

POINTS OF VIEW

TO THE EDITOR, THE LIFE

DEAR SIR:

It was a great shock to go from a Dedication Mass to THE LIFE OF THE SPIRIT (March) and the reading of the article on children and the Mass. '*Terribilis est*' the opening words of that most beautiful Dedication Mass, were on my lips again as I finished that article.

'Begin training him today', said a matter-of-fact nurse to a young mother on the birthday of her first-born. 'You can't begin too soon.'

'Our natural inclinations are prone to evil from our very childhood and if not corrected by self-denial will certainly carry us to hell', says an answer in that most valuable part of the catechism which is relegated to the background and little studied.

Before children are capable of knowing what self-denial means, the parents should be training them to it. Even the most 'progressive' of parents—chock-full of the tendencies of the modern 'psyche' schools—use repression. Self-development, etc., will hardly let the infant, the toddler, eat and drink as it wills. Yet those same parents will let other natural inclinations go unpruned, uncorrected.

Some unhappy little people go to nursery schools, some even to 'pre-nursery' schools. There at once training and obedience has to begin, and *stillness* at certain stated times is secured. And the self-control of stillness—silence—is one of the most valuable habits that parents can train in their children. How much of the mental unbalance, the nervous instability, the flooding of mental hospitals, is due just to that want of self-control. And Catholic parents have another motive for such training, and one that lays a firm foundation for soul training later on. 'In prayer and in church', says Alban Butler, there should be 'silence of voice, silence of mind, silence of body.' Wise parents will train their little ones to obedient stillness for very short periods to begin with. Then they can take their toddlers and babies to church with them to God's House and not have them 'staggering'—

'climbing' as if it were in the play-room. The parents' own stillness, 'their silence of body', will convey to the little ones that sense of 'otherliness' about this House—God's House.

And if children are ever to be trained to self-denial of the greediness natural to all, surely such training should be part of church attendance. Never, never should there be eating in church.

Toys, rag dolls! Have we not the Church's own 'toys'—little statues, rosaries—that children instinctively love? Picture-books, yes, those best of all made up by the parents where each picture has been studied and explained before church so that there is little need for talk about them in church itself.

In parishes where families predominate it is good to find the old-fashioned ways still in being. The parents expect their children, even the smallest, to 'behave themselves', and it is rare to find some who do not. Example tells here as everywhere—where newcomers arrive and see their 'peers' behaving with decorum, the example catches. But where, alas, parents spend their Mass time concentrating rather on their children than on their own following of the Mass and worship of God, the consequent restlessness—'un-stillness'—is bound to convey itself to children and increase rather than mitigate any such tendencies in the little people.

Yours, etc.,

M. CAHILL

DEAR SIR:

Would you or your readers kindly inform me where one can find in Catholic literature references to Christian friendship? Much seems to have been written on relationships between priest and layman, on the married state, the duties of children and parents, servant and master, between employer and employed, teacher and pupil, and so on. But on friendship I can find little except a modern transcription of, I believe, St Aelred, called 'Christian Friendship' which rather uncompromisingly refuses to admit women into this at all!

I am looking for any sort of references, whether descriptions of friendships achieved, spiritual advice on the duties, rewards, warnings, and anything else arising from the state, letters between close friends, writings in the Scriptures or by the Fathers of the