



Lord, you know my weakness; every morning I make a resolution to practice humility, and every evening I acknowledge that I still have many failures.

I am tempted to be discouraged by this, but I know that discouragement also has its source in pride. That is why I prefer to put my trust in You alone, O my God. Since You are all powerful, deign to create in my soul the virtue for which I long.

St Therese of the Child Jesus

Why am I unhappy? Why do I not walk through life singing and smiling, uplifted by the beauty of things? Why am I short and surly with the man I love and the children I love— with the very persons who, if they were dead before me, my heart would be broken, my life would be desolated?

Why, why, why? The answer is immediately at hand. The answer is our failure, through laziness and self-indulgence, to take advantage of the sources of grace that would transform our souls into shining things.

The Mass and the Sacraments are there at our beck and call, to give us the power and wisdom and zeal we need. Only one thing remains: Are we going to do something about it, or are we going to leave untapped, or hardly touched, the power that would flow to us from Christ Crucified if only we would open our hearts to it?

Joseph A Brieg

THE IMMACULATA



A Screwtape Letter for the Unappreciated Mother

My Dear Wormwood,

I was thrilled to hear you have been making progress with the mother. You have a good lead, from what I hear. She's feels over-worked, unappreciated, and discouraged? I'm so glad to hear it. If you tread carefully, this can be a great opportunity. With the kids waking her up every hour last night, we already have an advantage. A *tired* Mom makes for a more *emotional* Mom, and an emotional Mom is a vulnerable one. I do have a few tips. First, aim your best efforts at her marriage.

As you know, we cannot do much with a unified marriage. Luckily for us, a cranky and exhausted wife can do wonders to change that. We must convince her that her husband is no longer the friend and ally she first married. Instead, we must reveal every sin and selfish habit, especially drawing attention to his thoughtless actions (mal-intended or not) against *her*.

Sometimes it's the less obvious things, things the husband doesn't even realize, that we can use to offend her the most. When he comes home from work and dumps his things on the counter nearest the door (instead of hanging his coat or putting away his keys), let her think of it as a direct assault on her work as a homekeeper. When he treks mud in with his shoes, let her think it is because he does not love her. Such extremes of thought may seem ridiculous to you or I, but to the exhausted mortal woman, it can seem possible. Your goal is to make her think the husband does not notice, or even better, that he does not *care* about her efforts at home.

Secondly, do what you can to keep her focused on *her* troubles and pains. Remind her how much

her back aches, how draining the children were all day, and how many undone tasks still beckon her. Do not let her wonder what difficulties her husband faced that day or whether *his* back might also be aching. Valuing others above oneself is one of those silly, though strangely effective, tactics of the Enemy. If she stops to make him a cup of coffee, the next thing you know she'll be rubbing his shoulders and flirting with him on the couch. It can progress out of your control if you're not careful.

Along those lines, be sure the Mother starts to value productivity above everything else. Have her wake up early and work non-stop until bedtime. If the husband relaxes in the evening with an hour of computer gaming, be sure the wife notices the pile of unfolded laundry or unswept floors. Do not let her grab a book and relax alongside her husband. Diligence, often one of the Enemy's virtues, when overdone can be used to our advantage as well. Convince her that as long as there is a shred of work to be done (and there always is), no one should be resting. Then, as she folds and sweeps and he sits, you can introduce the sweet bitterness of resentment.

A word of caution here. Remember, the love of a husband can be dangerous to our cause. If he senses her unhappiness, he may begin to help or (even worse) show her affection. This is where previously planted seeds of resentment can be guided into full bloom. Make her think that his displays of affection are because he "only wants one thing". Do not let her view his help with the dishes (or kisses or cuddling) as having pure motives. If he shows his desire for her, convince her that she is being *used*, not loved. As we both know, the ultimate Act of Mar-

riage can bond them together in a way that can undo much hard work on our part. Because of this, do not allow her to prioritize that Act on her mental to-do-list. It is in our best interest to keep the wife busy, busy, busy and be sure she's far too exhausted to consider it by the end of the evening.

Now, onto the children. Lovely little opportunities for us, the children, especially the little ones. We all know that children are a favourite tool of the Enemy. He calls them Blessings and Gifts and calls parents to lay down their lives for them, just as his Son did. Insane, I know. We must convince her that the obnoxious little people she has charge of are not really worth her sacrifice. When the Mother first dreamed of having children, she probably imagined large, innocent eyes and chubby, happy grins taking up the majority of her days. Do your best to shatter those expectations.

Instead, draw attention to how much they take from her. Let them take and take and take... And *need* and *need* and *need*, until the Mother feels totally spent. Let them start crying at the same time for the most irrational of reasons. Let the noise bother her. Let their bad behaviour *surprise* her. Do your best to make the day-to-day monotony of diaper changes, meals, and baths seem simultaneously overwhelming and beneath her. Let her think of all the better, more important things she could be doing with her life, if only she didn't have *the children*.

Don't let her think about the future responsible, faithful adults she is raising. Society changers, friends, workers, husbands or wives... *Don't* let her think of them as life-long companions who will love her, converse with her, and care for *her* in her old age. Oh, and *definitely* don't let her think about the grandchildren she might be able to see in their little grubby faces if she looked hard enough now. No, no, no... Thinking ahead to when her work bears fruit, as the Enemy calls it, is always a bad idea. Keep words like 'heritage' or 'legacy' far away from the runny noses and jelly stains of the day to day.

If there is any last piece of advice I have for you, Wormwood, it is to keep the Mother looking to her husband or family for her fulfilment and comfort. We know that the Enemy is always watching and willing to take the burdens of his children, but if we divert the Mother's attention well enough, this fact can be forgotten. Make her look to her husband for worth and affirmation. Then, when he lets her down (as he is sure to do), she will be ours to torment. Yes, the worst thing that could happen would be for her to turn to Him with her needs and inadequacies. Once she realizes that the Enemy offers a peace that transcends her situation, our work could be utterly compromised.

Your Malevolent Uncle,

Screwtape

By Kelsey Shade

Never weary in cheering your family with your smile. It is not enough to avoid depressing them; you must brighten them up and let their spirits expand.

Fr Raoul Plus, S.J.



The School Bell is Ringing... Are You Ready? By Leane VanderPutten

With school just around the corner and so many responsibilities and things to accomplish, we may get a little nervous on how we are going to pull it all off.

I know, for me, summer time is so full, my days are bursting, that I truly wonder how I am going to "fit" school back in with all its demands.

I find my life goes in spurts. I am organized for a time, then it slips through my fingers for awhile. I have learned not to get discouraged, trusting that, with grace, I will get it together again. So I know what works for me and I know what doesn't. **Floundering does not work.** It is always good to have a plan.

The following are a few things that help me along the way not to get too stressed. Maybe a point or two might work for you, too.

1. **Make your list.** If you are feeling overwhelmed you may think that writing it all down will make you feel more burdened. That's not how it works. When you can get it down on paper, you can sort and prioritize. Those lowest on the "essential" list can be put on the next day so you can slowly work at getting them all done. If you don't get it done the next day, continue to add it to the next one. Checking each thing off gives you a sense of accomplishment and energizes you!

2. **Keep the house picked up.** My corners aren't always great but if you were to walk into my house at a given time, it would be generally clean...unless we decided to go play volleyball instead of doing the dishes right away (priorities, you know.)

3. **Go to Bed.** If I can go to bed and get up at consistent hours, it helps a lot. It's important for the kids to do the same. Summertime is a season of later bed-times. We loosen up the night time schedule and relax

for a spell. It is quite refreshing...for a time. I notice how much it affects the next day, these inconsistent and later schedules. That's okay for a while during the summer but you wouldn't want to do that during school days. So regularity on getting to bed is important.

4. **Wake up at a consistent time,** earlier than the family, if you can. With the demands of young children, and the lack of sleep that goes with that, this isn't always possible. At times like those, we need to just offer it up. That being said, nothing helps me more than getting up before everyone else, getting my prayers said, and doing other duties before the family gets up. It gets me started on the right foot.

5. **Plan Your Meals!** Okay this one I am not very good at but, Wow! does it take the stress-load off!! I have periods in my life when my girls are taking over the meals so it is hard for me to get back in the swing of things when they are occupied with other life things. But it makes such a huge difference! So if you can get it together once a week to plan those meals, DO SO! It will make a positive impact on your week!

6. **Get yourself fully dressed first thing,** right down to your shoes. This will help you to get motivated to accomplish things right off in the morning. I also wash my face with cold water first thing in the morning. I started that 2 years ago when we had the drought. It was a waste of water to leave the tap running until it got warm, so the cold water did the job and now I like the "pick me up" it gives me. Try it!

