

# The Catholic Mother

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## ASSAULT ON FAMILY LIFE

PERHAPS the most sinister menace of recent years has been the assault on family life, namely, first on the family as an institution and, secondly, on the various relationships within the family, husband and wife, father and mother, children and parents. This assault is not indeed only of recent years, for it is to be found at the French revolution also, and before that, in Rousseau. But there is this to be noticed: the assault that is being made at present on the family as the single unit of society comes no longer from one quarter, but is being delivered from many different angles. These attacks are sometimes conscious, deliberate, sometimes utterly unconscious. Thus those who advocate or denounce certain practices or principles are not always aware of what they are attacking, nor how inevitably what they hold today will lead them on to something else to-morrow, which at present they would repudiate but to-morrow will proclaim.

Thus when the practices of birth-control were first propagated, the opponents of them urged that if birth-control was taught there was no reason why abortion should not also be taught; and they were met by a very indignant denial on the part of those who favoured birth-control that there was any connection between the two ideas. No doubt this denial was sincere, but it was short-sighted and futile. The defenders of birth-control are equally now defenders of abortion. Sterilization of the unfit has already been added to their programme. It will be made compulsory, no doubt, and not merely on those that are now held to be unfit. This is merely one instance of what is happening everywhere.

Again, the Lambeth Anglican bishops, in their infamous contraception approval decisions of the 1930's, would have been disturbed if they had realized where their permissions were leading. But, with false principles from which to start, there is no end to the degradation that must follow. The next Lambeth Conference, if it is honest, will either go on to further abominations or go back. Thus, under the weight of Divorce, State Education (minus God), Sterilization, the present economic organization, etc., the family is gradually being assaulted from every angle.

## FAMILY MEANS MOTHERHOOD

Now the first point to realize is that all these various attacks are attacks on motherhood. They are also, no doubt, in part, attacks on freedom. They are attacks on motherhood precisely because what is attacked must inevitably be the centre of the family; - and round the mother grows up the home. The father is also the centre, but differently. He is the active external worker; the mother's activities are as great but they have a smaller circumference. They are limited to nearer matters. By her activities the home is kept alive and is a true home. At no time, moreover, can she " knock off work." Her factory has no hooter to sound the hour for stopping. Her shop has no closing time, her office hours have no end. But since she is the centre of the home it must be that her motherhood is most in jeopardy when the family is menaced. In birth-control it is she who suffers and she suffers

not merely in her nerves but precisely in her motherhood. Again, it is her motherhood that is affected by divorce. Even the most advanced defenders of divorce will admit that motherhood in its richest implications must suffer from the carrying out of their programmes. They regret this but consider that it cannot be helped.

The problem of children is an old one. Always, ordinary traditional Christian teaching has allowed parents to space the arrival of their children; but it forbids this to be done by direct artificial interference with nature. It recognizes that the virtue of prudence and also a variety of family necessities and difficulties may, under certain circumstances, allow a limitation to be set deliberately and legitimately to the number of children that parents may have. But it also considers that the will of man (plus the grace of God) is capable of carrying this out by the sole means of self-restraint. Since human nature has existed for many thousands of years and has been hitherto able to restrain itself by means of its will, it seems pure assumption to say that this cannot be done now - unless, indeed, it is equally admitted that man today is far less able to control himself than he was, that instead of progressing from a lower stage to a higher he has slipped back into the lower, that the loss of religion has meant also the loss of will-power, the disbelief in God ended in disbelief in man.

We cannot, indeed, but agree that economic conditions do now make the support of a large family harder than ever. But our answer to this problem is to urge as the remedy an improvement in living conditions and an increase in wages and not a diminishing of the family. If one of these two things has to happen, let living conditions be altered, wages improved, and not the family altered. We urge, moreover, that the money spent on contraceptives, this unclean trade, and on the booming of unclean practices by the trade which profits from their sale, should rather have been spent, and would have been better spent, on social propaganda for improving the circumstances of the people troubled in this way than on continuing them and exploiting the needs of the poor. Just as the Church forbids even the man who is so poor that he can hardly house or clothe or feed his family, to use artificial means to limit his family, on the definite principle that it is immoral, so also she denounces as immoral the artificial means that have made it almost impossible for him to house and feed and clothe a family. It is society which is falsely constructed, not the family. Motherhood is blessed, therefore what blocks motherhood in the present falsely constructed society is accursed.

## MOTHERHOOD AND CHILDREN

IN thinking of the children we think of their education, and so of their Catholic education, for Catholic education is not a right so much as a duty. It is a duty which lies on the father and mother as soon as the child is born.

The ancient Greeks insisted on the importance of surrounding babyhood with beautiful things; the psychologist of today entirely agrees with this. Without intermission the Church has taught the same thing; only with her it is holy things that the child should be surrounded by, namely, that particular beauty that is radiant with goodness from God. At least and always the Church insists that the child should have these. Here Plato would also have approved, for he maintained that beautiful bodies were the lowest form of human beauties. Plato would have approved of beautiful holiness as the best surrounding for a child, that as early and as constantly as possible it should be surrounded by whatever true idea, or true representation, of goodness the parents could collect round their child. Thus the making of the sign of the Cross on itself, the joining of its hands together in prayer, a statue of the Child Jesus, a crucifix, statues of the Mother and Child, of St. Joseph, and of the Angel Guardian, should be familiar objects to a child, so that it grows up in an atmosphere of supernatural

life. All this will depend largely on the mother's sense of her duty to the child's education and development.

Naturally, the physical well-being of her child must also be present to the mother's mind; and here, in the earlier stages of its growth, she will have need to consult a doctor and a nurse. Let them, if possible, be Catholic doctors and nurses. There are good doctors and nurses other than Catholic ones, certainly; but these, if they be properly instructed Catholics, will help a mother more faithfully than the others because she will have no misgivings or anxiety about their advice. She will be able to trust absolutely what they say.

But though the little body must be cared for, yet it must not be over-coddled. It must be kept clean. It is the temple of God. Again, the right sort of food for it is a matter about which advice should be asked from experts, experts in motherhood, mothers who know.

Also the character of the child will need training as far as its frail condition will allow. It should not be allowed to grow up anyhow. Neither should it be nagged at. What is wanted is not to have to say, "You must not fight or lie or be selfish or disobedient," but to encourage children not to want to fight or lie or be selfish or disobey. It is not action, but character at the back of actions, that has to be laid hold of. Now character can only be formed by character on character. You can only train children properly by making them wish to form themselves on the model of another character. That is why it is a mother's business to teach her child the beauty of the character of Christ. And she will teach it to her child successfully only in proportion to the way in which she herself perceives it. Only because the mother loves the character of Our Lord is she likely to be able to show its beauty and greatness to her child, and convince it that He was great, is great. That is only another proof of the responsibility of motherhood; she and her child united "for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer" in the things of the spirit.

Lastly, there is the opening mind of the child to be taught and trained.

## EDUCATION AND THE STATE

ACTUALLY the State now imposes public education on the child from the fifth year upwards. (In Australia, the State now imposes compulsory education. All children must attend school from the age of six to fourteen or fifteen years, either at public schools, conducted by the State, or at private registered schools, such as are conducted by the Catholic Church.) If parents are well-to-do the inspector will presumably not ask what is happening to the children. If they are not rich, he will want to know if the children go to school. It may be that we would prefer education to be optional as long as every parent had the opportunity to send his children to a school. But the conditions actually obtaining make education compulsory. No doubt there is some loss in this. It is better, both for parents and children, when the mother does some of the teaching herself. She would remember her schooling better herself if she had to teach it. Moreover, it keeps mother and child closer together all their lives long, when the child's memories are thus rooted in her home.

It is right also to remember that the authority which the teachers have over the children has been given them by the parents. The teachers have their authority because they stand in the place of the parents, and not from their relation to the State. Their power is given them by the parents of the children, and these parents, even when giving them power, never abdicate their own powers. They have always to keep an eye on the education of their children. Normally they can be sure that, in the hands of Catholic teachers, the children will be properly looked after. [But we no longer live in 'normal' times! Great vigilance is now needed!] But parents should get to know the teachers, and be

interested in the school, and try to see how they can help forward the education of their children. There should be co-operation between parents and teachers. The teachers need this co-operation. Sometimes they complain that the parents do not help them, that the parents undo their work, undo what the school has done for the children. Parents, too, sometimes think that the school undoes what the home has done for the children. The best remedy and preventative is co-operation between parents and teachers, and this is the best thing for the child.

But there is a difference between the natural authority of the parents and the imposed authority of the teachers, which makes the authority of the parents the more to be safeguarded, the more to be valued, to be kept the more continuously unbroken. Of the two the authority of the parents should be more important. Yet the teachers have a long apprenticeship before they are judged to know how to exercise it; this apprenticeship covers not merely years in which to learn the subjects to be taught the children, but in which to learn how to teach at all. Now a mother also has to teach her children many things. Does she ever learn how to teach? Is not her need to know this even greater than the need of the teachers? She should learn how to teach her children and she surely will not be able to do this without learning. It is not that she is ignorant of this, because she is a mother; but mother-instinct, though good, is not enough to live by. There are successful mothers, and mothers who are not in the least successful. It is not enough merely to love a child to be able to help it; wise love is needed. Love can sometimes be foolish.

Natural instinct goes a long way but not all the way. Mothers, however, can learn by watching successful mothers, and seeing how they train their children, and so becoming themselves expert in the art of training. Let them remember their own homes when they were children, and ask themselves whether their mothers failed with one or other of the children and why. It is not books that they need to help them so much as a study of the experiences of their life. A mother will learn more by remembering and watching and asking than by reading or having instructions in maternity clinics, though these, if carried on by sane instructors, can be of great help. Only she must remember that each child is a creature apart, and should be studied individually. It is due to the small circumference of the home that the children can have individual treatment. That is the value of home training. It can be personal. Not all the children of a family should be treated alike. It is not just to treat every one alike, because all are not alike. Justice demands a rich variety of treatment and perhaps this is only possible fully at home.

#### PROFESSION OF MOTHERHOOD

ALL this makes the profession of motherhood a very high responsibility. Indeed, it is a profession more challenging than any other profession in the world. There are professions which demand of those who practise them that they should be ready face death in the discharge of their professional duties. Thus a soldier and a sailor have to be ready to give their lives on demand. A doctor, a nurse, a priest, have each of them often to risk their strength, or even their lives, if the need of human service demands them. But yet soldier, sailor, doctor, nurse, priest, may live to ripe old age without actually having to put their lives in jeopardy. They may never be in danger from the duties of their profession. A mother is not like that. She has not only to be ready to endanger her life: she has actually to risk that danger. No mother but has actually faced that risk when she has acquitted herself again of motherhood.

Hence Motherhood asks of every mother a character of heroism. Mothers are the most constantly heroic of mankind. Mothers have therefore nearly always been found on the side of religion, for

religion demands heroism of its followers. Religion is not an opiate, for religion does not help people to forget, but to remember. It does not dull people. It does not say Take, but Give. Religion asks everything of its believers, for religion is love, and love is the most demanding, the most costing, of all the passions of man. That is why Our Lord compressed the whole of religion into one commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, whole soul, whole strength." Mothers perhaps more easily understand this than others (except young men, perhaps, who are learning it by falling in love).

Moreover, not only are mothers heroic because they are constantly being challenged to risk their lives, but also because more than any others they find their profession to be a 'full-time job'.

Moreover, many a mother needs heroism to accept the fact that her profession is "a whole-time job." Mothers are never unemployed, or should not be, for their children are not merely to be born of them but tended by them until death parts them. Children take a deal of tending, children of all ages; and here, in the number of a mother's children, even their father is to be reckoned. To the mother, her very husband is always a child. He needs looking after as much as any of them, but he must not realize that she so judges of him. He is even more sensitive than the children are to the indignity of being publicly looked after by the mother. That only means that she must wait on him with the greater tact.

But her cares are only increased the more by his, and her employment is only the more continuous. She has to go on looking after them as long as any of them are still at home; that is what inevitably happens, for she is the home. The family carries the nation, she carries the family. The whole of Christendom rests on the mother's knee.

#### A NEW AGE

MOTHERS are sometimes discouraged by their experiences to believe that these old ideals of motherhood are done with. In some moods they are led to think that the world has altered, and that children no longer obey their parents nor will be governed by them as they once were. It may be true. But if it is true, the cause for it is manifest.

If a whole generation of youth no longer is governed by its parents., no longer reverences them, is utterly selfish towards them, the only people who can have brought this about are the parents themselves. Individual cases indeed do not prove that individual parents have failed, for good parents can have ill-bred children and, contrariwise, careless parents may have children who worship them. But it remains true that a whole generation can fail only because the generation immediately before it disregarded its duty. The excuse was sometimes made that some young folk grew up in the war without a father to look after them. That alone would not have caused the trouble. The real cause was not that the fathers were not present, but that the mothers were absent. They went to work, or were touched by the excitement, or their hedonism, and neglected their duty because, in that pitiful phrase, they wanted "a good time."

#### WISE SELF-SACRIFICE

PERHAPS, after all, the cause of that selfish generation of children was not exactly because mothers were negligent of their duty in that they did not look after their children. The selfishness of children may be due to another cause which, however, will not free the parents from blame. It may be unselfishness that has been the mother's undoing. To be self-sacrificing is admirable and motherly; but it has its disadvantages. It can be unwise.

Let us put it in this way. A mother will come to the priest and complain of her child to him. "Father, I have done everything for him, and now he turns round and is most selfish to me." Poor mother! All the more shall we pity her because his selfishness is in part her fault. Why did she do everything for her child? She should not have done everything. She should have let him do things for himself. When children are little, the mother does everything for them. She cannot help doing everything for them since they cannot do anything for themselves. But gradually she has to steel her heart against doing everything for them. They must be trained to do things for themselves. They must not be forever dependent on her. She has to train them to get on without her, to be independent of her, to live their own lives, to look after themselves.

Even that is not enough. They must not only be trained to do things for themselves, they must be trained to do things for her. And they will want to do many things for her; that is their nature, they will want to help. There will be some things, of course, that very soon they will not want to do for her, dull, dreary things, fetching, cleaning, carrying. But these also they must be trained to do. The mother will often want to save time and trouble by doing them for herself, but if she does she will hurt her children's character. She must train them young to work for others, to be unselfish, to give.

It is an almost inevitable effect of a large family that the children of themselves grow up generous and tolerant. This is sometimes thumped into them by the aid of many fists. But with a small family, it has all to be done by the mother and father. They have to do for their children what brothers and sisters would have done for them, for whatever happens the work needs to be done.

Mothers, then, must not allow their self-sacrificing nature, their heroism, to prevent them from demanding sacrifices in return from their children. Their needs and not her needs must be remembered. They need to be trained to give. Of their very childhood they are impulsive and generous: but this spontaneous character of theirs can be hurt. It can also be developed. Let mothers look to it. Let them look into it. That only is wise self-sacrifice when it encourages and demands sacrifice. A generous mother can reduce her children to selfishness, a mother who does everything for her child has actually taught that child to be selfish. She has no right to complain of his subsequent ingratitude. Her folly has ruined her child.

That is why it has happened that many "good " mothers have ill-bred children; they were not really "good" mothers, for goodness includes prudence and wisdom. Really good mothers are also wise mothers.

## PIETY IN MOTHERS

RIGHT in early childhood piety needs to be taught to children; but even in early childhood, children are very different from each other in their attitude to piety. Some seem naturally pious, or at least naturally interested in religious things, or naturally devout and reverent; others seem wearied and troubled by piety, are restless under it, irked by it. These are merely natural traits of temperament and do not really mean very much. Those who are restless at prayer are, as often as not, restless anywhere; anything that calls for initiative, as prayer does, makes them uncomfortable. They are difficult at occupying themselves, entertaining themselves; they must be entertained by others, need to be amused, cannot amuse themselves. But it does not always follow that restless children are of this character. Sometimes the reverse takes place. Sometimes it is those who need to be entertained who relish church-going. Their temperament is satisfied by what they look at. So it seems to be impossible to decide why some children are naturally pious and some are not. Certainly it is not

always a continuing interest. Some begin like that and end very differently; some never seem to have a love of piety in childhood and yet have it in youth.

This early attraction or distaste for religion can be well set aside as of no absolute importance. What mothers have to do certainly is to study their children; each child is different. That is the beauty of a home, that children can be studied individually and with sympathy. In nearly every family, for instance, there is one who is different from the rest. However, the point to be realized is the delicate way in which mothers have to deal with each child in teaching it religion.

First, the mother has to insist upon religion, not as a matter of liking or not liking, but as a matter of duty; yet the duty must not be made distasteful. Religion of itself is interesting to a normal child. First a child is curious for information. It wants to know things. Hence catechism can be made most interesting to a child. But this depends on the teacher. Some questions and answers should be learnt by heart. Not all of them need be, for not all of them matter. Some certainly do. But the child should not be burdened in its learning. Here, then, is the delicacy of the business; on the one hand the child should not be plagued with religion, on the other hand the child should be taught to recognize the demands of religion as of a duty, over and above mere liking and disliking. Merely because it does not want to pray, it should not be excused from praying; merely because it does not want to obey, it should not be excused from obeying. It needs to be taught prayer in such a way that it shall find prayer interesting. The rosary is often meaningless, and worse, to a child. A "decade" is as much as it can manage at any one time.

The character of Christ, on the other hand, can always be an inspiration to a child; the stories of the Gospels, the scenes, the parables, His patience, courage, endurance, fortitude, truthfulness, fearlessness, His love of birds and flowers and the harvest, His choice of carpentering, His love of the sea and the hills and of gardens at night for praying in, His forgiveness, all can be of interest as well as help to a child. With all these it should be familiar at its mother's knee. She can teach him to pray by showing him how to form his own prayers, how to ask and thank and praise, how to be silent and listen, how to gaze at Christ. She will have no difficulty in explaining the Blessed Sacrament to him, or the Incarnation; she should have no difficulty in teaching him and guiding him how to talk to God - which is all we mean by prayer. But talk here also includes silence and contemplation, for a child is born a contemplative usually. It wants so often to look and be still and say nothing. Let it be helped to do that.

But no one can teach except what he has learnt himself. No mother can teach prayer who does not practise it. No one can give what he has not got.

## THE TEACHING OF PURITY

PURITY must be taught. But purity is not the opposite to impurity. Purity is the thing in itself, impurity is its lack. Purity is the positive dedication of love to Our Lord in such wise that love is not killed, but cleansed. To love God is not to deny the need to love man, still less the need to love a man, a woman, a child. Purity means that the love of God helps us to love other people, and not merely to love ourselves in other people. To love passionately may be to serve self only. To love passionately is sometimes to love the passion of love, its thrill, its stir, the pleasures it gives us, and not really at all the apparent object of our love. Thus to love passionately may be only to love self, not another. Passion can go hand-in-hand with decent, pure love, will be found nearly always to some degree in all love, but it can easily usurp love's place, if we love merely to have the pleasure of loving. Love is not the same as pleasure; love is as much at home with pain.

But purity means that Our Lord's friendship is a third friend in all our friendships. Into our human friendships the body enters as well as the soul. That is as it should be. We are compacted of body and soul. This love that involves the body in it will not hurt us, for Our Lord can be remembered as present in every moment of every lawful love. The Church has even a blessing for the marriage-bed. For marriage is not something to look down upon, but something to be looked up to. It was the Manicheans and Albigensians who taught that the marriage-act was unclean; and yet the Church has been condemned by many for persecuting them, for wishing to exterminate them. No doubt to exterminate them was a drastic remedy to apply to their disease; but the occasion infuriated Mother Church. She believed in the Incarnation. She believed that matter could be hallowed, that the sacraments were holy, that marriage had been blessed with a sacrament, that to decry the marriage-act was blasphemy against the Creator of mankind. For that reason she was bitterly intolerant. Yet in our time such is the ignorance of people that they accuse the Church of teaching what she condemned as worse than heresy seven hundred odd years ago.

#### WHAT SHALL CHILDREN BE TAUGHT?

To many it comes as a shock that priests should now recommend Catholic children being taught the "facts of life." They contrast with this present attitude of the priests an older point of view which advocated the reverse, which was in favour of reticence, silence, and leaving children in ignorance of what life later really implied. But though older people are thus disconcerted by a change of policy in priests, they ought certainly to recognize that it is demanded now since the world too is changed. In older days it was possible, perhaps, to pursue a policy of silence, because children could probably, in very many instances, grow up sheltered from any danger, and did not very much need to know about themselves. Certainly what was once true about this is no longer possible. It is impossible at present for children or anyone to escape the flaunting evidence of sex and sex-appeal. They cannot walk down the road and see the posters on the hoardings, or turn over the advertisement pages of respectable magazines, or read ordinary books, or look at moving pictures, or listen to the "talkies" or 'talk-backs' without being faced with all sorts of things that are plainly an exploitation of our human interest or curiosity in what is least for our good.

It may be argued, on the other hand, that a child sees no harm in these things, misses the spice of evil; yes, at first this is true, but gradually the weight of the obsession of sex must move them to enquire at last what it is all about, what these references mean which they do not understand but which interest grown-up people, what it is that provokes so easily a laugh amongst the older members of the audience. Sex is the god whom the world worships even more than it worships mammon, and it is a god whose claims are insistent and terrible, and without respite, and whose slime is over all.

But if the world is like this, then children have to be educated to meet it. It is not the world of our heart's desire that they are entering, have entered; it is this actual world. Now education is at least a preparation for life, has at least to fit children for life. Since this is the life they have to encounter, it is as well that they should be gradually prepared to meet it, be informed about it, i.e., this actual world.

To repeat, we do not praise this present fashion of sex-insistence. We believe that its arguments are false. We disbelieve the principle that the only way to make the idea of sex normal and natural is to talk about it. This generation has talked about it enough, but does not yet seem to have got it normal or natural. It is obsessed by it, in its literature, its drama, its art. It is not in the least normal, it is



definitely abnormal about it. Any psychoanalyst would be the first to agree with this. It may be true that the studied silence of the Victorians on the matter of sex provoked a morbid curiosity that created worse trouble. But there is no necessity to exchange that untruthful attitude to sex problems for an attitude which is equally unwholesome and insincere.

It is insincere for the folk of our time to tell us, for instance, that there is never any harm in knowledge. It all depends upon the matter of knowledge. There is obviously no harm in anyone knowing geography or history or mathematics or French irregular verbs; but knowledge about the human body and its purposes may very easily be harmful. It depends on how it is given and who gives it. We are obviously inflammable on the point of this particular knowledge. It can hurt our waking reveries and our dreams.

But this is our very reason for saying that, because knowledge can be harmful, children ought to be gradually given it individually and in such doses as they can understand without hurt. They must learn this knowledge one day; the question is from whom. Shall they learn it from lips that will speak of it with seemly reverence, or shall they learn it from those on whose lips it will be an unclean jest? Not indeed in a class, for children cannot be graded in this knowledge as they can be in other knowledge. This must be given individually by someone who knows intimately the particular child's mind, feeling his way delicately, careful not to be too revealing, too gross, yet to be clear and explicit, not to wrap up ideas in too mysterious a fashion, yet, however, not to hurt the sensitive, unwounded mind of the child.

Even so it happens that children often know more than those who think they understand them could have guessed; a child is secretive, especially in this matter. But if a child is ignorant, it does not follow there has been no hurt. Even if no one has told him (and he is always liable to be told by anyone, by another child, or a stray acquaintance, a boy, a grown man) he may begin habits that only later he discovers to be evil, later when he will find it much harder to break himself of what he has begun to do than if he had known at first.

Thus apart altogether from knowledge communicated from outside, there is always a traitor within man's nature. since it is a fallen nature with a bias towards evil.

We urge, then, that children should be taught about life, and that they should be taught this by their parents, father or mother. These are the proper persons to tell the child, for they have the responsibility of parenthood; also they ought to know their children and therefore know just how much can be told them, better than anyone else can. Moreover, they are in primary charge of the education of their children, and this is part of that education, and not an inconsiderable part. Perhaps the whole of their life will be coloured by what they learn now, and when, and from whom they learn it.

But parents will say that they hate having to do this. To which we would reply that hating to do one's duty is never an excuse for not doing it. Moreover, if, on the contrary, they liked talking about these things, this would hardly mean that they were any better fitted to do it or likely to do it any more reverently. Sometimes parents will reply that their way of doing this is not to talk of these things directly, but that they give their children pets to look after, and thus teach them indirectly. But this is a poorer way. It is poorer to begin with the lowest, the animals. It is better to begin with the highest, to begin with man. After all, father and mother know the beauty of love or should do so. Why not start with their own case and what it means, and how human love was divinely designed in

itself and in its expression and what came of it, and how the child itself was framed out of love, and came through love and is the fruit of love's expression?

Indeed, we have a higher example too by which to teach children, since their baby lips have early formed the phrase, "the fruit of thy womb." In telling them the story of the Incarnation they can thus learn its beauty, its humility, its depth of meaning. Thus, too, the way Christ came, His virginal birth, the contrast between this and other children's coming can be shown so as to show also the blessing which His coming gave to all births and lawful loves.

## THE SUCCESS OF MOTHERHOOD

EVIDENTLY the success of a mother is proved only in her discharge of her duties as a mother. If she fails in this she fails in everything else. She may succeed socially or publicly in other matters, but if she fails here she has failed where her first obligation lay, and where also her future happiness has most in store. Nothing can compensate her, especially in her later years, for what she has failed to do in her mothering of her children. Hence any wise mother will sacrifice any career of her own for the sake of her children; the children and their children afterwards will give her a nobler, richer, more human, more inspiring old age than anything else can give her. Moreover, the world has many others who will do the work she surrenders for them. Others who have not her ties will do the public work in her place.

But no one else can do her mothering for her. If she does not do it, it will not be done.

But if, after all, her children fail her later on ? Indeed, must they not always fail her? Must not her dreams of them be always greater than they can make come true? They cannot reach the heights she imagines them capable of reaching; but because she thinks them capable of reaching impassible heights they will be able to climb nearer to them than they would have done had she not believed.

But even if they fail her, she must not fail them. However they fail in life, in good life, in faith, in all, her love must never slacken, nor her sympathy be less. Always she must show them sympathy. Others may be obliged to refuse contact with them, never she. She must always be their home; her heart their hearth, her love their welcome, her belief in them their inspiration, their return to her a symbol of another return. "Even if the mother forget her child. yet will not I forget." Thus says the Lord! What a reverence in His voice, for mothers. Even if the mother forget, even if. . . .

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## The Cana Conference Movement

A Cana Conference consists of a group of young married couples who come together for a day to learn more about the ideal of the Christian family and home and the achieving of that ideal in their homes. The word "Cana" was chosen because it was at the Marriage Feast at Cana that Our Lord worked His first public miracle.

The first miracle of Our Lord's life was worked, at the request of His Mother, to help a newly-married couple over an upset that occurred at their wedding celebrations. Cana was the village where the incident took place.

Husbands and wives do not require to be told that many of the accidents and upsets of married life can be avoided, and the foundations of love cast much deeper, with the help of Our Lord and His Blessed Mother.

The Cana Conference Movement began in the United States and has spread to most parts of the English-speaking world.

It began in Melbourne in 1947 when the first Cana Conference, sponsored by the Young Christian Workers movement, was held at Santa Maria College, Northcote. During the past decades, the movement has become solidly established and Cana Conferences for married couples and Pre-Cana Conferences for engaged couples are held throughout the year.

#### Cana Conferences

These Conferences are specially designed for couples who are in their first years of marriage. However, other couples are very welcome. The Conferences occupy one Sunday only.

The talks cover the common problems of early marriage: adjustment of emotional and physical affection; the husband's contribution to his wife's mental security and physical well-being; the importance of keeping the feminine duties of lover, mother, and housekeeper, in their right order; the happiness and tensions of pregnancy months; the arrival of the baby.

#### Pre-Cana Conferences

Pre-Cana Conferences for engaged couples are held from February through to November, sponsored by the Young Christian Workers and the National Catholic Girls' Movement.

{The following information was accurate at the time this pamphlet was printed (1958). If you desire up-to-date information today, I would recommend that you contact your local Catholic Diocesan Office, OR, do an internet search on your favourite search-engine to find your nearest contact. Try searching under keywords such as 'Cana', or 'Cana Conference', or 'Y.C.W.', or 'Young Christian Workers', or 'Young Catholic Workers', or 'Catholic Marriage Guidance', or 'Catholic Education', or 'National Catholic Girls' Movement'.}

For further information, contact: Catholic Marriage Guidance Centre, 406 Albert Street, East Melbourne. OR - Chaplain Pre-Cana Conferences, Catholic Education Office, 379 Collins Street, Melbourne. OR - Diocesan Secretary, Y.C.W. 312 Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. OR - Diocesan Secretary, N.C.G.M. 379 Collins Street, Melbourne.

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