

## Admonitions for Parents

by *Saint John Chrysostom*

1. Having children is a matter of nature; but raising them and educating them in the virtues is a matter of mind and will.
2. By the duty of raising them I mean not only not allowing them to die of hunger, as people often limit their obligation toward their children to doing. For this, is needed neither books nor rubrics, for nature speaks of it quite loudly. I am speaking of the concern for educating children's hearts in virtues and piety—a sacred duty which cannot be transgressed without thereby becoming guilty of the children's murder, in a certain sense.
3. This obligation belongs to fathers as well as mothers. There are fathers who spare nothing in order to secure for their children teachers of pleasure and to pander to their cravings as wealthy heirs. But so that the children would be Christians, so that they would exercise themselves in piety, is of little need to them. O criminal blindness! It is this very crude inattention that is responsible for all the disorder that causes our society to groan. Let us suppose that you have acquired large property for them. However, if they do not know how to conduct themselves sensibly this property will not last long with them. It will be squandered; it will perish with its owners, and will be their most grievous inheritance.
4. Your children will always be sufficiently wealthy if they receive from you a good upbringing that is able to order their moral life and behavior. Thus, strive not to make them rich, but rather to make them pious masters of their passions, rich in virtues. Teach them not to think up illusory needs, reckoning their worth according to worldly standards. Attentively watch their deeds, their acquaintances and their attachments—and do not expect any mercy from God if you do not fulfill this duty.
5. If the Apostle commands us to take more care for others than for ourselves, and if we are guilty when we neglect their benefit, then is it not a much greater guilt when this concerns those who are so near to us? Was it not I, the Lord will say to us, Who gave place to these children in your family? Was it not I Who entrusted them to your care, making you masters, guardians and judges over them? I gave you complete authority over them; I placed all care for their upbringing in your hands. You will tell me that they did not want to bend their necks to the yoke, that they threw it off. But this should have been averted from the very beginning; you should have mastered their first impressions placed the reins on them before they had the power to break away from them. You should have bent their young souls under the yoke of duty, accustomed them to it, educated them in accordance with it, bound the wound when it first opened. You should have uprooted the tares when they first began to sprout around the young plant, and not have waited until they put down deep roots, when the passions have become uncontrollable and untamable through gradual strengthening in their formation.
6. The wise Sirach says: Hast thou children? Instruct them, and bow down their neck from their youth (Sir. 7:25). But the Lord does not only prompt us with this command through the lips of His prophet; he even takes our side, supporting the fulfillment of this commandment with the fearsome punishment that awaits those children who do not submit to the authority of their parents: Every man who shall speak evil of his father or of

his mother, let him die the death (Lev. 20:9). He punishes with death those who become guilty before you, and you look tepidly at these sins that they commit against the highest possible authority. They are rebelling against God Him self, transgressing His commandments, and you look at this without the least displeasure, without the slightest criticism of your children. What does He have to lose from their offense? Nothing. But you, why should you not fear for your own selves? For whoever abandons the Lord will never respect either his own father or himself.

7. Children who are submissive and faithful to God in their obedience to His law will have found an abundant source of happiness, even in this temporal life. A poor man with Christian morals inspires respect and love from others. Meanwhile, with an evil and depraved heart, all your riches will not save you from the displeasure and aversion of everyone around you.
8. The youth to whom you give a good upbringing will not only enjoy general respect, he will also become dearer to you yourselves! Your attachment to him will not be a mere natural attraction—it will be the fruit of his virtue. For this, during your old age, you will in turn receive from him the services of his filial love. He will be your support. For just as those who do not revere the Lord also have contempt for their own parents, those who revere God, the Father of all men, will have every respect for those who gave them life.
9. Let us suppose that you fulfill the commandment of the law in every other respect, but being unfaithful in this one commandment you will be severely punished. Listen to this proof taken from the history of one ancient people. You will immediately see to what terrible punishment those fathers subject themselves who neglect their children's upbringing. Among the Jews was one priest who was respected for his meek character. His name was Eli. This priest had two sons who had given themselves over to every vice. The father did not concern himself with this and paid little attention, or if their depravity, having reached the limit, forced him to reproach them, he did it without the necessary fervor and authority. He should have punished them severely, thrown them out of his presence taken strict measures in order to put a stop to the outrage. He did nothing of the sort. He limited himself to giving them a form of admonition: Nay, my Sons, for the report which I hear is not good; do not so (I Kings 2:24). Is this what he should have said? They offended the One to Whom they owe their existence, and he still accepts them as part of his family? His admonition was useless and vain. No, this demanded not an admonition, but a strong lesson, severe torments, a treatment as strong as the evil. He should have used fear to root their young hearts out of this blindness. An admonition! Elis sons had no lack of these. O useless words! O criminal meekness by which they became victims! A war began, and the wretches became the spoils of their enemy. When their father learned of their misfortune, he fell to the ground and, smashing his head, died.
10. I have just told you that fathers who do not take care to give their children a Christian upbringing are murderers of their own children. Is it not true? Who should Eli blame for his son's death? Himself. True, the enemys sword slew them, but the neglect of their false father directed the blow. Abandoned by heavenly help, they appeared naked against the arrows of the Philistines. The father destroyed himself and them. Meanwhile, we see the same thing before ourselves daily. How many parents there are who do not want to take upon themselves this labor of correcting their unsubmitive and unruly children! They are as if afraid to upset their children by reigning in with stern words the vicious tendencies to which they have submitted themselves. What is the outcome? Their

disorder increases; their impunity leads them to criminal offenses; they are brought to trial; and the wretches die at the hands of the executioner. You refused your personal rights over them and committed them to the severity of civil punishment, and human justice wielded its harsh rights over them. You are afraid to humiliate them with some light punishment in your presence; but what horrible dishonor shall befall you when your son is no longer around, and the father, hounded everywhere by accusing glares, no longer dares to show himself anywhere.

11. Therefore I beg you to take care for the good upbringing of your children. First of all think of the salvation of their souls. God has placed you as the heads and teachers over your families. It is your duty to watch, and to watch continually after the behavior of your wife and children. Listen to St. Paul. If your wives, says he, want to learn anything, let them learn it from their husbands. Educate your children in the teaching and instructions of the Lord (cf. I Cor. 14:35, Eph. 6:4). Imitate Job, who continually looked after his children and offered sacrifices for mercy towards any secret misdeeds they might have committed (Job 1:5). Imitate Abraham, who concerned himself less with the acquisition of riches than with the keeping of God's law by every member of his house, and about whom the Lord witnessed: For I know that he will order his sons, and his house after him, and they will keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment (Gen. 18:19). David, when he was near death, wanted to leave Solomon the surest inheritance; he called him to himself in order to repeat the following wise instructions: that the Lord may confirm his word which he spoke, saying, if thy children shall take heed to their way to walk before me in truth with all their heart, I promise thee, saying, there shall not fail thee a man on the throne of Israel (III Kings 2:4). These are the examples that we should follow during our lives and with our final breath!
12. If good fathers would strive to give their children a good upbringing, then we would need neither laws, judges, courts, nor punishments. Executioners exist because we have no morality.
13. We spare neither labors nor means in order to teach our children secular sciences, so that they can serve well the earthly authorities. Only the knowledge of the holy Faith, the service of the Heavenly King are a matter of indifference to us. We allow them to attend spectacles but we care little whether they go to Church and stand within it reverently. We demand an account from them of what they learned in their secular institutes—why do we not demand an account from them of what they heard in the Lord's house?
14. Having made the necessary exhortation to children, the Apostle addresses himself also to the fathers, saying: You fathers... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). Do you want your child to be obedient? Then from the beginning bring him up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Do not think that it is not necessary for a child to listen to the Scriptures; the first thing he will hear from them will be, Honor thy father and mother (Ex. 20:12), and immediately you will begin to reap your reward. Do not say, Bible is for monks; am I turning my child into a monk? No! It is not necessary for him to be a monk. Make him into a Christian! Why are you afraid of something so good? It is necessary for everyone to know Scriptural teachings, and this is especially true for children. Not knowing divine truths, they do know something of the pagan stories, learning from them about wondrous lives, about heroes in their sight, who served the passions and were afraid of death. Such an example is Achilles, inconsolably dying for

his mistress; another who gives himself over to drunkenness, and on and on! Therefore your children need remedies for these things, in the retribution and teachings of the Lord.

15. We are so concerned with our children's schooling; if only we were equally zealous in bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord! And then we wonder why we reap such bitter fruit when we have raised our children to be insolent, licentious, impious, and vulgar. May this never hap pen; instead, let us heed the blessed Paul's admonition to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Let us give them a pattern to imitate; from their earliest years let us teach them to study the Bible. He repeats this over and over again, you say, we are sick of listening to it. Never will I stop doing my duty!
16. Why do you refuse to imitate the holy men and women of old? Tell me! Especially you mothers; think of Hannah's example; look at what she did. She brought Samuel, her only son, to the temple, when he was only an infant! Who among you would not rather have a son like Samuel than one who became king of the whole world ten thousand times over? But it is impossible, you say, for my son ever to become as great as he. Why is it impossible? Because you do not really want it; you will not entrust him to the One who is able to make him great. And who is that? God. Hannah commended Samuel into the hands of God. The high priest Eli had no real ability to form him, since he even failed to form his own children. It was the mothers faith and zeal that made everything possible. He was her first and only child. She did not know if she would ever have another, yet she never said, I will wait until he grows up; he should have a taste of worldly pleasures, during his childhood at least. No; she rejected all these thoughts, for she had only one object: how from the very beginning she could dedicate her hearts delight to God. Be ashamed, you men, at the wisdom of this woman. She gave Samuel to God, and with God she left him, and thus her marriage was blessed more than ever, because her first concern was for spiritual things. She dedicated the first-fruits of her womb to God and obtained many more children in return. She saw Samuel honored even in this life. If men return honor for honor, will not God do much more? He gives so much even to those who do not honor Him at all! How long are we to be mere lumps of flesh? How long will we cling to the ground? Let everything take second place to our care for our children, our bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love true wisdom, they will have greater wealth and glory than riches can provide. If a child learns a trade, or is highly educated for a lucrative profession all this is nothing compared to the art of detachment from riches; if you want to make your child rich, teach him this. He is truly rich who does not desire great possessions or surround himself with wealth, but who requires nothing.
17. This is how to discipline and teach your child; this is the greatest of riches. Do not worry about giving him an influential reputation for worldly wisdom, but ponder deeply how you can teach him to think lightly of this life's passing glories; thus he will become truly renowned and glorious. Whether you are poor or rich, you can do this; these lessons are not learned from a skillful professor but from divine revelation. Do not ask how he can enjoy a long life here, but how he can enjoy an infinite and eternal life in the age to come. Give him the great things, not the little things. Do not strive to make him a clever orator, but teach him to love true wisdom. He will not suffer if he lacks clever words; but if he lacks wisdom, all the rhetoric in the world cannot help him. A pattern of life is what is needed, not empty speeches; character, not cleverness; deeds, not words. These things will secure the Kingdom and bestow Gods blessing. Do not sharpen his tongue but purify

his soul. I do not mean that worldly learning is worthless and to be ignored, but it should not be an exclusive preoccupation.

18. Do not think that only monks need to learn the Bible; children about to go out into the world stand in greater need of Scriptural knowledge. A man who never travels by sea does not need to know how to equip a ship, or where to find a pilot or a crew, but a sailor has to know all these things. The same applies to the monk and the man of this world. The monk lives an untroubled life in a calm harbor, removed from every storm, while the worldly man is always sailing the ocean, battling innumerable tempests. Although he himself (the worldly man) may not have any need (of instruction), it may be necessary to him in case he must stop the mouths of others.
19. Whoever enjoys great respect in the present life needs such an education even more. If anyone should serve in the king's palace—there, are many Hellenic philosophers, people who are haughty over their temporary glory. There, everyone is puffed up and arrogant; and if anyone is not, he strives to become so. How would it be if your son should enter this company as the best possible doctor with his medical instruments, able to tame the arrogance of each one, approaching each one and discoursing, treating the sick body, applying the plaster of Scripture, disseminating wisdom-loving evidence?
20. With whom shall a monk speak? With the walls of his cell, or his blanket? With the desert or the bushes? With the hills or the trees?! Thus he does not need the same teaching, in spite of the fact that he is striving to perfect himself in it—not in order to teach others, but to teach himself. What about those people who live in this (worldly) life? They are in total need of this teaching; for the worldly man is presented with more causes of temptation than the monk. And if you please, know, that with such an education a man will be the most pleasant of men. All will begin to respect him when they see that he is not irascible and seeking after power. Know this, educate your children in the discipline and knowledge of the Lord. And if some one be poor? Let him remain poor. It will never be the worse for him if he does not serve among the courtiers; to the contrary he could become the object of wonder. For if the Hellenists—who are a dime a dozen, cynics—who are accepted by those who cost a dime a dozen, philosophers (meaning Greek philosophers) or rather, philosophers only in name, dressed up in mantles with flowing hair, are able to put many to shame; cannot the true lover of wisdom do much more? If a false appearance alone, the mere shadow of philosophy can so exalt a man, what can be said of the love for true and enlightened wisdom? Will not everyone begin to respect such a man? Will they not entrust to him without reservation their houses, wives and children?
21. Tell me, which trees are best? Do we not prefer those that are inwardly strong and are not injured by rainstorms, or hail, or gusts of wind, or by any sort of harsh weather, but stand exposed to them all without fences or garden to protect them? He who truly loves wisdom is like this, and his riches we have already described. He has nothing yet has everything; he has everything, yet has nothing. A fence does not provide internal strength, nor is a wall a natural support; they provide only artificial protection. What is a strong body? Is it not one that is healthy, whether hungry or surfeited, cold or warm? Or is it something that is dependent upon restaurants, tailors, merchants, and physicians for health? The truly rich man, the true lover of wisdom, needs none of these things, and that is why the blessed Apostle admonishes us to bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

22. Therefore wealth is a hindrance, because it leaves us unprepared for the hardships of life. So, let us raise our children in such a way that they can face any trouble, and not be surprised when difficulties come; let us bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Great will be the reward in store for us, for if artists who make statues and paint portraits of kings are held in high esteem, will not God bless ten thousand times more those who reveal and beautify His royal image (for man is the image of God)? When we teach our children to be good, to be gentle, to be forgiving (all these are attributes of God), to be generous, to love their fellow men, to regard this present age as nothing, we instill virtue in their souls, and reveal the image of God within them. This, then, is our task: to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness; otherwise what answer will we have before Christ's judgment-seat? If a man with unruly children is unworthy to be a bishop, how can he be worthy of the kingdom of heaven? What do you think? If we have an undisciplined wife, or unruly children, shall we not have to render an account for them? Yes, if this happens it is because we did not take strict measures as we should have.
23. Neglect of children is one of the greatest sins, and it is the highest degree of impiety. And so that I might not seem to draw an unfounded conclusion, I will demonstrate this with experience itself, so that you will know that even though we may have everything we need, and all is beautifully arranged, we will nevertheless be subjected to the most extreme punishment if we do not take care for the salvation of our children. You know the story of the high priest Eli, written in the Holy Scriptures. He was an aged, well-known priest, who governed the Jewish nation faultlessly for twenty years, living during a time that did not demand great strictness (in life). Nevertheless he could not justify himself, but to the contrary, perished horribly and disastrously because he did not concern himself enough with his son's behavior; and the guilt of his neglect, like a great fault, overshadowed all of Eli's qualities and good works. How then shall we be judged, who live in a time full of much more love of wisdom, but who do not have his virtues? We not only do not instruct our children ourselves, but even take revenge upon those who wish to do so, and treat our own children more cruelly than any barbarians. For the cruelty of the barbarians leads only to slavery, to the razing and captivity of one's homeland—in general it is only a physical misfortune. But you enslave the very soul and, binding it like some kind of captive, thus commit it to the evil and fierce demons and their passions. You do this and nothing else when you yourselves do not prompt your children in anything spiritual, nor let anyone else do so.
24. Let no one say to me that there are many besides Eli who neglect their children but have not endured anything like what Eli endured. No—many have, and many endure even a good deal more for that very sin. For what is the cause of untimely death? What is the cause of our serious and long illness and of our children's? What is the cause of losses, misfortunes, distress, the innumerable multitude of evils? Is it not because we do not try to correct our vicious children? The misfortune of the elder (Eli) is enough to prove that this is not mere conjecture. But let me tell you yet another word of our wise fathers. Thinking of his children, he says this: Delight neither in ungodly sons. Though they multiply rejoice not in them, except the fear of the Lord be with them. Trust not thou in their life (Sir. 16:1-3). For you will moan with untimely grief and will unexpectedly hear of their destruction. Thus, many, as I have said, endured much the same; if some have escaped (punishment), they will not escape it forever. If they have escaped it here, then

the destruction will be on their heads, for they will endure very cruel punishments when they leave this world.

25. We must not act irrationally because God no longer sends prophets and does not wreak such punishments as that of Eli. Now is not the time for prophets; besides, He does send them even now. How do we know? They have (it is said) Moses and the prophets (Lk. 16:29). It was said to them (who lived at the time of Moses and the prophets) and it is said to us; and God says it not only to Eli, but through him and his suffering to all who sin as he did. God is no respecter of persons, and if He destroyed those of a less sinful household, then He will not leave unpunished those who have committed more serious sins.
26. God Himself takes great care over the upbringing of children. That is why He placed such a natural attraction in parents toward their children—in order to put parents in inescapable necessity of caring for their children. Subsequently, He created laws concerning their care, and, establishing the feasts, commanded us to explain their meaning. He summed up the meaning of the Passover in this instruction: And thou shalt tell thy son in that day, saying, Therefore the Lord dealt thus with me, as I was going out of Egypt (Ex. 13:8). He does the same in the Law. For, telling of the first-born, He adds again: And if thy son should ask thee hereafter, saying, What is this? then thou shalt say to him, With a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, both the first-born of man and the first-born of beast; therefore do I sacrifice every offspring that opens the womb. The males to the Lord, and every first—born of my sons I will redeem (Ex. 13:14-15). Through all of this He commands him to lead the children to the knowledge of God. Even to the children themselves He commands much with respect to the parents, rewarding the obedient and punishing the disobedient, thereby making them even more dear to their parents. Actually, when someone makes us lords over someone else, by this honor he places upon us the greatest obligation to care for him, so that this alone without anything else is able to convince us that the entire fate of this person is in our hands, and we will not lightly dare to injure the one who has been thus entrusted to us. When he also becomes even more wrathful and displeased with us for breaking this trust than the offended ones themselves, and becomes a stern punisher, he thereby inspires us even more to fulfill our obligation. This is what God has done. To these two He has added a third, natural obligation, and if you like, it is the first. Namely, it is that parents, having received the commandment to educate their children, would not disdain His commandment by which God has bound them by natural obligation. If this tie should be held in contempt by the children, He has protected it from being broken entirely by His own punishments and by the parents. Thus He has subjected children to their parents and inspired love in the parents for their children. But there is also a fourth method by which God has strongly and closely bound us with them. He not only punishes those children who work evil against their parents but He also rewards the good ones. He does the same with parents, cruelly punishing those who neglect their children, while granting honor and praise to those who care. Thus did He punish the elder (Eli), who was worthy of praise in every other respect, but rewarded the patriarch Abraham for his care no less than for other virtues. For, speaking of those many and great gifts that He promised to Abraham, God names precisely this virtue as His reason for such a promise: For I know that he will order his sons, and his house after him, and they will keep the ways of the Lord, to do justice and judgment (Gen. 18:19).

27. I have said this so that you would know that God will not be condescending to those who are neglectful of those for whom He Himself takes such care. For it is impossible that one and the same God should do so much to save these (children), yet pay no attention when their own parents disdain them. He will not ignore this, but to the contrary, He will all the more fearfully display His displeasure and wrath, as it actually happens. Therefore the blessed Paul insistently convinces us, saying: Ye fathers... bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). If we [4] are obligated to tirelessly care for their souls, as they that must give account (Heb. 13:17), so much more is the father (obligated to do it), who gave birth to the son, brought him up and lives constantly with him. For just as he can find no excuse for his own sins, he cannot find one for his children's misdeeds. The blessed Paul showed this same thing. Describing how those who have accepted authority over others should be, he requires care for their own children over all other requirements, so that we have no excuse for our children's unruliness (I Tim. 3,4, 5). And this is perfectly just! If evil in people is from nature, then everyone would have a right to excuse himself; but as we ourselves are impious or honorable according to our own will, then what good excuse could one present who has allowed his son, whom he loves more than anything, to come to impiety and dishonor? That he did not want to make him honorable? But not one father will say that nature itself insistently and incessantly inspires him toward this. Or that he was not able to do it? But this also cannot be said; for everything—that he took his son under his protection at a tender age, and that he alone primarily has been given authority over him, and that he constantly had him around—all of this makes the education of his son very easy and convenient. It means that the children's unruliness comes from nothing other than the insane attachment of the fathers to earthly cares. Paying attention only to earthly cares, and counting nothing to be more important, they involuntarily begin to neglect the souls of their children. I will say of these fathers (and let no one consider these words to be born of anger), that they are even worse than child-killers. The one only sunders the body from the soul, but the other casts them both into the fires of gehenna. Death is inevitable according to the natural order, but the second fate could have been avoided if the fathers neglect had not led up to it. Physical death can be ended instantly by the resurrection when it comes, but no reward awaits the lost soul; it will receive not resurrection, but will have to suffer eternally. This means that we not unjustly call those fathers worse than child-killers. It is not so cruel to sharpen the sword, take it in the right hand and plunge it into the little child's heart, as it is to destroy and degrade the soul, for there is nothing equal to the soul.

28. If the evil were only limited to the parents not giving their children any beneficial counsel, then the evil would not be so great. But you, parents, induce your children to do the opposite. Actually, when fathers convince their children to study sciences, you can hear in the course of their conversation none other than the following words: So-and-so, they say, is a low-born man of meager means, who perfected himself in eloquent speech and received a very high position, acquired a large property, took a rich wife, built a marvelous house, and has become fearsome and famous to all. Another says: So-and-so learned Latin, shines in the royal court and wields great influence there. Yet another points to someone else, and they all speak only of those who are glorified on earth. But of those who are glorified in heaven no one recounts; and even if one should recount them, he would be watched as a man who disturbs everything. Thus, when you instill this in your children from an early age, you teach them nothing other than the basis for all the vices, planting in them the two most savage passions—that is, love of money, and the even more blameworthy passion of vainglory. Each of these passions by itself can disorder everything in the child; but when they are both rooted together in the tender soul



of a youth, then like two united stormy fronts, they destroy everything good and produce so many thorns, sand and dust that they make the soul fruitless and incapable of anything good. How do you think your son can escape the devils snares when he is young—living in Egypt, or among the devils army, not hearing a beneficial word from anyone, and seeing that everyone, especially his parents and educators, are leading him to the opposite? How could he do it? With the help of your admonitions? But you suggest the opposite to him and, not allowing him to think about love of wisdom even in his sleep, to the contrary constantly occupy him with the present life and its gain, and only assist him in his drowning. Or does it happen by itself? Absolutely not; a youth does not have the strength by himself to perfect himself in the virtues, and if something good is born in him, then this good is more likely to perish than grow under the torrent of your words. For just as the body cannot live long if it feeds on harmful food, so also the soul, when it receives such suggestions, cannot think about something good and great; no, being disturbed and weakened as if by some infection, it will finally inevitably go down to gehenna and perish.

29. For you, as though you were intentionally destroying your children, order them to do exactly those things which make it impossible to be saved. Look first of all (at what is written). Woe, it is said, unto you that laugh (Lk. 6:25), but you give your children a multitude of causes for laughter. Woe unto you that are rich (Lk. 6:24), but it is your chief concern that they get rich. Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you (Lk. 6:26), but you often spend all your living for the sake of human glory. Again, he who maligns his brother is in danger of hellfire (Mt. 5:22), but you consider anyone who silently bears offensive words from others to be weak and cowardly. Christ commands us to avoid fights and arguments, but you are constantly occupying your children with these evil affairs. He commanded in many circumstances to pluck out your eye if it leads to evil (cf. Mt. 5:29), but you especially befriend those who can give you money, even though they may be teaching extreme depravity. He commanded not to put away ones wife unless it be for adultery (cf. Mt. 5:32), but when you see that money can be had, you order that this commandment be disdained. He absolutely forbade oaths (cf. Mt. 5:34), but you even laugh when you see that this ban is observed. He that loveth his life, the Lord said, shall lose it, Jn. 12:25), but you do all you can to draw children into this love. If ye forgive not men their trespasses He says, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses (Mt. 6:15), but you even criticize your children when they do not want to take revenge upon their offenders, and try to bring them to a state where they will want to do this. Christ said that if you do anything out of vainglory—fasting, praying, or almsgiving—it is all done to no effect (cf. Mt. 6:1), but you only try to arrange that your children receive praise. But why enumerate everything? If these vices already named are able not just collectively but even separately to prepare a thousand gehennas, and you, having gathered them together and laid this unbearably heavy bundle of sins on your children, send them with it to the lake of fire; how can they save themselves, carrying so much food for the fire?
30. It is bad enough that you prompt your children to do what is contrary to Christ's commandments, but you also mask them in beneficent-sounding names. You call the constant attendance of horse races and theaters social life, the possession of wealth freedom, audacity openness, dissipation humanitarianism, unfairness manliness. Then, as if this deceit were not enough, you call virtues by unattractive names: modesty is lack of education, meekness is cowardice, fairness is weakness, humility is slavishness, angerlessness is powerlessness. It is as if you are afraid that your child might hear the

true name of these virtues and vices and therefore avoid the vices like the plague. For calling the vices by their real names does not a little to inspire aversion for them. I know many people who came to their senses this way, and, hearing these offensive names, became more modest in life. But you have deprived your children of this means of correction. And what is worse, you prompt them to do evil not only by your words but by your deeds—you build magnificent homes, buy expensive land, surround them with all manner of glitter, and by all of this, as with some sort of horrid cloud, darken their souls. How can I be convinced that they can possibly be saved when I see that you incline them toward the very things that Christ singled out as leading to inevitable destruction; when I see that you disdain their souls as something unnecessary, but concern your self with what is truly extravagant as though it were something necessary and important? You do everything in order to provide your son with a servant, horse and the best clothing; but you do not even want to think about making him good himself. No, having stretched yourself in cares over rocks and trees, there is not the slightest portion of your care left for souls. You do everything to make sure that there is a lovely statue and golden roof on your house, but that the most precious of all sculptures—the soul—might be golden, you take no thought at all.

31. Furthermore, wishing to acquaint our children with sciences we not only remove any conflicting teachings, but give them everything that will support it: we thrust mentors and teachers upon them, give them financial support, free them from all other occupations; and even more than trainers at Olympic games, we scream at them about poverty that results from not studying and wealth from studying. We ourselves and through others do and say everything just to lead them to finishing their studies; and at that, we do not always succeed. But do modest manners and diligence over honorable behavior, in our opinion, come by themselves, regardless of all the many obstacles? What can be worse than this insanity—spending so much time and energy on what is easy as though it were impossible to succeed in it otherwise, while what is infinitely more difficult seems to us as something empty and insignificant that will come to us even as we sleep? For exercise of the soul in the pious life is so many times more difficult than the study of sciences, so much harder to fulfill than it is possible to say; it is the difference between action and words.
32. But why, you say, do our children need such wisdom and strict behavior? This is the very thing that is so all-destructive—that such an important matter, the support of our life, is considered extravagant and unnecessary. Having seen your son sick in body, no one would ask why he needs perfect and strong health. To the contrary you would take every measure to return his body to a good condition, so that the illness would not return. But when children have sick souls, they say that they need no treatment; and after such words they dare to call themselves fathers! What? you say, Shall we only seek after wisdom and let everything earthly fall apart? No, most respected ones, it is not love of wisdom but the lack of it that has destroyed and disrupted everything. For who, tell me, disrupts the present condition of things—those who live continently and modestly, or those who invent new and unlawful means of delighting themselves? Those who only try to grab other peoples things for themselves, or those who are content with what they have? Those who love mankind, who are meek and do not seek honor, or those who demand honor from their brothers above all obligation, and cause a thousand annoyances for those who do not rise when they enter, do not say the first greeting, do not bow before them, or do not agree with them? Those who love to submit, or those who seek power and positions of authority, and for this are ready to do and endure anything?

Those who consider themselves better than everyone, and therefore think that they may say and do anything or those who consider themselves to be last, and thereby tame their unreasonable self-willed passions? Those who support harlots and defile the marriage beds of others, or those who are continent even with their own wives? Are not the first in human society those who are like tumors on the body and lashing winds over the sea, who with their lack of restraint drown even those who if left alone might have saved themselves? And are not the last those who are like bright lamps amidst thick darkness, calling the shipwrecked to their safety, and, having lit on high in the distance the lamp of wisdom, thus lead those who desire it into the peaceful harbor? Is it not those others who cause disturbances, wars and fights, and destruction of the cities, and captivity, and slavery, and loss of freedom, and murder, and innumerable catastrophes in life—catastrophes not only wrought on people by people, but also everything sent from heaven, for example: droughts, floods, earthquakes, inundation of cities, famines, pestilences, and everything that is sent to us from there? They debase the social order and destroy the general good; they bring countless misfortunes on others, obfuscate people who seek peace, draw them in and then tear them apart from all directions. Courts and laws, sentences and all manner of punishment were created for these people.

33. If we wanted to educate our children from the earliest age and give them to those who wished to educate them, our children would of course be able to stand in the very forefront of battle; because God would not disdain such fervency and zeal, but would stretch out His hand to complete the sculpture. When His hand acts, it is impossible not to succeed, or rather, it is impossible not to reach the highest degree of brilliance and glory, if only we fulfilled what depends upon us. If women have been able to incline God's help in the upbringing of children, how much more so could we do the same if we so wanted. In order not to over-stretch this homily, I shall pass over in silence all other women and cite only one, though I could have cited many.
34. There was a Jewess named Hannah. This Hannah gave birth to a son and no longer hoped to have another, because she was barely able to conceive this one after many tears due to her barrenness. Although her rival often chided her over her barrenness, she did not do as you do, but having received the child she kept him only as long as she needed to feed him milk. As soon as he no longer needed this food, she took him and immediately dedicated him to God, not asking that he ever return to his family's house, but leaving him to live always in the temple of God. And when out of maternal feeling she wished to see him she did not call the child to herself but came herself with the father to him, treating him carefully, like a sacrifice to God. This is why the boy became so valorous and great that when God turned His face from the Jewish people for its extreme impiety and pronounced no prophecies and sent no visions, this boy again attracted God with his virtue and begged Him to grant the Jews what they formerly had—to renew the prophecy that had ceased. He did this when he was not yet a grown man, but a little child. And the word of the Lord, says the Scripture, was precious in those days, there was no distinct vision (I Kings 3:1); meanwhile, God often revealed His will to Samuel.
35. That is how beneficial it is to always give your acquisitions to God, and to refuse not only money and things, but even your own children. For if this has been commanded of us with respect to our souls (cf. Mt. 10:37), how much the more to everything else? The Patriarch Abraham also did this, or rather, he did much more than this, and that is why he

received a son with great glory. We especially have our children with us when we have given them to the Lord. For He will preserve them much better than we can because He cares more for them. Have you not seen how it happens in the homes of rich people? There the low-born servants who live with their fathers are not so respected or powerful as those whom the master has taken from the parents, appointed to his service and made guardians of treasures, giving them great good will and freedom. If men are so kind and well-disposed toward their servants, much more so will be the Unlimited Goodness, that is, God.

36. Let us allow our children to serve God, leading them not only to the temple, like Samuel, but to the very heavens to serve together with the Angels and Archangels. For anyone can see that one who dedicates himself to love of wisdom really will be serving with the Angels. Furthermore, such children will be representing with great boldness not only themselves, but us also. For if some children have received help from God for their fathers sake, so much more can fathers receive help for their children's sake; because in the first case the right to help comes only from nature, but in the second case it comes also from upbringing, which is much more important than nature.
37. I will prove both to you from Divine Scripture. Hezekiah, a virtuous and pious king but having no boldness according to his own deeds to withstand the great danger which threatened him, was saved by God for the sake of his father's virtue, as God Himself said: And I will defend this city as with a shield, for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake (IV Kings 19:34). Paul in his epistle to Timothy said about parents: she (the woman) shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (I Tim. 2:15). The Scripture praises Job because he was true, blameless, righteous and godly, abstaining from everything evil (Job 1:1), as well as for his care for his children (Job 1:5). This care consisted not in the collection of wealth for them, and not in attempts to make them glorious and famous, but in what? Listen to what the Scripture says: And when the days of the banquet were completed, Job sent and purified them, having risen up in the morning, and offered sacrifices for them, according to their number, and one calf for a sin-offering for their souls: for Job said, lest peradventure my sons have thought evil in their minds against God. Thus then Job did continually (Job 1:5). What justification will we have if we behave with such neglect? For if those who lived before the time of grace and the law, who never received any teachings on the upbringing of children, had such great care for their children as to tremble even over their secret sins—who will justify us, who live during the time of grace, have so many teachers, so many examples and instructions, but meanwhile not only do not fear for their secret sins, but even ignore the obvious sins; and not only do we ourselves ignore them, but even cast out those who do not? And Abraham, as I said before, stood out for this virtue more than for his many other virtues.
38. Thus, having so many examples, let us prepare pious servants and slaves for God. If those who prepare competitive fighters for cities, or warriors for the king, are vouchsafed great honor, then what gift shall we receive if we prepare for God such valorous and great men, or rather, angels? We will do everything we can in order to leave them the riches of piety which abide permanently accompany us even after death and can bring great benefit not only here, but there (in the other world). Worldly riches do not accompany people into eternity, and they can even perish here before their owners, often even destroying them. But the riches of piety are permanent in this and the next life, and preserve those who acquire them in great safety. This is really so: whoever prefers the

earthly over the spiritual will lose both, but whoever longs for the spiritual and heavenly will probably also receive the earthly. These are not my words, but those of the Lord Himself, Who promises to give us this good: seek, He says, first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you (Mt. 6:33). What can compare with this honor? Concern yourself, He says, with the spiritual, and leave everything else to Me. A loving father takes all cares of the household upon himself, the governing of servants and everything else, but advises the son to concern himself with love of wisdom. So does God. Let us be obedient and begin to seek the kingdom of God; then we shall see everywhere reverent children, and we ourselves shall be glorified with them, and delight also in present good things. Only you must love the future, heavenly things. If you are obedient, you shall receive a great reward; but if you are contrary and disobedient you will endure terrible punishments. For we cannot justify ourselves by saying: No one taught us this.

39. Untamed youth has need of many instructors and teachers, guides, observers and educators. Only with this effort can it be reined in. An unbroken horse, an untamed beast—that is youth. Therefore, if we place limits from an early age we will not need to use such great force; to the contrary, habit will become law. We will not allow them to do what is pleasant but harmful; we will not try to please them because they are children, for this brings more harm than anything to youth. But most of all we will preserve chastity. We should concern ourselves with this more than anything else, and pay the most attention to this. We will take wives for them early, so that they would unite themselves to their brides with pure and incorrupt bodies. This kind of love is especially ardent. Whoever was chaste before marriage is more likely to remain so after marriage. But those who learned before marriage to fornicate will do the same after marriage. For it is written in the Scriptures: All bread is sweet to a whoremonger (Sir. 23:17). That is why a crown is placed on the head—as a sign of victory, that they are entering the bridal chamber unvanquished, unconquered by lust. If someone prone to love of pleasure has given himself to harlots, then what reason does he have for wearing a crown on his head, since he has been vanquished? We will instill this in them, teach it to them and threaten them in various ways.
40. We have been given an important security—children. Therefore we shall take care of them, and take every precaution that the evil one may not steal them from us. Meanwhile, we do everything backward. We make every effort to insure that our fields be in good hands. We seek out the most experienced mule drivers and overseers, but we take no such precautions for what is the most precious to us and through which all other good things come, namely, that we might entrust our son to a man that would preserve his chastity. We take care to provide him with property, but take no care for him himself. Do you see what insanity has taken control of us! First of all educate your son's soul, and he will acquire possessions later. If his soul is bad he will not receive the slightest benefit from money. And vice versa, if he has been given the proper upbringing, then poverty will not harm him in the least. Do you want to leave him wealthy? Teach him to be good. For children who have not received the proper upbringing poverty is better than wealth; it will keep them even against their will within the bounds of virtue. However, wealth, even for one who does not wish it, does not allow one to live a chaste life, but lures him into a countless multitude of crimes.
41. You, mothers, look after your daughters. This should not be difficult for you. Watch that they sit at home. First of all teach them to be pious, modest, disdaining money, and not

worrying too much about fancy dress. Give them thus to marriage. If you raise your daughter this way, you will save not only her, but the husband who takes her; and not only her husband, but the children; and not only the children, but the grandchildren. If the root is good the branches will spread out more beautifully, and you will receive your reward for this. Therefore let us do everything as though we are caring for the good not of one soul alone, but of many through the one. For at the time of marriage, they (daughters) should go forth from their father's houses as fighters from the place of competition; that is, they should know precisely the entire science, by which they might, like a leaven, raise all the ingredients to the increase of them.

42. Again, sons should also be so modest that they might be recognized by their good morals and chastity, and might earn great praise from men and from God. Let them learn to refrain themselves from extravagant possessions, to be thrifty and tenderly loving; let them learn to submit to authority. For they can in this way obtain a great reward for their parents. Then everything will be directed towards the glory of God and our salvation in Christ Jesus our Lord, to Whom with the Father and Holy Spirit be glory, dominion and honor now and ever and to the ages of ages. Amen.