

You And Yours

Practical Talks on Home Life. Part 1 - Mother, Father and the Home

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PRACTICAL TALKS ON HOME LIFE.

TO HIS GRACE THE MOST REVEREND PATRICK JOSEPH HAYES, D.D. ARCHBISHOP OF NEW YORK, WHOSE LIFE LONG CONCERN HAS BEEN FOR THE CHRISTIAN WELFARE OF FAMILY, CHURCH AND STATE, THIS VOLUME ON FAMILY WELFARE IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

A nation will be very much what its homes are. Home life makes national life. Patriotism must begin at the fireside. Where the home is in honor, you will find a vigorous and patriotic people. It is the same also with religion. The Church is nowhere more flourishing than where the home is respected. For welfare both here and hereafter, much depends on the home. Modern life is making dreadful breaches in it. Church and state are threatened by this assault, for the home is the very heart of both.

You are interested in your home. You are interested in your country. You are interested in your Church. You will be interested in these talks, and what is more, you will, I trust, be benefited by them, for their purpose is to help Church and country and you by making your home the dearest place on earth.

Talk 1. THE HOME.

It is a very general remark that home is not now what it used to be. In country places and small towns, the home may retain some, if not all, of its former charms, but in the big cities, it has lost much that made it "Home, Sweet Home." Of course, the home is what the members of the family make it. But the members of the family are frequently what circumstances make them.

In these days of movies, automobiles, trolleys and trams, golf, sensational magazines, woman suffrage and 'liberation', and women in business, sport, et cetera, the members of a family are frequently not as closely nor as beneficially associated as formerly. Add to these disrupting influences, the spirit of independence and license, which the present age fosters, and you will not be astonished that the old-fashioned home is going, or gone.

This is not to say that all these new things are regrettable. Not at all. They are part of the onward movement of the human race. But in the transition stage, it is regrettable that the home is paying such a high price for progress.

For today, the world has lost its head with its new achievements. Distraction is mistaken for pleasure, license passes for independence, boldness parades as confidence, recreation degenerates into dissipation. Moreover, in big cities, overcrowding destroys privacy. Modesty, the guardian of virtue, loses its luster and often departs altogether.

Night workers, Sunday workers and shift workers make a continuous going-and-coming performance in many homes, thus depriving them of the reasonable possibility of family assemblage, one of the chief charms of home life, as well as one of the best bonds of family affection.

There is no use assailing these foes of family life. They have come to stay. Our business is to see what we can do under the circumstances to convert them into friends. For it can be done.

It is necessary, first of all, to recognize the altered situation in home life, brought about by modern conditions. The first step in the cure of a patient is that he recognizes the need of a cure. 'If a man refuses to admit that he is ill, his ailment may get a death-grip on him, and then it is too late for remedies. We need to realize now that the home is confronted by conditions, which are fast breaking it up. What are we to do?

When an army is confronted by threatening numbers, it draws closer together. Every unit feels the need of cooperation. Petty differences disappear. The authority of officers is unquestioned. Effort is unified. The result is that frequently the very danger of destruction is made the occasion of efficiency and victory.

And so with the home. Many things in modern life tend to disrupt it. Family ties are becoming weaker and weaker under the assaults of amusement, travel, bad books, business, sport, overcrowding, and the broad spread opportunity and inducement for dissipation. Against these foes of the home, the father and mother, as wise generals, must provide a defense. And let me say that the preservation of the home spirit will depend almost entirely on the heads of the family.

If a family is already grown up, and the home circle is not what it should be, I am afraid that little can be done. The battle is more or less over, and the army is dragging out a weary retreat. All that may be hoped for in such a home, short of a supernatural victory, is to save the remnants.

The time to safeguard the home begins on the very day of the marriage. Even before God blesses the union with a child, the home has been formed, and if its first development is not right, it cannot, as it enlarges, grow into the right kind of home.

How is the right start to be made? By living as God directs. Man and wife may soon be father and mother. Let them begin to lay the foundation for the family, which God may enable them to rear.

The first requisite is that man and wife realize that they are subjects of Almighty God. They are not their own masters even in their own home. The Head Master of every home should be God. The home wherein God is supreme will be the right kind of home no matter what the environment or circumstances may be.

We must realize that we are made to live in this world but not for this world. Our life is a stewardship for ourselves, and also for those whom God entrusts to us. If we lose sight of this accountability and live merely for this life and to suit ourselves, our families will do the same. And in these days of home decay, no family can hold out against worldly assaults unless God be its defender and ruler.

Such is the basis of happy home life. To realize that we are placed on this earth to live for a certain time as God directs, and not as we please, is to solve the riddle of life, and to find the key to home welfare.

For God places us here for a few years to test us, to find out if we are worthy of sharing His divinity forever in heaven. He permits the ups and downs of life that we may show ourselves true to Him. If we prove faithful, we shall become, in the end, children of God. Knowing this, we can bear our hardships patiently, and enjoy our good fortune with measure and gratitude. In all things, we can observe moderation. We will respect God and reverence His holy law.

Show me the man and wife who truly reverence God, and I shall show you the nucleus of a happy home. They may not be rich; God may not want them to be. They may not have high social position; God may be pleased to keep them lowly. But they will have the substantial peace which comes from knowing that they are friends of God, and that whenever He calls them, they are ready to meet Him as friends dear to Him. The man and wife living thus are safe and secure amid all the dangers of modern life. If their children are brought up with the same respect for God, they will be good sons and daughters, no matter what their environment.

The trouble with some families is that the parents do not respect God or each other, and in consequence, the children do not respect their parents. If little ones are brought up from the very beginning to love God and obey Him, they will also love and obey their parents.

Nowadays, when, on account of business and the customs of society, children are left so much to themselves, it is very essential that they have within themselves a safeguard for virtue and a motive for devotion to the family. It is simply impossible, except in isolated cases, to make people virtuous or devoted by worldly means. The world is essentially selfish, and worldly motives will make people virtuous and devoted only so long and in so much as it profits them to be so. Virtue and family welfare demand sacrifice. The greatest incentive to sacrifice in the whole world is love of God.

One reason, the main reason, why the family in many cases is faring so badly at present, is that religion, outside our holy Faith, has lost its meaning and its hold on people. It is not the various new distractions and perils of society, which bring ruin, but that these perils must be faced without the safeguards of religion.

Although the main purpose of religion is to bring us securely to our eternal inheritance, it has also this special feature, that it makes our journey to eternity a truly peaceful pilgrimage, and saves us from numerous disasters on the way. No wayfarer of life meets with so many hardships as he who leaves God out of the reckoning.

The religious man may and will have his afflictions, but he realizes that they are carrying him heavenward if he bears them in the spirit of religion. The man of practical faith knows that the cross here means the crown hereafter.

Consequently, his hardships have a purpose and a value, and this conviction enables him to go through life and meet its un-escapable ordeals not only patiently but even cheerfully.

The spirit of faith will do more to restore the home to its proper place than all the countless means and contrivances, which modern worldly-wise people can devise. Presently I shall touch on some very practical matters. Now I wish to say a word on basic principles. We must not expect the spirit of faith to animate the family unless it also dominates the parents. The realization that God is ever

present, and that we may at any moment be called by Him to give an account of our stewardship, will make parents solicitous and children dutiful.

When parents have a right sense of their responsibility, they will ordinarily have devoted children, and where children are devoted to parents, we have the ideal home. Bad environment and perilous conditions may put hindrances in the way of the home, but they can never disrupt it if true faith abides in its members.

What then will restore the family to its rightful place and condition? Principally the practice of religion. Not nominal religion. That often does more harm than good. Blank cartridges are of no use before an armed burglar. Nominal religion is nothing but a blank cartridge. Sometimes people who have a reputation for piety discredit religion by their conduct in the home. In most cases of the kind, you will find that their religion is only nominal.

In the home where God is rightly honored, it is realized that children cannot honor God without honoring their parents, and parents will understand that they cannot honor God without respecting each other and living mainly for the children. It is easy to see that with such a spirit animating children and parents, the family circle will be truly "Home, Sweet Home."

Of course, every family will have its misunderstandings and annoyances. That is life. There is no escape from it. But the home wherein God is supreme will be able to meet these vicissitudes in a way that will make them a blessing. Some of the happiest homes that I have known were those where affliction had abounded; for the peace and comfort, which God knows how to bestow on His own, also abounded there. If you would save the home, therefore, and have it the dearest place on earth, begin by putting it on the foundation of Faith. If after you have done this, the home is not what it should be, it will be exceptional.

We must not forget that we have not here a lasting city, but that we seek one, which is to come. A certain worldly man has said that our home is our heaven. Our home may be very dear to us, but the best home will have many annoyances and afflictions to remind us that our true home is not here, but hereafter.

Sometimes it happens that there is serious trouble in a home where every member of the family is truly religious. God at times permits even the just to suffer in order to perfect them. Saints have had serious misunderstandings in the Church of God. We must not forget that a difference in point of view will align the best of people in opposite camps. This shows us that life is a warfare.

But it also shows us that we should be armed, for the strife. If our Faith, with its aid and protection, does not eliminate all misunderstandings and other evils, how much would they be multiplied without this wonderful gift of God? The home, even with all helps which religion affords, will have its afflictions. But without religion, especially in these days, it is in imminent danger of disruption.

Alas, we see confirmation of this on all sides. Home for many people is now but a wayside inn. Seeking distraction constantly, without ever satisfying the quest, many of our young people today wear themselves out before their time. They leave the fountain of clear water for the polluted stream. Home, which for them should be the most attractive spot on earth, becomes merely a stopping place at which to put up until they can start off again to weary themselves in the way that gives no refreshment or peace.

I know that it will be too late for those who are well on in life to profit by what I am advising. The home, to be a true home, must be carefully built from the foundation up. We cannot be indifferent

for years, and then, when we find we have no home, expect to make one. It is then too late. We may repair some of the breaches, but we shall rarely have a home that deserves the name unless we have started it right.

But to those who are beginning the formation of a home, to young husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, I say that the home is going to be what they make it. A home does not happen. Nothing in this world requires more careful construction. On a bad foundation, it is impossible to erect a good structure. Begin from the very beginning. Make it a home from the start.

Religion does not exclude, rather it presupposes human cooperation. I shall therefore endeavor to help by setting forth some practical matters, which have a very direct bearing on the home. I repeat, the home will be what we make it. Like a business, it may be neglected and ruined. Nothing takes care of itself.

The following chapters and pamphlets will take up in detail the factors, which make for a good home. As the reader will perceive, the subjects are treated in a very practical way. Throughout there is not a suggestion that is not founded on experience. I feel certain that those who take these recommendations to heart and endeavor to carry them out practically, will find as the years go on, and they more and more feel the need of a home, that theirs will truly be "Home, Sweet Home."

Talk 2. FATHER.

An army is, for the most part, what its general is. Troops are very much the same everywhere. It is the general that makes the difference. The same troops under different generals will be victors or vanquished. It is so in business. How often do we see a losing concern put on its feet by a new head! The father is the head of the family. On him depends in great measure the happiness of the home. He is the general of the little fireside army, and on his policy will depend the success or failure of those committed to his charge.

We know how careful railroads are to have good engineers. If the engineer is not dependable, the good road-bed and costly carriages and cars matter little. A careless engineer can wreck the best train on the best road. A good engineer can guide his train safely over the most dangerous route. What the engineer is to the train, the father is to the family. Of course, a train needs a good deal more than an engineer, but the engineer is the guiding hand; the safety and welfare of the passengers depend upon him.

It is the joint influence of a good father and mother that makes the ideal Christian family. The influence of a mother is gradual and gentle. Her sweetness and tenderness soften the most hardened dispositions. Her sacrifices inspire love and loyalty. But something more than this is required in the rearing of a family.

Children up to a certain age take the love and sacrifice of parents for granted. They are so accustomed to the affectionate care of father and mother that it is only later in life that they realize how much they owe them. Up to a certain period, children are little animals. They need a firm hand. That is where the father is necessary.

I say a firm hand. I do not mean a hard hand. Firmness is consistent with the greatest kindness and consideration. Indeed, it is only kindness and consideration that can make a man truly firm. Firmness without kindness is cruelty or stubbornness. Firmness presupposes a considerate view of a situation, and the determination to act for the true welfare of those concerned. It does not degenerate into weakness or stubbornness. It knows how to insist, and how to relax, when it is advisable.

In order to be practical, I shall point out just what I mean by this kind firmness, which is a most essential quality in the right type of father.

First of all, children must know that if father says a thing, he means it. Children are very observant. They soon decide whether or not they may take liberties with father. I have seen a big, powerful man lay down the law to his child, who would listen and then act regardless of what was said. Why? The child knew from experience that it could do so.

Another father will talk to his child in a quiet way, and the child will no more think of going against orders than of putting its hand in the fire. He knows from experience that the father means what he says.

A threat may serve the purpose once, but if it is not carried out, it will have no meaning the second and subsequent times. The threatening or loud attitude means nothing to a child. What counts is authority. If the father tells his child to do something, he must see that it is done. Once children see that an order is meant, they will respect it. But if a command turns out to be a suggestion or an appeal or an expectation, it should occasion no surprise if the child acts accordingly. An order is an order. Either the parent has something worthwhile to say to his child when he gives instructions, or he has not. If not, he had better remain silent. But if a command is given, let it be a command, and respected as such.

Of course, some fathers are incapable of making themselves and their wishes respected. The more is the pity. But if you analyze the success or failure of a father's authority, you will find that it depends upon his possession of firmness joined with kindness. Firmness may be cultivated as well as any other quality.

I beg of fathers of families to be firm concerning a command, once it is given. But before telling the child that he must do this or refrain from doing that, the father is bound to consider whether such orders are just and expedient. He must make sure that his orders are practicable and beneficial and then see to it that they are carried out.

Many fathers give orders first, and think of their advisability afterwards. Of course, one who does that cannot be firm, and his authority goes. A father should never give an order the fulfillment of which he does not think it worthwhile to insist on. If the child's training begins in the right way, he will never think of disobeying.

In minor matters, a child may be thoughtless, or so interested in something or other, that he may forget or disobey instructions. A wise father will know how to make allowances. Firmness must be considerate. But once a line is drawn in a matter of importance he should never let it be crossed without the child's regretting it.

In that way, as the child grows up, it will form habits of docility, and later on its parents will not have to complain, as so many do, that they cannot control their children. In nine cases out of ten, when children are blamed for unruliness, it is the parents' fault. The duty of the father is to see that from its earliest years the child obeys its parents or learns by experience that it is to its disadvantage to disobey.

In dealing with children, it is hard or impossible to give any rule which applies generally. A parent must study his children, for in one family it may be that no two will respond to the same discipline. Children are as different in character as they are in appearance.

Some children respond to kindness only. Such should never be harshly dealt with. It tends to make them stubborn. They will do anything for love, but little or nothing for fear. Such children are a blessing, but the parents must cultivate this fine quality in them. The less a child has of it, the more the father should endeavor to develop it in him.

Other children respond best to what I may call expediency. They are clever and calculating, and if they find it does not pay to disobey, they will not do it. Such children are best managed by words of encouragement and little kindnesses, and even, at times, rewards for well doing. But they should never be led to believe that they are to be good only for a consideration.

There is a third class which, from an excess of animal spirits, seems to mind neither kindness nor advantage, and respects no law or order except it be enforced by a strong hand. These children are ordinarily very good at heart, but in their superabundance of vitality, they tend to be a law to themselves. Here is where the father's authority is necessary. His word must be law. And a peculiar thing about children of this kind is that under firmness they are happier as well as better.

Moreover, they respect and love those who can master them. Children are like men — they hate to submit to others, but when they find someone who is really their master, they admire him. The very happiest children I have ever known are in families where the father is master and head, not only 'in name' but also in reality. A father who gives way to his children loses their respect and frequently their affection. The best loved fathers are those who have shown character in dealing with their children.

By character, I do not mean severity. A firm man is rarely severe, but he is as steady as a rock when he once takes a stand. Severity is a mask "which a man of true character, or strength, does not have to use". A severe father will often defeat his own purpose.

A firm father will always be moderate and calm, qualities, which win admiration and increase love. It is better not to correct or chastise when one is not calm, for correction given in anger ordinarily does more harm than good. Power, character, and firmness are shown by control. Reserve force has a wonderful effect on children as on men. A dignified reserve will do more in dealing with children than the greatest show of anger and passion. If a father means what he says, and carries out what he says, he will seldom have to resort to stern measures.

Of course, things are different for the father who has already forfeited the respect and obedience of his children by his intemperate dealings with them, but you fathers whose children are young, start, I beg of you, from the beginning, and bring your little ones up to respect your authority. Then, when they arrive at the estate of youth, you will not have to complain that they are unmanageable and disrespectful.

The very best way, however, for a father to win the respect and obedience of his children is by his own example. There are two virtues, which will make a father an inspiration and an ideal to his children — regard for his religion, and respect for the mother of his children. If a man does not obey his Church, which commands him to go to Mass on Sundays and to receive the Sacraments duly, he should not be surprised if his children fail to respect and obey him. Moreover, if his children see that he neglects his Church, they will soon follow his example. That means that the best influence of life is taken from them. Even with the aids of religion, the path of youth is full of dangers. Without religion, it is one continuous pitfall. Every father knows that. The religious young man and woman have a protection and assistance in the journey of life, which those without religion can never have. By fidelity to his religion, the father will equip his dear ones with the God-given

armor, which it affords. I need not remind the father that he will have to render to God an account of the example he has been to his children in regard to religious observance. Next to religion, the best way to inspire love and obedience in children is by the father's regard for their mother. Mark it well; a father will never receive any more respect from his children than he pays to their mother. Even if she has shortcomings, it is his duty to shield her. In that way, whatever her defects, they will become less. If instead of being kind and considerate to her, of shielding and helping her, the father breaks out in abuse, she will become worse, and the children will lose respect for both father and mother.

His religion and the mother of his children are paramount in a man's life. Fidelity to them will do more for the welfare of the children than all else besides. The dignity of a father of a family is great; so also is his responsibility. Fidelity to his religion will enable him to discharge that responsibility properly, and consideration for the mother of his children will teach them consideration for their father as well as for her.

Many a home, instead of being a paradise, is a hell — usually because the father makes it so by his inconsiderate ways towards the mother. If the children see constant bickering and abuse, they fall into the same way; but where they observe a kindly and considerate manner in their parents, they quickly adopt kindness and consideration toward mother and father and among themselves. As for the value of this advice, remember, it is never too late to mend.

A good father may have his difficulties in bringing up a family, but he will also have his substantial joys. What is comparable to the good father who has the love and respect of his children? What a pleasure it is to toil and plan for those little ones of his own flesh and blood whom God has given him to rear, not only for this life, but for the everlasting kingdom. In their tender years, he is their guide and support; in his old age, they will be his comfort. The day will come, if he lives long enough, when he will depend upon their tender care and affection. What better way to deserve their love in his fading years than to win it as a good father while they are growing up.

It is not the indulgent father that is loved most. The greatest affection of sons and daughters goes out to the father who was a man in very deed, a man who worked for their welfare regardless of their whims and caprices. Weakling fathers, who prefer passing peace to the lasting good of their children, gain neither their love nor their respect.

God's way is the best way. And God made the father to be the head of the family. The head is not directed by the members, but guides and directs them. What the head is to the body, God intends the father to be to the family. The mother is the heart of the family. Head and heart in mutual accord constitute the well-being of the home.

Fathers of families, if you would have obedient and loving children, love and obey your Father in heaven and reverence the mother of your children! Even the father who does his full duty to God and towards the mother of his children will find many difficulties, embarrassments and disappointments in the rearing of his family. But he will have the assurance that these untoward happenings have not occurred because he failed to do his duty.

If a man does his best, he can bear with calm mind the vicissitudes of family life, but if he feels in his heart that he has neglected his duty, the mishaps will become almost unbearable. He will realize that the wayward son or daughter was made so by his un-fatherly conduct. It is bad enough to have a bad son or daughter, but much worse to have been a bad father.

On the other hand, what a constant comfort to the father to reflect that the little ones whom God has given him were started right in life, by his example and direction. It is worth all the toil and worry that a good father experiences, to realize that his life has had a noble purpose, and has put those dear to him in the right way to achieve in their turn a noble purpose in life.

Nor is this all. A good father will stand with his hands full before the judgment seat of God. He will hear from the Father of us all words that will repay him for the efforts and sacrifices he has made, and he will rejoice forever that he manfully did his duty. If you would be a happy father in eternity, be a good father now.

Talk 3. MOTHER.

If the father is the head of the family, the mother is its heart. I do not know of a better way of showing the true worth and position of the mother of a family than by likening her to its heart.

Strength must be tempered with gentleness, or there is danger of rule by force. The strength of man is required for the protection and up-building of the family. The gentleness of woman is just as necessary to restrain that strength and sustain it. For strength needs maintenance as well as restraint. The mother's sacrifices and devotion reanimate the father when his strength wanes from exhaustion, and restrain him when it would lead him to excessive measures. Children who are blessed with a firm father and a gentle mother have something for which to thank God all the days of their lives.

In considering the father, it seems that he means more to the family than does the mother. But in considering the mother, it seems that she is the more essential. The truth is, both have their necessary place and dignity, and in general it cannot be said which makes more for the well-being of the children. Where father and mother are what they ought to be, their mutual influence on the children is ideal, and though different in kind, about equal in degree.

A good father means everything to a family if the mother is not the right kind. And a good mother has often made the children forget that they have a bad father. It almost seems that whenever the father is delinquent, the mother rises to noble heights of devotion and service, and if the mother fails, the father assumes added duties nobly.

Neither father nor mother, however, can fall short of his or her duty without a decided detriment to the children in one way or another. Children without a good father lose something, which no mother can make up for. And children without a good mother will go through life deprived of something which the best of fathers cannot supply. Neither father nor mother, therefore, can afford to leave to the other the part, which God has intended specifically for him or her.

I do not need to say anything about the worth and dignity of a mother. The man or child who needs to be told that nothing on earth approaches so near to the divine as does a mother's love, knows not what a mother is, and cannot be made to know. The man or child who does not know the sublime influence of a mother's love has not felt the most inspiring sentiment that one human being can arouse in another.

Instead of glorifying the mother, I wish to say a few words to her, which may help her to become what every mother desires to be — the best human influence in the lives and hearts of the children whom God has given her. It is hard for me to restrain myself from eulogizing instead of advising the mother.

Taking for granted, therefore, that mothers are the loftiest expression of the goodness of God in this world of ours, let me say that they should do nothing to lessen the wonderful influence for good that they can exert. A mother should remember her function in the family — she is its heart.

What a world of meaning that one word suggest! It is the heart that suffers and sometimes breaks. It is the heart that rejoices and overflows with joy. Suffering and sympathy make the mother so cherished, so inspiring, so loved. Suffering and sympathy also bring to the mother her greatest joy. For her heart is so good that she delights to suffer for the well-being of others. Her kind, gentle nature it is that cheers the children and their father, and helps them over the rough places on the journey of life.

But if the mother has her cares and sufferings, she also has her joys. Indeed, it may be said that no human joy is comparable to that experienced by a good mother. Every joy of the children and their father is hers twofold. If her mother's love causes her to suffer with her family, it also enables her to rejoice with them, and no human joy is so free from alloy as a mother's.

Besides she realizes that in proportion as she lives for her family, they live for her. The good mother is the queen of the household. She reigns supreme over the hearts of her subjects. More than that, she is the inspiration of the father of the family. Under the gentle Influence of a good mother, the father of a family finds it easy to toll and to face the trials of life. Oh, that every mother might realize her dignity and power, for she holds the key to the souls of her children and it is she who opens their little hearts and places in them the seeds of future character.

Motherhood exercises the most intimate and powerful influence known among men. Some of the greatest Saints were the children of saintly mothers. Saint Augustine was the fruit of Saint Monica's example and prayers and tears. Saint Louis of France found in his mother Blanche a holy model. Her words, spoken to him in his youth, "I had rather see you dead at my feet than guilty of mortal sin," were engraved on his heart and influenced him throughout his entire life. The great Saint Bernard was the child of a mother so holy that virtue, inculcated by her example, became almost second nature. Bad mothers have also left their impress on their children. The mother of Nero was a murderess. What he was the whole world knows to its disgrace. The mother of Voltaire was notably immoral. The son surpassed the mother in vice. Rightly, then, may we say, "The mother in her office holds the key of the soul, and stamps the coin of character on her child." What a wonderful responsibility that puts upon the mother! As the potter fashions the clay, so does the mother mould the child by her precepts, but still more by her example. Her responsibility gives to the mother her lofty place in life and justifies the poet when he exclaims, "Then crown her queen of the world."

The first school a child attends is the one presided over by its mother. On those early lessons begun in the cradle and continued in the home, the career of after life mainly depends. Youth is like wax for receiving impressions and like steel for retaining them. If in the tender years of childhood the mother has placed the proper impress on her children, they will be the better for it all their lives. But if, as sometimes happens, a bad impression has been made in the classroom of childhood, the misfortune of it for mother and for child will indeed become evident as time goes on.

As the children grow up the solicitous care of the good mother follows them in the home and outside. You may fancy that all this is a burden on the mother. As well say that a miner who safeguards the gold he has dug from the earth is burdened by its care. As the miner looks ahead and sees in vision the comfort and luxury which his wealth will procure, and in that prospect finds peace

and joy in spite of his labor, so does the good mother rejoice in the care of her children, foreseeing that her affectionate care will make both them and herself happier and better in the years to come.

The good mother is like a gardener who cultivates delicate plants. The gardener must prepare the soil and keep it moist and remove every harmful growth. But the joy he experiences as the plants rise from the ground and develop into beautiful flowers, more than repays him for his labor. The pleasure of beholding the result of his painstaking care is so great that frequently he cultivates a garden not for what it produces but for the pleasure of producing. When the plants are human souls, when the tender growth is one's own child, what must be the joy of the gardener! And as the devoted mother watches her flowers unfold, beholds their love responding to her own, what joy on earth compares with her! "Then crown her queen of the world," for queen she is. The world is what mothers make it.

Napoleon, on being asked what France needed most, as it lay prostrate after prolonged war, replied, "Mothers!" Mothers of the right sort, he wanted, mothers who would rear children to promote the glory of France. Napoleon knew of what he spoke. He had seen men under all conditions, and with his genius for realizing situations he perceived that the greatest need of his fallen country was not wealth, but mothers.

The mother it is who by her gentle care transforms the "young animal," the being with its possibilities of selfishness and cruelty, into a Christian man. She thus cooperates with God not only in the creation of her child but also in the formation of a cultured man and child of God. Rightly conceived, what a dignity is motherhood! Nowadays, alas, some mothers fail to appreciate their lofty station. Instead of living for the substantial joys of motherhood, they spend their energies on trifles. Like children, they desire nothing but sweets, failing to realize that nature calls for a substantial diet and not merely attractive desserts. Desserts are very good in their place, but they must not take precedence of substantial food.

Some mothers neglect the home for outside. Relaxation and amusement are necessary for mothers, but not at the expense of their motherly duties. Nature has so ordered that a good mother finds her greatest relaxation and entertainment in the home. No amount of outside distraction will compensate for what she loses by spending herself on external amusements and persons. I do not mean at all to belittle social duties and proper amusements. These are not only desirable, but necessary. But they are not paramount. Some mothers seem to make visiting and theatre-going and display, their main purpose of living. And all the while they are losing the God-given joys of the home and, moreover, their children are growing up without due supervision and the father of the family is often secondary to outsiders. I know that I may be considered extreme in speaking thus, but if you knew of all the broken homes caused by frivolous mothers, you would desire me to be even more vigorous in exposing this malady, which is more pronounced now perhaps than ever before. Because of licentious magazines and indecent theatres and a worldly code of morals, a premium is now put upon the very things which formerly were in disrepute. All this has resulted in wrong standards of motherhood among many women.

Some frivolous mothers measure their happiness by the amount of gadding about they can do and by the capacity of the father of the family to furnish them with dress and outside amusement. Such mothers wonder why it is that after a time they are like dried up cisterns. They have sold their inheritance for a mess of pottage. The supreme joys of the home have been bartered for outside

distraction, which brings in the end nothing but emptiness. Not that a mother should not have recreation, I repeat, but a good mother usually finds that her chief pleasure is the home.

Please do not understand me to mean that a mother should be tied down to the home. But there are some mothers who are almost strangers to the home. They are uneasy unless they have a date for this and that, and they count that day lost which has not been spent in paying or receiving a visit.

They are surprised at length when they realize that the home has no attraction for them. But it is they who have made it unattractive. If the mother gads abroad, the children will run loose also. The father on returning from a hard day's work will find a cold reception. The mother has spent herself on outsiders, and she has nothing left for the children and their father.

Soon she has nothing left for herself. The affection and esteem of her family have been lost. As the children grow up, they seek their amusement outside, away from the home made unattractive by a selfish mother. Then, too late, she realizes that she has made a mistake. Her home is not a home. Her children find their pleasure anywhere, except at the fireside, their father seeks his pleasure elsewhere, and the home has gone forever.

How very, very many homes have been made desolate by such procedure! The woman is amazed when she hears about the devotion of other families to their mothers. She wonders why her children and their father do not mean for her all that other families mean for other mothers. Oh, if I could only make mothers realize how much their happiness and that of their families depends upon devotion to the home!

Nature has fitted all things for their appointed purposes. And nature has so constituted a mother that her greatest peace and happiness is found in motherly duty. There need be no fear that she will become a piece of furniture in the home. If she does her part, she will find that her children and their father are more solicitous for her welfare and enjoyment than for their own.

In a thousand ways, all that is done for them will come back to the mother. How to make their mother happy will be their first thought. They will find ways and means of giving her more pleasure in the home and outside than she would ever get by being always on the lookout for her own amusement and distraction.

Never in the history of the world has there been such a craze for selfish enjoyment as of late. People seek amusement here and distraction there, thinking only of themselves. With what result? In this era of selfishness, there is more dissatisfaction, disappointment, distress and disorder than ever before.

The worst way to satisfy self is to seek self. Selfishness is the worst possible investment a person can make. We are images of God. God's happiness is to make others happy. The closer we approach to His way, the happier we shall be. The very essence of goodness lies in imparting itself to others. The best and happiest people in the world are they who find their pleasure in doing something for others. It is the one pleasure that has no unpleasant reaction.

I remember on one occasion meeting a longshoreman on the docks of Manhattan and saying to him: "My dear man, you have a hard and long day of it."

"Very true, Father," he replied, "but when I think of my children and their mother, and that my wages give them the comforts they need, the day does not seem hard or long."

That was wisdom in a nutshell. That man did not find life a burden. That man was happy in making others happy. God bless him and the many like him!

After all, what do we get out of life that is worthwhile? Dress, food, travel, society, entertainment? When you sum it all up, what does it give you that really contributes to a contented mind? A good friend is more than all the style and amusement of life. And if a friend is one of the greatest blessings of life, what must children and their father be to a mother!

We like to please our friend. A mother likes to please her children and their father. Who does not know the great joy that comes from giving a friend a substantial and desirable present? A good mother gives to her children and their father the best present of all — herself. And this is a pleasure she enjoys, not only occasionally, but daily. Mrs. Gadabout often wonders how Mrs. So-and-so can stand her quiet and confined life. And all the while Mrs. So-and-so, a good mother, is thanking God for her paradise on earth.

Oh, the joys of a mother who is a good mother! Oh, the happiness of the mother who spends herself on her children and their father! ‘Drudgery’, Mrs. Gadabout calls it, but ‘a little bit of heaven’, the good mother considers it. Is there any joy in the world like working for those you love? And no human love is, or should be, greater than that of a mother towards her children and their father. The mother who does not find her greatest joy in living for her family is hardly a mother at all.

Of course, I know as well as you, Mrs. Gadabout, that a woman should not be tied down to the routine of domestic duty. There are social duties as well as domestic. The mother who fails in her social duties is unfair to herself and her family. For certain circles, the social duties are imperative. But the good mother will know how to discharge them, not as a detriment to the home, but as a benefit to it.

I have known social butterflies, mothers of families, who did not see their children more than once a week! Of course, that was among people of wealth, where maids and governesses were supposed to look after the children. But maid or governess is not a mother, and it may be too late when the mother realizes it.

In the ordinary walks of life, Mrs. Gadabout has no maids or governesses, but, nevertheless, she sacrifices the home, the children, and their father to her craze for novelty and amusement. Such a mother must pay an awful tax for her pleasure. When she can least afford it, that tax will be levied, for the time will come when she no longer cares to gad about. She will wake up to the emptiness of it all and then turn to seek her comfort in her home, only to find that she has none. Meanwhile the children and their father have lost the best human influence in their lives.

But the good mother! As the years steal on, the affection of the children and their father grows stronger and stronger. Their only thought is for her. She who found her joy in sacrificing herself for others now finds that it has all come back to her many-fold. Idolized by her family, she reigns queen of the home. Her heaven, it seems, has begun before she says farewell to earth.

And that is another thing that the good mother has always in view, that this life is not heaven, but only the way to it. She expects a way of the cross, and that very expectancy makes it less hard to walk in the path of affliction when it stretches before her, as, sooner or later, it does for all.

She teaches her children and their father by her example to live in this world, but not for it. She is careful that family prayers are said, that Mass is duly attended, and the Sacraments frequently received. She inculcates piety by word and deed.

Although solicitous for the worldly success of her children, she gives them to understand that it must never be attained at the cost of virtue. She teaches truthfulness, purity and consideration by her own high ideals. She knows that if she is to have the love and respect of her children, she must show love and respect to their father.

While insisting on the necessity of the virtues of religion, she does not overlook the social virtues. She realizes that the religion of her children will lose nothing before God, but will gain before men, if it be adorned by the outward graces and refinements which constitute good manners and are held in esteem by good society.

To live for the eye of God, but not to overlook the eye of man, that is her lesson to her little ones. She knows that often a very virtuous person may be put down as vicious because of vulgarity. Vulgarity is not sin. But as people see only the exterior, a virtuous person should avoid vulgarity as a disease. The good mother will inculcate this in the minds of her children.

How often have you traced a non-Catholic's condemnation of our Religion to the fact that a Catholic maid, butler or workman was careless or lacking in the social virtues? A good Catholic would die rather than offend God by sin. Yet often enough people without religion, sinning seriously and continually, appear more virtuous than some Catholics simply on account of the social virtues.

Mothers of families should be the first to see the importance of the niceties and conventionalities of good society. Children brought up in the right Catholic way will have manners superior to all that the rules of society alone can give. Keep God's commandments and do not neglect the polite laws of human intercourse. That should be the aim in every family, and it will be accomplished mainly by the influence of a good mother.

A mother who has good children possesses more, than money or anything else can give. You know the story of the Roman matron who, when asked by a frivolous gad-about of that era, to display her jewels, called her two sons, and embracing them, said: "Behold my jewels!"

On a certain occasion, a mother was complaining to me of her poverty. I told her I thought she was quite well off. In surprise, she declared that she could not understand my remark. I answered nothing in reply, but changed the topic of conversation. A few minutes later, I returned to the matter indirectly.

"I know a gentleman who is very wealthy, and he has taken a decided fancy to your little John. He told me he would like to adopt him and he will give you fifty thousand dollars as a present if you will consent. You have seven children, and you will not miss Johnnie. What do you say?"

Of course, I knew what she would say, but I was not prepared for the vigorous denunciation of the gentleman and myself which followed. It concluded by her announcing that not for fifty thousand nor for fifty million would she give up Johnnie.

Smiling, I said: "Did I not tell you that you were rich?"

She, too, smiled and went away happy — and rich.

Every good mother is possessed of more wealth than she realizes. Money does not procure happiness — good motherhood does. Even though a good mother has privations to meet and disappointments and even ingratitude, she nevertheless has a wealth of joy in her solicitude for her loved ones.

Ingratitude is the hardest stroke she may have to bear. God may at times permit a good mother to suffer this extreme pang. But it is because He loves her as she loves her children, and He knows that affliction will make her dearer to Him. Christ and His mother knew the sting of ingratitude. They bore it in order to sanctify its endurance for those who accept it patiently for God's sake.

The good mother will turn even ingratitude into a source of peace and joy, realizing that by it she can draw closer to God, and also obtain His help and grace for her ungrateful ones. For the good mother loves even the ingrates of her household.

How like unto God she thus becomes, for He loves us even when we turn away from Him or positively offend Him. The Good Shepherd sought especially the sheep that strayed, and the good mother somehow seems to love with especial tenderness her strayed sheep. God made her so.

Mothers, you have a wonderful mission in the world. Not until you see God face to face will you realize what it meant to be a good mother.
