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# **Part I:**

## **The Basics**

- 1. Where Do We Start?**
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- 5. Benevolent Authority in Practice (1)**
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# 1. WHERE DO WE START?

I. Our task is to form the children entrusted to us, to make them strong children: strong in their soul, in their mind, in their heart: Christ-like, upright, faithful, responsible in duty, great in heart.

II. It is important to look ahead, to have a long-term vision, not a short-term “damage control” way of doing things. We tend to leave it to time to bring about a transformation of our children, but time alone does not do it. They are wounded by original sin: this is the real challenge, not so much the evil that is in the world.

There are three great weaknesses in children:

1) **They are irresponsible:** Children are takers, not givers. They take for granted what is done for them; they’re driven by the whim of the moment.

2) **They are self-wilful:** Children have a ton of energy..... for what they feel like doing. They are capable of surprising savagery when things don’t go their way. They have strong wills, but they are only for themselves.

3) **They are centred on gratifying their appetites, especially food:** To deny them will provoke tantrums, dishonesty, etc. *“If they are not formed in strength of character, they will grow up to be large versions of what they were as youngsters. They will remain egocentric, domineering, pleasure-seeking, and more or less irresponsible.”* It is our role to make sure this doesn’t happen.

## III. WHERE DO WE START?

We start with truly loving the child. This makes perfect sense, for the child comes from the love of God and the love of his parents. The child is made for love and to love. He can only be happy if he is truly loved, he can only be formed if he is truly

loved. Sadly, in a world without God, there is not a lot of love. (Example of Amanda Todds, who committed suicide at the age of 15. What is tragic is the lack of love from her parents.....)

## 2. WHAT IS REAL LOVE, HOW DO WE SHOW IT?

Our children have God and they have parents who love them. However, we have to be careful when we talk about love. What is it, really?

### I. LOVE IS AN EFFICACIOUS DESIRE FOR SOMEONE ELSE'S GOOD.

- By definition, it is not centred on self but on another: it is unselfish. The weaknesses of the child can be summed up in one word: selfishness. How can we help him become what he's meant to be? Unselfishness. That starts with us.
- Loving is not something we feel necessarily. It doesn't necessarily make us – or the one we love – feel good or consoled. It doesn't necessarily protect the one we love from pain or difficulty. **It is something that helps him become what he is meant to be.** To love is to be a friend and guardian of the soul of others (from the French words: *amour* (love), *ami* (friend), *ame* (soul)).

### II. HOW DO WE SHOW OUR LOVE?

- If we really care about our children, we set limits: we protect them from their weaknesses, their inexperience, from themselves. So, we must provide a structure that protects the child from himself. Then training to build up that inner strength so that they can reach for the heavens (like the fence, brace, etc. of a young redwood tree).
- While providing a structure, we must provide inspiration, a flame of love for God, for his parents, siblings, classmates. **He will one day be judged on that love.** Real efforts and sacrifices must be required of him and they are

critical if the child is to acquire the higher things that he is destined for. (Ex. Money earned should not be “blown” on candy but should be saved for something worthwhile.) The aim must be high: parents sacrifice for their children; soldiers for their country; priests and religious for souls.... *“The child is truly grown up not when he is able to take care of himself but when he is able to take care of others..... and wants to.”* The child must learn to sacrifice what is lower for what is higher

### III. WHAT MUST BE THE SPIRIT BEHIND OUR LOVE?

- While demanding sacrifice and effort of our children, there must be great goodness. The child does not see beyond the (painful) effort required. Thus, it is very important that they know – not by what we say but by what we are – that we love them. We must be very good to them: take time with them, let them know we enjoy being with them; notice their efforts, their accomplishments. Don’t just notice them when they need to be corrected! Listen to them (this does not mean you give them everything they want!). *“You don’t cultivate a tender little plant with violence”.*
- Of course, correction is necessary, that’s not a problem. The problem lies in how you do it. If there’s hardness, undo severity – and especially if there is scorn, that is when you wound the soul, break the spirit. Patience is the greatest proof of kindness of heart, of charity in the soul. We must not look at the child – or teenager – with our eyes of an adult. We must know where they are coming from, put ourselves in their place.

*“Here are two great truths that will help you to raise your child:*



*1. It is impossible to raise well a child who is unhappy, for he closes his heart, and nothing – neither blows nor caresses – will open his heart and let us inside.*

*2. A child is not made happy by spoiling him or, by giving in to his every demand, or telling him he is right when in fact he is wrong. A child is happy when he is absolutely certain he is loved, but he must be loved for his own sake and for his infinite value before God: without fail, without weakness and without caprice; rather with evenness and constancy of action, with patience and with persistent firmness. That is what it is to love; begin right away with your child.”*

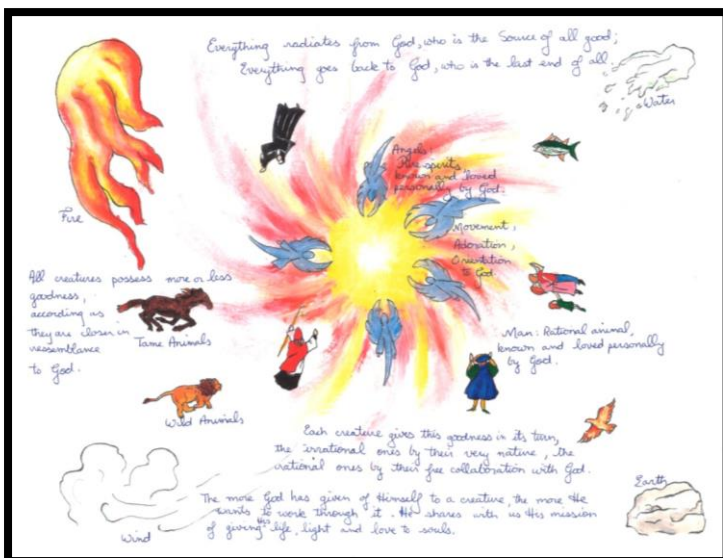
(Fr. Berto: Advice to parents)

**IV. CONCLUSION:** We must not fail our children as so many parents and educators fail them today. Each child is worth a whole universe; one soul, and God has entrusted it to you. Give your all, do it with great confidence, knowing that God will pick up where you leave off.

# 3. BENEVOLENT AUTHORITY, ITS SOURCE

## I. LOVE IS THE ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT IN EDUCATION

- A soul that is deprived of love will be sickly ... like a plant that has everything (good soil, water, fertilizer) except sunlight. Our difficulty is in our understanding of what real love is. Our world makes love = what makes me feel good, comforts me, is sweet, etc. To know what love really is we must look at what God is, for by very essence, He is Love.
- The image below shows God compared to all creation. In the very centre is God, God who is pure white. Everything is contained in God and then He creates outside of Himself. He gives something of His very self (like the sun that gives its own light and warmth). All of His creatures participate in His being and goodness and love, but more or less: there is more of God's being, goodness and love in angels, then in men, then in animals, plants, minerals, etc. God is at the centre of all and every creature depends on God at every moment of its existence.



## II. HOW DOES GOD “LOOK AFTER” HIS CREATURES?

- In some cases, He does it directly; but in most cases, He does it through other creatures. The angels look after men; men must look after other men.... Thus, **charity is absolutely necessary. HERE WE HAVE THE FOUNDATION AND THE MODEL OF PARENTS’ AUTHORITY.** As educators, they share in the fatherhood of God. It is a sacred authority, a sacred power.
- This is the reason why parents can – and should – bless their children (for example, by making the Sign of the Cross on their forehead before they go to bed), because their authority over their children comes from God. He works through them to take care of their children.

## III. THE PARENTS’ TASK WITH THEIR CHILDREN IS A CONSECRATION

- Work as a parent is a consecration; it is not a 9-5 thing, it is a whole life thing! It is the only thing that matters after your own soul, and your own soul’s good is connected to the job you do with your children. What determines your life’s success at the end is where souls are at the end: yours and your children’s.
- Christ is your model. He is light of Light, true God of true God. The parable of the Good Shepherd is the charter of all authority. The only ambition permitted of Catholic parents for their children is that they go back to God, period. Much of the “parenting” that goes on today is in fact selfishness pure and simple. There is a lot of vicarious living through the children (ex. dads’ attitude in soccer for 10-year-olds; beauty pageant for 3-year-old girls).

#### IV. OUR JOB AS PARENTS

- We must prepare our children for what lies before them: we must shape their world view and help them overcome themselves so they can live according to what they have been taught to see is true.
- Parental authority is essential because the child lacks the wisdom and strength to make the decisions that are for his good (ex. food, sleep, etc). This applies even much more to technology: do not underestimate the vulnerability of the immature judgement and the power of youthful curiosity... Decent kids have gone very far off track because the parents were naïve about where their child was going...
- The child lacks the wisdom to see what is good and he lacks the strength to make the right choices. Our modern culture “inebriates”; it does not nourish mind or heart. Instead, it distorts their world view and they no longer see it with Catholic eyes and they’re no longer willing to receive what is being given them in Catholic education.

## 4. WHY WE HAVE A HARD TIME WITH AUTHORITY

### I. THE RIGHT VIEW OF AUTHORITY

- When St. Thomas speaks of authority of parents, priests, and especially God, he says that those who are under this authority can never repay them in strict justice. It is impossible! We can never pay our parents back for what they gave us: they gave us life. We can never be on equal terms with them. We can never be on equal terms with a priest who has given us absolution even one time! And we can never be on equal terms with God, no matter what we do, no matter what we give.
- So what do we give them? **Our gratitude, our love and our service.**

### II. OUR REVOLUTIONARY WORLD

- We have a hard time with authority because of the world we live in. Of course, it goes back much further than that; it goes all the way back to the devil, with his *“I will not serve!”* rebellion against the fatherhood of God, the fatherly authority of God. **Wounded as we are by original sin, we carry this seed of rebellion in us.** This can already be seen in a 6-month old child!
- The history of the world is the history of God reaching out to man with His light, and man refusing and fighting against His light. A revolutionary is one who seeks to overturn the beautiful order of God. The world in which we live is revolutionary and wants to do away with God. For a long time now, our leaders - both civil and religious - have betrayed us; things are upside down, and we can't help but

be deeply affected by this. **Our understanding of, our trust in and our affection for authority are shaken, deformed by our world.**

- We have a hard time believing in authority; we have a hard time giving the benefit of the doubt to the authority when we don't agree or when we don't see the whole picture. When we criticize, second-guess etc., we undermine *all* authority, including our own.

### III. LIMITS OF OUR AUTHORITY

- **Because we have a hard time believing in authority, we have a hard time exercising our own authority.** Somehow, we look on authority as an evil and so we fear to exercise it with strength because we think it will make us unlovable...We must believe in our own authority, not be afraid to say no.
- However, **we must recognise the limits of our authority;** it is based on and must be submitted to higher authority - and ultimately to God.
- It is very important that those under us have not only us as the sole authority over them. We are not infallible! Parents must not be the only authority in their children's lives, for if the parents fail them, they will have nowhere to turn.
- We must do our best: believe in our authority, recognise its limits, and work to form ourselves. If we do this, God will work with us as we are, He will take care of the rest. We can count on this.

### IV. OUR VIEW OF GOD IS FORMED BY THE AUTHORITY OVER US

- We must exercise our authority with **strength, constancy and benevolence.** Your children will not respect you if you

are not firm, but there must also be kindness and benevolence. *“Strength emptied of love is but brutality: love emptied of strength is but weakness.”*(Duhr)

- If we go back and forth like a pendulum according to our moods and emotions, the children will never get a sense of the constancy of God who, no matter what it costs Him, is always strong and constant...and good.
- So what happens? The understanding of God becomes distorted. He is seen either as a tyrant or a teddy bear, but not as a Father. *“Most of us form our idea of God from those we are around the most (parents and teachers) and how they treat us...”* (Fr. Boylon)
- **The Catholic spirit:** God is our loving Father, whose love we can never repay. We are filled with gratitude. It is the spirit of a child, of St. Theresa, of all the saints.

## V. CONCLUSION

**Strength emptied of benevolence: God is a tyrant**

**Benevolence without strength: God is a teddy bear. The soul will neither love nor serve Him...**

**True Love is exercising our authority for the good of the souls entrusted to us, with a blend of strength and goodness.**

## 5. BENEVOLENT AUTHORITY IN PRACTICE, PART I

I. INTRODUCTION: For all of us, the effective exercise of authority is firstly a question of what we are, much more than what we say, and even what we do. The children must be able to look up to us (= we merit their respect by what we are).

II. TO EFFECTIVELY COMMAND OUR CHILDREN, WE MUST:

1) Command wisely (prudently) → Is what I am about to command going to help the child go in the direction he should be going? Passion is never a good counsellor. Think first. Mother and Father must be on the same page. God made man and woman differently on purpose because they are supposed to collaborate. Reflect and discuss.

2) Command judiciously: **Rules should be few, but based on principles.** It is much better to emphasize the principle (of charity, for example) and help to apply it, than to multiply rules/commands. Too many rules make for a “straitjacket” atmosphere, they also tend to blur the child’s view of what really matters. So, few rules, but expressed clearly and logically. Illogical rules send the message to the child that authority is a question of power, of being in a position of power and able to impose arbitrary decisions. It gives a wrong notion of authority, a wrong notion of obedience also (= slavery to a greater power, instead of acceptance of order out of love).

3) Command firmly:



- This does not mean rigidity (this breaks the child) or a nit-picky strictness (this stifles the child), or a cold indifference that seems oblivious to difficulty or weakness (this starves the child). **Firmness = one direction set and followed with constancy, all the while taking into account the reality of a given situation and the reality of the child himself.** Where is he at, what will help him go in the right direction, what will he respond to or not respond to?
- The child desires firmness as a compensation for his weakness and lack of wisdom. Firmness comes from the conviction that our authority is not ours. We represent Someone greater than ourselves. **The authority that we have is not ours and is not for us; it is God's, and it is given to us for the sake of those we are meant to guide and help to go to Him.** Our confidence comes from this, as well as our will to be obeyed. When we command and we believe the necessity of our being obeyed, and we are determined that we will be obeyed, then it is much more likely that we will be obeyed. **A key here is quiet, calm authority.** Anger does not motivate a child to obey; when it is constant, the child just tunes out.
- A child will obey more easily if he knows that “action” follows command (= there must be consequences if he disobeys). However, do not pull out the shotgun to kill the fly! There should be a gradation.
- Also, when we command, we must speak from a position of authority: a teacher, parents represent God and must have in their way of commanding something of the grandeur of God. Don't speak as an equal, as a buddy, as “cool” (or wanting to be), as begging, defensive, trying to convince, etc. *“Outcry in the face of determined authority is like water rushing over a rock: it makes the rock shine but it moves it not at all.”*

#### 4) Command with Constancy:

- We should never command what we have not determined is truly necessary and we should not command – ever – what we either cannot or are not willing to enforce. To do so is to undermine our authority and send a very wrong message about what we expect from our children.
- Children will test our authority; they want to know if the boundaries set for them are strong, if they will hold. *“That which gives way cannot be leaned upon, and the child seeks to be held up. He senses that firmness and constancy on the part of the authority is what will allow him to get his own balance and adjust to the world little by little.”*
- **Constancy is very important.** There is no such thing as “most of the time” in this domain; it is either constant or it is not. Children are like gamblers: they’ll try again and again, hoping it will work. To let it work once will encourage the child to try a lot more.
- **Anger is a bad counsellor, but so is fear.** We must not be afraid of not being loved. Our concern must be for the child, not for ourselves. *“Aim to win the child’s respect, not so much his affection.”* Do not be moved by his tears, pleading, etc. We must not be manipulated: we then send the message that authority is to be obeyed only when it cannot be gotten around. What a terrible message to send to a child! **We cannot be concerned about being loved, but we will be loved if we are the strong, benevolent authority that we ought to be.**

# 6. BENEVOLENT AUTHORITY IN PRACTICE, PART II

## I. SUMMARY OF WHAT HAS BEEN STUDIED SO FAR:

- How critically important love is in raising a child; it is essential to the healthy development of the child.
- The love that is needed is one that mirrors the love of God, for parents and educators stand in place of God. He entrusts a soul to us to do what He is doing, which is forming, elevating, helping a soul become what it is meant to be.
- It is a question of the exercise of authority, which, although difficult, is beautiful and necessary.
- In practice, this authority must be reasonable, firm, benevolent, constant.

## II. SETTING BOUNDARIES

### A. Necessity of Boundaries

- **It's a question of establishing boundaries that help form the child.** (*Ex. Perfect cake batter can only become a cake if it's poured into a pan... Just pour it into the oven but without the boundaries of the pan: disaster!*). We as educators enforce boundaries in order to form the child and prevent deformation of the child.
- **Formation** → create in the child lasting habits, qualities, skills.
- **We also want to form in him a Catholic world view** → a proper understanding of the order of things around him, and where he fits in that order, his place in God's creation and plan.

- **We must prevent** things from coming into his soul that distort, pervert his world view, and pervert his conscience. All of that requires boundaries. If there are no boundaries, he will not become the saint God created him to be; rather, he will be a monster.

## B. Beware of too many Boundaries

- Beware of **too many boundaries**, of putting the child in a straitjacket (You don't keep a 10 year old in a playpen!).
- It is difficult sometimes to know where to draw the line, especially because we live in a world that is in the last stages of revolution. We can sometimes react too strongly against it, but we must also admit that we are infected by it:
  - We are individualists (my good before the common good);
  - We are romanticists (we allow our feelings to reign rather than our mind, and we are very much driven by passion).
- **Because of these difficulties, we lack conviction in making boundaries.** We need to be guided, both in order to avoid being too liberal (not enough boundaries) and to avoid being too reactionary (keeping the child in a greenhouse, too much protection, too much concern about him meeting with difficulty..... But life is a battle, and he must be prepared for it!)
- *“A certain testing is necessary for healthy growth; without difficulties meant and conquered all strength of will is impossible”.* (Fr Duhr) Be careful, however not to throw the child into a battle he is not ready for (Ex. Sex education in Kindergarten).
- It is important for us to continue to learn, to inform ourselves, especially in the domain of technology: the

“Pac-Man” we played as a child has nothing to do with the video games of today!

### III. CONCLUSION

A lot of the boundary set-up is a question of training in early childhood. The child knows what he wants and where he wants to go, but he is incapable of discerning, so we must do it for him. If the early training is done well, most of the difficulties that arise later on (10, 12, 15 years old) will be taken care of.

# 7. THE NECESSITY OF PUNISHMENT

## I. INTRODUCTION

- When a child breaks through the boundaries that are set, **there must be consequences**, because we are forming the child's conscience. If a boundary is set but not enforced, the child's conscience will be deformed.
- In real life, every choice we make shapes what we become, shapes where we go, takes us a step in one direction or another. If there are no consequences to misdeeds in childhood (as far as the child is concerned), then how can we blame the future adult for not understanding that he is responsible for his actions and for the consequences that result from those actions?

## II. HOW WE FAIL OUR CHILDREN

- In practice, we have a hard time here (our heart is too big), so we micro-manage our children to prevent them from suffering any bad consequences. Far from imposing bad consequences on them (so that they learn not to break the boundaries), we prevent bad consequences that others – or simply reality – wants to impose on them. So we fill in for them, cover for them, fight for them..... and they get into trouble. (Ex. of 22-year-old parishioner who understood, for the first time in his life, that his actions had consequences, when he landed in jail at the age of 19..... “O my gosh, Dad can't bail me out of here.”)

### III. PRINCIPLES TO KEEP IN MIND WHEN WE PUNISH:

#### A) Charity:

- We punish because we love. This will make us punish in a certain way. We must never punish out of anger, vindictiveness, a bad mood, etc. To do so is to distort the child's world view. Passion will distort the picture on both sides: **the parent** will tend to be harsh; **the child** will tend to be hard-hearted (because he recognises selfishness in the parent...).
- If charity is motivating us, then only what is necessary to help achieve the end of recognition of the fault and amendment of the fault will be used..... Don't use big guns if a look or a word is enough.
- Charity will also help us discern what will help the child in a given circumstance (as opposed to an automatic, ready-made punishment). The goal is to win the heart of the child to a nobler path. He must see, in the way we correct or punish him, that we are on his side. *"No affection, no confidence; no confidence, no true education"* (Saint John Bosco)

#### B) Justice must prevail:

- We must properly judge the fault when a child misbehaves and the punishment that we give must be proportionate to the misdeed. There is a big difference between mischievousness and malice. The child has to see that it is just; he has to see that he is guilty and that the punishment is proportionate. With a small child (baby to 3-4 years old), it isn't punishment but training.
- True justice has to be equitable → takes circumstances and intention into account (facts, intention, temperament, etc.).

### **C) Mercy:**

- *“Justice without mercy is cruelty.”* (St. Thomas) In reality, we are fallen creatures in a very fallen world, and we will all fall, and we all need mercy. This does not do away with justice, firmness etc., but it excludes harshness, discouraging remarks, etc. which wound rather than help go in the right direction.
- Be especially careful of comments or in any way giving the impression that you have written the child off. There is no better way to break the spirit of a child. There must always be hope of pardon, of redemption, of becoming what he’s meant to be. That’s why prolonged punishments are not a good idea. We must always give the child the opportunity to get back on his feet. Fault-punishment-then move on.
- Our Lord Himself showed us how to correct when He appeared to His apostles after the resurrection. They were afraid because they had failed Him, denied Him... *“Peace be to you...”* and He confided His own mission to them. *“Peter, do you love Me?”*

## **IV. CONCLUSION:**

These are the two principles that we must always have in mind when we punish our children: Charity, that really cares, that is on their side and trying to help them; justice, which takes circumstances and intention into account and gives every opportunity to make good.



## 8. HOW DO WE PUNISH?

**REMINDER:** When a child breaks through the boundaries that are set, **there must be consequences**, because we are forming the child's conscience. If a boundary is set but not enforced, the child's conscience will be deformed.

### BUT HOW DO WE PUNISH?

I. *"Less is more when less is enough."* This means that a small punishment will have more effect if it is enough in itself.

- Sometimes a word or even a look is sufficient, a simple reprimand. **This is a moral sanction.** It must be given properly, at the proper time and in the proper place. *"Nothing is more dangerous than giving medicine at the wrong time."* (St. John Bosco).
- **Never correct a child when he is angry**, and if at all possible do not correct a child publicly (unless the fault was public). This is especially important with teenagers...
- **Proper tone also:** avoid anger, sarcasm, coldness, harshness. *"The seed is not going to come to anything if it is sown - however carefully - on the barren rock, that is upon the human will in a state of resistance."* If by our tone we put the child in a state of resistance, it doesn't matter what we say, he's not hearing.
- **Be careful not to go on and on.** We tend to go on too long and repeat ourselves. Be brief, and stay on his level.
- **Moral sanction can also take the form of praise.** We should look for the opportunities to be positive. (Ex. Fr. Beck's dad telling him, as a 10-year-old, *'Good job. I appreciate it.'* *"It made me the happiest boy in the world to*

*know that Dad was proud of me.”)* A word of recognition of the efforts made really helps the child to grow. So don't be stingy with your praise **when your praise is true.**

## II. WHAT IF A WORD IS NOT ENOUGH?

What punishments should we try, what punishments should we avoid?

### ➤ **Punishments to avoid:**

- **Anything that humiliates or degrades** (kick in the backend, slap across the face). We don't want to destroy a child's sense of honour.
- **General punishments** are to be frowned upon (because unjust) as are religious punishments (saying extra prayers, kneeling for a long time: the child will associate religion with punishment!).
- In written punishments, avoid making it mindless (“I will keep quiet”...500 times!). Have him copy something worth copying (from a good book).
- Avoid sending a child to his room for a prolonged time. That he cool down, yes, but something active is better afterwards.

- ### ➤ **The best punishments are the ones that fit the fault.** This can be by mirroring the fault (a boy breaks his brother's toy airplane: he has to give him his own) or by counteracting the weakness that led to the fault (no dessert for 3 days for a child who steals from a cookie jar).

**It is interesting to see that a child does not resent a punishment that fits the crime and that is given without anger.**

### III. CORPORAL PUNISHMENT:

- What it is: We are not talking about **training** (slapping the 3-year-old's hand when he tries to touch the hot burner).
- Corporal punishment = physical retribution for a bad action.
- Scripture says "*Spare the rod, spoil the child*" but we must be careful. St. John Bosco was opposed to corporal punishment because:
  - 1. It tends to push the one being punished in the wrong direction and 2. It tends to diminish the one punishing in the eyes of the one being punished.
- Nevertheless, corporal punishment can be necessary, but certain conditions must be met, and we must be careful.
  - It must be rare (if a child needs to be spanked every day, it's not working!)
  - It shouldn't be used beyond the pre-adolescent stage (10-11 years old) because the child will most likely not accept it.
  - It must be associated with a certain gravity and dignity, not anger or scorn. It also depends on the child himself: it can be water off a duck's back for certain temperaments; it can be devastating to overly sensitive ones.

# 9. EDUCATION AND RESPECT

## I. INTRODUCTION: IMPORTANCE OF THE VIRTUE OF RESPECT

- **To Respect = to consider worthy of high or special regard.**
- The importance of this virtue goes beyond what one might think at first glance. It is very important, not just in regard to Dad, Mom, Father and teacher. **A mistaken estimation of things leads to ill-advised choices:** a disregard of that which is worthy of respect, the sacrificing of that which is worthy of respect. Ultimately, it can lead to the sacrifice of one's soul, for nothing.
- **A proper regard for creatures other than oneself does not come naturally to the child.** He'll think nothing of trampling a flowerbed to get a football; of emptying a bird's nest to play catch with the eggs; of kicking apart an anthill. On the other hand, they have a disproportionate admiration for things that aren't worthy of esteem: in people, for example, they'll admire size, strength, sports talent, popularity, acclaim... They'll easily be fooled by superficial appearances, not just in people but in things.

## II. RESPECT FOR THINGS

- In forming in the child this virtue of respect, **it is important to start in everyday things**, to establish an atmosphere of respect that goes beyond respect for authority and starts by teaching firstly a proper respect for things.
- This means that **the educator must himself show a proper respect for the things of nature** and to teach that proper regard to children. It's a modern paradox that in the days

of exaggerated respect for trees, animals, etc., there is a blatant disrespect for the things of nature that really matter: human life (babies and the elderly); a blatant disregard for order (in marriage, human relations, etc).

- There is a right and proper respect for nature as God's creatures, God's order. The same goes for material things: food, school supplies, clothes, shoes, toothpaste, etc. Everything in life has its cost and its worth. So you don't want to disregard or discount a lack of respect on the part of the child for anything; to too easily replace what he has broken out of carelessness.

### III. RESPECT FOR OTHERS

- A child is superficial because he has little experience with the reality of life. This leads to a callous disregard for the sufferings he might cause others (animals or people). Because children haven't learned real respect, they will have no regard for the suffering they cause when they make fun of an old person, the looks of a classmate, etc. There may be no malice at all (at 6-8 yrs old) but we cannot just let it go. Charity is the foundation of the Christian life, and even of the social life.
- So a certain education is necessary. **It starts with the educators always showing respect for everyone.** Never ridicule or mock someone else, especially someone who is disadvantaged (the handicapped, for example). *"Exquisite politeness is the mark of respect for a soul"* (Archbishop Lefebvre)
- Then we must actively teach this respect to the child: to do unto others what he would like them to do to him... And to learn to look beyond appearances. This is very important.

#### IV. RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

- We go up yet another level: respect for authority. Respect is a virtue connected with justice: **it is an inward reverence expressed outwardly to those who are burdened with the office of authority.**
- **It is not possible to repay in strict justice one who is in authority** for he carries the burden of looking after our good. Thus we can only do what we can do: gratitude, respect, reverence. That is why the Fourth Commandment says "Honour thy Father and thy Mother"; it is an interior recognition of the debt that can never be repaid, an interior reality that is meant to be shown outwardly, because the outward reality protects the interior reverence.

# 10. RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY IN PRACTICE

**I. INTRODUCTION:** After discussing, last week, respect for things and respect for others, we go up yet another level: respect for authority. Respect is a virtue connected with justice: **it is an inward reverence expressed outwardly to those who are burdened with the office of authority.**

## **II. DISREGARD FOR EXTERNAL RESPECT IN OUR WORLD: A PROBLEM!**

- **There must be outward respect: speech, action, attitude.** Obedience is not enough: there must be a *spirit of respect*. This is greatly lacking in our world. Why? Besides the revolutionary principles and the failure of authority on every level (the Church included), there is a blurring of the distinction between superior and subordinate. This is a consequence of the principles of the French Revolution (liberty, equality, fraternity), and of Vatican II (liberty, equality, fraternity applied in the Church). ***The externals are disregarded, thrown away, making it look like everyone is on the same level.***
- **The same problem can happen in a family.** Child-rearing becomes a democratic process. The child is led to believe that he has a say in everything and is permitted to do everything an adult can do...including deciding what school he wants to go to! So there is no basis for respect, for the adult (= authority) puts himself in a lower position than the child, almost a position of a servant.

### III. HOW TO TEACH YOUR CHILD RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY

- If you want your children to have a real respect for you, their parents, you must always, yourself, **show real respect for those who have any authority over your children (priests, teachers, your spouse!)**. Go out of your way to show reverence to them. To criticize them or even show in action or word that you *doubt them* is to destroy the very foundation on which your child's education is built.
- Secondly, **parents must be respectable if children are to be able to look up to them**; respectable by what you are, the life you lead. Our Lord spoke with such authority because He was so holy, ever united in mind, in heart, in will, with God. We all have the graces we need to become saints and *the children must be able to see that the general atmosphere of the home goes in this direction.*
- **There must also be a certain distance between parents and children**, certain boundaries, a certain superiority of position which is upheld by good manners and external respect; and even a certain limitation of access (well understood!) of place (parents' bedroom) and time (no interrupting a conversation). A certain dignity must be had in dealing with the children which shows firmness and benevolence.

### IV. FRUITS OF THE VIRTUE OF RESPECT

- This virtue of respect has ramifications that go a long way in the formation of the child's character. **Character = an understanding, resolve and perseverance in one's task in life.** *"At bottom, there is only one ideal: to do our job in life, and that means self-surrender and service. There is only one virtue: humble and willing conformity to the will of God"*



(it's a question of submission and respect); *and there is only one sin: defiance of this will of God.*" (Dr Allers)

- **This virtue of respect is meant to permeate every aspect of the child's life.** It gives him the willingness to submit to God and to all those who represent Him; to the plan and Providence of God. Respect for parental authority is what gives the child respect for all authority, and ultimately for God's authority. Further, respect instils in the child a willingness to learn from those who are in a position of authority over him: teachers, priests and the Church.
- We can see how far this goes in society. **All of Christian civilisation and culture depends on this willingness to submit and receive what came before:** to treasure it, to invest in it, to preserve it, to help it to develop, and to pass it on. Country, Church, school, family...Vocations are a fruit of this!
- *"The acid test of education is the turning out of Christian soldiers. To the degree that education does not accomplish this, you must deem it to have failed: school, family, Church...To you, education must mean the medium whereby you seek to mould every child into another Christ, who will Christianise the world and who will, if need be, suffer and die in the performance of that mission..."* (Frank Duff)
- The Church is a great teacher of respect, in her ceremonies, etc.
- Our homes should be kept clean, orderly, be embellished, for they represent the family, for which we must have respect and pride. The children must do their part, be willing to give back, to invest in their family, their school, their Church.



# **Part II:**

## **Education by Stage**

- 1. Infancy**
- 2. The Crucial First Years**
- 3. The Young Child**
- 4. The Growing Child (7 - 12); Formation of the Will**
- 5. Self-Mastery and the Growing Child**



# 1. EDUCATION BY STAGE: INFANCY

## INTRODUCTION:

- **As a parent you have only a certain number of years to form the child**, a “window of opportunity” which must be used well when it is open, for when it is closed, it cannot be opened again.
- **Parents must help their child to realise his potential, and for that they must adapt themselves to his different stages of development.** Each stage has its particular inclinations, tendencies, needs and we can almost consider the child at each stage to be apart from the stage before. The baby is not the same as the toddler of two years old, who is not the same as the 5-6 year old whose mind is awakening, who is not the same as the 8-10 year old whose will is awakening, who is not the same as the adolescent whose heart is awakening.
- The whole purpose of this series of conferences is to use the whole picture; to look at each stage, and to look at **what educators must do to help the child in that stage to live as perfectly as possible, as much up to his potential at that point as possible, so that he grows as much as possible and is prepared for what comes after, and ultimately for life.**

## I. THE PRE-NATAL STAGE: IMPORTANCE OF THE CHILD'S PHYSICAL, MORAL AND INTELLECTUAL PATRIMONY

- One's ancestry has a lot to do with what one becomes. **Parents leave a physical patrimony to their children:** eye and hair-colour, athleticism, talents, health, strength of body come from their ancestors, and particularly from their parents. This is so important because the body impacts the soul.
- **More important than the physical seal left on the child by the parents is moral and intellectual patrimony (on a natural level).** Example: temperament, character traits, intellectual capabilities, moral qualities of soul on a natural level, artistic tendencies etc.
- **Young people must keep in mind that what they do today will impact the lives of the little ones they have tomorrow.** Imprudence with regard to one's sleep, health, work habits, etc. can lead to physical or emotional fragility; abuse of drugs and alcohol will leave a body and soul debilitated. Imprudent relationships can leave the heart scarred, fragile, or no longer believing in love. **Failure to work on ones weaknesses of temperament will leave one unable, as an adult, to control these weaknesses.**
- **There is also a spiritual patrimony** parents leave their children by their example, showing them how to live, how to respond, how to look at things, how to persevere in times of difficulty. We are affected by the virtue of those we live close to.
- **The mother has a very special influence** on the baby, the little child. Between them there is a soul to soul contact; for 9 months, they are one. This is a mystery, an influence that goes a long way, already on the natural level but also on the supernatural level. This is why a mother should take such care of her soul...

## II. THE NEWBORN

- **It is an error to think that education is not important at this stage**, even though the infant is at the mercy of blind instinct, knowing his needs only by pleasure or physical pain. The newborn is like warm, soft wax, very easy to form, and it is the mother who does most of the forming. There are the three particular areas to consider, all of which are educative and which concern formation:
1. **Nourishing the child:** In nursing the child, the mother offers, to her child in a new form, her own blood, and thus continues to enrich him with the riches of her soul and her heart. The necessary weaning from breastfeeding is the first sacrifice required of the child. This weaning should take place not too soon and definitely not too late, for the child gets entrenched in habits that can make him selfish. Around 12 months, if the child becomes too demanding, too whiny, etc, it's time to stop. This should be done gradually.
  2. **Protecting the child:** The infant is a fragile, sensitive being. He must be protected from too much cold or heat, from any uncleanness (mattered eyes, runny nose, diaper area, etc.), from a troubled atmosphere (irritation, tension, noise, agitation, over-zealous affection from older siblings).
  3. **Disciplining the child:** The seed of good habits can be sown in the child from the very beginning, but **at this level it's primarily a question of regularity**. Virtue is developed by repetition of acts, which is why regularity is so important already for a baby: feeding time, bedtime, quiet time, rise time, bath time, etc. The child will very quickly learn what is normal and will acquire a certain stability and peace, a certain sense of security. Lack of regularity is bad for the mother also: she becomes overwhelmed, exhausted, etc.

*“Know when to say no and know how to say no.” “In the long run, your child will be saved by your courage.”* This austerity also applies in matters of affection. Children need warm, strong affection, not petting, stroking, sensual caresses, coddling.



## 2. EDUCATION BY STAGE: THE CRUCIAL FIRST YEARS

### INTRODUCTION:

- The education given in the first years (ages 1-4) sets the tone for what comes later. If the “note” is too low or too high, the child will have a harder time and the “music” will not be as beautiful as it could have been.
- It is a beautiful time. The child’s personality starts to manifest itself. The soul is still completely hidden. Little by little, the child becomes conscious of the world around him. Everything is new to him. Parents must encourage and respect this exploration of the child. At his own level, he is “thinking”, pondering. It is the beginning of his being able to focus in the classroom, work out a problem, pray, etc. later on.

### I. COMMON MISTAKES MADE AT THIS STAGE:

- **Giving the child too many toys:** This will keep him from “discovering” properly and knowing properly. A child with too many toys will “plumb the depths” of none of them; he will be superficial. In education, it is not breadth that matters as much as depth. The toys given should foster effort, focus, observation, etc.
- **If in the 1950’s, too much time spent in a car was considered harmful to the child (because there is too much going by without the child being able to process it, interact with it) what will the screen do???** It harms the child physically, psychologically and even morally. Quote of a neurologist concerning ADD (Attention Deficit

Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder): *“I’ve worked with a lot of kids with this problem. In my opinion, only 2-3% are ‘born that way’. The rest of them, it’s our world that is going too fast, that is too visual; and that is overstimulating them from almost the first day of life. There’s no order, no structure, they’re constantly being bombarded with images, and they just can’t handle it. It creates the inability to focus, and the inability to stay the course in whatever they are doing.”*

## II. ENCOURAGE AND FAVOUR HIS INITIATIVE TO ACT.

- Just as the child wants to explore and to know, so he wants to act: unlimited energy! It is a need of nature. Too many parents crush this initiative by doing things for him. The child loses the ability to learn, to pride himself in being able to help, to find joy in helping, to accomplish something and to experience the joy of accomplishing something.
- **Parents must favour the child’s desire to act and accomplish.** They must also oblige the child to do, even with a struggle what he can do for himself from the youngest age: washing himself, cleaning his teeth, toilet, eating. Only intervene and help when the child has wrestled with it for a bit. **Also, give tasks proportioned to their capabilities:** clean up toys, clean up the mess, simple household chores, watering a plant, feeding the pets.

## III. WORK TO DEVELOP THE CHILD’S SENSES

- Sense knowledge is the foundation of all knowledge (intellectual and even spiritual knowledge). Train the child

to notice things: shapes, colours, sounds, textures, etc. It is so important that the child have a sense of beauty. To put the 2, 3, 4 year old doing math facts on the screen is to put him in an artificial world; he misses out on opportunities for growth in the real world all around him and that are on his level, and that will prepare him for real thinking, and real appreciation for what is higher, all the way to God later on.

#### IV. DEVELOP HIS SOUL AND HIS HEART.

- *“Created in God’s image, man is not truly man unless he possesses himself, that he might better give of himself.”* To possess himself: he knows what he is about, he stands on his own two feet, is master of himself. To give oneself: to be Christlike, making a difference in our world, loving and being loved.
- How is this balance between possessing self (confidence, individuality, knowing what I am about, etc.) and giving oneself (generosity) accomplished? In the growth of the child, there is a going back and forth between the two. The baby is open to discover, goes to anyone, etc. At the “terrible twos” (the explosion of the ‘I’) an egocentric withdrawal into self takes place. The child is solidifying his personality, but original sin makes it go too far.
- The role of the parents during this time is very important. They must direct and instruct, but not crush the child. To let the child take the bit in his mouth and be the master of what he will and will not do is a disaster. He must never ‘score’ over his parents by getting his own way. *“One single instance of successful obstinacy threatens to ruin the whole work and the whole character, so significant is the first beginnings of the revolt.”* (Fr. Hull, S.J) If his selfishness is allowed to grow, he will be incapable of seeing any ideal

but his own pleasure and his own inclinations. The parents must be firm and good, not severe or weak.

### 3. EDUCATION BY STAGE: THE YOUNG CHILD

**INTRODUCTION:** From purely sense knowledge, the child progresses to an insatiable desire to know. It is like the sun rising...There is joy and pride at each new discovery. There is a blind and complete trust in those who teach them.

#### I. THREE MAIN DISPOSITIONS THAT PARENTS MUST HAVE WHEN CHILDREN ARE AT THIS AGE:

- **Patience**, because it takes patient work to awaken the intellect.
- **Truthfulness**, for the child trusts that what the parent or teacher says is absolutely true. Often adults are not truthful with the child. Parents must be firmly resolved to give only truth to the child, for they represent God who is truth. To be dishonest risks to destroy the child's trust, especially concerning higher truths. Rather than feeding them on Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Tooth Fairy, tell them much more incredible and beautiful realities!
- **Youthfulness of spirit:** This means that the parents must go down to the child's level in order to lift him up. The parents' reactions to the child's discoveries are very important (don't crush...). In educating it is more important to dispose his intelligence to receive the truth rather than cramming his mind full of facts. The parents' own sense of wonder and their enthusiasm are important. They must see things with the eyes of the child.

## II. WHAT TOOLS ARE TO BE USED TO AWAKEN THE CHILD'S MIND? FR. DUHR GIVES TWO:

- A. The natural world:** contact with nature is essential for all intellectual formation. It is wondrous in its beauty and incredible in what it can tell a child. The child's home - the house itself, with its history; the traditions bound up with it, etc - teaches him many lessons without him even realising it. They sink in and he sees them much later on. The yard, the garden, the flowerbeds all teach the child the necessity of labour, of work for the development of life (true in all domains). The sky lifts the gaze and makes one think of God. The stars in particular...The plants and animals teach the child that man has a duty to care for and protect creation. It is very good for children to have pets because of this. City living makes this much more difficult...

➤ *"The great evil of our day, the evil which is the root of many others is that men and women have lost the art of finding joy and the resources of life in what is at their very door. They are not trained to find satisfaction in the simple and wonderful things God has made for their delight. They have eyes and do not see what is made to gladden the eye, to elevate the soul. They can neither enjoy themselves sanely nor entertain themselves in a natural way. For joy they can but substitute dissipation and distraction. They know not how to be still. They rush from the natural delights and pleasures, which God offers them in nature, to the artificial and canned entertainment prepared for them by the cynical and commercial-minded men; and to the education they have received, must be assigned the fault."*  
(Fr Duhr)

- **The two great realities which the child must be put in contact with are death and love.** Often, his future will depend on how this is done. Nature gives him many

opportunities to discover them, on a level he can handle, particularly with animals. It is important to respect the child's affection for his pet, her doll, etc. As for death, nature gives the first lessons, and prepares the child for deeper realities. Guidance from the parents is very important here. A child will be marked for life by the death of a loved one if the parents guide him through it, but marked by sadness, not bitterness.

**B. Another important tool in awakening the child's mind is the use of stories.** Our Lord used parables. Stories incarnate spiritual (not necessarily supernatural) realities that are sometimes difficult to explain: friendship, nobility, purity of heart, loyalty, motherhood, fatherhood, love, hate. Stories also shape our worldview, especially the main theme of love vs hate, the great battle between God's love and the devil's hate. *"Fairytales give the truest picture of life... despite errors of detail..." "Fairytales are not responsible for producing fear in the child; he is in intimate contact with evil and the dragon ever since his mind started working (because they are present in the world). Fairytales give him a St. George to kill the dragon with..."* (Chesterton)

- Stories also give the child a joy of discovering the world, for he enters into the story as actively as he reads it. (This is not the case with movies, which are passive and only gives the producer's view.) **The screen is an immersion in the senses and which impedes the development of the soul.**

## 4. EDUCATION BY STAGE: THE GROWING CHILD (7 – 12) FORMATION OF THE WILL

**INTRODUCTION:** The life of man, in God’s design, is meant to be a conquest, even if only to save our soul. We are meant to fight the world and ourself. We must have the will to do it, we must want the good. Educators have the task of forming the will of the child.

### I. TWO GREAT CHARACTERISTICS DURING THIS STAGE:

#### A. Peer Companionship

- Children at this age want to be around other children their age. Recess! They are still superficial – incapable of real friendship – and naïve; they do not realise what goes on in the heart of others. Nevertheless, this peer companionship is very important because it opens the door to true love and friendship later on. Lack of this companionship will be as damaging to the child’s soul as lack of air or food for the body. It will keep him from growing.
- **These companionships must be guided and monitored**, for the child lacks discernment and judgement; he is attracted by the externals. A paternal/maternal presence is necessary. Complete independence at this age is a no-no!
- **Technology is particularly dangerous at this stage.....** 90% of boys (60% of girls) are exposed to pornography before they’re 18; 51% of boys (32% of girls) before they’re 12... Imagine what that does to the child... The Pied Piper world of internet, social media, etc. turns aside the real energy of the child to a false world. **He’s no longer looking at the real world, he’s no longer interested in the real world,**



**he's no longer directing his energies to the real world, so he's no longer growing in his mind or his heart...**

## **B. Need for activity**

- A healthy child is attracted by anything that is life, movement, activity. There is no thought for the effort involved or for the danger either... and **to a certain point this element of risk is formative**. Anything worthwhile involves a certain risk (of failure, of bad consequences, etc.). This desire for action is best channelled, not stifled.

## **II. HOW DO WE FORM A CHILD IN THIS AGE WHERE THE CHILD'S WILL IS BEGINNING TO BLOSSOM?**

- **Firstly a reminder: we are creatures of habit and we'll go in the direction of our habits.** A conscious effort is necessary to go against our habits. Our habits determine whether we have a noble character. The goal of educating the child at this stage is to channel the child's natural energy in order to form good habits, noble, unselfish habits, to form in him the courage to rise above himself, to make an effort, to overcome difficulty. Habits formed at this age (of piety, work, etc.) will almost certainly stay with him for life.
- **There are two particular categories of habits:**

**A. Habits of skill** (practical and artistic) – Cooking, sewing, caring for children, housekeeping, carpentry, money managing, etc. These habits of skill are very important to the child and lack of them “get in the way” of a healthy marriage. They are important – as is the responsibility that goes with them – to permit the child to step into the adult world later on. On the level of artistic skill

(musical instruments, drawing, painting, etc.) this is the perfect age to begin, when the child is so open and eager to learn; they have the energy and focus necessary. The parents must help the child to persevere for he will not do so on his own. These skills will bring him joy for the rest of his life (not the case for sport!). Encouragement, positive affirmation are a big help.

**B. Moral Habits** in order to form the child's character.

- **The child must not be concerned so much about what he has (= habits of skill) as about what he is.** That's what character is; our character is determined by what we are, and **what we are is determined by our choices.**
- In today's world, young people do not have heroes. Instead of putting up for their admiration men and women of genuine character, it is only externals (looks, talents, etc.) that are admired (→ world of sports, Facebook, etc.). **In the end, the only thing we'll take before God is our choices, not what we have, not even our success on the natural level.** So we must train the child's will to make good choices.

### III. TRUE WILL POWER AND HOW TO FORM IT

- A strong will ≠ stubbornness (which is centred on self). Neither is voluntarism will power (*"I will go at this until I drop."*) Why not? Because the will is not directed to a real good but to one's whim, pleasure, pride, etc.
- **True willpower is the ability to command oneself, to forbid oneself a certain satisfaction, to endure something unpleasant for a noble end, for something worthwhile, higher than my whim, etc.**
- **There are two faces to this true willpower:**

**1) Action → drive** (see description below)

**2) Self-mastery → steering and brakes** (to be seen in the next class)

- Action without self-mastery is like running on ice. Action is the work ethic. True work is action done in view of something useful. There must be 1) a goal, 2) a plan to achieve it, and then 3) stick to it. For all three points, the child needs the parents' help.
- Inactivity leads to laziness, aversion for effort. Laziness is not so much a problem of temperament as of the will, the heart, not seeing something worth going for, not having the strength to pay the price to obtain it. **The child at this age is not lazy, but he becomes so if he is not trained properly.**
- The cause of laziness in the domain of work can be twofold: 1) the parents do not give him enough room for initiative, they help him too much... so he gets bored and disengages. 2) The bar is set too high and not enough help is given, so he gets discouraged and disengages.
- To form a healthy work ethic (= reasonable, noble goal; willing to pay the price to attain it):
  - **Begin early and avoid being "helicopter parents"** (hovering, doing everything for the child). Even in his games, oblige him to a certain effort.
  - **Oblige him to constancy** (limited time for his homework...), to go to the end of his task. The staying power and the drive that built the cathedrals will rebuild Christendom in our world. As the children get older, it is good to help them see the goal and to motivate them by positive approval at work well done.

However, action is not enough; self-mastery is necessary.

## 5. EDUCATION BY STAGE: SELF-MASTERY AND THE GROWING CHILD (7 – 12)

### INTRODUCTION:

- The importance of self-mastery goes without saying: the child must be able to rise above, dominate his likes, dislikes, moods, what attracts him. *“Conquer yourself and the world is at your feet.” “To live is to be willing to die.”* One who has not mastered himself is a slave to himself, he is incapable of doing anything that requires effort, incapable of refusing himself pleasure.
- Extreme examples: alcoholic, drug addict; everyday examples: impurity, intemperance in food and drink, etc. *“The worst tyranny your children could possibly experience would be their inability to control themselves.”* (James Stenson)

### I. A QUESTION OF VISION AND OF ATMOSPHERE

- Self-mastery is firstly a question of vision (not of strength of will), seeing things in such a way that one has the desire and the will to rise above because one sees the nobility, the necessity, and what is at stake with that effort. Instead of desiring an easy life, one desires the noble, the good, the beautiful, what is for the good of souls and for the honour of God.
- The child’s whole education is geared to this vision. Life is about a battle for truth, for good, for God, for souls. Everything must be seen in that light. *“Once we have given to our children this vision of high ideals, we can be sure that*

*we have wound them up from the inside, rather than forcing them from the outside.”* So many young people go off track after high school because, not having “seen”, they could not love the Faith and make it their own. They did what was expected of them to avoid getting into trouble, and once “free”, they let it all go.

- Perfect clarity of vision and perfect charity of heart are reserved for the next world, but we must strive for them. The educator must give to the child what he can take at his level and develop it gradually. At this age (7-12), the child can see and consequently can love, practice real virtue. **If the school and the family are not working in the same direction, it’s counter-productive; the child’s soul will not be healthy.**
- If the atmosphere in the home is one of mediocrity, selfishness, sadness, it’s an unhealthy atmosphere for the child’s soul. On the other hand, if it is an atmosphere of striving for excellence, of rising above self, of generosity and joy, the child will respond to this healthy atmosphere.

## II. A QUESTION OF TRAINING

- **Self-mastery is also a question of training, of repetition of acts, of the formation of habits.** Virtue is a question of denying oneself, overcoming oneself for God. **It is a question of love, a question of sacrifice, and it takes effort, effort that our fallen nature does not like, effort that our modern world does everything to help us avoid.** (*Ex. fast food, drive-through, pre-packaged food; lowering of standards in school so everyone passes; everyone gets a trophy in sports, etc.*) Without effort of mind and will, we will not grow at all. If our children are to become masters of themselves, then we must not be soft on them.

- We live in a world of “entitlement” (“I have the right... I don’t have to make an effort, you do...”) formed by upbringing and the spirit of the world. In the upbringing we give our children, we must prepare them to live in a difficult world. Teach them to wait before eating, drinking, etc. A certain sternness is necessary, but it must come from love. When they know they are loved, children love the high bar, they love a challenge. If we don’t give them a challenge, they will follow the path of least resistance.

### III. TRAINING GROUNDS (FOR OVERCOMING SELF) THAT ARE PARTICULARLY APPROPRIATE AT THIS AGE OF 7-12:

- **Table** → it’s a battleground. The child is drawn to overindulge his appetites and this tendency is dangerous because he will not be able to say no to himself later on when other, stronger appetites solicit him. The child must learn table manners (self-control for the sake of charity); waiting to begin to eat until everyone has been served; pacing oneself so as to finish with the others; taking a little bit of everything and eating everything on his plate.
- **Bedtime** → Children have a love/hate relationship with their bed.... A great way to grow in virtue is to get up immediately in the morning and get on their knees: an act of self-denial out of love for God to start the day: simple but very efficacious. A set bedtime is also very good, both for discipline’s sake and because young children need a great deal of sleep.
- **Love of comfort** → cold, heat, cold water, etc. Parents must oblige their children to a certain hardiness. Camp is great for this!
- **Play** → Real play is very formative because the children are trying out adult life (dolls, playing house, building, battles,

etc). Modern toys are not consequences but causes of where our children are today. **When choosing toys for them, always ask this question: What kind of a worldview is this giving to our children?** Video games, even when not immoral, give an artificial thrill that leaves reality uninteresting.

- *“By constructive play, the child will learn to direct his energy, to conquer whatever the difficulties are that need to be conquered, to persevere whatever the defeats, to win with modesty, to lose without jealousy and with good grace, to come to the aid of others, to put his abilities and strength at the service of others. His conscience will become more firm and more loyal and upright. In short, by his play, he will learn to master himself, to overcome himself and by that prepare himself to become – in all the strength and beauty of the term – a man/woman.”*

Games that require self-mastery: statue, the silent game, Capture the Flag for boys, legos, erector set, etc.

**CONCLUSION:** In training our children to discipline and effort, we must show them our love and encouragement. Being loved is a source of great strength.





## **Part III:**

# **Raising the Fathers and Mothers of Tomorrow**

- 1. Joy and Generosity: Raising the Mothers of Tomorrow**
- 2. Strength and Fidelity: Raising the Fathers of Tomorrow**



# 1. JOY AND GENEROSITY: RAISING THE MOTHERS OF TOMORROW

**INTRODUCTION:** In raising a child, our aim is to prepare her for her life task. For a girl, that task is defined essentially by motherhood. Her vocation is to give life of body, soul, mind and heart. Her vocation is to give life its start, but also to nourish it, protect it and render it the most beautiful and happy possible in this world in order to prepare it for the next.

St. Thomas says that it is not essential for a man to be a father. It is one of the things he does, but it's not the essence of what he is. It is essential for a woman to be a mother, in some way. If she's not a mother, she's not a woman. Our Lady is proof of that. She was all woman, the woman; she was all mother, the mother, and it's her motherhood that defines her. If she's the woman that she is it's because she's the mother that she is, the mother of us all.

## I. SO YOU WANT TO PREPARE YOUR GIRLS FOR MOTHERHOOD, AND THAT MEANS CULTIVATING HER WOMANLY CHARACTERISTICS.

If a man to be a good father must be a manly man, a woman to be a good mother must be a womanly woman. So you want to develop the feminine instinct in your girls: their desire to help, to heal, to mother, to mother the little ones, the weak ones, the broken ones, the suffering ones, the lonely ones.

## II. BUT WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL TO AVOID ANYTHING THAT WILL STIFLE THAT MOTHERLY INSTINCT, WILL SPOIL THAT HEART THAT IS MEANT TO BE A MOTHER'S HEART.

- So we have to avoid spoiling her heart by giving in to her every whim and desire, because it destroys her ability to love, to sacrifice for others. It creates selfishness, self-centredness. And so you have to be careful to not let the girl fall into her almost natural tendency to a certain vanity, to this desire to be noticed.
- You want to let your little girl find her joy in bringing joy to others, bringing comfort to others, and she will because God made her that way, that's how He designed her. So in the measure that she's forgetful of self and focused on others, even as a child, she will be happy, and as a wife and a mother, she will be happy.
- Don't let her live in her own little world.
- We encourage them as well to rise above themselves. Girls can be the sweetest things in the world, but they struggle sometimes too, because they are so sensitive, and that sensitivity is meant to help them be good wives and good mothers, where they are aware of the needs, the struggles, the sorrows and the joys of those around them. But that awareness has its price and the price is sensitivity, easily hurt, so easily up and down, for the smallest reason.
- Sharing one's time and teaching them to be aware of the needs of those around her.
- Balance in regards to the time the girl spends on personal needs.

**III. WE ALSO WANT TO CULTIVATE HER FEMININE GRACE, MODESTY, RESERVE IN THE WAY SHE SPEAKS, IN THE WAY SHE ACTS, IN HER DRESS, IN HER DEMEANOUR. WE CANNOT OVER EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF A GIRL BEING FEMININE AND OF A WOMAN BEING WOMANLY.**

- In marriage it is particularly important because it is the woman's femininity that will keep alive the mystical attraction her husband finds in her.
- Also it's her womanliness that will bring out the best in her man.
- *A true wife makes a man's life nobler, stronger, grander, by the omnipotence of her love turning all the forces of manhood upward and heavenward. While she clings to him in holy confidence and loving dependence, she brings out in him whatever is noblest and richest in his being. She inspires him with courage and earnestness, she beautifies his life. She softens whatever is crude and harsh in his habits or his spirit. She clothes him with the gentler graces of refined and cultured manhood. While she yields to him and never disregards his lightest wish, she is really his queen ruling his whole life and leading him onward and upward in every proper path. That's what's meant to be. It's not easy. It requires tremendous generosity, but it's what God had in mind when He designed a helpmate for Adam. Someone who would help Adam become what he was meant to be and fulfil the task he was meant to fulfil and without which help he would not become what he is meant to be or fulfil that task.*

#### IV. SO THIS WOMANLINESS IS VERY IMPORTANT. WHAT IS IT?

- It's a woman with a sense of womanly dignity and especially the dignity of motherhood and we want to guard her from all that will give her a false idea of what her vocation is, all that would give her a false idea of what is attractive in actions, in dress, in demeanour.

- We have to be careful of what is allowed in our homes that sends completely the opposite message to a girl about what she is meant to be.
- It starts with what her mother is. If she sees in her mother a gentle, obliging, caring heart; one who is never over pushy, over demanding, over harsh, domineering, aggressive, that already tells her something.
- I would discourage dress that will allow your girls to act in a way that is not like a lady.
- A certain reserve is part of this feminine nature.
- We have already spoken about the media, etc. that can destroy the sense of femininity, but it is very important to avoid actions that destroy this sense. The question of competitive sports for girls...
  - Competitive sports are good for boys because they need to learn to fight, to go up against bigger than them and overcome it.
  - A girl needs strength too, for she will give birth to children, but it's a different kind of strength, it's a strength that comes from a mother's heart. And the competitive instinct is not part of that equation; even though girls have it as well as boys, we do not want to cultivate that instinct.
  - **Competitive sports are problematic for girls on a number of different levels:**
    1. **Dress:** The girls get used to wearing masculine, not very modest clothes; she'll get used to it, will not be bothered by it.
    2. **The girl is on display in her physical movements,** which is very attractive to the man. Not only is it not a good thing for the girl and her selfless heart, but it can be not a good thing for the boy...
    3. **The more important problem is that they develop masculine traits: physical strength, the competitive, that desire to dominate, aggressiveness, fearlessness.** These

are opposite end of what we are looking for in the young woman: reserve, tenderness, willingness to submit – in a noble way of course. (Ex. Of a mother who played a lot of competitive sports when she was younger: she struggles terribly to overcome the competitive instinct so much developed by her years playing sports. Competitive with her husband, with her children in the classroom, with the other families of the parish: she has to rise above the desire to “beat them”, be always first.) ***“The movement towards fierce competition in sport and its accompanying spirit is pernicious in its effects in the feminine world. It tends to rob girls of what should properly belong to them: modesty, reserve, dignity, grace, tenderness and devotedness to those around them.”*** (Fr. Leen) Why the push for woman’s soccer, why the push for feminine sports? There’s the false principle of modern society that we’re all equal and that no one can be put at a disadvantage. But more than that and deeper than that, it’s because it destroys womanliness, and you see it in the female athletes. (Ex. Of Olympic soccer championship: the athlete pulled off her shirt and ran around: girl power competitive. Also: Olympic swimmer who spat in her competitor’s lane...)

Obviously, we don’t take away all games from our girls, but what we want is games that don’t harm their feminine nature.

## V. THE WHOLE EDUCATION THAT WE GIVE TO A WOMAN IS ULTIMATELY TO FORM THEM FOR THEIR ESSENTIAL TASK, WHICH IS MOTHERHOOD.

That doesn’t mean that outside the home, a woman can’t make a difference, but it must be in a domain that fits her feminine

vocation, that fits the motherly heart: teacher, doctor, nurse, chef, an artisan of some sort, something that fits her feminine nature. A woman can make a tremendous difference outside the home, but not at the expense of her nature, and not at the expense of there where her first opportunity of making a difference is, and that's in the home.

- What they need is that broad overview of life and of our world and of history and especially a broad and profound understanding of human nature.
- Teach her the basic household skills, teach her how to work with children.
- Teach your girl to love the home. As a wife and as a mother, the home will be her nest. It's there that she will raise her children, the vast majority of her time will be passed in that space. She must not be conditioned, by her childhood, to see happiness as something that is had only outside the home.



## 2. STRENGTH AND FIDELITY: RAISING THE FATHERS OF TOMORROW

### INTRODUCTION:

- Just as girls must be raised with their future role of mother in mind, so boys must be raised with their future role in the family in mind: husband and father. *“The greatest challenge a man can face by far is that of raising his children well. Without exaggeration, it can be said that his success or failure in this constitutes his success or failure in life.”* (James Stenson, “Successful Fathers”)
- This requires real prudence, strength and generosity. What we must do is form men who will be manly men; this does not mean macho, etc. This means that he will be willing and able to lead his family with wisdom, strength and benevolence.

Where do we start?

### I. A REAL MAN IS A MAN OF DUTY, SO WE MUST INSTIL IN OUR BOYS A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY.

- **From the time he is little, teach him to take care of his own affaires: this is what a man does.** Example: cleaning up after oneself (toys, etc.), making his bed, etc. To make ones bed perfectly in the morning may seem insignificant, but in fact, it is starting the day out by accomplishing a small task, and one task accomplished, another will easily follow; doing

a little thing right forms a habit that will lead to doing the bigger things right.

- **From the earliest age, give the boy the opportunity to contribute to the family**, and to know that the family is counting on him: help bring in the groceries, shovel snow to keep the driveway open, etc. When they fall short, it is important to show them that there are consequences both for him and for the family. Likewise, on the positive side, **give him a sense of accomplishment when his duty is well done**. It is important for a man to know that his work is appreciated. **For this to be true, the tasks given must be real tasks, real work that fills a void**. By nature, they want to be relied upon, they want to be looked to, to make a difference.

## II. A SENSE FOR THE CARE OF OTHERS; HE MUST LEARN TO THINK OF OTHERS.

- *“The exercise of authority begins with the practise of charity.”* (André Charlier) This makes perfect sense! **The whole purpose of authority is to look after the good of others, and to do so in such a way that the ones taken care of respond**. The father of a family must put his family first: before his career, his recreation, his pay cheque, his time, etc. he must be focused on the other... Boys are not born this way. They are very focused on their projects, their work, etc. and they can be oblivious that they are running someone over.
- **This formation starts with his relationship to those above him and to his peers. Start with how he treats his mother. A boy who does not show goodness and respect to his mother will not be a good husband and father**. It is up to the fathers to give the example here. Train him, too, to be

courteous and gentlemanly to all those he meets, to think of those around him (at table, in games, to see that there is work needing to be done, etc.). When he gets older and has a summer job, make sure he contributes to Church and family (Sunday collection, buying his own school clothes, contributing to family expenses, etc.). He must be trained to give himself without expecting a return.

### III. DEVELOPMENT OF PRACTICAL SKILLS: CAR CARE, PLUMBING, ROOF REPAIRS, ETC.

- The man must be able to stand on his own two feet, able to take care of repair jobs in his home. Young men, teenagers, who have these skills, develop a healthy self-confidence. This starts when he is small with the toys he is given: building blocks, carpentry tools, a motor to take apart, etc. The best is that the boys work with their dad.

### IV. OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

- **As head of the family, he will be responsible for leading. Manly fortitude is a must for a father of a family. A man must keep his head up and stay the course. His wife and children must be able to look up to him and to look to him in difficulty; he must be an anchor.** How to form the boy in this? Competitive sports can be a help; there is a formative aspect there through the discipline, the self-sacrifice, the reversals of fortune involved. We give our all, but it doesn't always work out the way we hoped. Sometimes we fail, but it doesn't change what we have to do: we still give our all, we still keep our head up, we still stay the course. So, in fact, it's much more formative for boys to experience losing

on the playing field than winning. Life is a mixture of both, and sports are a preparation for life.

- **So, sports have their place, but they have their limits.** There are dangers of vain glory, especially when you're in a "small fishbowl", as well as a tendency to exaggerate the importance of athletic skill. A real man is virile, virtuous. **Good coaches realize that it is the formation of the soul that is the real goal.** Too often, boys who are generous on the field do not have the same generosity in the classroom, in the practice of their Faith, etc.
- **So, the real way to form boys to have this manly strength is to allow them to experience real-life struggle, everyday struggle.** It is not a question of making things difficult for them, but of allowing them to face those things that come up in any life, any day. We don't want to baby our boys because if we do, they will grow up to be men who are not virile, and who will be a liability to their family. Instead of having a man to lean on, the wife will have another child to raise.
- Examples: Make less of little hurts, of his little difficulties. Don't let him be a whiner, don't let him "wimp out" when things are hard. Teach him to plough through difficulty. We tend to be too easy on them. So often, schoolwork is not done completely and correctly... They must learn to do their duty whether they feel like it or not. Also, make the boy fight his own battles, even to a certain extent on the playground.

## V. ROLE OF THE FATHER IN THIS FORMATION

- **The father must be involved in this formation. Your son will be the kind of father you are.** *"Like father, like son."* Babying creates a sort of mental weakness; in the face of

difficulty, they crumble. *“It’s too hard! I can’t do it!”* They can do more and bear more than they think they can.

➤ **There are two pitfalls here:**

1) **An overemphasis on safety:** strength can only be developed when there is some difficulty to face. In our world, having abandoned the souls and minds of our children, we protect them from all difficulty and from all physical harm, because that is all that’s left!

2) **Over-protection on a moral level:** parents don’t let their children go on camp, to Crusade days, to a school, out of fear of “bad children” there. Of course, we must not expose our children to dangers they aren’t equipped to handle. However, we must not put them in a little glass house and avoid all struggle either. They need opportunities to fight battles (on their level), to be a leader in the right direction. It’s a balance to be had, and the father must be there to form his boy. In our schools, camps, etc. the momentum is in the right direction, everything helps him make the right choices, but that doesn’t mean he will. However, to keep him from our camps, schools, etc., to keep him from having to make any choice until he’s 18, then having everything thrown at him in a secular college, a workplace, etc., is more dangerous!

## VI. GRACE BUILDS ON NATURE

- All of the above is more or less on a natural level. **If we don’t start on the natural level, grace – which builds on nature – won’t have anything to build on.** However, we must not stop there because our boys are meant to be Catholics, in the service of Jesus Christ. So, **what we’re looking for from them is a magnanimous soul, a greatness of soul:** *“It is the capacity and the desire to surpass oneself; to endure and overcome anything for the sake of another’s*

*welfare. It is generosity, the drive to give the best of what one has for another's sake while expecting little or nothing in return."* (James Stenson) This greatness of soul comes from conviction and an ideal: from the Faith, so we want to give our boys a profound sense of the greatness and goodness of their God, of His Church; a sense of His plan, and of the indispensable role that he plays in the salvation of souls. He must see the beauty of the big picture.

- **He also needs an ideal to strive for, someone to serve, and this is Our Lady.** He gets his strength from this womanly ideal, and the more the woman in his life approaches this ideal, the more she will be a source of strength to him. Teach your boys to love Our Lady; she is the source of their manliness. If they love her, they will be Catholic men, truly a reflection of her Son.

## **Part IV:**

# **Adolescence**

- 1. Understanding the Adolescent**
- 2. The Boy on the Edge of Manhood**
- 3. The Girl on the Edge of Womanhood**
- 4. Teens and Romance**

# 1. UNDERSTANDING THE ADOLESCENT

## INTRODUCTION:

Teenagers have a bad reputation: they can be moody, withdrawn, aggressive, defensive, insecure, immature, rebellious... They are indeed – and critical – years. **Never is the child more vulnerable; never is the work of the educator more delicate or more necessary.** We'll start by trying to understand him; we'll see later on what to do.

## I. NEITHER CHILD NOR ADULT

- **The teen is neither a child nor an adult; he's a mixture of both.** A child lives day to day, unaware of the problems of life, happily dependant on his parents, unaware of who he is or what he is about.
- **The teen, on the other hand, has become aware that he has his own life to live, with all the challenges and opportunities that that entails.** He begins to question; *"Who am I? Where am I going? What am I about? How do I compare? Am I up to par?"* An adult – hopefully – knows what he is about, where he is going and how to get there.
- **The teen lives in a world of doubt: that of his own existence.** Although eager to prove himself, he is full of fear as to whether he will measure up. To an adult, this fear seems exaggerated, but the teen doesn't have this understanding or experience of God's grace and the resultant fear can be paralysing.



## II. UNCERTAINTY: THE MAJOR PROBLEM OF ADOLESCENCE

- Reference: Father Paul Robinson's articles in *The Angelus* (Sept./Oct 2008)
- **This problem of uncertainty is aggravated by today's world:** the teen hasn't been taught to be responsible; he hasn't been held accountable in his work or his studies... We live in a world where it's "trophies for all" and this doesn't prepare for realism.
- **Society as a whole aggravates this lack of formation** by its systematic undermining of all sources of conviction, stability, certainty, starting with the attack on God and truth: "Do what's right for you; believe the truth that's true for you." There is no reality, no certainty, no stability. There's no regard for tradition, for our roots. Families are dysfunctional; authority is undermined everywhere with its constant push for false liberty and thus there is resentment for authority that restrains.
- **All these things leave the teen without a solid ground to stand on, without an anchor to hold on to.** *"...Today's youth have nothing to anchor them: they are set out to sea without oars or sails and told this is a wonderful freedom. Without the moorings provided by a sane society, they swim in a dark sea of uncertainty with no plank to grab on to."* (Fr. Paul Robinson)

## III. THE TEEN BOY

- **He has some idea of what his vocation as a man, as head of a family, will require of him** (= standing on his own two feet, leadership, stability, etc.) **and he tries to move in that direction**, by asserting himself, for example, but he overdoes it. He is determined to prove that he can stand by himself, determined also to cover up the inner uncertainty.

All the traits we see in our teenage boys – at least at times – come from this.

- **Over-assertiveness:** lack of docility, attitude, annoyance (especially toward his mother, especially in the things of the child: “Comb your hair,” etc.); refusal of correction and direction (he has his plan; he will do things in his own way and in his own time); show of superiority by boasting, bullying, drawing attention to himself by noise, sloppiness, etc.; being opinionated, etc. All this is an attempt to be a leader. He is very prone to be argumentative, especially when the adult does not take him seriously. His ideas and his will fluctuate constantly, and although he comes across as strong, as black and white, he is in fact fragile. He doesn’t reveal his inner struggles, partly because he doesn’t understand them himself, partly because a man deals with them himself.
- **Love of adventure:** The teen boy loves every opportunity of risk, danger, where he is able to prove his strength and his competency. That’s why he drives recklessly, accepts any challenge, looks for opportunities to shine. He admires those who shine, who are successful, who have overcome difficulty.
- **Passionate:** The teen boy is both very passionate and at the mercy of those passions (anger, hatred, love, despair, etc.). Consequently, he is subject to violent mood swings. He is full of a pent-up energy that doesn’t know where to go. His love of violent music comes from this.
- **Rays of light:** There is in the teen boy an idealism, dreams of greatness; he wants to make a difference. He demands a lot of himself and of those around him. **He’s not interested in love in the sense of being mothered, but love is beginning to become a reality for him, because he’s beginning to want to give more than to receive.** He’ll go to great lengths to prove his love, but by acts, and usually to

someone or something outside the family. There is something beautiful and noble in the teenage heart that is on track, and we have to recognize it and tap into it.

#### IV. THE TEEN GIRL

- What about the girl, with her vocation to motherhood? **God has given her a great heart, a heart tuned in to the sufferings and needs of all, and yet during her teens, a heart that is in immaturity.** She doesn't yet know – concretely – what her purpose in life is. She wants to love, to give of herself, but she doesn't yet know how or where, or to whom (to God in the religious life, to this or that man in a family...).
- **All of that sensitivity is there and she tends to be very sentimental and emotional.** Women are driven by their feelings in large part because that helps them to give themselves continuously to those who look to them for care and affection. **A girl in her teens is driven by her feelings to the extreme; she is very much affected by what is going on inside.** She is constantly seeking external affection; she never goes anywhere by herself; girls tend to cliques. Girls look for a special friend who will be theirs alone, and they are not willing to share.
- **Prone to daydreaming:** She dreams of what will be and she feeds her dreams with the books she reads and the music she listens to. Her dreams tend to be unrealistic. She expects more of love and of life than they will give in this world.
- **Melancholy:** With the tendency to being sentimental and emotional comes a great insecurity, again because she doesn't yet know what she will give herself to, what her mission is. Hormones do play a role in the resultant

melancholy, but so does the fact that she is as yet too focused on herself.

- **She tends to vanity.** Why? Because she needs reassurance that she is loveable, that she has something to offer, that she is pleasing to others. She tends to be extremely critical of her appearance. She's very willing – too willing – to hear that she is beautiful, admired, treasured... *“Never is she so vulnerable to the world as in her teen years.”* (Fr. Duhr)
- **Rays of light:** There is already in the teenage girl a mothering instinct, a willingness to give of herself even at great cost and suffering. She can be beautifully generous. She's ready to give, to love God, to love those who will profit from her love. She'll go to great lengths to please or to do good to one she loves, or even to hide what is inside so as not to bring down those around her.

## V. SOME PRACTICAL ADVICE

- So, there is in the teenager a real beauty, a real foundation on which to build. **It is very important for educators not to lose sight of the good that is there,** and not to let the external weaknesses that are there to cause us to “write them off”. Parents and teachers easily overreact to teen difficulties, either by “writing them off” or by confronting them overzealously...
- **It helps for us to remember what we were like as teens,** to look for the good that is there. Remember the uncertainty; they need to believe in themselves. **There's nothing that helps a teen more than to know that someone he/she looks up to believes in him/her.**
- When we respond in kind to a teen's anger, rudeness, incivility, we put ourselves on his level and forget that he is not completely in control of himself, not an adult. Shouting matches only aggravate the situation. **We must see where**

**he's at and take him from there**, making allowances that we would not make for a 10-year-old who is not facing the same difficulties. On the other hand, with a teenager, you might require more than a 10-year-old, in the area of responsibility for example.

- **But however we respond, it is the spirit with which we do it that is critical: there needs to be that combination of firmness and kindness, steadiness.** To be over-authoritarian is just as detrimental as to be over-permissive. The teen must cross the bridge from childhood to adulthood – there's no other way – and it takes time; you can't flip a switch on it. **Impatience and lack of understanding on the part of the educator simply increase the lack of trust and insecurity on the part of the teen.**
- Never is greater generosity required of a parent or teacher than when he is dealing with a teenager. **Many a time the teen will break your heart, but a parent who loves doesn't stop loving because of that.** His goal is to help the child become an adult, to weather the storm, to overcome, and he stays with him throughout, even though things are hard, even though the heart can take some real blows at times. The Sacred Heart is the perfect example and model for us in this.

## 2. THE BOY ON THE EDGE OF MANHOOD

*“When God put man in a garden, He girt him with a sword, and sent him forth a free knight that might betray his Lord.” (G.K. Chesterton, “The Ballad of the White Horse”)*

All the drama, tragedy and all the glory of the human condition is there: God made man free, free to love or to betray, and on the line is his honour and his eternity. So it is with the boy on the edge of manhood. He is already in battle for the good, the true and the beautiful, but will he fight valiantly, be faithful...? There is an element of uncertainty, uncertainty which is the defining characteristic of adolescence.

Let us take the three main faults that tend to manifest themselves in the adolescent boy and look at them more in detail and how we need to respond to them.

### I. OVERASSERTIVE / REBELLIOUS

He will seem to lack openness; he will be withdrawn from his family; will show annoyance, drag his feet, deliberately provoke, argue: all of this is part of him trying to stand on his own two feet.

**A. Preliminary note:** Mom has to step back a bit and Dad has to step up a bit. A teenage boy responds much better to masculine authority than to feminine authority. He’s looking to be a man, so that is what he responds to. He needs an authority that is caring, but in a more virile way than before. Dad tends to be less protective, less focussed on detail, less indulgent.

**B. Do not treat your adolescent boy the way you did when he was 8 or 10 years old, because he no longer is!**

- He is truly on the edge of manhood, and he responds to being treated like a man, and not like a child: in the way we command him, correct him, explain things to him, talk to him, we should treat him as a young adult. To treat him like a child is a vote of no confidence to an adolescent who is struggling with doubt. So he will respond either by withdrawing into his shell, content to remain dependant on his parents, a child – which is not good; or he will rebel... So we must treat him as a young man, remembering that the goal is to prepare him to leave the nest.
- *“The educator will not manage a positive influence on a teenage boy by opposing the natural need for independence that is characteristic of his age, but rather by taking advantage of that need to develop in him a greater sense of responsibility.”* **We need to give him greater independence as he gets older, but it should be in the measure that he is being given – and responding to – greater responsibility.** A man who is independent (= standing on his own two feet) but not responsible is a disaster.
- **A boy responds to being given real responsibility where he can make a difference,** has the weight on his shoulders. He wants to do something that means something; he is aiming for greatness. If he succeeds in bearing such and such a responsibility, he will grow in self-confidence; if he fails, it will help to ground him, make him realize that he still has to grow. So whether it be in the home, the school or the parish, we should be looking for concrete opportunities for the boy to shoulder responsibility and make a difference.

- **As you give him responsibility, you give him also increased independence**, firstly because he needs a certain independence to carry out the responsibility given to him. You want to give him the sense that you have confidence in him, confidence in his ability, in his integrity, that you believe in him, that he will do the right thing, that he will man up to the difficulties. A boy responds to this confidence just as he responds to a lack of it.
- **This doesn't mean that you don't impose reasonable limits on your boy, even as you give him more independence.** He needs a certain liberty, but a controlled liberty; it will depend on his age and what he is manifesting to you. It is not a question of not trusting him but of being aware that he is still young and can easily make bad choices / decisions because his judgement is not yet formed. There is a distinction here that is not easy for the teen to understand. By the limits that you place on him, you are trying to form him to think before he acts (example: curfew), to protect him from his rashness. In the measure that he manifests maturity in following these limits, in that measure you can give him more independence.

### **C. Conversation**

- This is the key to helping the boy develop a genuine sense of confidence, confidence which is justified by an accurate view of things. There is no real education without conversation (in the sense of genuine listening, thinking, eventual questions, etc.). Often, the best with the boy is informal conversation (at meals, around the campfire, etc.), and in our world this is very rare, because it takes real effort, and very often we have nothing to talk about.



- The goal is to help your boy – little by little – to see the reality of the human condition, of this world, in all of its different aspects: human nature, politics, family life, religion. You want him to accept that things aren't' as black and white as he might think, and to act accordingly. *“We can only acknowledge and please God by acknowledging and conforming to His reality, which is the only reality. In every sin there is an intellectual fault, a trick bought into, wherein an evil is considered good, where reality is not seen or is pushed aside in favour of a lie, of something which is not reality. Satan is happy to have us avoid reality because then we destroy ourselves in a false world. Getting real is an indispensable condition for become an adult, as it is an indispensable condition for saving ones soul.”* (Fr. Paul Robinson, Angelus October 2008)
- We have never done learning to see reality, but our job as adults – who hopefully see it more completely than our teens do – is to help them come to see better, and we do that by talking to them about real things.
- We have to avoid two traps: 1) Direct opposition to his over-assertive, black and white mentality (“You don't know your head from a hole in the ground.”) 2) Letting him say and think whatever he wants without responding, leaving him – in fact – to his own reality.

#### **D. In practice...**

- It is very important to remember where the adolescent boy is coming from: he's trying to find out who he is, what he really thinks, what he wants from life. It's a given for adults because we have lived a bit; it's not a given for a teen, who must discover the truth and make the truth his own, and decide for himself to live according to the reality of things.

- So, we don't want to be defensive or come down on him for his seemingly know-it-all attitude, bold provocations. An adolescent will only let himself be convinced by one who takes him seriously and who will discuss on equal footing with him (= man to man, with a certain respect for him trying to see reality). It takes tact, patience and understanding.
- Don't be afraid to use someone else – teacher, priest, older brother, adult friend, etc. – to help shape the Catholic vision of your boy. What you want him to draw out particularly from these conversation is what is noble and manly (but without sermonizing!). A boy who, in his adolescence, has this conviction that that is what he's striving for, and who has the courage to strive for this virility on a human level, will be a good Catholic man. He will be a true follower of the Man – who is also God – Our Lord.

## II. LOVE OF ADVENTURE / RASHNESS

The adolescent boy is dreaming of great things and he looks for any opportunity to prove that he is strong and confident, and he's not above a certain disdain, a certain boasting if he sees someone who doesn't seem to manifest the same confidence or strength, or superiority in any way. How do we respond?

- Allow opportunity for and even encourage adventure (boy's winter camp; a midnight campfire; downhill ski; water skiing, etc). Do not be a wet blanket. A spirit of being light-hearted and allowing adventure goes a long way with a boy.
- Encourage contact with worthy role-models. The young teen is looking outside his family for someone to look up to, who will tell him what it is to be a real man. Try to arrange

this contact, but discretely, either in person or in books (“The Long Walk”, “An American Knight”, etc.)

- Look out for your boys’ friendships. Because the teen boy is unsure of himself, lacks confidence, doesn’t know yet where he is going, he will easily follow someone who does seem confident, popular, etc. It’s not a question of hovering but of being wise and of knowing your boys’ friends. Have them over: you can learn a lot about your boy by watching him in a group: does he lead or follow? Does he set the tone, or does he follow whatever tone is set? Does he back off when things are closer to the edge, or does he go right along?

### III. PASSIONATE NATURE OF THE TEENAGE BOY

His mood swings tend to be violent, it doesn’t take much to provoke them, he can be at the mercy of anger, a crush on a girl...he’s restless, energetic, always wants to be doing something. How do we respond to this?

- Be careful not to overreact to an emotional crisis. Passion provokes, feeds passion. The ship in a storm needs an anchor; the passionate boy needs steadiness, not a counter wind.
- Do not comfort him in these crises. “Poor baby” is not the message to send to someone whose crisis chiefly is a question of doubt in himself. You’ll only feed the doubt.
- Do not explain to him why he’s in a crisis; just take it in stride (easier said than done!). when the crisis is over, act as though it didn’t happen. He’ll have learned from it.
- Make sure that he keeps busy. “An idle mind is the devils’ workshop.” The boy’s engines are revving: if there’s no road to travel, no load to haul, he’ll go anyway, but not on the right track. So keep him busy, especially with work. A real man’s stability and sense of manhood is centred on – on the

natural level – his work. That’s why it’s so hard for a man to be laid off, without work. The boy on the edge of manhood will find his centre, something that is an anchor to him, a source of stability, in his work. If he doesn’t have any work, he’ll just be a rollercoaster. Sport can be a help, but with real physical workout which helps diminish the pent-up emotions/ energy, etc. it also helps him overcome himself, discipline himself, rise above himself.

- Constructive hobbies are very important for young people, they give them something to put their energy into. Be careful not to dismiss as a waste of time something that is simply not to your taste, or that is not as constructive as you would like. (it is better for a boy to be passionate about a sport than about video games...which are not constructive at all!). “The worst of disasters for an adolescent is that he be passionate about nothing.” (Fr Duhn)
- Give him space...and yourself space. Don’t hold him to that same home interaction that you would hold your 10-year old to. Ex do not oblige him to join in family board games, walks, etc. Invite him, make him feel welcome, but don’t oblige him; he tends to look at things like that as childish, and he wants to be a man. Sometimes too, when he withdraws into his cave, leave him alone; that withdrawal is what men do when they are trying to come to grips with something. This doesn’t mean you let him hibernate in his room all the time, but a certain space is good.

Conclusion: All of this is not easy. However, if we stay the course with these principles in mind, the storm of adolescence – although violent at times- will eventually dissipate, and from that storm will come new life. The boy will grow in to a good Catholic man.

### 3. THE GIRL ON THE EDGE OF WOMANHOOD

#### INTRODUCTION: WOMAN'S STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

- **The adolescent girl can only be understood in the measure that we understand womanhood: woman's nature, woman's role as a mother.** In order to fulfil this role of forming and nurturing life, she has been given by God great gifts. *"God has made her a mother. How? By entrusting to her the fostering of love, of beauty and of truth. By enlarging her heart and making nurturing easy for her. By instilling in her a desire to serve, to be helpful, to be accommodating. She it is who will safeguard the sanctity of the home and bring beauty to it. She it is who will set the example: kindness, gentleness and love. She it is who makes the home a home"* (Susan Potts).
- We could speak further of the woman's instinct for self-giving, self-sacrifice; of her ability to see where a soul is at and how to help that soul; her sense of what is lacking, of the needs of all; her intuition to know exactly what it will take to make things better; that womanly touch that gives joy and beauty, a sense of harmony and tact that enables her to adapt to persons and situations the most varied. All of these gifts are directed towards souls; her sanctity in giving herself to help souls, to draw souls to God.
- **But with these gifts is the flipside of the coin, a great weakness as well:** tendency to vanity, inordinate desire to please, tendency to jealousy, to inordinate and imprudent activity. These weaknesses can make her, instead of a

sower of happiness, a sower of destruction and misery and even death. Her foundation, especially in her teen years, will determine what she will be. These teen years are uncertain; she dreams of her future life and love, but it is idealistic, unreal, and it makes her everyday life unattractive and undesirable. She is also very emotional, changeable, moody, melancholy; behind it is a great desire to love and to be loved. She is very sensitive.

- **There are also obstacles to the educator's action:** she is generally not as open as the teen boy is about her dreams, fears, worries. She is also hyper-sensitive to what she takes as criticism; she tends to take any adult intervention as "he/she doesn't like me", as a personal affront. The great dominance of her emotions makes it difficult to reason with her. The teenage girl is thus "*a flower of no little beauty but not a few thorns,*" to be handled carefully for the sake of the flower.

## I. HOW TO FORM AND ELEVATE THE ADOLESCENT GIRL SO THAT SHE BECOME A TRUE AND BEAUTIFUL WOMAN:

**A) Understand her:** Be steady, don't overreact.

- Things are not as bad as she makes them out to be. Don't take her outbursts at face-value, for this will confirm her fears that she does not measure up and never will. Don't tell her that you don't see where she's at.
- She needs encouragement ("*Don't you see how hard I try?*"); patience, tolerance. We don't need to see everything and control everything. Any show of impatience will be taken very hard (like the slightest weight put on a

sprained ankle). *“An always inviting but discreet – low-key – and steady influence will win out in the end, almost always”* (Fr. Duhr).

- A harsh intervention will just bring out the tiger’s claws. More than any other time in her life, she needs her parents, her teachers, priests to hope in her: hope that there is goodness in her, that she is loveable, that God’s grace will triumph in her and that she will become what she is meant to be. We show this hope by not overreacting and by being patient, by acknowledging the good that is there. Positive comments go a long way towards helping a girl stay the course in the storms of adolescence.

**B) Work to enlighten her,** especially as to the dangers that threaten her.

- She easily will play a game and be in over her head without realising it. The best way to protect her from the dangers is to help her realise, understand what she is, what a woman is, to present to her the beauty, nobility and grandeur of womanhood. This true womanhood makes what is false and artificial be seen in its true light.

**II. WOMAN’S PRESTIGE AND NOBILITY AND JOY ALL LIE IN HER CAPACITY TO LOVE.** Love is the very foundation of her soul, her reason to live, the need and law of her life. There are three aspects in the love: devotion, sacrifice and collaboration.

- Devotion: a virginal love
- Sacrifice: a maternal love
- Collaboration: a spousal love

The woman’s love is designed by God and her joy of life is geared towards those three states.

**A) A Virginal love: Devotion to a cause of goodness and truth.**

- We are speaking here of a greater and higher motherhood than that of nature. It is not only the religious who love in this way; every woman is meant to love in this way. It is the love of the ordinary woman, but it is not an ordinary love, because it is based on Our Lord's words: *"As long as you did it to the least of my brethren, you did it to Me."* So, the girl looks beyond the bonds of nature (family, friends) and looks to give herself to anyone who is in need, who is struggling, fallen broken, sad, anyone who needs a womanly touch, a woman's heart.
- It is important to train your girls to be noble-hearted, other-focused, to seek to help others for their sake and not for the response that they get. Not yet having a family/religious order of her own, it is at this time of her life that she is meant to look outward, to make a difference in the greater human family.

**B) Maternal love: the love of sacrifice.**

- Motherhood is all about sacrifice of the body, of comfort, of time; its about spending oneself on another that he might grow, that he might attain to the fulness of body, mind and soul.
- All selfishness, all self-seeking blocks motherhood; it prevents another from becoming what he could otherwise become; it can even prevent him from existing... The mother must die to herself, sacrifice herself in order to give love.
- This motherhood goes beyond the family, it goes out to the poor, the weak, the little. Our world desperately needs motherly hearts; we live in a world which is scientific and



machine-orientated, incapable of compassion but capable of immeasurable destruction, (e.g., the abortion industry).

**C) Spousal love, love of collaboration.**

- She is man's helpmate, his collaborator, not only physically, but also in the broad sense as well. Woman collaborates with man to make Christendom; all that is good and lasting is the fruit of masculine strength and feminine love.
  
- The woman's part lies not in her beauty, her charm, her ability to manipulate and get things done, striking as all these may be. No, the woman's part, the feminine element is charity, the gift of self. If the woman's collaboration is necessary in the natural order, it is even more necessary in the supernatural order. The work of the redemption began with a woman's collaboration with God, a woman who said "Yes", who was good, faithful, who gave everything. The new Adam collaborated with the new Eve to give new life. This work of redemption, begun with the collaboration of a woman, can only continue in the same way, with a woman's collaboration with Catholic man. The woman's role is to –with man- give Christ to the world, to merit the graces needed by souls.  
It is important that girls have a sense of what God destines them to, and how beautiful it is.

**III. FORM HER: PHYSICALLY, INTELLECTUALLY, MORALLY, RELIGIOUSLY**

**A) Physical formation:**

- The soul depends on the body for the accomplishment of its tasks (like the musician depends on the violin). The well-being of the body is not without influence on the well-

being of the soul, especially for women because they are such delicate, complex and fragile creatures.

- The girl must take care of herself correctly without scorn or neglect of her body: to imprudently weaken her body is to rashly weaken her soul. This easily happens: often teenage girls don't eat enough (they're too conscious of their figure) or sleep enough (lack of discipline, or they're doing too much, are spread too thin).
- However, there must not be either an over-attention, an idolatry, where one is focused overmuch on the external beauty, figure, appearance. *"An adornment that is both proper and dignified while neither excessive nor meticulous, is always an indication of a noble and refined soul."* (Fr Duhr)
- The girls' physical formation should make her capable of enduring a certain amount of physical discomfort: heat, cold, effort, fatigue; there should be a certain feminine "toughness", strength. This physical strength (=stamina) will make for a greater nervous strength, and in the long run, a greater strength of soul.

#### **B) Intellectual formation:**

- Feminine intelligence is different (not lesser or greater) than masculine intelligence. *"The woman's intelligence, as her entire soul, is maternal. The woman sees the universe with the eyes and the heart of a mother."* (Fr Duhr) She will be drawn to abstract, philosophical, mathematical, etc. studies only insofar as they permit her to manifest her mother's heart (by teaching, nursing, etc).

- So, a woman's intellectual formation should be in function of her maternal vocation: she should have a profound understanding of the human condition, of the human heart, of the soul. She should have a broad understanding of Catholic culture, with an ability to pass it on to her children.

### **C) Moral Formation:**

- We form the girl in function to what God made her to be: a woman. She is on a mission of charity, whether it be to her family, the convent, a hospital. Her ideal must be to love without thought of herself. In the measure a girl seeks herself – attention, her own advantage or well-being – in that measure she ceases to be the vessel of charity that she was designed by God to be.
- She must be taught to treat people and things with respect, gentleness, mildness, for this will be essential to her as a mother, nurse, teacher. She must be shown – by real-life examples – how certain feminine faults can harm others to the depth of their souls: the sharp tongue, the cynical remark, the mockery, the excessive sensitivity, the jealousy...She must be encouraged to be an angel of charity and of joy in her real world because charity is only exercised in the real world: their family, their school, their friends, their class, and you point them towards efforts in that world, real-life charity. You will thus prepare her heart for her mission of tomorrow.

## **IV. SUPPORT HER AS SHE MAKES HER WAY IN THIS DIFFICULT TIME OF HER LIFE.**

- Be good to her: She is made to love, but she must justly be loved. Of special importance is the father's love: the firm goodness, the strong kindness, the manly love that only he

can give. A father can do nothing greater to strengthen his daughters than to love and respect them; there's no better way to assure your daughters of their own self-worth. This gentle strength of love must be given on a consistent basis. *"When a girl cannot trust and love the first man in her life- father- what she is missing cannot be replaced by money, friends, teachers, social workers, etc."* The plan of God is that the father be there to play an essential role in the formation of his daughters as well as of his sons.

- **See to it that her surroundings are conducive to womanly growth.** A woman is made to adapt herself to the reality of her circumstances, this is a gift from God. A woman is what her surroundings are, this is especially true of a young woman, the teenage girl. She will quite naturally model herself on her surroundings, adopt their habits and life principles; her conscience will be moulded by them, as will her way of seeing things, her opinions. That is why a good Catholic home, school, friends are so important. Our world is anti-woman, anti-mother; it makes true womanhood, true motherhood look boring, unfair, drab, etc. when in fact it is the sole path to dignity and happiness.

**V. CONCLUSION:** In this world in which we live, it is quite a task to raise a young woman to be a true beautiful woman. But we see it happen. So we stay the course with great hope and great peace, but also with a clear mind, a generous heart, ready to pay the price to help young ladies become what God created them to be.

## 4. TEENS AND ROMANCE

*In “Romeo and Juliet”, Friar Lawrence cautions Romeo against ill-advised, immoderate love, the result of which can be loss of body and soul. The play also shows the consequences of the failure of authority to lead, to prevent what was in fact easily preventable. The parents of Romeo and Juliet were so lost in their feud with each other that they didn’t even notice what was happening under their very eyes; Friar Lawrence, although saying all the right things, was too weak to enforce them.*

This is a good backdrop for this conference.

### I. WE GO BACK TO THE PRINCIPLES

#### **1) Our decisions must be ruled by REASON.**

➤ This is simply a question of nature. We are creatures of reason, it’s what makes us human, it’s what makes it possible for us to love. Reason deals with reality: of things, of the reality created by God, of the plan of God. It is a plan that must be seen and respected. Failure to do either will mean disaster, both in life and in eternity.

#### **2) Our decisions must be ruled by CHARITY.**

➤ This is on the level of grace, of supernature. We are children of God; our hearts belong to Him first, and we are meant to care about His other children, especially those to whom we owe a special love: spouse, children, best friend, priest, students.

➤ So our decisions are based on reason and charity, and we apply these two principles to the relations between the sexes. God’s plan is a beautiful one, a masterpiece of benevolence. He knew that man needed woman, that it was “*not good for man to be alone*”. There is a complementarity

between man and woman that is an amazing reality of God's creation. This complementarity is on every level and completes each of them, strengthens both. Those two who are meant to help one another, are also meant to love one another, and **that love is beautiful when it is real, and in the proper context and in the proper time. But the fruit must be ripe. If it is picked too early, it risks being bitter, and never ripening.**

## II. WHAT IS THE REALITY REGARDING DATING?

- **Love by its nature (= the reality of love) requires a complete gift of self, forever.** *"You ... only you ... forever"* (Bishop Sheen) **A young person does not have the right to ask for another's heart when he is not ready to, or cannot commit his own in return,** e.g. when the vocation question is not settled, when he has college ahead, etc. Dating is about finding a good spouse; it is not a game, a conquest, a popularity contest. It's not about "meet my needs, entertain me, show me affection, etc." It's not about doing what everyone else is doing.
- **When one dates, there's a certain danger to heart and soul involved, and so there is required a proportionate reason to justify it. Both partners must be ready, willing and able for marriage in the relatively near future:** not so far away that this relationship is going to cause undue danger to either one, or not so far away or so impossible of so out of the question that in fact it's not real at all. There has to be a realistic prospect for marriage. If these conditions are not met, then we are dealing with something that is dangerous ... and also unfair.

### III. WHAT ARE THE DANGERS OF PREMATURE INVOLVEMENT?

1) **“Impurity, which is the most obvious, but probably not the most significant problem.”** (Fr Themann)

➤ When intimate friendship is reached long before one is able to get married, the passions at that point are engaged, a deep affection is there, there is a danger; it is very difficult to keep things where they need to be. It requires a nobility of heart and prudence on the part of both. **Nobility of heart cannot be present in a relationship based on feelings** (“He makes me feel better ...”), **or if there is some, it will be outweighed by weakness.** The emotions and passions are driving things instead of reason and charity. And so, from the beginning – **when there’s a premature relationship – we have the ground prepared for unreasonable decisions throughout.**

➤ With the inordinate time lag between 1) we have a serious relationship here and 2) this relationship can now go to the level of engagement/marriage, and with the lack of reasonability from the start, few couples will spiritually survive. It is almost inevitable that there will be, at a given point, grave sin.

➤ **That grave sin has consequences,** not only because it further weakens souls that are already weak and opens their eyes to the vulnerability of the opposite sex, **but it also blinds – passion blinds.** The couple in this situation is no longer able to see what they need to do to extricate themselves from the situation they find themselves in; they cannot see even if they are meant for each other, whether there is even love there at all, because at this point, it is not love that predominates. **They are saying “I love you” and at the same time they are doing grave harm to the one they are saying it to.** This is a very bad foundation for a future marriage. Down

the road, there may be mistrust and resentment, for down the road there will be clarity.

**2) More significant than impurity, in a way, premature romantic involvement leads to a loss of focus on what matters, on priorities.**

➤ Just as one plucks the blossoms from very young fruit trees so that they don't put all their energy into just a few fruits at the expense of their own overall growth, so premature love stunts real growth because all one sees is the loved one, while studies, family, responsibility are left as not interesting. The young person puts all his energy and potential for growth into that little blossom that looks so beautiful, and he no longer grows himself.

**3) Another danger: loss of vocations.**

➤ Once the heart is settled on "that one", it is very difficult to raise the gaze and to offer oneself to God, because the current involvement provides instantaneous satisfaction, while offering one's soul to God is a long-term endeavour without immediate satisfaction. The idealism of the young person is snuffed out and the emotions obscure God's will and make it difficult to choose Him. How many priests, Sisters, monks have we lost through premature love?... How different would our world be if these young people had responded to their vocation ... which they never knew they had.

**4) The probability that one has not chosen well.**

➤ A youngster of 16, 17, 18 years old is struggling with adolescence – this is normal. He/she is not mature, not looking at the right things ... and so **the right questions are not asked** ("Will he make a good husband and father? Can I



entrust my soul and my life to him? Will he lead my family?") because there is simply the feeling that everything is perfect.

➤ **This lack of reasonability and charity brings about a disregard for God's plan.** The only focus is "He/she likes me." But the chances of it working out are very slim, and in the meanwhile it can't go anywhere without grave danger. And meanwhile, there is a frustration in the young person's heart because he wants it to go somewhere, and a frustration that everyone is against him: parents, priest, teachers, school. Too often, it leads to a broken heart.

➤ **Adolescent boys and girls are looking for different things:** the girl is looking for affection; a good boy is looking for a star to latch onto (very unrealistic) and a boy without a noble heart is looking for a trophy or self-gratification.... A broken heart is a wounded heart. It will be harder to trust, to believe in yourself, to resist temptation, for you are more vulnerable. What often happens is a pattern of broken hearts, for the young person seeks someone to fill the void. He/she ends up being weakened rather than being prepared for marriage.

## IV. WHAT DO WE DO IN PRACTICE?

### 1. What do parents have to do?

➤ **Parents, before all else, love your children** with a true affection that is both firm and benevolent, that is willing to make hard, unpopular decisions for them. It will make them stronger, a lot stronger; they can trust, and there isn't that emptiness that leaves them almost desperate in their efforts to fill the void.

➤ With that love, parents must strive from the very beginning to **teach their children what they must do to act according to the two principles of reason and charity.** Reasonability of action: a child doesn't think about what things are for (he just uses them), about consequences of

action, about restraint (when he considers himself to be free → on the playground, he throws off all restraint) .... No sense of measure.

➤ **And charity, true charity that is incarnated in reality, at home, with parents, siblings, friends, classmates:** unselfish, seeking the good of another and not ones satisfaction and gratification. And when it comes to relations with the opposite sex, don't facilitate your child's fall by your lack of vigilance, your weakness, by allowing or encouraging what the world allows as being perfectly normal and necessary for "happiness" when in fact it leads to the destruction of the child. Don't inadvertently expose your child to danger, to contact that will go to the next level if given half a chance (esp. through mobiles and technology).

## 2. What do the young people have to do?

➤ They need to be encouraged, as they look ahead, to prepare for the future: by developing their spiritual life with spiritual reading, prayer, a regular confessor; by acquiring a certain seriousness which knows what matters and what matters less (little misunderstandings, etc.).

➤ The boy must aim at self-conquest, conquest in study, to a certain extent in sports, etc. not for his own sake but in order to make a difference in the world around him. *"An effeminate man is someone who is looking for self-gratification in the joy of being with another who likes him, so it is a self-seeking in the more or less sticky expression of feelings. Contrary-wise, a real man leads, stays the course with strength because others rely on him."* (Fr Le Roux)

➤ The girl needs to devote herself, to be generous in her efforts to give joy and light and life to those around her: her family, her friends, her schoolmates, neighbours, etc. By these concrete efforts, she prepares herself to be a mother, likewise with her efforts in the practical things (cooking,

sewing, childcare, etc.); all of it comes down to a selfless devotion out of regard for those around her.

## V. SOME PRACTICAL QUESTIONS

1) **“But we’re just friends.”** Is this possible? A certain general friendship is possible, but we have to take into account that wonderful complementarity that makes for an attraction between sexes. Like with magnets, the “tug” between them is more or less controllable depending on how far apart they are. If they are too close, there is no controlling the tug.... Friendships must remain general, not particular.... So, there should not be a focus on one; attention, efforts, generosity and confidence for one..... Intimate friendship between a man and a woman is not possible without it going to the level of love.

2) **“Isn’t a certain amount of interaction between the sexes a good thing?”**

➤ Yes. There is a danger if we have an excessively strict approach to this question – of creating the very problem we are trying to avoid → an exaggerated preoccupation, an undue preoccupation with the opposite sex. Too little or no contact simply heightens the mystery; it also precludes any understanding of the other. The question is then, when should this contact take place and what are we trying to do?

➤ When we speak of education, we are not speaking of destroying our natural tendencies but forming, governing them so that they are reasonably and charitably observed or dealt with. **It is a question not of repressing nature but of forming virtue.** At the same time, we must be very aware that because of fallen nature, there is always a certain danger when the sexes are interacting; teenage vulnerability and uncertainty heighten that danger.

- **So the interaction should be only a certain, limited, healthy interaction → with a family spirit, not boy-girl one on one.** Parties, etc. should have this family spirit, with families present, not just the boys and the girls. Dancing simply heightens the danger, not the family-orientated fun, wholesome enjoyable dances, but the dances where boys and girls are pairing off. **We do not want these kinds of dances because we don't want the fire and the powder, the match and the gasoline, the two magnets drawing closer.....** It's too dangerous, the consequences are too grave and the weakness is too obvious, even though the hearts are usually very beautiful and very noble in themselves.
- So, what you want is that the young people understand that **it is a question of being a friend to all and a Friend to none.** This attitude is to be aimed at even in relations with the same sex; this is a question of charity, not of me.

### 3) “What if real emotional attachment has already been formed?”

- It happens. **Real courage is needed,** for the young people have to look the thing in the face; they have to see the reality of the matter, and **even if their hearts are sincere in their affection for one another, it's not real, because it's not grounded in the reality of things, it doesn't fit the reality of God's plan.** It's not real, it's not fair, and it's dangerous.
- They must be helped to see this and they must understand that the car is heading for a brick wall, so they must take their foot off the gas, stop fuelling the fire → less contact, no one-on-one contact..... honesty. “Why do I really want to go to this party..... to the Legion meeting... to whatever...?” Honesty. And trust. They have to trust that God has a plan for them, that God has someone particular in mind. It may be this one, but it can only be this one if we work with His plan; and that means – for right now – backing away.

**CONCLUSION:** Generosity is very necessary, both on our part and on that of the young people. They have been given a lot. They have good hearts. Don't discredit them by giving them the easy way and letting them fall short of what they were created to be.

### **Questions and Answers**

1. How do we help our children in their battle for purity?

Answer: There are two principles: 1. You have to form your child in restraint: right measure, right time, right intention.  
2. You have to form your child in nobility of heart because it's only a greater charity that will overcome when it comes to problems and temptations of purity.

Conclusion: There must be order in the heart and mind. It goes back to the principles and to the child taking those principles for his own, with a generosity and a conviction that will help him to stay the course with God's grace.



## **Part V:**

# **The Atmosphere in the Home**

- 1. Nurturing the Child in a  
Climate of Hope (1)**
- 2. Nurturing the Child in a  
Climate of Hope (2)**
- 3. Nurturing the Child in a  
Climate of Peace (1)**
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# 1. NURTURING THE CHILD IN A CLIMATE OF HOPE (1)

**INTRODUCTION:** As educators, we are associated with Christ in a work for souls. Each soul is a garden in which the tiny seed of faith was planted. That little seed is meant to sprout, take root, grow, blossom and bear fruit, the fruit of eternal life. **We seek not only to instruct and protect but to nourish and form a soul, to ennoble, elevate the soul towards its destiny with God.** So, we have to provide a climate that is conducive to the growth of each little plant: a climate of peace, joy, respect, kindness and hope (=optimism).

## I. WHAT IS MEANT BY “OPTIMISM”?

➤ What is not meant is the superficial optimism that we see in the world, that way of looking at things which is in fact a denial of reality. It’s not that.

➤ Genuine optimism takes into account the difficulties of our world, the difficulties that the child faces in his own soul, his own weaknesses and shortcomings... And yet, there is a confidence, an expectation with regard to the child; we must believe that the child will respond, that he is “natured” to respond: **he is made for truth, for goodness, for beauty. He is “natured” to respond to all that is goodness, truth and beauty.**

➤ And then there is grace. God understands the reality of our fallen nature, and He took our weakness upon Himself on the Cross to merit the graces we would need to rise above fallen nature. **He created every soul for heaven, and He is obliged to give the necessary grace to reach that goal.**

➤ So, we as educators know that when we approach our children, they are “natured” to receive what we are giving them,

and that God is helping them to respond... So, whatever the obstacles and weaknesses, if the child gives what he has, and the parents give what they have, the child will obtain his goal (= heaven). **Thus, we speak of a genuine “optimism” which is simply a consequence of hope grounded in the reality of things.**

## II. WHY IS THIS “OPTIMISM” SO IMPORTANT?

➤ Because we can easily fall into the trap – in the difficulties of our world – of losing confidence in the plan of God, in His willingness to intervene; we can lose sight of how God uses difficulties to ennoble the soul.

➤ From there, we fall into a certain pessimism, which manifests itself in a critical spirit, a defeatist attitude, a seeing only the negatives, and a cynicism which doesn't believe in the good anymore...Such a soul becomes an apostle of discontent, and if such an attitude is destructive in the workplace, in our circle of friends, etc., it is far more destructive when we are in an environment that is meant to help foster the growth of souls: parish, family, school... Invariably, souls are demoralized.

➤ **The educator is a leader of souls;** he must believe in them, draw them, and this cannot be done if he himself sees no good and doesn't let *them* see any good. Any natural momentum that is in the child is very quickly lost if it is not supported and encouraged and developed. The child very quickly ends up believing that he has nothing to offer and that he never will... Every noble aspiration is nipped in the bud.

## III. BEWARE OF A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE!

➤ We know from our own experience that we respond better to a positive approach, to someone who genuinely sees the good in us and says so. They have encouraged us to believe that we have a foundation to build on. **This is even more true for our**

**children: our encouragement, our belief in them leads them to go beyond what they thought they could do.** This is where a genuine confidence and self-esteem comes from.

➤ The child is in the springtime of his life: everything in him speaks of light and hope and growth and potential; and he thirsts to hear that he can make a difference, that he's made for something important, that he has a real role to play and that he's up to it, provided he puts his whole heart into it and little by little grows into the task.

NB. However, we must be careful not to fall, here, into the false optimism of the world, which ignores the difficulties or denies them, or deforms them. **Real optimism takes the reality of the child and forms, develops, corrects it with goodness and firmness, sure that with the help of grace and our own perseverance and charity, the child will indeed "be up to it".**

**CONCLUSION:** We have to beware of falling into two traps:

➤ That of constantly approaching the child in a negative way. Busy, tired, discouraged ourselves, we see only the negatives, we take the positives for granted; we point out the negatives and we pound away relentlessly on the weak points. In such a case, we don't form the child, we simply correct him. We don't help him grow.

➤ That of approaching the child in a falsely positive way, which ignores or denies the real difficulties that he is confronted with.

## 2. NURTURING THE CHILD IN A CLIMATE OF HOPE (2)

### I. DRAWING THE CHILD TO THE GOOD

➤ So we want to establish in our home, in our school, a climate of hope. We want to approach things in such a way as to draw the child to the good. *“Raising a child does not consist simply in forbidding certain things and commanding certain things. Rather it is to live before him the life that draws him to live the same way.”* We want to draw him to the good, so we present to the child - in ourselves firstly - **a noble Catholic ideal.**

➤ The goal of an educator is **to help the child admire rightly: the right people, the right things.** Who and what a person looks up to says a lot about that person, but it also goes a long way in determining *who he becomes.* *“Once we have given our children proper ideals, we may rest assured that we have wound them up from the inside instead of forcing them from the outside.”* Once they have seen the ideal (of the Christian soul, of womanhood, of manhood, etc) and latched onto it, it will be a source of light and strength their whole life long.

### II. THE IMPORTANCE OF HEROES FOR OUR CHILDREN

➤ The child thirsts for this great ideal...because that is what he is made for. He's natured to that, so he longs to know what greatness is, and he longs to know that it's possible. That's why he craves a hero and loves a story about the underdog who wins: David and Goliath, the Hardy Boys, etc.

➤ The jaded cynicism of today's youth is easy to understand. **They are given no heroes at all, or false heroes:** actresses, sports heroes, millionaires...or those who fight for a false cause (those put forward by the media). What's more, they are exposed to evil far beyond their years, evil that crushes their aspirations for greatness, and their belief that greatness is even possible or desirable.

### III. PARENTS MUST BE THEIR CHILD'S FIRST HERO!

➤ It starts with the parents, who must give their children the ideal of the Christian life in such a way that it touches their mind and heart and gives them the desire to follow. The mission of the parent, as an extension of the Fatherhood of God, is to model God to the child: **the benevolence, strength, wisdom and goodness of God are revealed to the child by his parents.**

➤ Beware of discouragement here: yes we are weak, fallen creatures... but **the child doesn't ask his parents to be infallible or perfect; he asks them to be *real*:** that the appearances match the reality that is inside. When he's little, that's an automatic; when he reaches a certain age and realises that all is not right in the world, he starts to look to see for himself. If he sees that his parents do not live by what they preach, he loses that trust, respect, spontaneous love that was his. *"I know nothing more beautiful or moving than the loyal exchange of direct, loving glances between a father who can open his life to his son without shame, and a grown-up son whose heart is full of loving admiration for his father. What reward for a man is this full spiritual intimacy with his adult son."* (Fr. Jacques, army chaplain in World War II) The same could be said for a mother and daughter.

## IV. OTHER HEROES FOR OUR CHILDREN

➤ Of course the ultimate heroes for the child are the saints, but we must be careful: even if they are the best of saint stories placed before the child, they are not the *only* heroes that should be given. Literature and history are necessary for the children, for they show that someone can be good and still have weaknesses, not be perfect.

➤ We can also incarnate the Catholic ideal **by mottos** which point the children in a direction, give them a model that a hero can latch onto, that is worthy of a noble heart that is aspiring to greatness. Examples used at school: *“Yes to God, no matter the cost!”* *“Yes to God, a joy that lasts!”*

➤ On an everyday basis, we must help lift the gaze of the child to the motto, to the ideal, to what he’s striving to be. **It is not a question of preaching**, of a *“do this, don’t do that”* checklist. The essence of religion is not a checklist but *“Love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, mind and strength.”*

➤ **This noble ideal is incarnated every day by the child’s noble choices.** To guide him in that direction, there must be a readiness of communication between the educator and the child; a trust, a conviction of affection. This is only established over time, by an on-going generosity, taking time with your children, being patient with them, discussing things that matter etc. The child must be able to admire, and know that he is loved, cared about, believed in. His weaknesses are taken as a matter of course, but do not shock or become the whole picture; the educator expects that the child will rise above them and he is there to help him to do it.

### 3. NURTURING THE CHILD IN A CLIMATE OF PEACE (I)

I. INTRODUCTION: *“Ultimately, one of the key features of a Christian atmosphere in a Christian home is peace.”* (Fr. de Chivré)

It is a sign that things are where they need to be, that God is working... and **it is even what enables God to work**. Obviously, the world in which we live is anything but peaceful, and too often our homes are not peaceful either: there is anxiety, stress, agitation, discord, arguing, etc. All of this has its effects on both children and parents.

#### II. WHAT IS TRUE PEACE?

➤ We must not think of peace in the home as simply an absence of discord or conflict; it goes a lot further than that. ***“Peace is the tranquillity of order”***: things are in their proper place, ordered; **the higher comes before the lower**. There is harmony: things fit together because of that order.

➤ **This order is essentially interior**: things are right in the soul...of the parents, of the children, and in consequence, between the parents and the school, between the parents and the priest, between the parents and the neighbours... But it all starts from within.

➤ When there is this interior peace, souls are able to go to what really matters, to the essentials. It also makes for a stable foundation on which one can build, on which one can move steadily in the right direction. Life today is like a rollercoaster...which is fine for a few minutes but not for 80 years!

### III. WHERE DO WE START? PEACE BETWEEN THE PARENTS

➤ Peace between the parents, **for the family comes from this union. There is a union of mind, of heart which is the source of peace between the spouses.** If the spouses are not on the same page, do not have the same priorities, the same heart as to what matters and what matters less, then there is going to be conflict. *“Love is looking with another in the same direction.”*

➤ The home requires the collaboration of the spouses, collaboration that is nourished by the fusion, in the common action, of the individual qualities and graces of each one. Both spouses must work together.

➤ **It is the harmony and mutual love of the parents that makes the child’s world secure.** He is born of the union of hearts of his parents, and consequently **it is only of that union of hearts that he can grow.** Nothing will help him more than to see this union and this love between his parents. And there is nothing that makes life harder for him than when he sees that it is not there. So, arguing in front of the children, unnecessarily sharp criticism, cutting words or actions **will destabilize the child. The parent who wounds the heart of his spouse in front of the child, at the same time wounds more deeply the heart of his child because he destroys the child’s confidence in the parental union, the parental authority and the parental love for him.**

### IV. PARENTAL HARMONY ALSO SETS A TONE IN THE HOME.

➤ Parental union and harmony makes the child’s world harmonious. The things he struggles with because he is at the mercy of his emotions **must be ordered from outside of him, from the peaceful stability of his home, his parents.**



➤ The same goes for fighting: children will fight because they do not see things in perspective and are not masters of themselves. **Parents must not respond to it by injecting more turmoil into the picture but by putting things in perspective, in order, restoring harmony** (by punishment if necessary). If the atmosphere in the home is one of order and harmony, there will be a lot less of these things to deal with, and they will very quickly be gotten over. So, it is important that the parents set the tone. It takes virtue and strength; it also takes understanding of the greater questions, and making the greater questions the priority.

## V. HARMONY WITH THE ASPIRATIONS PLACED BY GOD IN THE CHILD'S SOUL.

➤ If this atmosphere is lacking, there will be turmoil in the child's life. The parents must be "in tune" with the desire of the child to '*reach high*', and be open to receive his confidences; his openness of soul, even though expressed in childish terms, is of God.

➤ So what we want to have is an atmosphere of the home that fits these aspirations of the child: Everything is ordered to God, everything fits God's plan, fits the order intended by God between husband and wife, parents and children, children and neighbour. Everything is ordered to God, is in harmony with God and the ways of God: charity amongst family members, love for truth, etc. **Life is seen as a path to God, followed in friendship with God.** "*The enthronement of the Sacred Heart is the key to saving our world*" (Pope Pius X) because it is about trying to have ones' home ordered to God, **ordered in such a way that Our Lord, as King and Friend, can do anything He wants there.**

## 4. NURTURING THE CHILD IN A CLIMATE OF PEACE (2)

### I. WHAT DOES IT MEAN PRACTICALLY WHEN WE SPEAK OF PEACE?

➤ We want our home to be a shelter, a sanctuary from the breathless agitation of our world. We need time to breathe. Already on an exterior level, there must be a certain routine, schedule, set priorities. We have to make time for things that really matter: prayer, good reading, time together.

➤ **We must protect our home from the world** that lives just for today and lives just for self. The problem with our modern world is that, with the internet, mobile phones, technology, the world is hitting us from every angle; we cannot defend every side, and **very often we do not try to**. *“Worldliness is the secret, unacknowledged canker of many Christians who are in fact dominated by the world rather than dominating it by the life of the soul.”* (Fr. De Chivré) What he is talking about primarily is a **lack of a supernatural spirit** and a supernatural vision, and remembering what life is about, remembering that **the only important things are the ones that take place in the depths of the soul**.

### II. IT STARTS WITH PEACE AND ORDER IN OUR OWN SOUL

➤ He who would effectively form a child – put order in the life and soul of a child, elevate the child – must have order in his own soul, a certain elevation of spirit, and he must have things in perspective in his own vision of things. If he does not, the atmosphere will be tense, anxious, agitated and overly

concerned; and this will be conducive neither to happiness nor to growth in the child. So, even on a natural level, it is important to often step back, slow down.

➤ **On a supernatural level, it is even more important.** If we are to let God touch souls through us, there must be peace in our soul. *“The more our soul is peaceful, balanced, surrendered, the more the good – God – communicates itself to us and to others through us.”* (Fr. Jacques Philippe)

➤ **God is *always* peaceful...** Our Lord even on the cross was in perfect peace... Even with our world completely upside down as it is, God is at peace. He is not up there asking Himself, *“What will I do?!”* He knows what He will do. Everything that is happening in our world is part of His plan. He allows it and He is Master of it.

### III. FOUNDATION OF PEACE OF SOUL: FAITH

➤ There is a natural foundation for peace of soul: going for a walk, taking a break, etc. It is a virtuous thing if it is done with a supernatural intention; we take care of ourselves so we can take care of others.

➤ More important is the supernatural foundation, and this starts with our faith. **Do we really believe** the first words of the Creed: *“I believe in one God, the Father almighty”*? **Ultimately we lose peace of soul because we lack faith and trust in God.** We try to control things that are not within our control instead of peacefully letting God take care of them. **Yes, we have to do our part, but we have to leave to God the things that He doesn't place within our control. Prayer is absolutely essential for this, in order to get a sense for how God works.** He works through the storm at sea, He works through Calvary!

➤ When we're dealing with the difficulties of an upside-down world, we have to realize that **our natural reaction to them is not the Catholic reaction.** More often than not, our natural reaction is going to be an emotional reaction, without reflection and without reason (at least reason seeing the whole picture). So we have to step back, for if we let the natural impulse take over, **we will no longer be a Catholic in mind and heart,** and because of that we will be overwhelmed. *"It is a precious memory for a child to think back on the supernatural calm of his parents in the midst of the trials of life."* (Fr. de Chivré)

➤ When you go through things that are really hard, you see that God is there despite everything and that He takes care of things, and then you can be at peace going forward because **no matter what happens, no matter how great the storm at sea is, He's there and He's taking care and He's proved that He will take care.** So it almost takes going through a great storm to be able to be peaceful in a storm.

➤ Our Lord foresaw a much greater storm than the one that took place on the Sea of Galilee, and it was the storm that was going to rock the faith of the disciples on Calvary. He wanted to prepare them for it; He wanted them to remember – in the midst of the spiritual storm – that He was there with them in the material storm, and Master of the situation. They forgot, and that is why their faith crumbled...

#### IV. FORGETFULNESS OF SELF

➤ So this peace of soul which is so necessary to the educator – especially to the priest – comes firstly from faith. **But with it there must be a great forgetfulness of self.** It is forgetfulness of self which makes for willing sacrifice, peaceful sacrifice, a sacrifice informed by charity. This is necessary not only in the big things but in the things of everyday.

➤ It takes an acceptance that – yes – *this is what God is asking, so He will give the strength, and I'm willing to pay the price, even if it is everything.* **No matter what it costs, we must be determined that our home be one of peace and harmony and willingness, so that our children grow up to be strong, strong for God.** There has to be that willingness to pay the price, otherwise we get bitter, and bitterness is the beginning of everything that is the opposite of peace.

➤ The “Pax” at the Solemn High Mass is a beautiful example of this. After the Consecration, when Christ is present on the altar in a state of sacrifice, the priest and the deacon kiss the altar of sacrifice. Then they turn to one another and exchange the Pax, the kiss of peace. They embrace Calvary and the Cross, and that acceptance of Calvary and the Cross, that reverence for Calvary and the Cross **is what brings about union and prepares for Communion with Christ.**

➤ **It is the same thing in marriage:** if the parents can embrace the altar of sacrifice that is the home and married life, then they can give a peace and strength to one another that they can then pass on to their children and to others. **But the origin of that peace and strength is the acceptance of the Cross.** The children will come to have a sense that life is but a path where God, our Father, is guiding them and leading them.

# 5: NURTURING THE CHILD IN A CLIMATE OF JOY (1)

## I. INTRODUCTION

- After peace, **joy is the defining key of a Christian home.** We cannot overstate the importance of a joyful home if our children are to become what they were created to be: saints.

## II. IMPORTANCE OF JOY IN THE HOME

- We can look at a number of levels to see the truth of this. Already on the natural level, **we are made for happiness** – the happiness of God ultimately. So already in this life, **happiness is necessary for physical, psychological and moral health.** *“No one can live without some joy in his life”* (St Thomas). Joy is like the sun’s rays: it lifts the heart and allows it to radiate outward. **Both affection and joy are necessary for a healthy soul and the two are inseparable.**
- St. John Bosco: *“It is critically important to teach the children to adore God, but it is even more important that they taste God by the joyous atmosphere of their home and school.”*
- Pope Pius XI: *“Every home should be, as much as we can make it so for the little ones, a miniature paradise; a place of harmony, of beauty, of joy.”*
- We know from experience that children are drawn by joy. Whether it be at school or camp, it is the atmosphere of joy that permits us to get somewhere with the children: they simply can’t help being drawn in... *“Joy is the*

*birthright of the child,”* and it is the duty of the parents to see that his life be joyful. The purest joys of a child are those of his childhood.

### III. EFFECTS OF THIS JOY

- **It is important for physical and mental health.** Joy stimulates and relaxes the whole organism, body and soul. Sadness on the other hand, causes a tension – emotional and psychological – that leads inevitably (if it is constant) to an unbalance later in life.
- **Joy facilitates the awakening of the intelligence.** *“For knowledge to be digested, it must be received with appetite. But curiosity is only alive and health in one who is happy.”* (St. John Bosco) This makes sense: sadness, because it turns the child in on himself, drains him of the desire and the energy to learn. Just as we don’t see clearly when our eyes are blinded by tears, so **excessive sadness clouds the intellect:** the child no longer sees clearly or accurately and he is no longer thinking rationally because emotion colours the picture too much.
- **Joy diminishes the danger of vice and corruption.** Why? Because those who are unhappy look for consolation wherever they can get it most immediately, and **very rarely is a real healthy joy immediate.** In our world, vice seems to monopolise all pleasure and happiness. The young person – in order not to be deceived – must have learned from his childhood that **it is the virtuous life which is the happy life,** contrary to what the world says; **that true religion is no friend of sadness, that true joy is Catholic joy.** The child must experience it, live it, not just be told it.

- **Joy helps virtue to flourish.** Joy favours a generous response, an upright spirit. *“It’s the sky under which every plant prospers except the poisoned plant of evil.” “The devil fears cheerful people.”* (St. John Bosco) It is the memory of a joyful childhood that gives a child the chance to come back when he has strayed (example of the Prodigal Son).



## 6. DANGERS TO JOY IN THE HOME

### I. ULTIMATELY AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, LACK OF REAL AFFECTION

➤ The child is born of parental and divine love; he is created to love, to respond to love, to be loved... so he can only be happy if he is loved and knows it. This is not something the child reasons out; he's simply living it.

➤ **Love is by definition a selflessness which sees the good of the child,** and is willing to pay the price of that good...

### II. **Selfishness manifests itself in various ways in a parent:**

➤ Self-focus (my projects, my agenda) which leads to a certain indifference with regard to the child (and do not forget that for the child, perception is reality) as well as to a neglect of the child: not realising where the child is at.

➤ Self-focus **zeroed in on the burden one is obliged to carry** will manifest itself by resentment, harshness, impatience.

➤ **The effects of this selfishness** are unhappiness in childhood and vulnerability in life: an emotional instability that makes the child crave affection; also a self-questioning, a lack of self-confidence that renders him vulnerable to peer pressure and makes him put excessive pressure on himself. Ultimately, this lack of affection leads to a weakness of faith because he doubts the understanding and goodness of God, not having experienced it through his parents.

### III. LACK OF AFFECTION THROUGH FAVOURITISM AND MATERIALISM

➤ We must be very careful about **favouritism...** for where there are favourites there are also the sacrificed and thus the unhappy. Parents and educators must be good to all, must invest their whole heart in each child, by the interest and kindness shown; by seeing the good in all (rather than commenting on how hard of a time you have with a particular one; comparing unfavourably, etc).

➤ Another thing that is part of our modern culture: we love the child so we give and give every gift possible. This is counter to affection for it spoils - even rots - the child's heart. **It ultimately destroys his ability to be happy.** Why? It rots his heart because it turns him in on himself; he's just a receiver whereas **his happiness will come in giving.**

➤ Spoiling the child with material things also teaches him that he can always have whatever he wants, and that's not real life. It also ruins his appreciation for the little things and it's in the little things that much of the joy of life is found. Softness which often accompanies this spoiling with "things" creates a weak child who will be too easily overwhelmed by the demands of life, and so he will be unhappy.

➤ **So we must really reflect on what we mean by the word "affection":** what are we trying to help our child become, and how is this effort, word, gesture, influence, entertainment affecting him? Prudence is necessary, and a great generosity; we can't just go with our inclinations, be they positive (spoiling the child) or negative (being too hard on him).

## IV. HOW DO WE ASSURE A CLIMATE OF JOY?

➤ It begins with a **determination that your home will be a happy place** for your children, and **everything you do is with that in mind**. It's a determination born of your understanding of the necessity of joy for your children, and of your love for them, that translates into real-life efforts.

➤ **An effort to create a material atmosphere of joy:** a home that is taken care of, clean, in order; children taken care of (hair, dress, etc). A constant effort is required here, but a home that is not taken care of is demoralising for all who live there. Besides being neat and clean, an effort should be made to make it as pleasant as possible (flowers, a new coat of paint, etc).

➤ **Imitate holy Mother Church:** She knows the importance of joy and she knows how to give it. It is important to bring the customs of the Church into the home... Christmas crib, St. Joseph's altar, May crowning, Lent, Advent, etc.

➤ **Love to give joy.** It's the little, simple things that bring joy, but if we have too much, we do not appreciate the little things. If we want joy, there are all kinds of opportunities to help foster it in our children. It comes down to knowing how to be light-hearted.

➤ **On a more negative side:** we must let the unpleasant things pass by quickly. We must not be like chickens who, when they "lay eggs," want to sit on them and won't let them go - and the rottener the egg, the more they hang on to it. We have to lift our gaze to God, who is a true Father and who loves us, and even when it seems that He's not there, it's only that the clouds of this life are shielding the reality from our eyes. Nothing has changed: He continues to radiate upon us His benevolent care. So how can we not be happy?!

