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JMJ

U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls
O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!

+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +

VOL. 4 = THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE
NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Due Chastisement of Children

“Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into exterior darkness.” St. Matthew 22: 13.

Christian parents, you must either raise your hands to punish, when necessary, the misdeeds of your children in this life, or you must see them bound hand and foot and cast into exterior darkness in the next life. Which of the alternatives do you choose? What do you think, children? Is it not better for children to shed a few tears and suffer a little pain now and then here, than to be cast into the gloomy lake of fire, where there is eternal weeping and gnashing of teeth? No doubt you will choose the first. And that is exactly what is necessary in order to avoid the second; that is to say, children must sometimes weep here to escape eternal wailing hereafter. Parents must punish and chastise their children here, that they may not be obliged to see them bound and cast into exterior darkness hereafter. And this is the third requisite for a Christian training. The tongue of the parent must be good, to instruct the children in piety and lead them on to it; the eyes must be good, to keep constant watch over them; and the hands, too, must be made use of to inflict due punishment on them.

I. Parents, who wish to bring up their children in a Christian manner, must chastise them in a parental way, when necessary.

II. Many parents are guilty of grievous neglect in this point.

There is a duty imposed by God on all men, although it is often disregarded, and that is the duty of fraternal correction. By that every one is bound, under pain of sin, to restrain his neighbor from sin, or, if the latter has already sinned, to warn him, and, if he continues obstinate, to accuse him to others who will have more influence over him. This obligation binds him who prudently foresees that he will easily be able to restrain, reprove, or accuse his neighbor, so that his correction will benefit the latter. This is the express command of Jesus Christ: “If thy brother shall offend against thee, go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he listens to you, you have saved your brother’s soul. If he despises your warning, take some one else with you as a witness, and repeat it. If you still find no trace of improvement—”And if he will not hear them, tell the Church” (Matt. 17: 15-17)—”accuse him to his superiors.” Thus a neighbor is bound to tell the parents on their son or daughter, and the master and mistress on their servants, if they see the latter committing any sin unknown to the former. Thus, also, every one who notices anything dangerous in a house, and who prudently hopes to make matters better, is bound to make known the circumstances to those who are able to remove the danger. This is required by the law of Christian charity and fraternal correction.

Christian parents may learn therefrom what a great obligation is imposed on them by God to punish their children in a parental manner, and to chastise them if they commit a fault, or do anything wrong; for if even strangers, who have nothing to do with your children, except that they are their neighbors, are bound to correct them when necessary, I say, how much greater and stricter is the obligation of the father and mother in such a case, since they have given life to their children and are bound to keep them from evil, and to lead them on to virtue and to heaven? And there can be less doubt about this since God has given parents such great authority over their children, and has inspired children with such great reverence and respect for their parents. A father or mother who admonishes a child seriously, or speaks a word of warning, or gives it a single threatening look, can do more to correct it than any one else could by beating it. Without your correction and chastisement, parents, there is no use in anything that others may do. What good can teachers do your children if you tolerate in the latter what ought to be punished? How can the preacher or the confessor induce them to amend their vicious lives if you allow them to act as they please when they are not in church, at the sermon, or in the confessional, and if, after you have noticed a few times that they are given to certain faults, you do not earnestly admonish and chastise them? No, it is all useless; you will never rear good children, no matter how much you preach to and teach them, no matter how watchful you are over their conduct, unless you punish and chastise, in a parental manner, their faults and vices.

If you, Christian parents, wish to perform the duty of rearing your children properly, you must not spare the rod of chastisement when it is useful and necessary. "He that loveth his son frequently chastiseth him that he may rejoice in his latter end, and not grope after the doors of his neighbors. A horse not broken becometh stubborn, and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him lest thou have sorrow, and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth, and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young, and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of the heart to thee" (Ecclus. 30: 1,8-12). Fathers and mothers, mark these words; learn from them how earnestly you must correct and chastise your children, from their earliest years, and that you must not spare the rod on your sons and daughters while they are young, if you wish to be saved from the necessity of applying it to them when they are grown up. In their childhood you must not allow the least sign of anger, vindictiveness, untruthfulness, disobedience, frivolity, or vanity to go unpunished, so that these weeds may not take deeper root and become more difficult to pull up afterwards. There is no doubt that it is indispensably necessary for parents to correct and chastise the faults and misdeeds of their children; and if this were done by all fathers and mothers in a proper manner, the morals and lives of Christians would be far better than they now are; but herein lies the great fault of many parents.

II. The natural love for very young children is so inordinate and foolish with many mothers, and, what is still more surprising, with many fathers, that they fear to distress their children by saying a single cross word to them. They give them everything they ask for; they fulfill their every desire as quickly as possible, so as to avoid the grief and sorrow that the tears of their children would cause them. They are children, they say; we must have patience a little longer. And when the little ones notice that they soon become lords and masters over their own parents, and the latter must obey their every command and slightest wish, like most dutiful servants; for they know how to use the weapons that they have already found to be so powerful, that is, their tears.

Is that the way to love children and bring them up in a Christian manner? Does it not rather tend to make them stubborn, impudent, obstinate, willful, and disobedient, so that it will be impossible afterwards to correct them of those faults? And what are you doing by this over-indulgence but cutting a rod to beat yourselves? For you are rearing up a disobedient son, a willful daughter, who will afterwards occasion you much grief and anxiety. Hence the Holy Ghost says: "Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid," when he grows up; "play with him, and he will make thee sorrowful," and turn thy laughter into

tears. “The child that is left to his own will bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29: 15). How many parents there are who now experience the truth of that, in the torment that they have with their children, because they did not punish and chastise them in their youth! If they had done so the children would now be obedient and respectful to them. As it is, the poor parents come weeping and complaining; but to what purpose? They may thank themselves for the troubles they have. It is too late to do anything now. The tree has grown up crooked, and cannot be straightened.

Again, parents sin by the same foolish love—or shall we rather call it hatred and anger—toward their children, when they correct their grown-up sons and daughters in the way in which the high-priest Heli corrected his children; that is, by mere words. They curse and swear, and threaten all sorts of things to their children, but never fulfill their threats, because they are afraid to cause pain to their dear son or daughter; and yet they know by experience that their threats have not the least effect. What an unchristian and foolish love that is! Now, father, pay attention. You hear from well-meaning friends, you see and know yourself that your son plays truant from school and church, and spends his time running about the streets with bad boys; that he can curse and swear, and gamble, and drink; that he does not go to catechism or sermon on Sundays and holydays; that he never says his morning and evening prayers. Ah, your son is in great danger! Help him at once, or he will be lost forever! Mother, if you see that your daughter is too vain and frivolous in her behavior; that she is too free in company; that she idles about the house, and sometimes in the street; that she is not restrained enough in the company of some friend or neighbor of the opposite sex; that she laughs and jokes with him alone in the garden, or at the house door late at night—then is the time to help your child, for she will otherwise be ruined. Now, what will you do in such circumstances? You may stretch out your hand to save your child, that is, you venture on a mild expostulation, as Heli did: “Why do ye these kind of things which I hear, very wicked things, from all the people? Do not so, my sons, for it is no good report I hear” (1 Kings 2: 23). In the same way you say to your children: My son, that is not right; my daughter, that is not becoming; you must not do that. Well-reared daughters must stay at home, and employ themselves in some suitable work. Have you not heard what was said in the sermon, that children who act as you do are in danger of losing their souls? Girls who act in such a manner will never get good husbands. But what is the use of all that talk? It will not save your children from the danger in which they are. They are sinking deeper and deeper: you must exert yourself to more purpose, and stretch forth your arm to help them; that is to say, you put on an angry countenance and threaten them, saying: Take care, if you do not amend I will punish you severely; I have a rod in pickle for you. But these threats are of no use either. They frighten only for the moment; the children are used to them, and they know that they are only harmless thunderstorms, without lightning. They appear to tremble, but in reality they are laughing at you in their sleeves, and they think: Oh, I have heard that often enough! Thus they are on the point of sinking altogether, and you must chastise them seriously and in a parental manner, until they show signs of improvement, not merely in words, but in deeds. But, alas! The mother says, and sometimes the father, too, although he should have more sense, I cannot bear to beat the darling child! Children must not be ruled with the rod! No? then the darling child must go to ruin, while you, father and mother, look on, and prefer to see your son or daughter howling amongst the devils forever rather than cause them to shed a few tears here on earth by your parental chastisement! Do you think your children will thank you hereafter for such a foolish love? How could they?

Still more foolish are they who not only refuse to punish their children when the latter do amiss, but even do not permit other well-meaning persons to perform this duty. Sometimes a child is punished in school for a fault; it knows that the punishment was deserved, and is very careful not to say a word to father or mother about the matter. But if the parents hear of the punishment, what a noise they make! They call the teacher an unmannerly, coarse, and savage person, instead of thanking him for what he has done. And that, sometimes, even in presence of the children, although the latter would otherwise bear their punishment patiently enough. A fine way that to rear children! Sometimes a neighbor comes with the

best possible intentions, and says to the father or mother, as he is in duty bound: I have heard so and so of your son, or daughter; I myself have seen them act in such and such a way; I thought it right to tell you, that you may correct them in time. Whereupon the parents get quite angry and say; it is not true; it is false; mind your own children and leave me to manage mine.

Sometimes a sensible father wishes to do his duty in this particular, when the mother rushes up, crying and screaming: you murderer, do you want to kill the child? Or, on the other hand, as is also frequently the case, a pious mother is determined to administer due punishment to her child, but she is prevented by the foolish father. Thus the children have a protector, to whom they know they can fly for refuge when they have done wrong, and of course they trouble themselves little about the faults they commit, or about the threats of punishment they hear. I have known children who dared to say to their mother, who was about to punish them: "Wait till my father comes home; I will tell him, and then you must look out." Ah, blind parents, is that the way you have your children? Do you not see that such apparent mildness and mercy is, in reality, the greatest cruelty that you could practice toward them? You drive your unfortunate children to a terrible death, that of their immortal souls, by your false love, since you do not punish them when you ought.

In conclusion, I address you, children. You will henceforth have no very good opinion of me. You will say that I have taken your part very badly today, for I know well that you do not like to hear anything of beatings and punishment. The rod is an ugly thing that you would rather see in the fire than in the hands of your parents. Yet, you may believe me when I say that there could be nothing better for you than the subject of today's sermon, and you will one day thank me for having spoken to your parents, apparently against, but really for your advantage. If your father and mother are too indulgent to you, so that you are thus led into evil ways, you will one day be the first to utter complaints against them, and your complaints will be eternal. Such was the complaint of St. Augustine against his father: "The thorns of lust," he says, "were growing over my head, and there was no one to pull them up." And what will you say, children, if through want of chastisement, you grow up wicked and lose your souls? That you may not then have to complain fruitlessly, do not complain now; but be glad and thank your parents when they chastise you, in a parental manner, for the faults you commit. Kiss the rod as a token of submission and gratitude to your parents for the great benefit they have thereby conferred on you, so that you may rejoice with them in heaven for all eternity. Amen.

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