

THE IMMACULATA



The Catholic Family By Fr George Kelly

In view of the many social evils resulting from the decline in the father's influence, one of the most important functions the modern mother should perform is to help maintain or restore the father's position of authority in the family. In doing so, you will fulfil your own role as a wife and mother to a greater extent than is possible when you permit your husband to be the lesser figure.

You can make your greatest contribution to your family as the heart of your home—not its head. From you, your children should learn to love others and to give of themselves unstintingly in the spirit of sacrifice. Never underestimate the importance of your role. For upon you depends the emotional growth of your children, and such growth will better prepare them to live happy and holy lives than any amount of intellectual training they may receive.

Priests and psychiatrists often see problems from different angles, yet they display striking agreement in pinpointing other kinds of maternal conduct which do great harm to the child. Their advice might be summarized as follows:

Don't be an autocrat who always knows best. Your child may have his own way of doing things, which may seem to be inefficient or time-consuming. Have patience and let him do things his way, thus giving him the opportunity to learn by trial and error.

Don't be a martyr. Naturally, you must make sacrifices. But do not go to such extremes that your child feels guilty when you deny yourself something which rightfully should be yours, in order to give him what rightfully should not be his.

A typical martyr worked at night in a laundry to pay her son's way through college. Before his graduation, he asked her not to appear at the ceremony—he said she would be dressed so poorly that he would be embarrassed.

You would embarrass your family if you insisted on acting and dressing like a teenager; and, if you adopted a demeaning attitude toward household tasks, you would teach your children that motherhood and its responsibilities are unworthy of respect.

'From you, your children should learn to love others and to give of themselves unstintingly in the spirit of sacrifice'

Don't think you have the perfect child. Some mothers, when their child receives low grades, appear at school to determine, not what is wrong with him, but what is wrong with the teachers.

When such a mother learns that her son has been punished for disobedience, she descends upon the school officials and demands an apology. By her actions she undermines the child's respect for all authority—including her own.

You will probably be on safe ground, until your child is canonized at St. Peter's, if you conclude that he has the same human faults and weaknesses that you see in your neighbours' children.

Don't use a sickbed as your throne. The "whining" mother feigns illness to attract sympathy and to force her children to do as she wills. Who would deny the last wish of a dying person? In this vein she often gets what she wants—for a while. The usual, final result, however, is that her children lose both sympathy and respect for her.

Don't be a "glamor girl." Motherhood is not a task for a woman who thinks that ordinary housework—preparing meals, making beds, washing clothes—is beneath her.

Of course, mothers should strive to maintain a pleasing appearance, but they should also realize that they are most attractive when they are fulfilling the duties of their noble vocation.

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"When I feel myself tossed about in the sea of this world amidst storms and tempests. I keep my eyes fixed on you, O Mary, shining star, lest I be swallowed up by the waves."

"When the winds of temptation arise, when I dash against the reefs of tribulations, I raise my eyes to you and call upon you, O Mary. When I am agitated by the billows of pride, ambition, slander or jealousy, I look to you and I invoke you, O Mary; when anger or avarice or the seductions of the flesh rock the fragile little barque of my soul, I always look to you, O Mary. And if I am troubled by the enormity of my sins, troubled in conscience, frightened at the severity of judgment, and if I should feel myself engulfed in sadness or drawn into the abyss of despair, again I raise my eyes to you, always calling on you, O Mary.

"In dangers, in difficulties, in doubts, I will always think of you, O Mary, I will always call on you. May your name, O Virgin Mary, be always on my lips and never leave my heart in order that I may obtain the help of your prayers, grant that I may never lose sight of the example of your life. Following you, O Mary, I shall not go astray, thinking of you I shall not err, if you support me I shall not fall, if you protect me I shall have nothing to fear, if you accompany me I shall not grow weary, if you look upon me with favour, I shall reach the port"

St. Bernard

We must certainly be extraordinarily blind because when all is said and done, there is not a single person who could say that he is ready to appear before Jesus Christ.

Yet in spite of the fact that we are quite aware of this, there is still not one among us who will take a single step nearer to God.

Dear Lord, how blind the sinner is! How pitiable is his lot! My dear children, let us not live like fools any longer, for at the moment when we least expect it, Jesus Christ will knock at our door. How happy then will be the person who has not been waiting until that very moment to prepare himself for Him.

That is what I wish you to be.

Curé of Ars

Learn to forgive,
and learn to apologize.
Holding on to "stuff"
even for a few hours is destructive.
It is like having poison in your system
for just a short time;
you think you are teaching your
spouse a lesson, but, in truth,
you are weakening the soul
of your marriage.
Just forgive and move on.
For many, saying I'm sorry is difficult.
Just get over it and say the words and say
them in a meaningful way.

No Greater Joy



The Power of a Woman's Words—Sharon Jaynes

MY FRIEND CATHERINE AND I set out for a lazy summer stroll through the neighbourhood just before the fireflies emerged to celebrate the setting of the sun. We chatted about raising boys, working husbands, and decorating dilemmas. When we arrived back at her house, she invited me to come in and look at some fabric swatches for a new sofa.

Before I knew it, a few minutes had turned into a few hours. "Oh, my!" I exclaimed. "It's ten o'clock. I've been gone for over two hours! I bet Steve's worried sick. He doesn't even know where I am. I'd better give him a call before I start back home."

When I dialled our number, the answering machine picked up. After I listened to my sweet Southern greeting, I left a bitter message. "Steve, I was calling to let you know I'm at Catherine's. I thought you'd be worried, but apparently you don't even care because you won't even pick up the phone!" Click.

I said my goodbyes to Catherine and left feeling dejected.

"I'm wandering around in the dark all alone and he doesn't even care," I mumbled to no one in particular. As my eyes adjusted to the darkness, I noticed someone coming toward me. It was Sir Galahad riding on his steed...his bicycle!

"Where have you been?" Steve desperately asked. "I've been riding all over the neighbourhood looking for you! Do you know what time it is?"

"Oh, you do care," I said with a grin, giving him a big hug. "What are you talking about?" "Oh, nothing. Let's go home." When we arrived at the house, I quickly erased the message on the machine before Steve could hear my reprimanding words. Whew, I thought. That was close.

A few days later, Steve called me from work. "Sharon,

have you listened to the answering machine lately?" "No, why?" "Well, I think there's something on there you need to hear."

We hung up and I reached for my phone to call my home phone. The message on the answering machine went something like this. (The voice of a sweet Southern belle) "Hello, you've reached the Jaynes' residence. We're unable to answer the phone right now... (enter the voice of Cruella De Vil) "I was calling to let you know I'm at Catherine's. I thought you'd be worried, but apparently you don't even care because you won't even pick up the phone!" (Return of sweet Southern belle) "At the sound of the beep, leave a message and we'll get back with you as soon as possible." Beep. "Oh, my goodness!" I screamed. "How did this happen! How many people have heard this over the past three days?"

I called the phone company, and they explained that sometimes during a thunderstorm (which had occurred three days prior), lightning strikes the wires and answering machine messages get scrambled. My message somehow became attached to the greeting. I was mortified. It sounded like Dr. Jekyll and Mrs. Hyde. "Lord," I prayed, "this is so embarrassing." "Yes, it is," He replied.

Well, He didn't really say that in so many words. It was more like this:

"By it we bless God and the Father: and by it we curse men who are made after the likeness of God. Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send forth, out of the same hole, sweet and bitter water? Can the fig tree, my brethren, bear grapes? Or the vine, figs? So neither can the salt water yield sweet."

James 3:9-12



The Psalm of Young Mothers By Fr Raoul Plus

A YOUNG mother—very true to her role of mother and at the same time very artistic—got the idea of comparing her role with that of cloistered sisters. Between her washing, her cooking and the care of her youngest, she managed to compose "The Psalm of Young Mothers". It is full of love, full of spontaneity. Every young mother will recognize herself in these passages we are quoting:

"O my God
Like our sisters in the cloister
We have left all for you;
We have not imprisoned the youth of our faces in a guimpe and under a veil,
And though we have cut our hair, it is not in any spirit of penance....
Deign nevertheless, O Lord, to cast a look of complaisance
On the humble little sacrifices which we offer You all day long,
Since the day our groaning flesh gave life to all these little Christians
We are rearing for You.
Our liberty, O God, is in the hands of these little tyrants
who claim it every minute.
The house has become our cloister,
Our life has its unchanging Rule,
And each day its Office, always the same;
The Hours for dressing and for walks,
The Hours for feeding and for school,
We are bound by the thousand little demands of life,
Detached by necessity every moment from our own will,
We live in obedience.
Even our nights do not belong to us;
We too have our nocturnal Office,
When we must rise quickly for a sick child,
Or when between midnight and two o'clock,
When we are in the full sleep we need so badly
A little untimely chanter
Begins to sing his Matins.
We practically live retired from the world:
There is so much to be done in the house.
There is no possibility of going out anyway without a
faithful sitter for the little ones.
We measure out the time for visits parsimoniously.
We have no sisters to relieve us on another shift.
And when the calls for service reach high pitch for us
We have to sweep, to wash the dishes, scrape the carrots for the stew,
prepare a smooth puree for baby and keep on going without stopping
From the children's room to the kitchen and to and fro.
We do big washings we rub and we rinse
Aprons and shirts, underclothes and socks
And all the baby's special things.

In this life of sacrifice, come to our help, O Jesus!

