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U.I.O.G.D.

Ave Maria!

Jesus, Mary, Joseph, we love Thee, save souls
O God come to our assistance. Jesus, Mary, Joseph please make haste to help us!
+ + + Jesus, Mary, Joseph + + +
VOL. 4 = THE CHRISTIAN'S STATE OF LIFE
FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

The Christian Training of Children

“He gave him to his mother.” St. Luke 7:15.

Why does Christ give the son to his mother? The young man would certainly have gone to his mother of his own accord, after having been raised from the dead. But our Lord wished to remind the mother that she must henceforth confess that she would never have recovered her son if Christ had not restored him to life by a miracle. Christian parents, do you frequently think why and to what end God has given you your children? You must train them up carefully. But how, and for what, must you train them? For the end of their creation, for which God has made them. That is the only object you must have in bringing up your children. This is a very important matter, on which the salvation of many souls depends, and I am forced to speak of it by the great neglect that many parents are guilty of in this respect. I say, therefore,

- I. *Christian parents, bring up your children most carefully for the end of their creation.*
- II. *The eternal salvation of your children requires it.*

I. Most parents train up their children as regards the body very carefully from their youth; they are not wanting in that. But to what do they train them? To eat, drink, stand, or walk becomingly; cats and dogs do as much as that for their young. To speak, read, write and dress properly; that is no more than heathens and infidels do for their children. To what tends the greatest care of parents for their sons and daughters when the latter are past the years of childhood? Some try merely to teach them some respectable trade, so that they can earn their living. Others, thinking that their children are not obliged to work, train them up to speak foreign languages, or to the liberal arts and sciences, or instruct them in commerce, or send them to travel in foreign countries, that they may know something of the world and its customs, and thus be able to deal with people in different offices and employments. Or they try to settle their daughter well in life, or to procure an office or a rich marriage for their son; or, finally, their whole aim is to be able to leave their children well off after their own death. If they are successful in that, their whole duty is fulfilled, as they think and they have nothing more to trouble about. It certainly is a care that cannot be found fault with; and would that all fathers and mothers attended to it properly, and gave their children a decent trade or profession. If they did, there would not be so many idlers and good-for-nothings going about the streets.

But, Christian parents, is that the only end for which your children were entrusted and given to you by their Creator? Have they come into the world for no other purpose than to care for their bodies, which will one day

become the food of worms? Is it their only object to earn their bread, and to live respectably in the eyes of the world? Have they not a soul, one only soul, one immortal soul? Does not that concern you at all? Have their immortal souls nothing to hope for, nothing to fear after this life? There is an eternal fire, to which your children may be condemned; forget it not. There is an eternal heaven, in which they may rejoice; forget it not. To this latter place they are called by God. They are entrusted to you by their Creator that they may attain it. The principal thing, the only object for which they are created, is to live piously, to fear and love God, and to be eternally happy. If they do not attain that end it were better for them never to have been born. If you do not train them up for it, you are not the fathers, and mothers, but the butchers and murderers of your children, whose souls God will demand from you.

Christian parents, what a great and precious deposit God has left with you in your children! Look after them with the greatest care, so that no crafty thief may steal them away from you, but that you may be able to restore them to him from whom you have received them. When your children were brought home, after having received Baptism, you received their souls, and henceforth were bound to honor them; not as your children, but what they really were, as children of God, and to take them from the hands of the priest as a sacred treasure given to you by him in the name of God, who thereby wishes to say to you; you have offered this child, the fruit of my blessing, to me. I love it, and will henceforth be its only father and mother. Now I lend it, I deposit it with you, but with the strict obligation on your side to bring it up according to the spirit and law of my Gospel, and to restore it to me in the same state in which you now receive it. And what state is that? When you brought that child to me first it was still a child of Adam, a slave of the devil, laboring under a malediction. Now that I have washed it in my Blood, cleansed it from original sin, and adorned it with sanctifying grace, it is a holy child of God, a vessel of grace, a living temple of the Holy Ghost, a citizen of heaven, a companion of the Angels, an heir of my glory and happiness. Such is the state in which you must restore it to me, and woe to you if by your neglect in training it, it should be led astray from me and be lost! Therefore, Christian parents, all your desires must tend to preserve that heavenly treasure for your children; all your ambition must be centered therein, that you gain eternal honor for them; all your care and trouble must be employed to restore them uninjured to their heavenly Father.

But there is nothing that many parents think less of than the last end of their children; nothing they care less about than bringing them up for God and heaven! If many a father and mother were commanded by God, under the severe punishment of eternal damnation, to bring up their sons and daughters to worldly vanities, they could not do more in that way than they do now. If the devil were to say to many a father and mother: You must give up your son, your daughter, to me, could they do more to satisfy his desire than they do now? If they were addressed in the words of Christ to St. Peter, when the latter was troubled about the fate of his fellow-apostle, St. John: "What is it to thee? Follow thou me." Never mind your children's souls; look after yourself, or be satisfied with providing them with food and drink. Look after their bodies, let their souls be. If, I say, many parents were thus spoken to by God, could they be more careless or neglectful in this matter than they already are? There are many who look after their horses and dogs with more care than after the immortal souls of their children. Miserable children! I pity your lot in being born of, and brought up by, such parents. It seems as if they had given you temporal life only that they might drag you down to eternal death! Parents, if you have no fear of God and his commandments, you should be impelled to take all possible care of the souls of your children, at least, by the thought that their eternal salvation requires that care.

II. Fathers and mothers, you give sufficient proof that you love your children. What trouble mothers cheerfully take with their little children, day and night, is best known to themselves. How fathers work, and think, and labor incessantly, so as to leave their children well *off*, is taught us by daily experience. But do you really desire your children's welfare? Do you really wish to do them good? Then you must not grudge them the best and greatest good, but do all you can to secure it for them, namely, to gain for them the eternal happiness of heaven. For how can they thank you afterwards for having given them this miserable life, which is over in a few years, if you do not gain eternal life for them? How can they be grateful to you for feeding and clothing them if you prevent them from enjoying the never-ending banquet of heaven? What can they think of you, although you may have had them instructed in many branches of knowledge, if you do not give them the real wisdom of heaven, the knowledge and love of God? What is the use of your leaving them worldly riches if they lose eternal

treasures through your fault? In a word, how can they be grateful to you for bringing them into the world if they cannot live forever with God in heaven? But whether your children attain this highest good or not; whether they are to burn forever in hell, or to rejoice eternally in heaven, depends mainly on yourselves, oh, parents, how you train up your children! For on their good or bad training depends the good or bad life of your children, which is terminated by a good or a bad death, and followed by a happy or a miserable eternity. Your little children, parents, are like soft wax in your hands, you can give them any shape you please. They are like young plants; do you wish them to grow up straight? It all lies with yourselves. They are like a canvas prepared for painting: you can paint on them whatever you please, a devil or an angel; an accursed, reprobate goat, or a sheep of the fold of Christ, destined for heaven.

Christian parents, how is it that there is often such a difference in the morals and life of children who are of the same age, the same condition, state, and family, who have the same faith, and have been born in the same town, the same street, the same house? If we take the trouble to examine the matter we shall find in one household that the children know all the chief parts of the catechism, that they kneel down to say their prayers every morning, and, as is the pious custom in every good Christian family, that they make their examination of conscience every evening carefully. In another house you will find that the children get up and go to bed when they please, and that, in place of praying, they curse, swear, play, and indulge in useless conversation. In one family it is the custom for them to hear Mass every day, to go on Sundays and holydays to the sermon and to catechism, and to be sent regularly to the Sacraments. In another, the sons frequent the saloon, the daughters go into dangerous company; they neither see nor hear anything of the Word of God, or of what would benefit their souls. In one household one hardly knows that there are daughters in it at all, because they are hardly ever seen out of the church; in another, every one can easily be aware of their presence, because they spend their time at the window, or before the door, talking and laughing, even with persons of the opposite sex. In one household the children dress modestly, according to the law of Jesus Christ; in another, they ape all the vanities and extravagances of the world. In one family the sons and daughters are always occupied with work or study; in another, they are allowed to run idle about the streets, where they will certainly not learn much good. In one family they are trained to give up their own will for the sake of doing the will of God; in another, each child does as he pleases. And whence comes this great difference? From the difference in the training and teaching they received from their childhood upward. In one family the father and mother attend to their duty; in another, Christian doctrine, paternal vigilance, correction and chastisement and good example are wanting. What wonder is it, then, that young children live as they are taught or allowed to live?

And according as children are accustomed to lead a pious or a wicked life in their youth, so will their after life be pious or wicked. "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). The eternal happiness or the damnation of your children, then, depends on the good or bad training you give them; and therefore, if you love them sincerely and wish to secure to them the possession of the one thing necessary, you must train them up for their last end, that is, for true piety, for God and for heaven, with the greatest care. And woe to you if you are wanting in this most important duty! Woe to you if by carelessness, or by not instructing them in the catechism and leading them on to good, or by giving them bad example, you prevent even one of your children from saving his soul, and drag him down to the eternal flames of hell! What would you think if you heard your lost children crying out from hell to God for vengeance on you, the cause of their damnation? They might say: "We are not the cause of our own ruin; our parents have ruined us; they are the murderers of our souls." We have deserved hell by our vicious lives; that we must confess! But our parents are the cause of our wickedness, and of our damnation. "Our parents are the murderers of our souls! Our parents are the cause of that, because they did not bring us up better and train us to virtue!" "Our parents are the murderers!" It is my father, the son will say, who is to blame for my damnation. He never spoke to me of any but earthly and transitory things. He hardly ever said a word to me of God and heaven. From him I learned to curse, swear, blaspheme, and give way to other sins that he was constantly committing. He never asked me, and never troubled himself about where, when, or with whom I went, whether I frequented the Sacraments, or heard Mass and sermon on Sundays and holydays, or attended catechism. If I blasphemed the Name of God, spoke ill of my neighbor, lied, cursed, or swore, he never said a word to correct me. My mother is to blame for the loss of my soul, the daughter cries out from the flames of hell. I would have been modest, reserved, and humble, according to the law of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, if she had not, as soon as I was able to walk, trained me up to

all sorts of worldly pomp and vanity. I kept my virginal purity and baptismal innocence unsullied until she brought me into dangerous company, where I learned vice and wickedness. I was pious until she sent me away to a foreign country, where I soon changed for the worse. I was chaste until she allowed me to be idle, to go about wherever I pleased, and to walk and amuse myself in the evening alone with a person of the opposite sex! Cruel father, cruel mother, if you did not intend to lead me to heaven, why did you bring me into the world? It would have been a thousand times better for me never to have seen the light of day, and to have remained in the abyss of my original nothingness. Would to God that I had been your dog, and not your son or your daughter: I would not now have to suffer these torments! You are the murderers of our souls!

Parents, what does your father's or mother's heart now say to you? What are you to do? If any of you have really a child in hell, whose damnation you are the cause of by not bringing up that child properly, what can you do now? Alas, the poor soul is lost, and you will never be able to remedy your mistake! Parents, do penance now for your past faults, that you may not be condemned to do fruitless penance for them in hell, with your unhappy child. Make up, by diligence and care with your remaining children, for the neglect with which your Conscience now reproaches you. I repeat with St. Paul: "Fathers, bring up your children in the discipline and correction of the Lord." Let it be your chief care to lead them on to the fear of God, to the love and practice of virtue, to a Christian, holy life, and to the kingdom of heaven. All your love, your labor, and trouble, nay, even your devotions and good works, are of no use, if you are guilty of deliberate and grievous neglect in this point. That is the principal duty that God and the natural law require from you in your state of life. Oh, happy parents who have now children in heaven, to pray to God for you daily, and to praise and bless him forever! Happy parents, whose greatest care hitherto has been to bring up your children to piety and virtue! What consolation it will be for you to find yourselves one day, along with your children, at the right hand of your Judge, and to hear those children proclaiming publicly, in presence of all mankind: My father, my mother, is the cause of my eternal happiness! Christian parents, let this thought impel you to train up your children in a holy manner. Amen.

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