

The Christian Home.

A Guide to Happiness in the Home. Part 1 A.

The Necessity of Religion in the Home.

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TO CHRISTIAN FATHERS AND MOTHERS, HUSBANDS AND WIVES AND TO ALL HOME LOVERS THE WORLD OVER. THIS LITTLE VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE SUPREME MODELS OF THE CHRISTIAN HOME: JESUS, MARY, AND JOSEPH.

If the social reform that is being demanded on all sides is to have any hope of success, it must begin with the reform of the family. Victor Cathrein, S.J.

INTRODUCTION.

THE world today is full of reformers. Society, we are told, is sick with many ills, and a radical remedy is imperative if the utter breakdown of Christian civilization is to be averted. Yet, while the urgent need of reform is quite generally conceded, there is a wide divergence of opinions as to the proper means of bringing it about. As Catholics, possessed of the divinely revealed truths that should regulate all human action, we know that many of the remedies proposed for the cure of social ills are inadequate, because they do not reach the root of the evil; and that many a well-meant reform movement is foredoomed to failure, because it is not based on the only true and solid foundation of all social reform; namely, the principle that there can be no real, permanent social justice and morality without private justice and morality; and that there can be no enduring private justice or morality without religion.

A Truism.

So much is agreed upon among Catholics: religion and morality must form the basis of all true reform; and it is a truism to say that if all the individuals that make up society were morally good and religious, the ills that afflict society would disappear. It is furthermore agreed among Catholics that the Catholic Church offers the individual all that is necessary for leading a good life. Why then do so many of her children fail? They have the true Faith; they have the Commandments, which tell them what they must do and what they must avoid; and they have the means of grace, prayer and the Sacraments, to help them to avoid sin and practice virtue. Why, then, are they not all morally good and religious?

The Sin of Adam.

The fundamental reason is simply that they do not choose to be so. Sin is apparently so pleasant, at least for the moment, and the constant practice of virtue is so hard, that men often choose the former in preference to the latter. Even in Paradise, where all circumstances were so favorable, Adam and Eve abused their free will by disobeying God. But in consequence of that first sin of Adam, there exists in all his descendants a strong inclination to evil, which makes the practice of virtue still more difficult. And added to all this is the example of the wicked world in which we live.

The Enemy Without.

It is this latter, the bad example of the world around us, which forms the great obstacle to social reform even among Catholics. If man were merely an individual living by himself, he would have only the enemy within to fight against; but being a social being, destined by God to live in society with others, he has also an enemy outside himself — the evil example of many of those with whom he lives. How to overcome this evil example is the great problem of social reform.

It is easy enough to say that the bad example must be offset by good example; but how and where is the good example to be had?

Catholic Societies.

Many there are who say that since it is mainly social attractions that lead Catholics into dangerous company and dangerous places of amusement, we must have our own societies, our own social agencies, club rooms and recreation centers, so that our people can satisfy their craving for company and amusement in a harmless manner. While admitting that our people should be provided with ample opportunity for healthful and innocent recreation; while admitting, too, the importance and desirability of Catholic societies, both secular and religious, and attesting that, when properly conducted under proper auspices, such societies can do an immense amount of good, I am nevertheless of the opinion that it is not by means of these societies that social evils will be greatly reduced.

Let us have these societies by all means; but when we have established them and made them flourish, let us not imagine that our task is done. In all such societies something is wanting, — namely, the intimate daily association of the members in all the important affairs of life.

The Best Catholic Society.

Happily, however, there is a society that has this all-important requisite; a natural society in which the great majority of men spend their lives; a society that is capable of exerting a lifelong influence on its members. That society, dear reader, is the family. In the family, we have all the essential things that man requires as a social being for his physical, moral and intellectual well-being and advancement. And since the family rather than the individual, is the unit of society, to reform society one must begin with the family. Restore religion to its rightful place in the home; let religion direct, control and permeate the family life, and not only will the individual have the safeguard he needs against the evils of society, but society itself will be transformed. This, then, religion in the home, is to my mind, the best of all remedies for the reform of society; and the purpose of these little booklets is to explain the remedy and to induce all Christian families that can be reached to adopt it.

“For the love of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we implore pastors of souls, by every means in their power, by instructions and catechisms, by word of mouth and by written articles widely distributed, to warn Christian parents of their grave obligations. And this should be done not in a merely

theoretical and general way, but with practical and special application to the various responsibilities of parents touching the religious, moral, and civil training of their children, and with indication of the methods best adapted to make their training effective, supposing always the influence of their own exemplary lives.”

Pius XI, “Christian Education of Youth”.

CHAPTER 1. Necessity of Religion in the Home.

Point 1. Primary End of the Family.

IN accordance with the words spoken by God to our first parents, “Increase and multiply and fill the earth,” the primary purpose of the family is the propagation of the human race. Now without religion, this purpose will be only imperfectly attained.

All history witnesses to the fact that there can be no enduring morality without religion, and the history of the family is no exception to the rule.

The suffering and labor, the difficulty and disappointment, the grief and vexation incident to the bearing and rearing of children demand so much patience, love, and self-sacrifice, that no one not imbued with a religious sense of duty and buoyed up by the hope of an eternal reward, will be willing to endure them.

Hence where these religious motives are wanting, the primary end of the family will be either wholly or partly neglected, and matrimony degraded to the low level of a selfish partnership or a sinful pastime.

Perverting Marriage.

We need not have recourse to pagan lands, where infants are deliberately exposed to die, for proof that such is the inevitable result of the absence of religion in the family.

The absence or scarcity of children in many families of our own land is sad and sufficient evidence. Nay, even in Christian families, where religion no longer exerts the sway it should, are found those immoral practices that pervert the sublime aim of the family. One might, and in charity one would be bound to, ascribe the absence or scarcity of children in such families to other causes, if wives and mothers did not openly advocate artificial restriction of families on the theory that it is better to have one or two children and bring them up well than to have a larger number and be unable to take proper care of them. That theory in itself, of course, is unassailable so long as no law of God is violated by having only one or two children, and so long as the expression “proper care” is rightly understood. But just the way this theory is understood and put into practice by most of its advocates shows into what errors man falls when he is not restrained by the salutary curb of religion.

Educating for Heaven.

What is meant by bringing up a child well? From the standpoint of religion, as far as essentials are concerned, it means to bring up a child in such a manner that it will be enabled to attain the end for which God created it — eternal happiness in Heaven. Such an education even the poorest parents will be able to provide for their children, no matter how many they have; and their own happiness in Heaven will be increased by every child that they have added to the number of the elect. There is always a possibility of a child going wrong despite the best parental care; but the probability of its going wrong from neglect because of the large number of children is far less than the probability

that it will be spoiled if it is one of a limited few. The very action of the parents in thwarting nature by limiting their offspring will militate against the proper religious training of their children; for it is not likely that parents who themselves disobey the law of God in so grave a matter will be at great pains to rear God-fearing sons and daughters.

“Proper Care” Relative.

But even from a material point of view, the assumption is false that parents cannot take proper care of many children. “Proper care” is to be understood relatively, not absolutely; for while parents are bound to provide for the material as well as the spiritual needs of their children, the extent of that provision must vary with the parents’ resources. If the best possible training and the best possible care were required for every child, few persons would be allowed to marry at all; since few, if any, could be found whose circumstances could not be improved on.

Pope Pius XI on the Rearing of Children.

“We are deeply touched by the sufferings of those parents who, in extreme want, experience great difficulty in rearing their children. However, they should take care lest the calamitous state of their external affairs should be the occasion for a much more calamitous error. No difficulty can arise that justifies the putting aside of the law of God which forbids all acts intrinsically evil. There is no possible circumstance in which husband and wife cannot, strengthened by the grace of God, fulfill faithfully their duties and preserve in wedlock their chastity unspotted.”

Encyclical on Christian Marriage.

Periodic Continence.

If really serious financial straits or imperative considerations of health should discountenance the addition of another child to the family at a given time, truly Christian parents will know how to meet the situation by mutually agreeing to practice continence over a certain period. So much, with a good will and God’s grace, they will always be able to do. But no combination of untoward circumstances can ever justify the misuse of the sacred rights of marriage. (See the quotation above.)

I realize most keenly that faithful adherence to the law of God will sometimes require great sacrifices of God-fearing parents. But every state of life, as it confers certain rights and privileges, also demands its peculiar sacrifices; and God will always grant sufficient grace to enable one to make them.

If God enables those husbands and wives to keep His holy law who are deprived of the legitimate pleasures of wedlock by the premature death or the life-long illness of their spouses, He will certainly do the same for those whom poverty or other trying conditions place in a similar predicament. With Saint Paul, every Christian can say in time of trial: “I can do all things in Him that strengthens me.”

An Extreme Case.

The following example, which is about as extreme a case as one might imagine, shows how God strengthens and consoles those sorely tried consorts who place their trust in Him. I condense the story narrated by the chief actor himself — an English Catholic journalist named W. Gerald Young — in a letter to the London Universe.

“Some years ago I stood with a woman at the altar where God united us in the bonds of holy Matrimony. She was all that man could wish for, and, with her, life was a succession of sunny days. More than once did God give her that wonderful blessing of radiant motherhood, and we were intensely happy. Today, however, black clouds of sorrow have overwhelmed us, and we are no longer together.

“Once a week I make a pilgrimage into the beautiful hill country of Surrey, where there is an institution known by the name of a mental hospital. Here it is that my dear one spends her days, — long, weary days, because she is mad. Here is my shrine. Frail and pallid, she lies on a bed, dead to the world of intelligence. Her once beautiful face is now disfigured; her old-time smile superseded by a scowl. When I kiss her dear lips, there is no warm response from the woman who loved me so dearly; and yet she still holds the keys of my heart.

“My journey back to London is a weary one; for how can we call it home when the wife and mother is absent? Little voices will ask when Mama is coming back, and Daddy cannot tell them. On my way back, I visit a little church wherein the Blessed Sacrament is always exposed for adoration. In this haven of rest where all is quiet and peaceful, I lift up my weary heart to God and tell Him my troubles, and I come out a happier man, because I have unburdened my soul to my Maker and He has given me new courage to fight this weary battle of life. Some day God may see fit to answer my petition. In the meantime I can only hope and pray.”

But whether God grants this brave man’s prayer here on earth or not, oh, how magnificently will He reward his fidelity in eternity!

A Selfish Life.

Now if a man can be faithful to the law of God in such trying circumstances, how much easier should it be for those whose happy homes are still unbroken and who need only practice Christian self-restraint? The whole argument against large families only shows the absence of the salutary restraints of religion. At bottom it is not the desire to give their children a more excellent training but the desire to lead a more selfish and comfortable life that clamors for the unnatural limitation of the family. No one is more desirous of having well-trained children than deeply religious parents; but such parents, regarding their office in the light of Faith, are bent mainly on rearing their children for Heaven; and they understand that, even should they be able to provide them but scantily with the goods of this world, by training them for Heaven the main thing is achieved and their principal duty performed. They realize, too, that the success of all their efforts in behalf of their children depends mainly on Heaven’s blessing, and that if they merit that blessing by their upright lives, He who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field will also provide for their children.

Consolations of Parenthood.

Happy the parents who still retain this religious outlook on life; whose religion is their guide, their support, and their consolation amid the arduous duties of their state of life! They know that they are the chosen instruments of Divine Providence for peopling the abode of the blessed. They know that in assuming the office of parenthood, they cooperate with God himself in bringing into existence beings destined to praise and enjoy him forever in Heaven. They know that every child they receive is a gift of God; since, do what they will, they can have no child that God does not give them. But above the solace of all this knowledge, is the supernatural aid which the true religion affords them.

They have the actual graces of the sacrament of Matrimony, of frequent Communion, and of daily prayer to strengthen them, and the example of their suffering Savior to console them. Yes, with religion in their homes, they can resist the evil example of those godless couples who seek only their own gratification. And though eugenic wise-acres scoff, and even misguided friends smile in derision at their old-fashioned families, they will never thwart Heaven's designs concerning their families, but look upon every child as a new token of Heaven's trust and Heaven's love.

The Parents' Pride.

It is remarkable how often God rewards parents of large families by making the children that came last become the chief joy and pride of their life. The Little Flower of Jesus was the last of nine children; Saint Ignatius of Loyola, the thirteenth and Saint Catherine of Siena, the twenty-fourth or twenty-fifth. Many parents owe the honor of having a son raised to the priesthood to the fact that they had large families. Had my own parents been willing to have five children but no more, they would never have had a priest in the family. But because they were blessed with eight children, they had the happiness of seeing the sixth and seventh celebrate their first Mass on the same day; and though they have gone to their reward, they are no doubt happy to know that two sons of their eighth child are studying for the priesthood.

A few years ago, I received a letter from a young mother of two children, in which she related how certain worldly-wise women try to induce mothers to limit the number of their children. On the occasion of a social call, a lady acquaintance of hers had remarked: "It is not a woman of refinement nowadays that has more than two children."

To which the young mother replied: "In that case I hope to belong to the common herd, as I intend to take all that the good Lord wants to give me."

In replying to her letter, I commended her for her truly Catholic stand, and then added: "I thank God that my own good mother did not have such a false idea of refinement; for if she had, I should have had no chance at all, as I was her seventh child."

And the very first time I related this incident, namely, to a group of Franciscan Fathers at Saint Elizabeth's Friary, Denver, Colorado, each one of the five priests present declared that he, too, was his mother's seventh child!

Point 2. Final Aim of Marriage.

Necessary as religion is in the home for the attainment of the primary aim of marriage and the family — the propagation of the human race, it is equally necessary for the attainment of the family's final aim — the education of children for Heaven. Above all else it is the soul of the child for which parents will have to render a strict account on the day of judgment; and it is the religious and moral training of their children, therefore, that constitutes their paramount duty to their offspring. When Catholic parents stand before their Divine Judge, they will not be asked whether they did their utmost to enable their children to prosper in this world — to wear the laurels of its honors, to reap the fruits of its riches, and to quaff the wine of its sensual pleasures. No; the question they will have to answer is, whether they did their duty in enabling their children not only to save their immortal souls, but also to reach that degree of holiness to which God destined them and to embrace that state of life in which God wished them to serve Him.

Before the Dawn of Reason.

To acquit themselves of this sacred duty, parents must needs foster religion in their home. If religion is to be planted deep in the heart of the child, — so deep that it will defy all later attempts of the world, the flesh and the devil, to root it out, it will not do to defer the child's religious education until it starts to school. Its religious education must be begun not only at the first dawn of reason, but long before the dawn of reason — in very infancy, so that a truly religious mind will be developed and become a veritable second nature. It follows necessarily, then, that religion must exert the dominant influence in the place where the child's first years are spent; namely, in the home. Religion should surround the child as snugly as its infant clothing. The child should imbibe religion at its mother's breast. It should be rocked to sleep to the tune of religion, and its first lisping accents should have a religious character.

Only if religion rules the home, will the child get the impression right at the start that religion is the most important thing in life.

If there is little or no religion in the home, the child will naturally be led to suppose that wealth and position, secular knowledge and training, or even worldly comforts and pleasures are the things most worth while; and that religion, instead of being a vital force in life, is merely a polite concession that man feels he must occasionally make to God, his Creator; and hence that it is, like a badge or his best clothes, to be displayed only in church and on special occasions.

Religion a Spiritual Food.

Few parents who send their children to a Catholic school will deny the necessity of religion in the school. They know that even if a school should be entirely non-sectarian and in no way opposed to religion, the mere absence of religion would itself be a great evil; for, if education means the training and instructing of a child for the performance of the duties of life, it must needs embrace religious training and instruction, since the practice of religion is the first and foremost of life's duties. Now, what is true of the absence of religion in the school, is equally true of its absence in the home. The supernatural graces which the child received in Baptism, sanctifying grace and the infused virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity, are awaiting nourishment and warmth in order to blossom forth and yield fruit; and to deny the child the religious food and atmosphere it craves is to stunt if not to thwart its spiritual growth. To say that no harm is done the child so long as it is taught nothing positively bad or irreligious, is just as false as to say that it will not harm a child to deprive it of food so long as you do not give it poison.

Yet great as is the need of religion in the home for the proper molding of the infant mind and heart, how frequently is the hungry little soul of the child practically starved until it begins to attend a Catholic school! How often, too, is it not taught things that are positively bad either by word or by example! How often are not things said or done or permitted in the presence of children and justified or excused with the remark that "they don't know what it means," or "it won't do them any harm"! It may do them incalculable harm. It is just this seed sown in the innocent child's memory and imagination, from which later on evil will spring; and then the astonished parents wonder where the child learnt it. Small children are the most impressionable beings in the world, and the impressions which they receive are the ones that sink deepest and that will leave their traces all through life.

Shifting the Burden.

One reason why the child's religious education is often neglected at home, is the tendency on the part of parents to disburden themselves of the duty of educating their children by committing

that task entirely to others. The Catholic parochial school is unquestionably a splendid as well as a necessary institution; but it must be remembered that the education of children is in the first place the duty of the parents, and that the purpose of the school is only to co-operate with the parents, and in particular to take up the work at that point where the parents are no longer able to accomplish it satisfactorily themselves. That point, I am inclined to think, is ordinarily not reached before the child completes its sixth year, since there are few parents who are unable, from lack of either time or knowledge, to teach their children all they need to know on entering the first grade. There is, however, a growing custom of anticipating that point by entrusting the child to others when it is only five, or even only three or four years old; and the cause of the custom is the existence of the kindergarten.

The Holy Father on the Decline of Family Education.

“We wish to call your attention in a special manner to the present-day lamentable decline in family education. The offices and professions of a transitory and earthly life, which are certainly of far less importance, are prepared for by long and careful study; whereas for the fundamental duty and obligation of educating their children, many parents have little or no preparation, immersed as they are in temporal cares.

“The declining influence of domestic environment is further weakened by another tendency prevalent almost everywhere to-day, which, under one pretext or another, for economic reasons, or for reasons of industry, trade or politics, causes children to be more and more frequently sent away from home even in their tenderest years.”

Pius XI in “Christian Education of Youth.”

Kindergarten versus Home Training.

There are those that favor the kindergarten; and it is easy to understand that, like the day nursery, it is a most welcome institution to mothers who are obliged to work away from home for the support of their families. While the use of the kindergarten in such a case is certainly above criticism, the same cannot be said in regard to its use by those parents who avail themselves of it merely to have the children off their hands. And, even where there is no lack of parental love and care, there is likelihood that parents will send their children to the kindergarten simply because others do so; or from the mistaken notion that they are supposed to do so.

Now, without wishing to dogmatize in the matter, I want to tell such parents that, in my opinion, the kindergarten training is not superior to home training; and that nothing is learned in the kindergarten that cannot be learned equally well at home. It is quite true that the school mistress who specializes in her work may be intellectually better equipped than many mothers for the education of very young children; but it is none the less true that the mother is by nature the child's first and chief educator; that the mother is nature's own specialist just in the task of educating the child before it reaches the age of reason; and that, as regards religious training, it is every mother's bounden duty to acquire so much knowledge as will enable her to teach her children that rudimentary religious knowledge that they should have before they complete their sixth year. (See the quotation above.)

A Work of Love.

Yet it is not so much duty, young mothers, that I would emphasize, as love, to induce you to make the early education of your children your own personal task. Soon enough, yes all too soon the time will come when your darlings will pass from the sacred sanctuary of your home to spend the greater

part of their waking hours elsewhere. Should your mother's love not be anxious to have them under your watchful eye as long as possible? During those first half dozen years, when the child's heart can be molded like soft clay, should you not desire to fashion it to the highest ideals with your own loving hands? Should you not wish to be able to say that those essential prayers, which you expect your children to recite daily through life, were first learned and lisped at their mother's knee? Should you not aim to bind them to their home by the strongest ties of interest as well as of affection? If so, then the surest way is to make the home the fountain at which they first drink the waters of wisdom; to make the home the attractive center of all their earthly hopes and joys and the holy shrine round which will caressingly cling the fondest of all the happy memories of childhood.

Harmony between School and Home.

But even when parents have done all in their power for the religious education of their children before the latter begin to attend school, let them not imagine that their task is accomplished. When they finally commit them to the charge of others, at the proper age, they do not thereby divest themselves of all responsibility, but must co-operate with the teachers by their interest, their discipline, and their moral support. (See the Holy Father's quotation below.) Here again appears the necessity of religion in the home. If the child learns at school that it is in this world to serve God and to save its immortal soul, and that the things of earth are to be used merely as means to that end, that lesson must have an echo in the home. What the school emphasizes as the most important thing in life must likewise be regarded as such in the home. It will not do for the child to find a disagreement between the religious truths it learns at school and the views it hears expressed and defended at home. The irreconcilable opposition between the maxims of Christ and the maxims of this world will come home to the child soon enough; and if the former are to take root in its heart as they should, the seed sown in religious instruction in school must be nurtured by religion in the home.

A Puzzling Contradiction.

It is true, the child will come in touch with irreligion sooner or later outside the circle of the home and school; but that is not likely to affect it so easily, since it has been taught to look upon the world as hostile to its own best interests.

It will be quite different if irreligion is met with in the home. A child implicitly trusts its parents. It believes that they have its welfare at heart; and it will be confronted with a puzzling contradiction if its parents by word, deed, or omission countenance or counsel anything that it was taught at school to regard as wrong. Just because of its confidence in its parents, the child is more likely to follow the example of the home than the precept it learned at school. Example is always more powerful than precept; and it is of the highest importance, therefore, that the religious instruction of the school be seconded by the example of sterling Christian conduct in the home. Only when home and school work hand in hand, mutually supporting, complementing, and encouraging each other, may we hope that our children will receive the kind of education that will enable them to bring forth the fruits of a truly Christian life.

Pius XI on the Status of the School.

"Since, however, the younger generations must be trained in the arts and sciences for the advantage and prosperity of civil society, and since the family of itself is unequal to this task, it was necessary to create that social institution, the school. But let it be borne in mind that this institution owes its existence to the initiative of the family and of the Church, long before it was undertaken by the

State. Hence, considered in its historical origin, the school is by its very nature and institution subsidiary and complementary to the family and the Church. It follows logically and necessarily that it must not be in opposition to, but in positive accord with those other two elements, and form with them a perfect moral union, constituting one sanctuary of education, as it were, with the family and the Church. Otherwise it is doomed to fail of its purpose and to become instead an agent of destruction.”

Encyclical on “Christian Education of Youth.”

Non-Catholic Schools Forbidden.

The very fact that the school is supposed to continue the education of the home and that both must be pervaded by the same Christian spirit, shows the obligation that Catholic parents are under of placing their children only in a Catholic school. In his encyclical on the Christian Education of Youth, Pope Pius XI emphasizes this duty in unmistakable terms:

“There is no need,” he writes, “to repeat what Our predecessors have declared on this point, especially Pius IX and Leo XIII...”

“We renew and confirm their declarations, as well as the sacred Canons, in which the frequenting of non-Catholic schools, whether neutral or mixed, those namely which are open to Catholics and non-Catholics alike, is forbidden for Catholic children, and can be at most tolerated, on the approval of the Ordinary alone, under determined circumstances of place and time, and with special precautions.

“Neither can Catholics admit that other type of mixed school... in which the students are provided with separate religious instruction, but receive other lessons in common with non-Catholic pupils from non-Catholic teachers. For the mere fact that a school gives some religious instructions (often extremely stinted) does not bring it into accord with the rights of the Church and of the Christian family, or make it a fit place for Catholic students.

Religion Must Pervade All Schools.

“To be that, it is necessary that all the teaching and the whole organization of the school, its teachers, syllabus, and textbooks in every branch be regulated by the Christian spirit, under the direction and maternal supervision of the Church; so that religion may be in very truth the foundation and crown of the youth’s entire training; and this in every grade of school, not only the elementary, but the intermediate and the higher institutions of learning as well. To use the words of Leo XIII:

‘It is necessary not only that religious instruction be given to the young at certain fixed times, but also that every other subject taught be permeated with Christian piety. If this is wanting, if this sacred atmosphere does not pervade and warm the hearts of masters and scholars alike, little good can be expected from any kind of learning, and considerable harm will often be the consequence’.”

Exceptional Cases.

It is true, indeed, that Catholics who have had the very best religious schooling and come from the finest Catholic families sometimes fail nevertheless to turn out well; but that is certainly not because of, but despite, their religious education. Such cases, too, are relatively rare; and I think that on investigation it would be found that most of them were thrown too suddenly upon the world, or passed at too early an age beyond the sustaining and restraining influence of Christian surroundings.

The great majority of men stand in need of the support and encouragement of a good example throughout their entire life; and as they cannot find this encouragement amid the hustle and bustle of the world, they must find it in their homes. It is not enough, then, that the child have the advantage of an early religious home training. The steadying influence of religion in the home must continue all through life.

The Grown-up Children.

This phase of our subject, the necessity of religion in the home also for the children that have graduated from school and for the grown-up members of the family, ought perhaps to be emphasized most, because it is so commonly disregarded. It is with religion as with all other things that influence our lives: it must be fostered if its influence is to last; and once the child is beyond the school age, there is great danger that it will gradually limit its religious practice to the hour in church on Sundays, if a truly Christian home life does not continue the beneficial religious influence previously exerted by the Catholic school. The home is really the only place, besides the church, that can be made to conform to one's daily religious needs; and it is here, therefore, that one must provide what cannot be had abroad. If abroad, amid the enforced companionship of unbelieving fellow-workmen, it is not always possible to avoid hearing one's religion set at naught and ridiculed, in the home one can insist that it be held in honor and esteemed the most vital thing on earth. If abroad the open practice of any act of religion would ordinarily be viewed with silent wonder or unconcealed contempt, in the home the act of folding the hands or kneeling to pray must be regarded as natural as eating and drinking. If abroad one is often powerless to prevent irreligion and immorality from having access to the press, bill-boards, art galleries and places of amusement, one can at least refuse admission to them when they knock on the door of our Christian homes.

Give me truly Christian homes, homes in which Christianity is not merely tolerated but revered and fostered, and homes that are homes and not only sleeping quarters, and I will give you a race of Christian men and women who will cling to their Faith despite the insidious machinations of a corrupt and irreligious world.

Point 3. Religion Prevents Divorce.

It remains yet to touch briefly on a third reason why religion is indispensable in the home; the fact, namely, that without religion in the home the very existence of the family is in danger; for religion is the only sure safeguard of the indissolubility of marriage, the only bulwark against the breaking up of the family by divorce.

Where there is no religion, no supernatural motive to sustain and comfort them and no belief in the inviolability of the marriage vow, it is but natural that when difficulties that demand mutual forbearance arise, as they inevitably will, the husband or wife will have recourse to divorce. God Himself knows that it is by no means always an easy matter for husband and wife to bear with each other's shortcomings; that unaided human nature cannot perseveringly fulfill all the duties of wedded life; and for that very reason He super-naturalized Christian marriage, making it a sacrament that confers all the special graces needed to enable the married pair to perform their duties faithfully until death. It is mainly owing to the denial of the sacramental character of Matrimony, that marriage is entered into so lightly outside the Catholic Church, and that so little is made of the wide-spread evil of severing the marital union.

While we may rejoice that divorce is not prevalent among Catholics, we must nevertheless admit to our shame that divorced Catholics are not altogether unknown, and that not infrequently the strained

relations between husband and wife and the breakdown of parental authority fall little short of the evils of actual divorce. It is not enough, therefore, that the religious character and the indissolubility of the matrimonial union be acknowledged. Religion must sanctify not only the beginning but the entire course of wedded and family life.

What a world of difference it would make in our lives, if among the requisites for an ideal home, the first place were assigned to religion! We say, "What is home without a mother?" and it is true that the absence of a good mother makes a gap that cannot be adequately filled. Yet how far, how unspeakably far, short of the ideal mother does she fall who does not foster religion in the home!

Religion a Gracious Queen.

Why then are there so many homes, even Christian homes, where religion is notably lacking? Is it perhaps because religion is regarded as a tyrant ruling with an iron hand? Undoubtedly, this view is responsible for the attitude of many who style themselves Christians. But no view could be farther from the truth. A real tyrant in the home, a tyrant whom many serve with slavish care, is the insatiable desire for ease, pleasure, or social standing, which forces families to live beyond their means in order to equal their neighbors in sumptuousness of board and luxury of equipment; while religion, whose sway would be that of a tender mother and gentle queen, is shown scant courtesy or even barred admission.

Welcome religion to your homes, therefore, fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, all ye who would be the possessors of truly happy homes. Welcome religion with open arms and gladsome hearts. Grossly do they err who look upon her as a tyrant. Religion is a queen, a most gracious queen, whose sway is as gentle as it is salutary. Yield yourselves to her loving influence so that the smile of her approval will ever beam upon you. Let her rule your going out and your coming in! Let her occupy the place of honor at your table! Let her sit with you in your study! Let her kindly eye restrain you in time of joy! Let her tender hand wipe away your tears in time of sorrow! Let her minister to you in time of illness and distress! Then, having received your last breath, she will conduct you at the last from the threshold of your earthly home to the eternal home of your Heavenly Father.

WHAT A GREAT ENEMY OF THE CHURCH SAID ABOUT THE FAMILY.

Before his conversion, a great infidel made the following admission to the eminent apostle of the Sacred Heart, Father Mateo Crawley-Boevey, SS.CC.: —

"We have only one object in view — to de-Christianize the family. We are willing to let Catholics have their churches and chapels and cathedrals. We are satisfied to have the family. If we gain the family, our victory over the Church is assured."
