

Thoughts from a parent.....

It's a relief, in a way, to know that the Lord is providing just what my children need, even though I make mistakes along the way. But it's also inspiring to know that what I do affects the goodness and truth that is being stored in my children by the Lord.

I guess this concept of "remains" makes sense, because I can feel a special atmosphere when I do certain things with my children. When I rock my babies, for example, and sing a lullaby to them (or a song about the Lord) I am filled with a sense of peace that indicates to me that something good is happening.

With my older children, I feel a similar sense of peace when they come to me with an emotional hurt. I can help comfort them with kind words or a gentle touch. I feel, somehow, that I have allowed the Lord to work through me to nurture my children's souls.

What we do, as parents, really does make a difference.

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Fostering a Positive Environment in Your Home

Adapted from a talk by Rev. Philip Schnarr, director of the Office of Education

The good of innocence grows in accordance with [a child's] life of innocence with his companions and in accordance with his life of goodness and obedience toward parents and teachers (Arcana Coelestia 9296:2).

Parents can promote an environment that nurtures innocence by being protective and affectionate.

Parents can provide a climate of safety and trust.

- One way to foster this in your infants is verbally. Talk to your babies and little ones often. Tell them "Mom loves you. Dad loves you. Grandma and Grandpa love you. The Lord loves you," etc.
- Be selective about what impressions they receive from TV.
- Provide an orderly environment that has rules and expectations to prepare your children to follow the Lord. Set reasonable limits that are consistently enforced. Introduce them to the Ten Commandments.
- "A feeling of strong assuredness involves feeling comfortable and safe; knowing what is expected; being able to depend on individuals and situations; and comprehending rules and limits" –(Dr. Michelle Borba – *Self Esteem: A Resource Handbook*).
- The Lord finds every possible chance, to instill remains, in spite of hard times for some children. The Lord gives these stored memories of good and truth to all people, regardless of how difficult their childhood seems to be.

In the second state, which belongs to a person in childhood, there is...an affection for knowing, by means of which the infant child learns to speak and to read, and afterwards gradually learns such things as belong to the understanding (Divine Love and Wisdom 404).

Parents can create an enriched learning environment.

- Introduce your children to nature and the Lord's creation
- Enrichment does not mean buying educational toys. They are fine, but allow little ones plenty of unstructured time-especially outdoors. Collecting leaves and sticks is a childhood occupation that is incredibly educational. Exploring nature, going on nature walks, talking about the Lord's creation, giving simple answers to *some* of their questions, asking them what they think and feel, prepares children for greater understanding of science, physics, animals, people, this world and the spiritual world.
- Read to your children, especially stories from the Word.

Facts and knowledge must have use as their end in view, and when they do, they have life as their end in view, for all life looks to uses because it looks to ends. Unless they are learned for the sake of a life that looks to uses, they are of no value because they have no possible use (*Arcana Coelestia* 1964).

Parents can give children a sense of purpose.

Parents can help to cultivate good habits

- Help children to feel useful by having them assist with as many family chores as they are able, such as clearing the table, making their bed, and picking up their toys. Even very little ones can help with chores. A toddler can help in small ways by fetching things and carrying things.
- Impress your children with ritual and order. It seems that first time parents often struggle with the fact that their children will feel angry with the parent and may say angry words when they are not allowed to do as they please. It's ok for your children to be angry. It's also ok *and orderly* for the parent to continue to *not* allow them to do as they please.

Compassion for the needy and friendliness with siblings and playmates are two qualities that when active become remnants that are stored in the interior memory forever (see *Arcana Coelestia* 561, 3183, 5342).

Parents can increase skills in friendship making and compassion.

Parents can set healthy boundaries.

- Most children are social beings by nature, therefore, children's ideas of themselves are developed partly through social interactions. Teach your children about the limitations of their own bodies, their environment's limitations, and mom and dad's limitations.
- Teach your children about giving and sharing.
- Ask them what they like about their siblings and other people they know.
- Becoming unselfish takes a lifetime of practice. Remember that little children are trying to find the line between what is theirs and what is not. Children will have a few special items that they should not be forced to share. i.e. a blankie, stuffed animal or other lovie that is off limits to others.
- It is also important to remember that some children have an easier time sharing and for being friendly because of their inherited inclinations, and not necessarily because of better parenting. Try hard not to make comparisons with other children.
- Talking about how despite individual differences, all people share so many similarities.

- Book recommendations:
 Ages 0-4 *Two Eyes, a Nose and a Mouth* by Roberta Intrater
 Ages 2-5 *Whoever you are* by Mem Fox
 Ages 4-5 *People* by Peter Spier

Children cannot be in true freedom because they have not reached the age of rational judgment.
 (See *Divine Providence* 98.)

But they are in a kind of freedom that emulates rationality. It is important to respect a child's freedom of thought and feeling while at the same time resisting the urge to allow them the freedom to harm or show disrespect to the neighbor. (See *Arcana Coelestia* 892.)

Parents can provide opportunities to increase a child's awareness of their own competency.

- Teach children to make appropriate choices by giving them opportunities where the consequences are minimal. This will foster confidence and security and will help them to make good decisions as they gain a greater state of freedom.
- Do you want to walk to the park or the pond?
- Do you want to wear the yellow shirt or the red shirt?
- Set up a healthy, safe environment that your children can explore in *ways they can handle*.
- Remember that sometimes even a small choice is too overwhelming for them, and other times they may display a desire to make *all* of the choices. Try to find a balance for your children. Not too many choices can help them feel secure.

REMNANTS ARE...

"...all the good and all the truth with a person which lie stored away in his two memories and in his life" (*Arcana Coelestia* 2284 see also 2280, 1900.)

"But what are remnants? Not only the goods and truths which one has learned from the Word of the Lord from early childhood onwards and so implanted in his memory, but also resulting states, such as states of innocence from early childhood; states of love toward parents, brothers and sisters, teachers, and friends; states of charity toward the neighbor, and also of compassion on the poor and needy; in short all states involving good and truth...[which] the Lord stores away in his internal man... Here they are separated completely from the things that are the person's own, that is, evils and falsities" (*Arcana Coelestia* 561).

These childhood remains are the ones that are called into play in our times of deepest temptation.