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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

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Good Example of Parents to their Children

“His lord commanded that he should be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.” St. Matthew 18: 25.

Surely, the poor children could not prevent the father from wasting his master's property, and not pay his debts! Why, then, were they to be sold as slaves, and to atone so severely for the fault of another? Because the master probably thought that the children must be like their parents, and therefore would be just as extravagant with his money. Hence, he sentences them without mercy, and orders the man, and his wife and children, to be sold, that the debt may be paid. Christian parents, what will be the sentence of the heavenly Judge, when you shall one day appear before him to give an account of the property he entrusted to your care—I mean the souls of your children, which he will demand at your hands? Oh, woe to you if by negligence in bringing up your children you have squandered this treasure! Where will you find the means of paying your debt, and making good the loss of those souls? And what will be your fate? You have no other sentence to expect but that which was passed on the servant in today's Gospel. You and your children will be condemned to eternal slavery; you, because you were the cause of your children's ruin; they, because they led bad lives, on account of the bad training they got from their parents, and, after the example of the latter, incurred the debt of sin. Therefore, parents, I warn you again, to bring up your children well, and take care of their souls, that they may go to heaven. The means that you must use to that end are salutary instruction in good, constant watchfulness over all the actions of your children, and parental correction of their faults. We have still one point, and that the principal one, to consider, namely, the necessity of the parents living piously and giving good example to their children.

The best and most necessary means to bring up children in a Christian manner, and to lead them to heaven, is the pious life and good example of their parents.

Christian parents, what is your life, your example, with regard to your children? It is a mirror that they look at daily, since they are always with you, and to it they conform their lives and actions. As a general rule, children who take notice of the lives of their parents act well or ill, according to the example given them by the ordinary actions of their father and mother. They become what they see. Children will generally be what they see in their parents. If they see in them vanity, pride, avarice, impurity, vindictiveness, laziness, and sloth in the service of God, they shall become what they see. If they see in them Christian humility, modesty, meekness, chastity, the fear and love of God, zeal and piety, they shall become what they see. They will have the same inclinations and desires that they see reflected in those mirrors. “For if

the first fruit be holy, so is the lump also; and if the root be holy, so are the branches” (Rom. II: 16). As the lump must be like the first fruit, and the branches like the root, so must children be like their parents. Hence, just as bad yeast spoils the bread that is made with it, and as a rotten root infects the branch that grows from it, so it would be an unusual thing if wicked parents had not wicked children. We read that Saul was once amongst the Prophets. “And all that had known him yesterday, and the day before, seeing that he was with the Prophets and prophesied, said to each other: What is this that hath happened to the son of Cis? And one answered another, saying: And who is his father?” (I Kings 10: 11, 12.) As if they meant: We have never heard that his father could prophesy; how, then, can the son have such favor with God that he is amongst the Prophets? The same Saul, when he saw the youthful David fighting in single combat against the gigantic Philistine and conquering him with a sling, could not but express his admiration at such great valor, and asked Abner, the general of the army: “Of what family is this young man descended?” And again: “Inquire thou whose son this young man is.” And at last Saul himself asked David: “Young man, of what family art thou?” (Ibid. 17: 55.) My dear brethren, why was Saul so anxious to know who was David’s father? He had often seen him before, and had had him with himself. Because he was fully persuaded that such heroic courage did not come from nature, but from the bravery of the young man’s parents. For a close resemblance is, generally speaking, to be found between the conduct of parents and that of their children.

Christian parents, what are your children like, especially when they are still young, and are living under your authority? They are like monkeys that imitate everything they see; like parrots that repeat whatever they hear; like little birds that sing whatever tune they are taught. Works speak louder than words. The example of others, and what we see them do, impels us with a gentle violence to imitate them, and that is the case in evil much more than in good things. Now, if it is true that we easily imitate what we see in others, even though they are strangers to us, how much more powerful will not the example of parents be with their own children, since God has given them such great authority and influence over the minds of the latter, that there is nothing like it in the world. Father and mother are visible deities in the eyes of their children, who generally imagine that there can be no one better, or more excellent, than their parents. They think that their father and mother cannot do wrong, and they look upon their very vices as virtues deserving of praise, so that they imagine the best thing they can do is to imitate something they have seen in their parents. Christ our Lord made use of no other proof to convince the wicked Jews that they were not real children of Abraham than to reproach them for not doing the works of Abraham: “If you be the children of Abraham, do the works of Abraham!” (John 8: 39.) And since they did the works of the devil, he calls them children of the devil: “You are of your father, the devil.” Learn from this, Christian parents, what a powerful influence your bad or good example has to corrupt your children, or to lead them on to virtue.

No father, therefore, can be surprised if his sons are given to lying and cheating, to swearing and cursing, to drinking and gambling, if he himself speaks and acts so as to set them an example of these vices. No mother should be astonished if her daughters are too free in their manner, vain and frivolous, when her own conduct is not as it should be. It is to no purpose that parents often exclaim when their children do or say anything wrong: My goodness, where did the child learn that? Not from me, surely! By all means it is from you. You have taught it, not by express words, but by your bad example. The child has heard or seen it before from his father. How could he help learning it, since it was taught in such an impressive manner, by the living example of his parents, that he picked it up very quickly and retains it in his memory? You will never hear a child speak French if his parents and all the servants of the house speak another language.

Oh, how many children there are nowadays in Catholic families who are far more apt to call upon the demon than upon their Father in heaven! How could it be otherwise? They hear nothing else at home; it is the language that their father and mother speak. Oh, woe to you, parents, who thus accustom yourselves to curse and swear! If it were no sin even on any other account, it would be a grievous and terrible one by

the sole fact that you give your children and servants a very bad example, so that they learn to speak the same horrible language. How many still innocent children know how to speak of impure and unbecoming things, even before they are capable of committing sin, although they will afterwards commit sins enough! How can it be otherwise? They have seen these things and heard them from their imprudent parents. Woe to you again, parents, who in any way whatever give bad example to your children! If it were better for him who gives scandal, even to a stranger, to have a millstone tied about his neck, and to be cast into the depths of the sea, what do a father and mother deserve who give scandal to their own children, and lead them into sin by their bad example? And, what is still more to be deplored, not only does the bad example of parents hurt their own children, but its bad effects are often continued down to their children's children, and to all their posterity, who are thus infected with the contagion of bad example. For as your sons and daughters are, parents, so will their children also be, and these latter will propagate still further the evil influence of the bad example of their own parents; so that there will be an almost endless series of sins descending from one generation to another, like an inheritance.

And it is that of which an angry God complains by the Prophet Osee (6: 7): "But they, like Adam, have transgressed the covenant," and violated my commands. But why is the sin of parents compared to that of Adam? What covenant did God make with Adam? It consisted in this, that the consequence of Adam's obedience in observing the divine command, or of his disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit, should descend to all his children and their posterity. So that the sin of parents is likened to his in this, that the latter, in virtue of the covenant made by God, has descended on all Adam's posterity, so also the former, by the influence of the parents' bad example, is inherited by their children and by their children's children, who in their turn follow the example of their father and mother.

It is in this sense we must understand the terrible threat of God: "I am the Lord thy God, mighty, jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, upon the third and fourth generation of them that hate me" (Exod. 20: 5). And how is that? Does the just and merciful God punish innocent children for the sins of their forefathers? Was it their fault their parents led bad lives? What is the meaning of the words. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers, to the third and fourth generation"? Because the children are imitators of their parents, and commit sin after the example of their parents. Besides, one of the most terrible punishments that God inflicts upon parents who lead vicious lives is that he generally permits their children and children's children to fall into the same vices. "The children of sinners become children of abominations" (Ecclus. 41: 8). And again: "But the wicked shall be punished according to their own devices. Their hope is vain, and their labors without fruit, and their works unprofitable; their children wicked, their offspring is cursed" (Wisd. 3: 10-13).

From all this you may see, Christian parents, how necessary it is, if you wish to do your duty, and to bring up your children in a Christian manner for their last end, that you give them a good, Christian, and holy example. Do you wish them to be pious and to go to heaven? Then the first thing you have to do, your first thought, must be how you yourselves are to lead holy lives, and to advance on the right path to heaven, so as, in all your actions, to give them an example of how they ought to live. The Apostle says: "If the root be holy, so are the branches." We see and experience that in many families, in which, from one generation to another, holy souls are found who give an example of a good, pious, and conscientious life to their descendants.

Oh, if I could persuade all parents to lead good and Christian lives, and to induce their children to imitate them, what a great change there would be for the better, what a different appearance the whole of Christendom would present in a very short time! The Church, I have no doubt, would be provided with pious priests, the Religious Orders with holy members, spiritual and secular employments with worthy officials, and all households with pious souls; nay, the whole world would become holy, and would be an earthly paradise, in which God alone would be sought, loved, praised, and blessed!

Therefore, you fathers and mothers, continue, or, if you have hitherto been wanting herein, begin, at least, to do your share of the work! Remember that the salvation of so many of your descendants depends

on your living piously; hence, before every other domestic care, see that you serve God justly and faithfully, and that you encourage your children to do the same by your example. In that way, when you are no longer on earth, you will leave souls there after you who will (oh, what a consolation for you!) serve God; love him and praise him for you, and their service, love, and praise will be imputed to your training and example. Christian parents, if you give your children an example of virtue in this life, they will follow it, and they will follow you also into eternity, where you will all see, love, and praise your God in the everlasting joys of heaven. Amen.

Remember, the good example of meditating on the Joys, Sorrows and Glory of the Holy Family while daily praying the Most Holy Rosary with modesty, attention and devotion!

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