

## “Honour thy father and thy mother”

**Parents show children how: A husband honours their mother! A wife honours their father!**

**MY FATHER** used say, "The bulk of mankind are in the greatest possible need of **compassion**."

I have made this part of my priestly ministry, plus the adage, "People need **encouragement**," for which St Barnabas is my patron, for his name means "son of encouragement", cf. Acts 4:36; 11:25-26.

### **EXCELSIOR!**

All of us in the **improvement industries** — and that includes husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, priests and other teachers, and also doctors (the word means "teacher", since they teach bodily health) — need to radiate and receive compassion and encouragement.

All vocations dedicated to "improvement" bristle with difficulties. Others often seemingly reject our good efforts for their improvement. They do not like suggestions. Children ignore them with disobedience or even brush them off with anger and contempt, while spouses and friends take affront and have to be soothed. Tact and sensitivity are essential.

How easy it is to see the improvements needed in others! How hard it is to make improvements in myself! And often, the same improvements are needed in me as in the others: how hard to improve temper tantrums in others when I indulge in them...

While I live I grow — to *improve* myself and others.

### **THE SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY**

The sacraments which keep the Church going as a family of God and a people of God are called social sacraments, or sacraments of *communio* [as in 'the communion of saints']:-

Holy Orders and Matrimony — The Sacraments at the Service of Communion — are **directed towards the salvation of others**; if they contribute as well to personal salvation, it is through service to others that they do so.

Catechism of the Catholic Church §1534

- Parents labour so hard and faithfully to make saints of their children and of each other. Their two directions of effort are interdependent: "The first duty of parents to their children is that they love each other as husband and wife."
- Breadwinners: don't be sweet at work and a bear at home; homemakers: don't be sweet on the street and sharp with husband and children; St Bernard was a "mellifluous doctor" of honeyed words; St John Chrysostom "golden-mouthed" and St Peter Chrysologus "golden worded".

### **PARENTS ARE SOMETHING LIKE GOD!**

- as procreators, using the powers given them by the Creator;
- giving a one-way gift a child cannot give back to his parents;
- freely risking that parental love will be rejected or mocked;
- loving their wayward children into repentance;
- having a sympathetic understanding of fallen human nature.

### **PARENTS ARE TARGETED BY SATAN**

The Devil wages war on spouses and parents, the engaged and unmarried, and bishops and priests. Our apostolate is to implement the Resurrection against him and against his latest wiles to make us fail our testing time, be damned, or at least unhappy and ineffectual

### **BAGGAGE**

WHEN A BISHOP is sent to a diocese by the Pope, willy-nilly he inherits the baggage of his predecessor. No matter how graced and gifted, he must start from where the previous bishop left things, including the various skeletons in diocesan cupboards. So too a new parish priest cannot just move in and change things in what he considers to be improvements.

Getting married, having children, means facing up to the baggage carried by one's spouse, and vice-versa:-

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.

Galatians 6:2

As well, each must carry his own baggage, from his parents, his upbringing, and the sins and mistakes of his youth. Everything is labelled, "For better or for worse."

### **SPIRITUAL GENETICS**

Not only does each parent give us our early environment with daily examples of virtue and vice, but also each gives 23 chromosomes with their myriad of genes.

Spiritual Genetics is in the First Commandment:-

And God spoke all these words, saying, "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me**, but showing mercy unto thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

Exodus 20:1-6

As "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children" so also are the sins of the mothers.

Furthermore, and more positively, the **virtues of the fathers and mothers are also visited upon the children**. Such are the social consequences of sin and virtue through a sort of spiritual genetics.

So we "make allowances" for other people, especially spouses for their spouse. It is why we must guard our minds and tongues against rash judgements or uncharitable comment on those present or absent, and even more so against detraction, which is revealing the faults of others without necessity.

Grown up children need help to make allowances for their parents. Blessed are the younger children who are not aware of any defects in their parents...

See *Handouts* n. 58, "Shonky": God is accustomed to working with extremely shonky material — in the world and in the Church — and we, like Him must do wonders in bringing good out of weakness and evil.

See old *Catechetical News* n. 183 pp. 5-8: **Mrs Parkinson's Law** by Cyril Northcote Parkinson:-

Create an adult society to which the young will clamour for admission. A start can be made, however, in any family where the need for responsibility is recognized.

## BRINGING UP CHILDREN IS HARD WORK

It always was, and it gets harder as they get older.

As I see it — and write in my children's Bush Boy books — the two practical rules of the *Australian Bush Catechism of Camping* are basic to a successful upbringing at home, formulated or unformulated:-

38. *What are the two rules for good discipline ?*

**The two rules for good discipline are  
'Answer properly when you're spoken to'  
and 'Obey, straight away'.**

## DISCIPLES ARE ON L-PLATES

Discipline literally means learning, with an implication too of *being taught*; note the interrelationships:-

- **tutor**, teach, instruct, educate, school, train;
- **correction** of mind, morals, manners, also punishment;
- **will power**, self-discipline, self-control, self-restraint;
- a branch of **knowledge**, a programme of training.

Good discipline is closely related to good manners. Good manners of children towards parents and siblings depend on good manners practised between the parents themselves: "What you are doing is shouting louder than what you are saying".

Good discipline is also essential for "Safety First":-

37. *What is essential for bush safety and happiness?*

**Good discipline is essential  
for bush safety and happiness.**

Body language — or "non-verbal communication" — ranges from cuddles to spankings, a pat on the back to a slap lower down. Be kind, be firm — they complement each other, like soft-hearted and hard-headed.

N.B. Corporal punishment is a psycho-sacramental, part of the parent-child relationship, and has proven a helpful part of most successful upbringings, because:

- continuing waywardness from original sin despite Baptism;
- a message which is felt is better heard and heeded;
- the Bible insists on it: Proverbs 13:24 etc; Hebrews 12:5-11.
- the Catechism of the Catholic Church believes in it:-

He who loves his son will not spare the rod.... He who disciplines his son will profit by him.

Ecclesiasticus 30:1-2 in CCC §2223; full context §§2214-2231.

## SOME PRACTICAL PRECAUTIONS

- The fewer the DOs and DON'Ts the more effective;
- Be forgiving, but slap for flagrant disobedience of vital commands like No! Stop! Come! Go! or for defiance.
- Avoid pejorative language: not hit/beat but smack/slap/spank. 'Never criticize your wife or husband in front of the children.
- Teach courtesy, patience, responsibility by practising them.
- Insist on things being put back where they came from.
- "Clean up the mess you make," progress to not making a mess and to the ultimate of cleaning up the world's messes.
- Banish "It's boring" and make what seems tedious a grace.
- Be patient, be kind, or it is not love; 1 Corinthians 13:4.
- Be temperate with rewards/praise, punishment/ restrictions.
- A little permissiveness works if there are hidden strengths.
- Behaviour is purposive and actions have consequences.
- Reduce confrontations by personal self-control.
- Practise moderation: some mischief is better ignored:-  
Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."  
Ephesians 6:4.

## IDEAS for high IDEALS — "Be ye perfect"

- Think big: make virtues, not vices, the "default settings".
- Aim: a secure child, an eager adolescent, a mature adult: the alternatives are all too often:
  - undisciplined peevish children;
  - sullen resentful teenagers;
  - irresponsible purposeless 'grown-up' teenager @ 18!
- Are some of apparently new emotional problems induced or exacerbated by an undisciplined upbringing? Have obedience and manners been sacrificed to Dr Spock?  
Some of the little terrors who are unmanageable... are *mistakenly* believed to have emotional problems. The greatest social disaster of the [twentieth] century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary.  
*Dare to Discipline* by Dr James Dobson, p. 21
- Maturity plans activities according to a scale of priorities, and defers or even rejects acting on one's own mere feelings.
- Defuse the time-bomb of adolescent turbulence in advance through a disciplined upbringing in childhood.
- Help children and adolescents to have sympathy for the feelings of others, without being dominated by their own.
- Be merciful to all the poor souls partly imprisoned by Satan. Tactfully, help them to "get out of it" and be free.
- Better than saying "You're a failure" is saying "There's another way of doing that." Unstated is the implication that the latter is the better choice — but don't say so.
- Each day is a new start: practise daily prayers, at least weekly Holy Communion at Mass, monthly Confession.
- Count your blessings — there is every reason to hope.
- Family catechetics (= homeschooling in the Catholic faith) goes hand-in-hand with personal Bible reading: use the carefully selected texts in the Catholic Family Catechism Disciples' Edition II **set out in full** with each of the 50 Questions & Answers, plus the lists of texts to look up:-
  - Bible Texts to Read and Know: pp. 28, 29, 30.
  - The Public Life of Christ: pp. 34-35.
  - Mysteries of Christ's Passion and Death: p. 36.
  - Resurrection Triumph: p. 39.
  - Bible on the Holy Spirit: p. 42; what He does p. 43.
  - The Church: pp. 44, 45.
  - What must I do to be saved? p. 56.
  - The Second Coming of Jesus Christ: p. 57.
  - The Seven Spiritual Works of Mercy: p. 103.
  - Seven Corporal Works of Mercy: p. 107

## NEVER LOSE HEART

- Do what's right even if it's unpopular.
- Popularity is not a Christian virtue, or any other sort.
- When children and adolescents are wayward...  
Yea, a sword shall pierce thy own soul also...  
Luke 2:25  
A man had two sons... [1. prodigal; 2. proud]  
Luke 15:11...  
the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.  
Luke 22:61

## PEOPLE NEED PRIESTS — pray for them

He said to them: "Show yourselves to the priests."  
Luke 17:14  
The priest's lips should keep knowledge... for he is the messenger of the Lord of host.  
Malachi 2:7  
Art thou not a master in Israel and knowest not these things?  
John 3:10