

Catholic Training Of Children

Part 1.

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Daily Meditations for Parents on Adolescents.

TRAINING THE ADOLESCENT.

TO TRAIN little ones is difficult enough. When these little ones grow up the difficulty of educating them grows with them.

There is a particular age — between thirteen and seventeen — when the rise of new energies generally produces a crisis. The child is no longer a child; neither is he a grown-up. He is in a period of transition which we must not fear but which we must consider sympathetically; it is a time when we should be ever ready to come to his help at opportune moments.

It is also a time when restraints weigh upon him. Until now, the child did not distinguish his individual identity much from those about him. What they thought and felt he was satisfied to feel and think in perfect harmony. But now his personality is emerging. Before this, it was indistinct. Oh, yes, at times traits of it would shine out and predict the future character but it was only a faint sketch. Now the design takes form and definite lines.

It is thrilling to see the dawn of manhood and womanhood in the young as they rise up to meet life. It is depressing to think of possible deformations! A design can so easily change into a caricature!

There is no question now of a dead image on inert paper! We are concerned with an animated potentiality, with an intense dynamism — a soul seeking itself. It is like a person lost in the night groping about here and there to find the right road. We can speak to the adolescent, guide him, but nothing takes the place of personal experience and it means much to allow the young the liberty to try their luck.

Even as a baby, as soon as he takes his first steps, the child uses all its baby strength to pull away from its mother. The mother had until then held him in her arms. But one day she put him down so that he could learn to stand and to put one foot before the other. As soon as he learnt this new game, the little one is ready for his first expedition. And what mother, even though she rejoices at the prowess of the young explorer, does not suffer when she realizes that her arms and her heart can no longer hold back this little conqueror already setting out to meet life?

As the adolescent boy or girl grows older, the span of their investigation widens. There is the immense field of their own individuality. How many realities, how many mysteries they encounter at every step! Fortunate that youth who, avid until now to ask questions, remains willing to ask some still! He wants to learn certainly, even more than ever before, only he wants to learn by himself so he withdraws into himself to solve his problems. Who could ever know as he does his

little domain; he is jealous of it; he closes his arms about his riches; he yields to no one the right to violate his treasure.

We should not be astonished at this but stimulate their research unobtrusively, provide them, without appearing to do so, with the means to solve their problems; we should not pry into their confidence but rather cleverly inspire and provoke it. Let them realize that mother and father themselves formerly discovered this whole world that challenges their discovery; that mother and father can therefore serve as prudent but well-informed advisers to the young novices of life.

Then there is the whole world outside of themselves — the frame of their life, their surroundings, and other people; that is quite a universe. What is the significance of such a smile, such a silence, such an action? They thought everyone was good — that was a mistake! They thought that life was conquered without difficulty — they have to struggle hard: How much work to learn the least thing!

And then the whole domain of religion. It was all so simple formerly. Now there are problems on every side. And love? This whole transformation that they sense within themselves? Those impulses of feeling? Those sensations never before experienced, organic phenomena whose nature and reason they do not know?

We need great sympathy before their laborious and often worried seeking, and also much vigilance mingled with a gentle firmness, high moral principles, and exceptional psychological insight almost bordering on prophecy. Above all, we need much prayer.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS. (1) They're different.

THE training of adolescence ought to make much allowance for the difference between the sexes and for the difference of individual temperaments within each sex.

The boy as he grows older becomes more and more individualistic. Everything exists for him. His little person makes itself conspicuous without fear. He loves to make noise not only because of his love for activity but also to assert his presence. In games, he likes to direct and if he envisions the future, he always sees himself in the role of a leader...

He must be taught that other people exist and what is more, that he has the duty not only to refrain from harming them but also to help them. Every opportunity for him to render service should be used to advantage — to take care of his little sisters gallantly and willingly, to run on errands for father or mother or someone else in the household. The boy and later the man is a great egoist. It is wise to counteract very early this tendency of his to make himself the center of interest, to turn his attention to careers of devoted self-sacrifice, to impress him with the repercussions his actions have upon others and to enlighten him on his duty to give much since he has received much and to penetrate him with the realization that he has a responsibility toward his own.

The little girl as she advances toward womanhood — and this begins quite early — very quickly becomes conscious of herself as part of a relationship. She feels herself physically weaker than her brothers and her powers of feeling orientate her even at that early age whether she is aware of it or not, toward love — in the beginning toward the couple “mamma and baby” but later toward the couple “husband and wife.”

Much less individualistic than the boy — although she can be so in her own way and sometimes fiercely so — she is above all family-minded. She loves to rock the baby, to help her mother. If she prefers one study more than another, history, literature or mathematics, it is more often because of

the teacher who teaches it than the subject itself. Early in the little girl's life are verified the words of 'George Sand' (the great female author) concerning woman, "Behind the things that she loves there is always someone."

Because of the complexities of feeling, the education of the adolescent girl is more delicate and more difficult than the education of the adolescent boy. The boy is more heavy, more blunt, more matter of fact, less given to fine distinctions; the phenomena of puberty are more tardy in him and are generally not at all or scarcely ever accompanied by any fits of feeling but rather a mere hunger for sensations: he is still the individualist.

Because of her periods, a phenomenon which often troubles the adolescent girl even after its mysterious significance has been chastely and adequately explained to her, she becomes more curious and uneasy about all that bears on the problem of life and is much more susceptible to emotional unbalance and the fascination of abandoning herself to daydreams than a boy of her age. If the adolescent boy is healthy, he doesn't indulge in dreaming; he makes noise or pulls all kinds of pranks. The girl, even when she loves study, loves still other things and she is much attracted by the perspective of an eventual giving of herself.

Beautiful is the task of giving her a clear idea of her essential vocation; to guard her from false notions; to get her to be diligent in the tasks of the moment, her house duties and school assignments; to direct her need for unreserved giving so that what is but a vague instinct within her becomes translated into terms of clear duty; to impress her with the immense responsibility of having been chosen to give life, unless God chooses her to renounce this power, for love of Him, in virginity.

GIRLS VERSUS BOYS. (2) Prepare well.

EVERYDAY experiences give many examples of the distinctive differences between the two sexes especially during their adolescence: the egocentric interests of the boy, the self-radiating tendencies of the girl. The boy thinks about his future exploits; the girl dreams of possible children. In the one, love of glory; in the other love of love itself.

The following bit of conversation between two sisters is in itself an amusing commentary on feminine adolescent psychology. "What are you thinking of," the twelve year old asked her fifteen year old sister, "of your future husband?" "A husband," protested the elder, "I am too young. I have a lot of time before I begin thinking of a husband!" "Well then what are you thinking about?"

"I was planning what kind of trimmings I would have on my wedding dress."

Even when we take into account the differences created by nature between boys and girls, we still must make allowances for different temperaments within the sexes. Each child lives in a world of his own, in a world that is strangely different from the world of those about him. With one individual maternal influence will have greater force; with another, paternal influence. One child may have vigorous health, whereas another is delicate. In the one, a melancholy temperament may predominate; in another, the exact opposite, the sanguine with extrovert tendencies is conspicuous. One child may be calm and poised; another, a little bundle of nerves... Consequently, if the educator has but one method of dealing with all, a single and only method, he can expect to meet with disappointments.

However, in providing for these individual differences, a real problem must be faced: It is not sufficient to correct the one child and refrain from correcting the other; to congratulate the one and

ignore the success of the other and so on through all the possible variations that might be in order. All this must be done while preserving the impression of treating all alike. If children perceive, as they sometimes do with reason, that there is partiality shown to one or other of the family, authority is broken down, jealousy enters and soon constant wrangling results.

The ideal is to maintain poise, serenity, evenness of temper, and a steadiness of behavior that nothing can upset.

Superiors of religious orders are advised to make use of a practice, which is beneficial for all — an honest examination periodically of their faithful fulfillment of the trust confided to them. Have I given evidence of any partiality or any unjustifiable toleration of wrong? Have I seen to it that the rules have been observed, the ways or customs of the order and its holy traditions held in honor?

In what way are things not going as they should? One can pass quickly over what is as it should be, thanking God humbly for it but direct attention by choice to what is defective and faulty to determine to make the necessary corrections either in one's person or one's work. Mussolini's comment has a point here: "It is useless to tell me about what is going along well. Speak to me immediately of what is going badly."

If only parents would make it a habit to practice this counsel suggested to monks: Stop a moment to observe the train pass; look to see if the lighting functions, if the wheels are well oiled, if there is any need to fear for the connections. People do that from time to time in regard to their personal life and we call it a Retreat. It is strongly advisable to make a retreat to examine oneself on the conduct and management of the home, of one's profession; such a retreat should be sufficiently frequent to prevent painful surprises.

Our Lord said that when one wishes to build a tower, he sits down to calculate the cost and requirements for a solid structure. What a tower is the Christian home! That is something to construct! How necessary are foundations that will not crumble, materials that will hold solidly! How essential an able contractor, attention to every detail, care to check every stone, exactitude in the measurements for every storey...! Then when the story of that family is told, it will be an edifice to the Glory of God!

Perhaps I have forgotten to sit down... to calculate... to get on my knees. There is still time!

A FATHER'S LETTER.

JEAN RACINE the great classic dramatist wrote a letter to his son urging him to complete fidelity in his religious duties and to love for the interior life.

"You beg me to pray for you. If my prayers were good for anything, you would soon be a perfect Christian, who hoped for nothing with more ardor than for his eternal salvation. But remember, my Son, that the father and mother pray in vain for their children if the children do not remember the training their parents gave them. Remember, my Son, that you are a Christian, and think of all that character makes of obligation for you, all the passions it requires you to renounce. For what would it benefit you to acquire the esteem of men if you would jeopardize your soul? It will be the height of my joy to see you working out your salvation. I hope for it by the grace of Our Lord."

When Racine was thirty-eight and at the height of his power, his religious directors through the misguided zeal of their Jansenistic spirit commanded him to give up writing for the theatre which he

did with untold pain. Consequently, when he spoke to his son of the practice of renunciation, he could speak with authority.

Especially sensitive to physical suffering, he accepted sickness humbly and generously: “I have never had the strength to do penance; what an advantage then for me that God has had the mercy to send me this.”

It is a great grace for children to have a father who teaches the divine law with firmness, and who, moreover, lives this divine life, joining personal example to precept.

‘Am I sufficiently attentive to give my children the supernatural equipment they need? Am I sufficiently careful about that still more important duty of giving them a good example always and in everything?’

If there was too much severity in Racine’s manner, it was due to his own training at Port-Royal, the Jansenist center. When his brother Lionval was only five years old, he insisted that he would never go to the theatre for fear of being damned. Madelon, his daughter, at ten years had to observe Lent to the very end even though she felt ill because of it. The mother, Racine’s wife, kept them in step. Did she not command young Louis Racine, Racine youngest son, who had indulged in writing about twelve stanzas of poetry on the death of a dog to betake himself to Boileau (Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, France’s most eminent critic, and friend of the family) for a good scolding?

There must be no exaggeration in the exercise of authority; it would no longer be Christian in character but an erroneous way of understanding the morality and perfection of the Gospel. It is essential to retain a zealous will on the part of the children and a courageous practice of generosity. We must however always remember that they are children and not impose upon them too heavy a yoke thereby running the danger of giving them an incorrect idea of religion or of disgusting them even with its most balanced practice.

We must be mindful too that some day they will be confronted with fearful difficulties. They will need a training that is not harsh but strong, otherwise we can fear shipwreck or at least ineffective returns.

‘If my profession or my health prevent me from fasting, am I careful to get a dispensation, to substitute another mortification for it, to manifest an exemplary moderation on all occasions, in general, a real detachment from food and body comforts; to deny myself amusements that might prove dangerous?’ {Since the Church’s requirements for compulsory fasting are now so light, can I not, of my own free will, impose on myself some of the fasting discipline that my forebears regularly undertook?}

MISUNDERSTOOD CHILDREN.

ANDRE BERGE in his book on “Bewildered Youth” gives us the story of a young man who had been left completely to himself by his parents. Taken up with their own affairs, business and pleasure, these parents let their son grow up with no concern at all for his soul, his ambitions, his difficulties, his temptations, his failings.

At first, the youth relished this liberty, which he interpreted as reserve on the part of his parents. But soon he came to realize that it was nothing more than cowardice, abandonment of duty and flagrant desertion of obligation on their part; he was living in the home but was not of the home — a mere boarder in a hotel. As soon as he was out of his childhood, they showed no more care for him; he

found himself confronting life alone, confused, cut off. He should have been able to expect counsel, affection, protection, light. Nothing of the sort did he receive. Instead he met with selfishness; faced by loneliness, life began to pall upon him; he had no one to untangle his problems, no one to point out definite steps to follow on the bewildering way.

Unable to bear living any longer in this way with no vital ties binding him to those who should have been nearest to him, he decided to break all connections, to go away. Material separation from his own would but serve to accentuate the separation of their souls.

He left this note as an explanation of his conduct and a reproach for theirs:

“To my parents,

“Why do you desert me? You do not understand that I am stifled between these walls and that my heart is bursting. Do you not understand that I am growing up and that life is calling me, that I am alone all day with its voice? You who could have so lovingly directed me in life, why do you abandon me?

“Well, so much the worse, I will meet life alone. I am so far from you already through your fault.”

How heavy the obligations of parents! Let us not consider now the case of grossly selfish parents as described in the preceding story. We shall consider parents who are concerned about accomplishing their mission.

Are they not in danger of two extremes in the fulfillment of their duty: either to exaggerate their control or to exaggerate their reserve?

If they try to exercise too much control over the young adventurers in freedom, who are making ready for their first flights, will they not incur the blame of tyranny, excessive watchfulness and supervision?

If, on the other hand, they try to avoid this reproach, are they not going to lack firmness? By trying to win confidence through a gentleness that gives free rein, are they not going to see all the restraints, which they deem good, broken down and the advice they judge opportune utterly ignored?

‘How have I succeeded in this problem of training? Do I steer my bark with proper mastery? The reefs are many; a solid craft is needed, a steady hand at the helm. Am I acquainted with the route, the true merits of my crew?’

‘My God grant me the grace to know how to rear my little world as you want me to; to know how to form each of my children according to Your plans; to know how to attain balance in sharpness, firmness and restraint. Grant that the youth formed in my home may never be confused, lost before life, but rather know always where to find counsel, support, the warmth of love and guidance, an understanding and patient heart that can give help with enlightened insight.’

A DEFAULTING FATHER.

A RELIGIOUS was trying to extricate a young man of twenty-two from a distressing and almost insurmountable difficulty; the young man wrote him the following explanation for falling so low:

“...I was endowed as any normal person and would have been able to succeed in my studies as anyone else but for some wretched habits — and I say these words, trembling with a powerless rage

— wretched habits which came to poison the work of God. A cousin and a friend bear with me the responsibility for the first steps toward those devastating sensations that enkindled the odious flame, which in turn upset my mental and physical health. No more willpower or rather no more strength despite good will; no more memory; all these results followed in succession. I blame my parents especially my father who had given up all religious practices. He never spoke to me with a view to understanding me; never did we have the least conversation which could indicate any common bond of ideas or feeling; he fed my body, that is all...”

What a terrible indictment are these words! How they prove the necessity of watching the associations of the children, their work, the reasons for their laziness; the importance of keeping their confidence, of knowing how to win that confidence; of showing them understanding and a willingness to help; of giving them an assurance of victory.

“I was endowed as any normal person and would have been able to succeed.” Nothing more readily weakens the resilience of the powers of the mind and the heart than lust. What the young man said is exactly true; he had abandoned himself to impurity; he lost the keenness of his intelligence, the retentiveness of his memory and a relish for effort. Even grave physical injuries sometimes result. “Devastating sensations” and “the odious flame” quickly depleted and consumed vital energies.

“A cousin and a friend.” How absolutely necessary is vigilance over the friendships that circumstances and relationships often provide, and sometimes alas that certain corrupted individuals seek to establish to give vent to their secret taste for perversion.

If the child had confided in someone at the onset of the first serious difficulties! But nothing in the attitude of the parents invited confidence, a request for enlightenment, a humble avowal of imprudence or faults already committed. How many children, how many youths yearn to speak! Someone, their father or mother or a director must take the first step. Nothing happens. Nobody imagines that they want help; nobody deigns to interest themselves in them. The mother is absorbed in her worldliness or completely oblivious of their needs; the father is wrapped up in his business; the spiritual director if they have one at all does not find the time or the means to help...

And the child, the young boy or the young girl carries the weight of inward suffering and is stifled by it.

“I blame my parents... never did my father speak to me with a view to understanding me; never did we have the least conversation which could indicate any common bond of ideas or feeling; he fed my body, that is all.”

Did this father realize that even while he was nourishing the body of his son, he was contributing to the death of his soul by a double sin of omission! He did not help his son in his moral life when he needed it; he gave him a very bad example by openly abandoning the Christian law.

Such sins are paid for and paid for painfully. How prevent lack of training and mistakes of training from producing their disastrous effects?

To develop the body is fine, commendable, and a duty. Even more important is it to develop the soul, to protect it, to strengthen it, to uplift it.

A MOTHER TO HER SON.

WHEN Leon Bloy was about twenty years old, he fell into one of those crises not uncommon in youth, particularly in youth whose environment brings contact with unbelievers and persons of

loose morals, and he drifted from his religion. He was wretchedly unhappy besides, unhappy because of the very direction he was taking; but an involuntary confusion and probably a certain amount of willful pride prevented him from breaking with doubt to return to the path of light.

The mother read her son's soul clearly. She did not reproach him, nor did she speak to him exclusively nor immediately of his religious problem; she attributed his interior troubles to different causes of an inferior order which more than likely played a part in his wretchedness. She wrote to him:

"How is it my dear child that you do not write to us? I feel heavy hearted because of it for I am sure that you do not realize what is taking place in your poor soul; all kinds of things are conflicting within it — it is ardent and lacks the nourishment proper to it; you turn from one side to the other and you cannot tell what really bothers you. Ah! Poor child, be calm, reflect. It is not that you feel your future lost or compromised; at your age, one cannot have established his future or despaired of it; it is not for most persons your age still uncertain. No, it is not that. Your work, your studies do not show sufficient progress? Why? Perhaps because you want to do too many things at once; you are too impatient. No, not that either? Your mind is willing enough but your heart and your soul are suffering; they have so many yearnings that you are scarcely aware of, and their unease and their suffering react upon your mind sapping from it necessary strength and attention.

"You are suffering, you are unhappy. I feel all that you experience and yet I am powerless to console you, to encourage you much as I should love to do so. Ah! That we might have the same convictions! Why have you rejected the faith of your childhood without a profound examination of your reason for and against it? The statements of those whom faith irritates or who have no religion for lack of instruction have made an impression on your young imagination; but just the same, your heart needs a center that it will never find on earth. It is God, it is the infinite you need and all your yearnings are driving you there. You belong to that select number of elect to whom God communicates Himself and in whose regard He is prodigal of his love when once they have consented to humble themselves by submitting to the obscurities of faith."

What a frightening duty mothers have! To bring forth the bodies of their children is a beautiful ministry; to rear their souls is an even greater ministry.

What anguish for a mother when a grown child, a son in early manhood or a daughter in early womanhood cuts loose from faith, and considers God lightly! If ever she feels that she has lost her hold over her son or daughter, that they are escaping her, it is when she sees them follow the paths of doubt or fall under the spell of the intoxicating enchantments of flirtation.

A mother must continue to bring forth her children all her life. In this sense, they are always her little ones. Not that she makes them feel their bonds of dependence any longer but that she watches over them. And she prays! Except for a brief reminder from time to time, the clear statement of her hopes joined to the definite but loving message of the father, an occasional letter in which true principles are recalled, the chief role of a mother whose adult child has strayed is prayer, patient waiting and sacrifice — the persevering effort to become a saint.

What if she were to die before she sees the return of the Prodigal? What if the Child were to die before she has seen him "return"?

She should not be discouraged. Can we know the mystery of souls? Can we know what takes place in the last moments? Can we know what goes on within when the exterior reveals nothing? Can we

know the value of a mother's tears? Monica will continue to the end of time to convert Augustine; but Monica must be a saint.

TICK TOCK.

THE mother of Cardinal Herbert Vaughan had fourteen children — eight boys and six girls. Remarkable educator that she was, she believed that she owed the best part of her time to her little world.

The children's special room looked like the nave of a Church for each little boy and girl had his statue to care for and they never failed to put flowers before it on special occasions.

With what art this mother settled a quarrelsome boy or a vain or untruthful little girl! With the littlest ones, she was not afraid to become a little one and like them to sit on the ground. Thus, placed on their level, as the biography of her Jesuit son expresses it, she used to put her watch to their ears and explain to them that some day God would stop the tick tock of their lives and that He would call to Himself in heaven His children whom He had lent to earth.

In the course of the day, Mrs. Vaughan loved to pick out one or other of her band, preferably two, chosen on the basis of their earnest efforts or some particular need for improvement, and make a visit to Church. Yes, they should pray at home too; they had God in their hearts; but in each village or in each section of town, there is a special house generally of stone where Our Lord lives as He once lived at Nazareth except that now He remains hidden under the appearances of a little Host. She explained to them that prayer consists not in reciting set words but in conversing with Jesus. And if they had been very, very good, she would let them kiss the altar cloth and sometimes the altar itself, a favor the children regarded as most precious. When they had beautiful flowers in their green house they brought them to Church; happy and proud were the ones who were entrusted with delivering the bouquets or the vases of flowers!

Besides the visits made to "Jesus, the Head" there were also visits to the "members of Jesus," "What you do to the least of My brethren you do to Me." And Mrs. Vaughan explained to each child according to its capacity to understand, the great duty of charity and the reason for this duty. She did not hesitate to take them into sordid homes. Sometimes people were horrified to see her take the children to see the sick who suffered from a contagious disease. Wasn't she afraid her children would contract it? But kind, firm Mrs. Vaughan did not allow herself to be the least disturbed by such comments. "Sickness? Well if one of them contracted a sickness while visiting the poor, that would still not be too high a price to pay for Christian charity. Besides, God will protect my children much better than mother-love can."

Here was true formation in piety, true formation in charity.

Here too was encouragement to follow a high ideal.

Herbert, the eldest of the boys, was once quite concerned over a hunting trip that the weather threatened to spoil. "Pray mamma," he said, "that we have good weather!"

And Mrs. Vaughan more concerned to lift her son's soul than to secure him a pleasurable time answered smilingly, "I shall pray that you will be a priest!" How the boy took such an answer at the moment is not recorded. We do know this:

Herbert was... the future Cardinal (the archbishop of Westminster)!

Mrs. Vaughan also gave her children an appreciation of the fine arts. She herself played the harp delightfully. From time to time, she gathered her household about her for a gala time playing, singing, and a bit of mimicry; she always used the occasion to remind the children that there are other melodies and other joys more beautiful than those of earth.

TRAINING IN GENEROSITY.

THE child is instinctively selfish, but he easily learns generosity.

His training should be directed toward it.

Little Rose of Lima's childhood was marked by a series of accidents, maladies, and sufferings which the crude treatment of that time often aggravated rather than relieved. When only three months old she crushed her thumb under a trunk lid and the nail had to be removed. She also had to undergo an ear operation, which was followed by a skin disease that began on her head; her mother treated it with a salve, which burnt her so severely that the surgeon had to treat her for weeks, removing proud flesh so that the healthy skin could heal.

Thanks to her mother's exhortations, this little girl of four years bore the cruel pain with an astonishing calmness and in perfect silence. Are not the staggering mortifications we see her imposing on herself later due to her early training?

Like all little girls, she was vain and took considerable care of her hair, which was very beautiful. Her brother used to throw mud at it and get it all dirty, just to tease her. Rose became very angry, but the brother, recalling perhaps some sermon he had heard, assumed a preaching tone on one of these occasions and said to her solemnly, "Take care, vanity will be your ruin; the curled hair of girls are cords from hell which bind the hearts of men and drag them into the eternal flames."

Rose did not answer, but bit by bit began to understand... and she detached herself. That detachment prepared her for greater sacrifices and soon we see her offering her virginity to God. Now, of course, we know she is a saint.

Jacqueline was another little girl, a little girl of our own day, who learned the lesson of sacrifice. She was sick and suffering much.

"Oh, I believe nobody has ever had pain like mine!"

"Where does it hurt?" she was asked.

"In my stomach, in my head, everywhere!"

"Think of Saint Francis who had a red hot iron applied to his eyes as a treatment..."

This time her attention was caught. She forgot her own misery to sympathize with her dear saint whom people had hurt. "Did they cure him after all that?"

Guy Pierre de Fontgalland had to have many strychnine injections in his leg. "Offer it to Jesus, my darling," suggested his mother. "He was crowned with thorns for love of you." "Oh yes, that is true and He kept the thorns in His head while they quickly removed the needle from my leg."

A mother had three children; the oldest was four, the second, three, and the baby, twenty months. It was Good Friday. Why not encourage them to offer Jesus on the Cross some little sacrifice which would cost them a little? "My children, I will not deprive you of your chocolate candy at lunch today; but little girls who love Jesus will know themselves how to sacrifice their chocolate."

She made no further reference to it. None of the children answered. That evening the mother was very much moved to see the three chocolate bars at the foot of the Crucifix. Our Lord must have smiled at the childish offering; one of the candy bars bore the teeth marks of the baby who had hesitated before the offering and begun to nibble on her chocolate.

‘These stories of successful lessons in generosity are encouraging. What others have achieved, can I not achieve too?’
