes into the womb.

That tiny little egg cannot become a baby of itself; for, as we have seen, the babies of all living things need a father as well as a mother; and until a girl is married there will be no husband to be a father to her children. But once the egg has left the ovaries the girl could become a mother if she was married; and if she did, the baby to be formed in her womb would need a special supply of blood

for its own use. So extra blood begins to collect in the sponge-like walls of the womb, to be ready in case it is needed.

If the egg is not "fertilized" by sperms or seeds from a husband, then, after waiting a few days, the unwanted blood flows away, passing through the front opening of the girl's body of which we have already spoken. About every twenty-eight days, after it has once commenced, this flow of blood called "menstruation" takes place. When a girl gets married and is going to have a baby the flow of blood stops, because the baby will need the extra blood for itself.

Now let us turn to boys. Just as in every girl there are two ovaries, one on each side of the womb, for making eggs—eggs so tiny that they cannot be seen by the human eye—so every boy has two special little organs or glands to make the sperms or seeds which can give life to the egg in the womb of the girl he some day will marry. Tubes, like the fallopian tubes in the girl's body, lead from these glands to the finger-like pipe which is generally used for getting rid of waste water. These sperm-making glands begin to work in boys when they are about fourteen, and then changes come over them. People notice that their

voices begin to "break," and become deeper; for they are beginning to become grown-up men instead of the little boys they were.

Now we can see how human fathers and mothers can have their own little human babies. If, when a boy and a girl are grown up, the outside tube from the man's body—called the "penis"—is placed in the opening of the woman's body which leads into a channel or passage-way called the "vagina," the sperms or seeds of the man will pass through from him to her and find their way into her womb; and if there is a tiny egg there waiting, one of the sperms will join with the egg and fertilize it, and a new little baby will begin its life. The baby's life really begins from that moment, and not only when it is born. In fact, it won't be born until nine months afterwards.

In its little nursery inside its mother the tiny child develops slowly. Mother doesn't even feel that it's there until after three or four months; and even then, when she begins to feel its first baby movements, it only weighs about five ounces! After seven months it weighs about three pounds, and at nine months from six to eight pounds. Then it is big and strong enough to be born. So its head moves

down towards the vagina or passage-way through which the sperms came from the father. The passage-way stretches and spreads to let the baby through. The womb—or the “uterus,” as it is sometimes called—begins to press again and again on the little child’s body to help it on its way, and soon the baby is in the outside world, breathing in the air for the first time, and perhaps crying its hardest—which is good for it—and making father and mother ever so happy in their own new little baby!

### **In Marriage Only**

God gave to men and women this power to have children, so it must be good; for whatever God does is good. But this power is meant to result in babies, so it may be used only in marriage.

You see, when babies are born, they need a home to be born into, and they need the care of both father and mother for many years. So people must be married before they make use of this power. If people who are not married were to use this power, they would ruin each other’s lives; and if a baby is born, it will never have a father’s love and care, and will be unhappy, and will feel “in disgrace” all its life.

This power, then, must never be used for merely selfish pleasure. God trusts us with this great gift, and we must respect it.

Why do we eat food? We eat food to keep alive. And why do we want to keep alive? Just so that we can eat food? No. It is so that we can use all the other wonderful powers God has given us, our minds to think, our eyes to see and to read, our ears to hear, our feet to walk, and our hands to work.

Now the sex-act is to keep the human race alive, so that there will be others to use their wonderful powers also, doing and helping us to do many useful and necessary things. Very well, then. But just as we eat to live, not live to eat, and just as we don't have to keep thinking about food all the time, so there's no need to keep thinking about sex all the time. We can know about it—and that's that! Then we are free to think about other things, not bothering any more about it.

### **Healthy Christian Outlook**

Unwanted thoughts and feelings, imaginations and desires that may come to people are not evil in themselves, any more than hunger for food. It's what we do about them that counts. To satisfy them, or intend to satisfy

them, apart from marriage is the sinful thing. We must not want them, nurse them, or give in to them.

We must, then, learn to avoid things which can cause temptations. If temptations come, we should turn our thoughts to Our Lord and Our Lady, say a prayer, and then give our attention to some good and interesting occupation. Every boy and girl should have a healthy interest in games and hobbies. Above all, we must cultivate noble ideals. St. Augustine used to pray, "Dear Lord, make me beautiful within." But beauty depends much on the thoughts we think. Think of Our Lord and of heavenly things, not all day, for you've got to think of other things also, but at least every day from time to time.

God has a special blessing for those who keep their thoughts, and their talk, and their lives sweet and clean always, because of their great love for the Christian virtues of modesty and holy purity.





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