



The Catholic Mother

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by

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COVER ART: “Madonna of the Streets”

Painted by Roberto Ferruzzi (1854 - 1934) and first publicly exhibited in 1897 at an art exhibition in Venice. Whereabouts of the original is unknown. An oil painting recently appeared that may be the original, but that has not yet been confirmed.

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Assault on Family Life

Perhaps the most sinister menace of recent years has been the assault on family life. Assaults have been made against the family as an institution and against the various relationships within the family—husband and wife, father and mother, children and parents. These assaults are not only of recent years, for they are to be found during the French Revolution also, and, before that, in Rousseau. However, we do notice that the assaults currently being made on the family as the single unit of society comes no longer from one quarter, but they are being delivered from many different angles. These attacks are sometimes mindful or deliberate and sometimes utterly unintended. Those who advocate or denounce certain practices or principles are not always aware of what they are attacking. They are not aware that, inevitably, what they hold today will lead them on to something else tomorrow, which at present they would repudiate but tomorrow will proclaim.

For example, when the practices of birth control were first publicized, birth control opponents (hoping to dissuade those who encouraged use of birth control) suggested that, if it was taught, then abortion should also be taught. Those who favored birth control indignantly insisted that there was no connection between the two ideas. No doubt, their denial was sincere, but it was short sighted and futile. The defenders of birth control are now equal defenders of abortion. Sterilization of the unfit has been added to their agenda. Ultimately, it will be made compulsory, no doubt, and not merely on those that are now held to be unfit. This is merely one instance of what is happening everywhere.

The Lambeth bishops would have been disturbed if they had realized where their permissions were leading. But, with false principles from which to start, there is no end to the degradation that must follow. The next Lambeth Conference, if it is honest, will either go on to further abominations or will go back.

Thus, under the weight of divorce, birth control, abortion, state education, and sterilization, the present economic organization (the family) is gradually being assaulted from every angle.

Family Means Motherhood

The first point we must realize is that all these various attacks are attacks on motherhood. They are also, no doubt, in part, attacks on freedom.

They are attacks on motherhood precisely because what is attacked must inevitably be the center of the family and round the mother grows up the home. The father is also the center, but differently. He is the active external worker. The mother's activities are as great but they have a smaller circumference. They are limited to nearer matters. By a mother's activities, the home is kept alive and is a true home. At no time, moreover, can she "knock off work." Her factory has no whistle to sound the hour for stopping. Her shop has no closing time. Her office hours have no end.

Yet, since she is the center of the home, her motherhood is most in jeopardy when the family is menaced. With birth control, the mother suffers not



merely in her nerves but precisely in her motherhood. Again, it is her motherhood that is most affected by divorce. Even the most advanced defenders of divorce will admit that motherhood in its richest implications must suffer from the carrying out of their agenda. Proponents of divorce regret this but consider that it cannot be helped.

"Sleeping Mother with Child," oil on canvas painted in 1883 by Christian Krohg (1852 – 1925). The original is in the public domain in those countries with a copyright term of life of the author plus 80 years or less.

The problem of children is an old one. Typical traditional Christian teaching always has allowed parents to space the arrival of their children; but it forbids this to be done by direct artificial interference with nature. It recognizes that the virtue of prudence and a variety of family necessities and difficulties may allow, under certain circumstances, a limitation to be set deliberately and legitimately to the number of children that parents may have. Yet, traditional Christian teaching also considers that the will of man (plus the grace of God) is capable of carrying this out by the sole means of self-restraint. Since human nature has existed for many thousands of years and has been hitherto able to restrain itself by means of its will, it seems pure assumption to say that this cannot be done now. If we say it cannot be done today, we must then equally admit that man is far less able to control himself than he was in the past. We must say that, instead of progressing from a lower stage to a higher stage, man has slipped back into the lower stage. We must say that the loss of religion has meant also the loss of will power and that the disbelief in God ended in disbelief in man.

We cannot, indeed, but agree that economic conditions do now make the support of a large family more difficult than ever. Our answer to this problem is to urge an increase of wages and not a diminishing of the family. If one of these two things has to happen, let wages be altered, not the family.

We suggest, moreover, that the money spent on birth control, abortion, and other unclean trades that profit from their sale should have been spent, and would have been better spent, on education and information to improve the circumstances of the people troubled in this way instead of continuing them and exploiting the needs of the poor.

The Church forbids even the man who is so poor that he can hardly house, clothe, or feed his family, to use artificial means to limit that family on the definite principle that it is immoral. The Church also denounces as immoral the artificial means that have made it almost impossible for him to house, clothe, and feed his family. It is society that is falsely constructed, not the family. Motherhood is blessed; therefore, what blocks motherhood in the current, falsely constructed society is accursed.

Motherhood and Children

In thinking of children, we think of their education, and so of their Catholic education, for Catholic education is not a right so much as a duty. It is a duty that lies on the father and mother as soon as the child is born.

The ancient Greeks insisted on the importance of surrounding babyhood with beautiful things and psychologists today entirely agree with this. Without intermission, the Church has taught the same thing; only, with the Church, it is holy things that the child should be surrounded by, namely, that particular beauty that is radiant with goodness from God. The Church has always insisted that the child should have these. Plato would also have approved, for he maintained that beautiful bodies were the lowest form of human beauties. Plato would have approved of beautiful holiness as the best surrounding for a

child, that as early and constantly as possible a child should be surrounded by whatever true idea, or true representation, of goodness the parents could collect round their child. Thus, the making of the sign of the Cross, the joining of hands together in prayer, a statue of the Child Jesus, a crucifix, statues of the Mother and Child, Saint Joseph, and the Angel Guardian, should be familiar objects to a child, so that it grows up in an atmosphere of supernatural life. All this will depend largely on the mother's sense of her duty to the child's education and development.



"Early Teaching," oil on panel painted in 1866 by George Hardy (1796 – 1909). It can be seen at Bantock House and Park Finchfield Road, Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, England. The Original is in the public domain in those countries with a copyright term of life of the author plus 100 years or less.

Naturally, the physical well-being of her children must also be a concern to a mother; and, in the earlier stages of its growth, she will have need to consult a doctor and a nurse. Let them, if possible, be Catholic doctors and nurses. There are good doctors and nurses other than Catholic ones, certainly; but, properly instructed Catholics will help a mother more faithfully than the others because she will have no misgiving or anxiety about their advice. She will be able to trust absolutely what they say.

Though the little body must be cared for, it must not be over-indulged. It must be kept clean. It is the temple of God. Again, the right sort of food, for it is a matter about which advice should be asked from experts in motherhood, mothers who know.

Also, the character of the child will need training as far as its frail condition will allow. It should not be allowed to grow up any which way. Neither should it be nagged. What is wanted is not to have to say, “you must not fight or lie or be selfish or disobedient,” but to encourage children not to want to fight or lie or be selfish or disobey. It is not actions, but the character behind actions, that must be grasped and learned. Now character can only be formed by character on character. You can only train children properly by making them wish to form themselves on the model of another character. That is why it is a mother’s business to teach her child the beauty of the character of Christ. She will teach it to her child successfully only in proportion to the way she herself perceives it. Only because the mother loves the character of Our Lord is she likely to be able to show its beauty and greatness to her child and convince her child that He was great and is great. That is only another proof of the responsibility of motherhood: she and her child united “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer” in the things of the spirit.

Lastly, there is the training and teaching of the child’s opening mind.

Education and the State

Actually, the state now imposes compulsory education. (Generally, all children must attend school from the ages of six to fourteen years, either at public schools that are conducted by the state or at private registered schools, such as those conducted by the Catholic Church.) It may be that we would prefer education to be optional as long as every parent had the opportunity to send his children to a school, but the existing conditions make education compulsory. No doubt, there is some loss in this. It is better, both for parents and children, when the mother does some of the teaching herself. She would remember her schooling better herself if she had to teach it. Moreover, it keeps mother and child closer together all their lives when the child's memories are thus rooted in the mother's home.

It is also correct to remember the authority that the teachers have over the children has been given to them by the parents. The teachers have their authority because they stand in the place of the parents not from the teachers' relationship to the State. Teachers' power is given them by the parents of the children, and these parents, even when giving them power, never abdicate their own powers. Parents must always to keep an eye on the education of their children. Normally, they can be sure the children will be properly looked after in the hands of the teachers. Yet, parents should get to know the teachers, should be interested in the school, and should try to see how they can help forward the education of their children. There should be cooperation between parents and teachers. Teachers need this cooperation. Sometimes teachers complain that parents do not help them, undo their work, and undo what the school has done for the children. Parents, too, sometimes think the school undoes what the home has done for the children. The best remedy and preventive is cooperation between parents and teachers, and this is the best thing for the child.

Still, there is a difference between the natural authority of the parents and the imposed authority of the teachers, which makes the authority of the parents the more to be safeguarded, the more to be valued, to be kept the more continuously unbroken.

Of the two types of authority, the authority of the parents should be more important. Teachers have a long apprenticeship before they are judged to know how to exercise their authority. A teacher's apprenticeship covers years not merely to learn the subjects to be taught but also to learn how to teach at all. A mother also must teach her children many things. Does she ever learn how to teach? Is not her need to know this even greater than the need of the teachers? She should learn how to teach her children and she surely will not be able to do this without learning. It is not that she is ignorant of this, because she is a mother; but mother-instinct, though good, is not enough to live by. There are successful mothers, and mothers who are not in the least successful. It is not merely enough to love a child to be able to help it; wise love is needed. Love can sometimes be foolish. Natural instinct goes a long way but not all the way.

Mothers, can learn by watching successful mothers and seeing how they train their children, and thus becoming themselves expert in the art of training. Let them remember their own homes when they were children, and ask themselves whether their mothers failed with one or other of the children, and why. Mothers do not need books to help them as much as they need to study the experiences of their life. A mother will learn more by watching, asking, and remembering than by reading or having clinical instructions though these, if carried on correctly, can be of great help. Mothers must remember that each child is a separate creature, and each should be studied individually. The children can have individual treatment due to the small circumference of the home. That is the value of home training. It can be personal. Not all the children of a family should be treated the same. We cannot just treat everyone alike, because everyone is not alike. Justice demands a rich variety of treatment and perhaps this is only fully possible in the home.

Profession of Motherhood

All this makes the profession of motherhood a very high responsibility. It is a profession more challenging than any other profession in the world. There are professions that demand of those who practice them that they should be ready to face death in the discharge of their professional duties. Thus, a

soldier and a sailor have to be ready to give their lives upon demand. A doctor, a nurse, a priest, often must risk their strength, or even their lives, if the need of human service demands them. Yet, soldier, sailor, doctor, nurse, priest, may live to a ripe old age without actually having to put their lives in jeopardy. They may never be in danger from the duties of their profession. A mother is not like that. Motherhood asks of every mother a character of heroism. Mothers are the most constantly heroic individuals of mankind.

Mothers have nearly always been found on the side of religion, for religion demands heroism of its followers. Religion is not an opiate, for religion does not help people to forget, but to remember. It does not dull people. It does not say Take, but Give. Religion asks everything of its believers, for religion is love, and love is the most demanding and the most costing, of all the passions of man. That is why Our Lord compressed the whole of religion into one commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength."

Mothers perhaps more easily understand this depth of love more than others. Mothers are heroic not only because they constantly and inherently give up their lives for their children, but also because more than any others they find their lives to be a "full-time job." Mothers are never unemployed, or should not be unemployed, for their children are not merely to be born of them but tended by them until death parts them. Children take a great deal of tending, children of all ages; and here, in the number of a mother's children, even their father is to be reckoned. To the mother, her very husband is always a child. He needs looking after as much as any of them, but he must not realize that she so judges of him. He is even more sensitive than the children are to the indignity of being publicly looked after by the mother. That only means that she must wait on him with the greater tact.

Her cares are only increased the more by this, and her employment is only the more continuous. She has to go on looking after her children as long as any of them are still at home; that is what inevitably happens, for she is the home. The family carries the nation and she carries the family. The whole of Christendom rests on the mother's knee.

A New Age

Mothers are sometimes discouraged by their experiences to believe that these old ideals of motherhood are over. Sometimes mothers are led to think that the world has changed and that children no longer obey their parents or that children will not be governed by mothers as they once were. That may be true, but if it is true, the cause for it is obvious. If a whole generation of youth no longer is governed by and no longer has respect for its parents, the only people who can have brought this about are the parents themselves. Individual cases indeed do not prove that individual parents have failed, for good parents can have ill-bred children. Alternately, careless parents may have children who worship them. Yet, it remains true that a whole generation can fail only because the generation immediately before it disregarded its duty. The excuse is sometimes made that the young folk grew up in the war without a father to look after them. That alone would not have caused the trouble. The real cause was not that the fathers were not present, but that the mothers were absent in some way. They went to work, or were touched by their excitement and neglected their duty because, in that pitiful phrase, they wanted “a good time.”

Wise Self-Sacrifice

Perhaps, after all, the cause of that selfish generation of children was not exactly because mothers were negligent of their duty in that they did not look after their children. The selfishness of children may be due to another cause that, however, will not free the parents from blame. It may be unselfishness that has been the mother's undoing. To be self-sacrificing is admirable and motherly; but it has its disadvantages. It can be unwise.

Let us put it in this way. A mother will come to the priest and complain of her child to him. “Father, I have done every- thing for him, and now he turns round and is most selfish to me.” Poor mother! All the more shall we pity her because his selfishness is in part her fault. Why did she do everything for her child? She should not have done everything. She should have let him do things for her. When children are little, the mother does everything for them

since they cannot do anything for themselves. Gradually she has to steel her heart against doing everything for them. They must be trained to do things for themselves. They must not be forever dependent on her. She has to train them to get on without her, to be independent of her, to live their own lives, to look after themselves.

Even that is not enough. They must not only be trained to do things for themselves, they must be trained to do things for her. And they will want to do many things for her; that is their nature, they will want to help. There will be some things, of course, that very soon they will not want to do for her—dull, dreary things like fetching, cleaning, or carrying. But they must be trained to do these things. The mother will often want to save time and trouble by doing them for herself. If she does, she will hurt her child's character. She must train them young to work for others, to be unselfish, and to give.

An almost inevitable effect of a large family is that the children grow up generous and tolerant. This is thumped into them by the aid of many fists. With a small family, it all must be done by the mother and father. They have to do for their children what brothers and sisters would have done for them, for, whatever happens, the work needs to be done.

Mothers, then, must not allow their self-sacrificing nature, their heroism, to prevent them from demanding sacrifices in return from their children. Their need to be trained must be remembered. They must be trained to give. Because they are children, they are impulsive and generous, but their spontaneous character can be hurt. It can also be developed. Let mothers look into it. Self-sacrifice is wise only when it encourages and demands sacrifice in return. A generous mother can reduce her children to selfishness, a mother who does everything for her child has actually taught that child to be selfish. She has no right to complain of his subsequent ingratitude. Her folly has ruined her child.

That is why it has happened that “good” mothers have ill-bred children; they were not really, “good” mothers, for goodness includes prudence and wisdom. Really, good mothers are also wise mothers.

Piety in Mothers

Piety needs to be taught to children in early childhood; but, even in early childhood, children are very different from each other in their attitude towards piety.

Some seem naturally pious, or at least naturally interested in religious things, or naturally devout and reverent; others seem wearied and troubled by piety, are restless under it, irked by it. These are merely natural traits of temperament and do not really mean very much. Those who are restless at prayer are, as often as not, restless anywhere; anything that calls for initiative, as prayer does, makes them uncomfortable. They are difficult at occupying themselves, entertaining themselves; they must be entertained by others, need to be amused, cannot amuse themselves.



"Little Girl Saying Her Prayers" by Johann Georg Meyer von Bremen (1813-1886). (This work is in the public term is the author's life plus 100 years or less.)

But it does not always follow that restless children are of this character. Sometimes the reverse takes place. Sometimes it is those who need to be entertained who relish churchgoing. Their temperament is satisfied by what they look at. So it seems to be impossible to decide why some children are

naturally pious and some are not. Certainly it is not always a continuing interest. Some begin like that and end very differently; some never seem to have a love of piety in childhood and yet have it in youth.

This early attraction or distaste for religion can be well set aside as of no absolute importance. What mothers have to do certainly is to study their children; each child is different. That is the beauty of a home, that children can be studied individually and with sympathy. In nearly every family, for instance, there is one who is different from the rest. However, the point to be realized is the delicate way in which mothers have to deal with each child in teaching it religion.

First, the mother has to insist upon religion, not as a matter of liking or not liking, but as a matter of duty; yet the duty must not be made distasteful. Religion of itself is interesting to a normal child. First a child is curious for information. It wants to know things. Hence catechism can be made most interesting to a child. But this depends on the teacher. Some questions and answers should be learnt by heart. Not all of them need be, for not all of them matter. Some certainly do. But the child should not be burdened in its learning. Here, then, is the delicacy of the business; on the one hand the child should not be plagued with religion, on the other hand the child should be taught to recognize the demands of religion as of a duty, over and above mere liking and disliking. Merely because it does not want to pray, it should not be excused from praying; merely because it does not want to obey, it should not be excused from obeying. It needs to be taught prayer in such a way that it shall find prayer interesting. The Rosary is often meaningless, and worse, to a child. A "decade" is as much as it can manage at any one time. The character of Christ, on the other hand, can always be an inspiration to a child; the stories of the Gospels, the scenes, the parables, His patience, courage, endurance, fortitude, fearlessness, His love of birds and flowers and the harvest, His choice of carpentering His love of the sea and the hills and of gardens at night for praying in, His forgiveness, all can be of interest as well as help to a child. With all these he should be familiar at his mother's knee. She can teach him to pray by showing him how to form his own prayers, how to ask and thank and praise, how to be silent and listen, how to gaze at Christ.

She will have no difficulty in explaining the Blessed Sacrament to him, or the Incarnation; she should have no difficulty in guiding him how to talk to God—which is all we mean by prayer. But talk here also includes silence and contemplation, for a child is born a contemplative usually. It wants so often to look and be still and say nothing. Let it be helped to do that.

But no one can teach except what he has learnt himself. No mother can teach prayer who does not practice it. No one can give what he has not got.

The Teaching of Purity

Purity must be taught. Purity is not the opposite of impurity. Purity is the thing in itself, impurity is its lack. Purity is the positive dedication of love to Our Lord in such a way that love is not killed, but cleansed. To love God is not to deny the need to love man, still less the need to love a man, a woman, or a child. Purity means that the love of God helps us to love other people, and not merely to love ourselves in other people.

To love passionately may be to serve self only. To love passionately is sometimes to love the passion of love, its thrill, its stir, the pleasures it gives us, and not really at all the apparent object of our love. Thus to love passionately may be to love self only, not another. Passion can go hand-in-hand with decent, pure love, as passion will be found nearly always to some degree in all love. Yet, passion can easily usurp love's place, if we love merely to have the pleasure of loving. Love is not the same as pleasure. Love is as much at home with pain.

Purity means that Our Lord's friendship is a third in all our friendships. Into our human friendships, the body enters as well as the soul. That is as it should be. We are made of body and soul. Love that involves the body will not hurt us, for Our Lord can be remembered as present in every moment of every lawful love. The Church even has a blessing for the marriage-bed, for marriage is not something to look down upon, but something we should look up to.

The Manicheans and Albigensians taught that the marriage act was unclean; and yet the Church has been condemned by many for persecuting them or for wishing to exterminate them. No doubt, to exterminate them was a drastic remedy to apply; but the occasion infuriated Mother Church. She believed in the Incarnation. She believed that matter could be hallowed, that the sacraments were holy, that marriage had been blessed with a sacrament, and that to decry the marriage-act was blasphemy against the Creator of mankind. For that reason, she was bitterly intolerant. Yet, in our time, such is the ignorance of people that they accuse the Church of teaching that the marriage act was unclean when, seven hundred years ago Mother Church condemned that opinion as worse than heresy.

What Shall Children be Taught?

To many it comes as a shock that priests should now recommend Catholic children being taught the “facts of life.” They compare the present attitude of the priests to an older point of view that advocated the opposite, which favored reticence, silence, and leaving the children in ignorance of the later implications of life. Though older people are disconcerted by a change of policy in priests, they ought certainly to recognize that it is demanded now since the world, too, is changed. In older days, it was possible, perhaps, to pursue a policy of silence, because children could probably, in many instances, grow up sheltered from any danger, and did not have much need to know about themselves. Certainly, what was once true about this is no longer possible. It is impossible at present for children or anyone to escape the flaunting evidences of sex and sex appeal. They cannot walk down the road without seeing posters or turn over advertising pages of respectable magazines, or read ordinary books, or go to the movies, or watch television without being faced with all sorts of things that are plainly an exploitation of our human interest or curiosity in what is least for our good. It may be argued, on the other hand, that a child sees no harm in these things and misses the spice of evil. Yes, at first this is true, but gradually the weight of the obsession of sex will move them to enquire eventually what it is all about, what the references mean that they do not understand but which interest grown-up people, or what it is that provokes so easily a laugh among adults.

Sex without love is the god whom the world worships, even more than it worships mammon, and it is a god whose claims are insistent and terrible, and without respite, and whose slime is over all.

If the world is like this, then children have to be educated to meet it. They are not entering the world of our heart's desire, they are entering the real world. Now, education is at least a preparation for life and must at least help prepare children for life. Since this is the life they have to encounter, it is good that they should be gradually prepared to meet and be informed about meeting the real world.

To repeat, we do not praise this present fashion of sex insistence. We believe that its arguments are false. We disbelieve the principle that the only way to make the idea of sex normal and natural is to talk about it. This generation has talked about it enough, but does not yet seem to understand that it is normal or natural. This generation is obsessed by sex, as seen in its literature, its drama, its art. This generation is definitely abnormal about it, which is not in the least normal. Any psychoanalyst would be the first to agree with this. It may be true that the studied silence of the Victorians on the matter of sex provoked a morbid curiosity that created worse trouble. Yet, there is no necessity to exchange that untruthful attitude to sex problems for an opposing attitude that is equally unwholesome and insincere.

It is insincere for the folk of our time to tell us, for instance, that there is never any harm in knowledge. It all depends upon the subject of that knowledge. There is obviously no harm in anyone knowing geography or history or mathematics or French irregular verbs; but knowledge about the human body and its purposes may very easily be harmful. It depends on how that knowledge is given and who gives it. We are obviously inflammable on the point of this particular knowledge. It can hurt our waking reveries and our dreams.

Because knowledge can be harmful, this is our very reason for saying that children should be given that knowledge gradually and individually and in doses that they can understand without hurt. They must learn this knowledge one day; the question is from whom. Shall they learn it from lips that will

Speak of it with seemly reverence or shall they learn it from those on whose lips it will be an unclean jest? Not indeed in a class, for children cannot be graded in this knowledge as they can be in other knowledge. This must be given individually by someone who knows intimately the particular child's mind, feeling his way delicately, careful not to be too revealing, too gross, yet to be clear and explicit, not to wrap up ideas in too mysterious a fashion, yet, however, not to hurt the sensitive, unwounded mind of the child.

Even so, children often know more than those who think they understand them could have guessed. There is always the likelihood that the child will be told by someone—another child, a random acquaintance, a young person, an adult. A child is secretive, especially in this matter. Even if a child is ignorant, it does not follow that there has been no hurt. Even if no one has told him, he may begin habits that only later he discovers to be evil, later when he will find it much harder to break himself of what he has begun to do than if he had known at first. Thus, apart from knowledge communicated from outside, there is always a traitor within a man's nature, since it is a fallen nature with a bias towards evil.

We urge, then, that children should be taught about life, and that they should be taught this by their parents—father or mother. These are the proper persons to tell the child, for they have the responsibility of parenthood. They also know their children best and are the best judges of just how much can be or should be told. Moreover, parents are in primary charge of the education of their children, this is part of that education, and this is a considerable part of that education. It is possible their entire life could be colored by what they learn, when they learn it, and from whom they learn it.

Parents will say they hate having to do this. We would reply that hating to do one's duty is never an excuse for not doing it. On the contrary, if they liked talking about these things, this would not mean they were any better fitted to do it or likely to do it any more reverently. Sometimes parents will reply that their way of doing this is not to talk of these things directly, but that they give their children pets to look after and thus teach them indirectly. This is a poorer way. It is poorer to begin with the lowest—animals. It is better to

begin with the highest—mankind. After all, father and mother know, or should know, the beauty of love. Why not start with their own case and what it means, how human love was divinely designed in itself and in its expression and what came of it, and how the child himself was framed out of love, and came through love and is the fruit of love's expression?

Indeed, we have a higher example, too, by which to teach children, since their baby lips have early formed the phrase, "the fruit of thy womb." In telling them the story of the Incarnation, parents can teach its beauty, its humility, its depth of meaning. Parents can also teach the way Christ came, by His virginal birth. A contrast between this and other children's coming can be taught, thus showing the blessing His coming gave to all birth and to all lawful loves.

The Success of Motherhood

Evidently, the success of a mother is proved only in her discharge of her duties as a mother. If she fails in this, she fails in everything else. She may succeed socially or publicly in other matters, but, if she fails here, she has failed where her first obligation lay and where her future happiness has most in store. Nothing can compensate her, especially in her later years, for what she has failed to do in her mothering of her children. Hence, any wise mother will sacrifice any career of her own for the sake of her children. Her children and their children afterwards will give her a nobler, richer, more human, more inspiring old age than anything else could give her. Moreover, the world has many others who will do the work she surrenders for them. Others who have not her ties will do the public work in her place. No one else can do her mothering for her. If she does not do it, it will not be done.

If, after all, her children fail her afterwards? Indeed, must they not always fail her? Must not her dreams of them be always greater than they can make come true? They cannot reach the heights she imagines them capable of reaching. Yet, because she thinks them capable of reaching impossible heights, they will be able to climb nearer to them than they would have had she not believed.

Yet, even if they fail her, she must not fail them. However they fail in life, in good life, in faith, in all, her love must never slacken, nor her sympathy be less. She must always show them sympathy. Others may be obliged to refuse contact with them, never she. She must always be their home; her heart must always be their hearth, her love must always be their welcome, her belief in them must always be their inspiration, their return to her must always be a symbol of another return. “Even if the mother forget her child, yet will not I forget.” What a reverence in His voice, for mothers. Even if the mother forget, even if

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"On the Way Home"

Painted in 1868 by Johann Georg Meyer von Bremen (1813-1886) in Berlin, Germany.
(This work is in the public domain as the author's life plus 100 years or less.)



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