

Cooperating with the Lord in Education

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The Lord Himself is the Master Educator. He works to lead all men to heaven. He leads from within to awaken the love of what is good and true in the human mind. He quickens the seed of truth, nourishes and protects the tender plant, leads to the growth of leaves, blossoms and, finally, fruit—all this He does in secret through the inner urgings of the soul which never rests until man becomes a form of use.

For our delight and fulfillment, the Lord extends the privilege of playing a part—of cooperating with Him—in the education of our children. And if we would learn to play our part successfully, we must try to do this from Him—in the light of His Truth and the heat of His love.

Our cooperation with Providence centers in bringing our children into direct contact with His Holy Word, in which is the light that is to become the "life of man." By prayers and songs—and Hebrew songs are said to be closest to the language of heaven—we first initiate our children into the worship of the Lord. We tend to wait until children can respond before introducing them to the things of the Church, but the teachings concerning "remains" say, the earlier the better! "Celestial things of love... are insinuated into man chiefly in his state of infancy up to childhood, and in fact without knowledges; for they flow in from the Lord, and affect him, before the man knows what love is and what affection is" (*Arcana Coelestia* 1450).

Parents who say the Lord's Prayer at the bedside of their new-born and who sing songs, especially from the Word, cooperate with the Lord by providing a basis by which inmost delights may be communicated to their infants from the presence of celestial angels—delights of love to the Lord and love to the neighbor which 'remain' to be the basis for a love of what is true and good in later life—and in eternity.

As children mature they are called back to the Word by delight—the delight of a story told with a sense of the dramatic and an awareness that it is what is visual, the scene, as well as the words for the ears that is to be emphasized. We cannot love an invisible God. Children cannot delight in a story that cannot be easily pictured in their imaginations. When we know children are in a sensual state, then we can meet their needs by bringing the stories of the Word before their senses to be heard and seen, felt and lived, and above all, delighted in!

We need to emphasize two "R's" in seeking to give the Word to our Children—*Reverence* and *Repetition*. Reverence should stem from what the Writings call "Holy Fear." "All worship of God must begin with Holy Fear, within which is the thought that God will reward the good and punish the evil. The simple and little children must believe this because they do not yet understand what (the permission of evil is)... And when (little children) begin by not daring through fear to do what is evil, there is gradually insinuated love together with good, and they begin to know and perceive that nothing but what is good is from the Lord, and that evil is from themselves, and at last that all evil is from hell" (*Arcana Coelestia* 6071:3). This fear expresses itself in a concern lest the things of self—calling attention to self—disturb the worship of others.

A self-control which promotes the uses of family and public worship needs to be taught to children.

Repetition is essential to all learning. It may bore adults who are too lazy to dig more deeply into a story from the Word, but to repeat stories until they become familiar and loved is of the utmost importance to children. A familiar story, like a familiar song, evokes an affectional response and brings a special delight to the growing mind. The core of the Old Testament is the Ten Commandments which should be gone over on a regular basis as children come to understand them. The core of the New Testament is the Lord's Prayer, which is to be ever new, ever refreshing in its insights and spheres. If one recitation is repeated for family worship for a week, it helps impress it indelibly on the mind, and, of course, special festival recitations should be practiced so they can be said by heart, then there is the deepest delight.

A careful study of the Word in sequence introduces the minds to all the problems of life—of right and wrong, of obedience and disobedience, of honesty and dishonesty, of marriage and adultery—all human relations are dealt with in the Word so that a systematic review introduces the mind to life, and to eternal life!

Feelings of mutual delight between parent and child in later life, when the stories of the Word are studied more deeply, will return from the affections attending the early tellings and can be infilled with more mature knowledge and applications to life. And many difficulties of life which must be met in the process of growing up can be prepared for by means of stories from the Word—problems of right and wrong, honesty and sex. A fundamental grasp of the basic stories of the Old and New Testaments reaches into all knowledge and experience and prepares the mind to understand God and man, the Lord and self.

Cooperation with the Lord means, then, leading our children to delight in His Word. The Word lives and imparts life to all who learn to approach It with reverence. "The Word is living and gives life, because in It, in the supreme sense, the Lord is treated of, and in the inmost sense His kingdom...so that It is life itself that is in the Word, and that inflows into the minds of those who read the Word with reverence" (*Arcana Coelestia* 3424).