

Embattled Parents

May 8, 2010

Sister's words from last week's "Eleison Comments" remain in my mind: "The world has a tight grip on our girls." Over a mere three years "the change of their mentality is noticeable. We struggle to maintain principles and morality." Now the world is hardly going to ease off its pressure on the girls, on the contrary. Then either our Catholic Faith has ceased to be "our victory over the world" (I Jn.V,4), or Sister's words may be a red light flashing to warn us all that our Faith needs to be activated, or Catholic Tradition may need to be sifted again?

For between home and school, if school is responsible for, say, two-sevenths of a child's formation, home is responsible for at least five-sevenths. That is why, as was suggested here last week, it is a grave error for parents to think that if they have entrusted their child to a good school, their duty is done. The main responsibility for children's formation has always belonged in the home. Sister would certainly not shuck off onto the home what is her own responsibility, but on the other hand her main hope, after the mercy of God, must be good homes.

Now nobody reasonable can today not have compassion on parents. For instance, father is liable to be run ragged by commuting, by unsatisfying work, by an anti-catholic workplace, while mother is liable to be exhausted by the series of children God can send if she and her husband are to obey the laws of Catholic marriage, by schooling them at home if outside schools are too corrupt, by work outside the home as well as inside if an incorrupt school outside is expensive, and by people's scorn if she stays at home. In any such worst case scenario, God expects of none of us to do the impossible. But he does expect us to carry our Cross, and to do the possible.

Fathers, are you acting as the manly – not tyrannical! – head of the family? Do you put family before money, or money before family? Are you giving your girls the example of loving and supporting their mother? Do you listen to her? Are you encouraging her to dress or behave for your own pleasure in such a way as can only give to your daughters bad example? They will do much more what she does than what she says. Do you take time with your girls? Do you give them that wise attention and care which they so much need from their father? Mothers, only one question: do you give to your girls the example of respecting and obeying their father (even if he may not always deserve it), or do you use your tongue to make him small in front of them? Do both of you give to them an example of respect for the priest?

One last question for fathers and mothers: have you ever listened to those Catholic parents of children around the time of Vatican II who were asleep at the switch of their children's formation, woke up too late and have now nothing but tears to shed for their children living, and being prepared to die, outside the Faith? Throw out that TV set! Fellow-priests and Sisters, let us not be afraid of making ourselves unpopular! And let us all beware of our Catholic Tradition becoming so cosy that for our own good the Lord God must let us do a re-run of Vatican II!

Kyrie eleison.