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Chapter 5

Between Parent and Child

Purpose: The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the purpose of the family, the role of each member of the family, and some practical guidelines for raising and training children.

Tips for Teachers: Begin by reviewing the serious problems that face Christian families today and the necessity for cooperation between parents and children to overcome them. Explain the purpose of the vocation of marriage and the solemn responsibility parents have in working with God to bring a new life into the world and then to educate and train that child. The Christian family is a team and everyone has a specific role to play and certain duties and obligations to fulfill. Outline those roles and duties and discuss how each member can contribute to a happy home. Pope John XXIII's statement on this matter should also be discussed.

The education and training of children is a huge task for parents. The task is made easier, however, by the fact that the home is a natural place for education. Mention the importance of beginning the training of children in both religious and secular matters as early as possible. Most children are pretty well formed by the time they go to school, so the pre-school years must not be neglected.

During these years, children are eager to learn and their minds are like sponges. It is a great opportunity to tell them about God and the Church, Mary and saints, and Christian values. They should not be allowed to watch too much television, but should be encouraged to read and to play nicely with their brothers and sisters and friends. If open and honest communication between parents and children is developed and encouraged in these early years, it will help to prevent communications problems later on, particularly in the teenage years.

The matter of discipline—what it is, why it is necessary, and how it can be beneficial both to parents and children—should be taken up next. Point out that effective discipline must be fair, firm, consistent, constructive, and balanced with

love. Seek examples to illustrate these points. Ask the students what disciplinary rules they would draw up if they were parents.

The area of sex education is very controversial and confused today. That positive and prudent instruction should be given to children is undeniable, but the best way to go about this is widely debated. Discuss some of the principles suggested in this chapter and recommend the references below for more detailed advice and answers to some of the typical questions about sexuality that are often asked.

One point that ought to be stressed is modesty in dress. This will be a hard issue to deal with because of the extremes to which modern fashions have gone, but it should not be skipped over. Catholic young people must set a high standard of morality, but how can they do so unless they are encouraged by parents and teachers of religion classes?

Lastly, it should be noted that parenthood is not easy; it requires prayer, hard work, sacrifice, patience, perseverance, and love. Urge the students to cooperate with their parents in every way they can so as not to make a difficult job more difficult. A harmonious Catholic home is attainable today if all members of the family do their share and work for the good of the family.

Topics for Discussion:

1. How important is proper home training in raising children?
2. What is meant by the statement, "Parents must be acknowledged as the first and foremost educators of their children"?
3. Should parents monitor their childrens' reading material and television viewing?
4. Should parents check on who their childrens' companions are?
5. True or false: Spare the rod and spoil the child.
6. Where, when, and by whom should sex education be given to children?
7. How many children do you plan to have if you get married?

*Some Questions and Answers:***1. What is the purpose of the family?**

A. The purpose of the family is to educate and train children to know, love, and serve God in this world so as to be happy with him in the next life.

2. How can parents communicate love to their children?

A. Parents can show love and affection for their children by giving them understanding and support, by offering them advice and encouragement in whatever worthwhile things they do, by showing an interest in what they are saying, by always being available to them, by answering their questions honestly and fully, by praising them and complimenting them, and by telling them straight out and frequently that they are loved and wanted and appreciated. Parents can do a lot for a child's sense of worth and self-esteem through words and actions that communicate love and affection.

3. How can children express their love and thanks to their parents?

A. Children can show their parents how much they are loved and appreciated by telling them so, by showing them respect and obedience, by asking their advice, by discussing things with them, and by always being open and honest with them. Children should fulfill their duties as members of a family and should do so automatically instead of forcing Mom or Dad to nag them or to threaten some punishment. The "Golden Rule" is still the best advice: Treat other people as you would want them to treat you.

4. How important is religious training and example in the home?

A. It is absolutely vital to the spiritual growth and well-being of a child. No parochial school or CCD program, no matter how good it is, can make up for a lack of religious training at home. Unless religious instruction in the classroom is supplemented and reinforced at home, and vice-versa, a vital part of a child's training will be neglected. Family prayer, Bible reading,

religious discussion, and frequent reception of the sacraments as a family are indispensable aids in the molding of Catholic youth.

5. Why is modesty in dress so important?

A. The human body was created by God and, therefore, it is good. It is to be used, however, as God intended. The physical attraction between males and females is perfectly natural and was designed by the Creator to lead them into marriage and into sexual activities which are both life-giving and love-giving. Sexual intimacies outside of marriage are immoral and sinful, and followers of Christ are to avoid immodest thoughts, words, actions, or dress that could lead to illicit sexual pleasure. Chastity outside of marriage can be compared to a castle, with modesty being the moat that surrounds and protects the castle. Once the moat has been crossed, the castle is in trouble. Once modesty has been disregarded, then chastity is endangered.

Modesty is very much ignored today—on television, in newspapers and magazines, and in the revealing clothes that people wear. Those who dress immodestly can be an occasion of sin for others who may be sexually aroused by the skimpy outfits and bathing suits they see. Those who advertise their wares so blatantly should not be surprised if someone expects them to make available the product they have been advertising. One doesn't have to dress in Victorian styles to be modest, but one should try to wear decent clothes and bathing suits.

Projects:

1. Do a report on one of the references listed below.
2. List five ways that you could improve the atmosphere in your home—and then do them.
3. Voluntarily perform an extra chore around the house.
4. Draw up a list of disciplinary rules that you think would be fair to children.
5. Bring any problems or questions you have to your parents first.
6. Act out a solution to a problem, first from the parents' side and then from the childrens' viewpoint.

References:

Bonacci, Mary Beth. *Real Love Answers Your Questions on Dating, Marriage, and the Real Meaning of Sex*

Catechism of the Catholic Church

Drummev, James J. *Catholic Replies*

Fox, Fr. Robert J. *The Gift of Sexuality: A Guide for Young People*

John Paul II, Pope. *Familiaris Consortio* ("The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World")

_____. *Letter to Families*

John XXIII, Pope. *Ad Petri Cathedram* ("Near the Chair of Peter")

Kuharski, Mary Ann. *Raising Catholic Children*

Pontifical Council for the Family. *The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality*

Pulling, Pat. *The Devil's Web*

Sattler, Vern. *Challenging Children to Chastity*

U.S. Catholic Conference. *Basic Teachings for Catholic Religious Education*

Vatican II. *Declaration on Christian Education*

_____. *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World*