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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

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Reasons Why Parents Should Bring up Their Children in a Christian Manner

“See that you despise not one of these little ones.” St. Matthew 18: 10.

Children, no matter how small, how poor, how lowly they are, are of such great worth and value in the sight of God that he has given each one of them a prince of heaven as companion, tutor, and guardian; therefore: “See that you despise not one of these little ones,” nor scandalize them; “for their Angels in heaven always see the Face of my Father who is in heaven.” Christian parents, this warning and exhortation is addressed especially to you. Have you children under your care? “See that you despise not one of these little ones.” Ah, above all, take the greatest possible care of them, so that not one may be lost! Parents bring up your children most carefully for their last end, that is, train them to be pious, to love and fear God, so that they may attain eternal happiness. That is required by the natural and the divine law, and the eternal salvation of your children. But if that is not enough for you, I shall give you some more reasons that ought to have even more effect on you than the first.

If you love your children, bring them up for their last end, for your own salvation and happiness depend thereon:

I. *Your temporal happiness;*

II. *Your eternal happiness.*

I. The temporal happiness that parents can expect to have from their children in this life consists in bringing up those children well, so that they are always ready to obey their parents, are always respectful, loving, and helpful to them in every possible way, and think nothing of such importance, after the service of God, as to give their parents consolation and joy. It is the debt that all children owe their parents; it is the greatest satisfaction that parents can seek and desire from their children. Consequently, if we hear of parents who enjoy that satisfaction, we say that they must be happy indeed, since they have such good children.

Christian parents tell me how can you hope to have that comfort and consolation from your children if you do not bring them up, from their earliest years, in the fear and love of God? No, it cannot be; for virtue, piety, and the fear of God alone can make children really obedient, respectful, and loving toward their parents. He who loves God endeavors to fulfill his holy will in all things; therefore, since the will and commandment of God is: “Honor thy father and thy mother” (Exod. 20: 12), a pious child must necessarily be most careful in observing this most important duty. On the other hand, if the son or daughter is disobedient to the father or mother, obstinate, ready to contradict them, fond of murmuring, complaining, and speaking against them, I should say at once that such children are not pious, they have not the fear of God, they are wanting in virtue, inasmuch as they do not fulfill that important

commandment of childlike reverence and love toward their parents. The Holy Ghost says of pious and God-fearing children: “A wise son maketh the father glad, but a foolish son is the sorrow of his mother” (Prov. 10: 1). He who is unfaithful to God is unfaithful to men; he who dishonors God will not show proper respect to his parents; he who disobeys God will pay little attention to the commands and prohibitions of his parents; he who resists God will be obstinate and stiff-necked with his parents; in a word, he who does not fear to offend God will have still less fear of grieving his father and mother.

Now, parents, the conduct of your children depends principally—nay, almost entirely—on you, and on the way in which you train them. Do you wish them to be wicked and impious? They will be so if you are careless of their souls. Do you wish them to be pious and God-fearing? They will be so if you earnestly desire it and train them up to it with care from their earliest years. God will give them more or less grace to lead a pious life, according as you are more or less diligent in fulfilling your duty and in trying to make them good.

What an indescribable comfort and joy it must be for you to be able to say with truth: I am the father, or the mother, of a holy child, who is always obedient, respectful, loving, and pleasing to God and man. Suppose, on the other hand, that, through want of Christian training, your son is wicked, obstinate, unruly, given to drink and other vices, your daughter disobedient, immodest, and leading a scandalous life, so that your children are a disgrace to your family, and will obey neither you nor any one else—I leave it to yourselves to say, could there be a greater trial for a father who loves his son, or a mother who loves her daughter? Especially when the parents must say to themselves: I am the cause of this misfortune, since I did not train up my wicked son as I should have done. I am the cause, because when they first went wrong, I, through a foolish and inordinate love, did not punish nor correct them; I am the cause of it, because I gave them bad example; I am the cause of it, because I did not keep them away from dangerous occasions and bad company!

What a sorrow it was for David, who had not punished his son Absalom for having murdered his brother, to be attacked by that son and driven from his throne, and in the end to have to hear the sad news of the temporal and eternal death of his rebellious child! How great was the grief of Jacob when the news was brought to him that his daughter Dina, whom he had allowed to go out to see the women of the country, was dishonored and disgraced! How great must have been the wailing and lamentation of those parents of whom we read that they allowed their children to go out into the street and mock the Prophet Eliseus, at seeing two-and-forty of their unhappy offspring torn to pieces by wild bears!

But it is not necessary to go back so far. Are there not parents enough nowadays who have nothing but trouble and sorrow from the very children to whom they looked for comfort and consolation in their old age, and to whom a foolish love made them too indulgent? Now they lament and complain: What an unhappy being I am! Could there be a greater trial on earth than what I have daily to suffer from my own children? It seems that my children are actually accursed by God. They cannot be induced to say a prayer, to go to church; I dare not ask them to do anything, or they will do the contrary; if I reprove them, they are sure to have a sharp answer ready. I have taken so much trouble and worked so hard to better their position, and now they are ashamed of me! They are shortening my life! My God! Do I deserve to be thus treated by my own children? Yes, you have reason for asking that question; you have richly deserved to be ill-treated by your children. It is not so much a curse from God as a curse that you have brought upon yourself that you are suffering from. You have cut a rod to beat yourself with. Tell me, how have you brought up your children? What have you taught them from their childhood? How have you punished and chastised them when they committed a fault? What sort of example have you given them? “What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap” (Gal. 6: 8). You have, by your want of care, sown weeds, thorns, and thistles in the souls of your children. You cannot now hope to reap good wheat therefrom, but rather thistles and thorns that will pierce your heart with sorrow. You have sown curses and oaths in their still innocent ears; and now they use against you what they learned from you. You have, by your bad example, sown in their still innocent eyes vanities and follies; what else can you now expect to reap? “Do men

gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” (St. Matthew 7: 16) asks Jesus Christ. No, that cannot be: “What things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap.” Whatever grief or trouble your children now cause you is just what you chose yourself.

And this is the just punishment that the hidden judgment of God decrees against you, oh, parents! He chastises you with that wherewith you offended him. You have offended God by not carefully training up your children, from their earliest years, to fear, obey, and love him, and now he allows them to refuse you the obedience, respect, and love they owe you. Not that your wicked children are to be excused; by no means. They will have to suffer in this life and in the next; but the divine justice wills that you should, even in this life, share in the punishment merited by your children, since you are the cause of their present perverseness by neglecting their early training. You see, then, that it depends on you, Christian parents, whether you are to have joy and consolation, or grief and trouble with your children.

II. In order to be sure of your eternal salvation you must fulfill all the duties that God has imposed on you, under pain of mortal sin. There is not the least doubt of that: “If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments” (St. Matthew 19: 17). The natural and divine law, and the law of charity toward your children, tells you that you are bound to rear them in the fear and love of God. Now, if you consider the matter seriously, you will see that you commit a very grievous sin, incur a fearful responsibility before God, and that thus you cannot entertain any reasonable hopes of salvation if you do not fulfill this duty. To be the deliberate cause of leading into sin immortal souls, for whom the Son of God shed his Blood and died a shameful death, to betray them into vicious habits, to deliver them up to the devil, to deprive them of heaven and drag them down to hell, surely that is a terrible sin! It is the sin of which our Lord says: “Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; it were better for him that a millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea” (St. Matthew 18: 6). If this is true of all men—if, I say, all these people are threatened with eternal woe, and the souls they have betrayed will be required at their hands, how will it be with you, fathers and mothers, if by your evil training or neglect of giving them good instruction, or, what is still worse, by your wicked instructions and example, you lead astray your own children, who are your own flesh and blood? What will you have to say if you deliver up to the devil those whom God has entrusted to you that you may bring them to him? But their good or evil lives, their piety or wickedness, and consequently their salvation or damnation, depend on the training you give them from their early years.

Unhappy parents, what a fate is in store for you! What answer will you make when the great God says to you: I have given you so many sons and daughters, and entrusted them to your fatherly or motherly care, under the strictest obligation of giving them back to me again. Where are they now? Where is your son, or daughter? I find only some of your children among my chosen sheep; the others are amongst the goats; and yet I expected that they would all serve, fear, and love me, and be happy with me forever. It is you who have estranged them from me, and given them over to the demon! And Jesus Christ will say: I have chosen you as my helpers and co-operators in the eternal salvation of your children, for whom I have shed my precious Blood, and you have sold them to my sworn enemy for a miserable price! God the Holy Ghost will also accuse you, saying: I entrusted those souls to your care, after I had chosen them and consecrated them as my temples; and now, through your negligence, they have become dens of murderers! Mary the Mother of God will also be there to accuse you: I had already taken your children under my protection in order to bring them to eternal life; but you, by your culpable carelessness, have allowed them to abandon me, and to become the prey of demons! The holy guardian Angels will complain of you: We have labored day and night to protect our charges and lead them to eternal happiness, and we found no more bitter opponents, no worse enemies on earth, than you, who should have helped us! All the Saints in heaven will cry out against you: We hoped and desired that the number of our companions in happiness would be increased by you; and now, by your negligence and the bad training you have given your children, you help to increase the number of the reprobates in hell! What answer will you make to all this, I again ask you; what judgment, what sort of a punishment can you expect?

Oh, what a fearful number of parents, even of those who have no other grievous sins to answer for, will be lost eternally because they did not bring up their children in a pious and Christian manner! A great number of parents will be lost on this account alone, that they were the cause of the loss of their children. This truth is confirmed by the fact that very little is thought of negligence in this respect, so that hardly any one makes it a matter of confession. Thus, through culpable ignorance, many do not confess it, nor repent of it as they ought. Christian parents who are here present, I hope better things of you. Look upon this duty as the most important one you have to perform. Think every day: The greatest obligation that the married state places me under is to bring up my children piously and with the greatest care, that they may fear and love God. Think: The most important thing for my children is to escape hell and to gain heaven. If that thought does not influence you, then, at least, you must be moved by remembering that your own welfare is at stake, that there is question of your being happy with your children here in time, and hereafter in eternity. If you do not fulfill your duty, nor repent duly of your negligence, there can be no hope of salvation for you. Think, whenever you look at your little children: Woe to me if I should ever be the cause of these now innocent souls losing their innocence and burning in hell, and thus make myself a sharer in their damnation by bringing them up badly! On the other hand, what a consolation and joy it would be for me if I could stand before the judgment seat of Christ with my children and say to my Judge the same words that he said to his heavenly Father: "Those whom thou gavest me, have I kept; and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" who lost himself by his willful obstinacy. I have brought them all up to thy service as well as I could; not one of them is lost. Behold, they are here with me; now I come with them into thy kingdom! Oh, what a consolation! It is what I wish you all, Christian parents, from my heart. May you and your children be happy together forever. Amen.

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