

Enthusing the Wayward Adolescent

See earlier *Handouts* n. 65 “Honour thy father and thy mother” and n. 132 *Growing-up, the Great Adventure*
“LIFE IS WORTH LIVING”

Archbishop Fulton Sheen

Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you.

The Lord Jesus, John 15:13-15

Friend, go up higher!

The Lord Jesus, Luke 14:10

PURPOSE IN LIFE

DAMIEN PARER was a heroic news-reporter with the Australian army in World War II and killed in New Guinea in 1944. His job was to keep up morale of the soldiers and their folks at home. When he joined up, the army had just discovered psychology, and he was quizzed, “What’s your purpose in life?”

At once he quoted the *Old Green Catechism*: “**God made me to know, love and serve Him here on earth and to see and enjoy Him for ever in Heaven.**”

He had made Christian ideas and ideals his own — the Three Ds: the **Dignity, Duty and Destiny** of man made in God’s image. Gen. 1:26-27; Deut. 10:12; 11:13.

THE SPIRITUAL WAR

SATAN has special departments in Hell working overtime, always concocting new plans to ensnare souls to live and die in mortal sin.

Further, Satan — at least as alleged by C.S. Lewis in *The Screwtape Letters* — assigns other fallen angels, that is, demons, to individual human souls, to promote these evils.

ONGOING CHRISTIAN FORMATION

INFORMAL TALK while doing things together helps adolescents (and children): e.g. gardening, household repairs, preparing vegetables, washing & pegging out clothes. Then adolescent son or daughter might “open up” to either mother and father, separately or together.

Avoid confrontations, avoid prying questions. Rather, try this bit of wise and witty ironic sarcasm — just leave it lying around:-

“WHY I DON’T WASH”

1. I was forced to wash as a child.
2. People who wash are hypocrites — they think they are cleaner than everyone else.
3. There are many different kinds of soap. I can’t decide which one is best.
4. I used to wash, but I got bored and stopped.
5. I wash only on special occasions, like Christmas & Easter.
6. None of my friends wash.
7. I’ll start washing when I get older and dirtier.
8. I can’t spare the time to wash.
9. The bathroom is never warm enough in winter or cool enough in summer.
10. People who make soap are only after your money.

John Bohan, Geelong West, in *Into the Deep*, December 2016.

SPIRITUAL LIFE

ENTHUSE by parental good example of living a life in good standing with God — praying daily, morning and night, on one’s knees; Sunday Mass, and perhaps weekday Mass for special intentions.

Do you go to Confession regularly? To a regular confessor? Have you they ever been on a retreat?

The worst scenario is an adolescent having nothing to live for, and whining like a curmudgeon, “I didn’t ask to be born”! It’s worth remembering that:-

It’s a privilege to have lived.

John L. Tierney, casual remark

THE HOLY CHILD Samuel was given encouragement by old Eli the priest (who foster-fathered him): Samuel did not yet know the Lord...

And he said, Speak, Lord, Thy servant is listening.

1 Samuel 3:7 and 3:10

WHAT DOES HE READ? What do you?

IS he reading the Bible? Do you? Try the *Didache Bible* (see *Handouts* n. 138) with its helpful notes and articles and cross-references to the CCC).

And do they ever see you checking things in the CCC (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*)?

Is it feasible to have **Bible Discussion Group** for family and even others? It helps if each has a different version, which brings out the difficulties of translating an ancient language and culture into modernity.

Then there’s *The Book of Virtues* with its inspiring snippets in a constructive counter-attack on schooling which despises heroes and saints. Try taking turns reading bits aloud during the main meal.

If the adolescent does not read, it’s still not too late to help him enter into his full literacy potential and to read books for pleasure and improvement.

Some families regularly read adventure fiction or travel, saints or biography, taking turns at the main meal. N.B. It’s character formation to eat together.

Reading helps all present to escape addiction to TV, mobile phones, or lost in cyber space in computer games. Reading books transcends the shallow relationships of a virtual presence. Also, Face Book, U-tube and Twittering have lots of “stranger danger” and bad company, as well as wasting much time.

BAD COMPANIONS

THE INTERNET is a grievous temptation even to those old enough to know better. Yet deliberately entering an occasion of sin can sometimes be justifiable. But more than half of it’s pornography — an electronic brothel and propaganda for promiscuity. It’s worse than being trapped in an underwater cave by an octopus, or sinking into bottomless quicksand:

But I say to you that every one who looks lustfully has already committed adultery. If your TV or mobile causes you to sin, cast it out; better to forego electronic entertainment or education than be thrown into hell.

Adapted from Matthew 5:28-32)

SELF-RESTRAINT in Bedroom & at School

DOES the adolescent have a TV or mobile phone in bed? It's a symptom of a serious malaise. What's more, the whole electronic entourage is a lure for wasting time, missing opportunities and squandering life itself. Computers on every desk in school rewire the brain to its detriment; they impair intellect occasion moral weakness. They can become a false religion! **They weaken concentration, mental alertness and memory power**, which are all empirically observable.

See *REMOTELY CONTROLLED, How Television is damaging our lives and what we can do about it*, by Dr Aric Sigman, 2005, 356 pp. (see *Handouts* n. 125).

HUMILITY

AIM for it indirectly, by **honesty and generosity**. We need **humility to admit when we are wrong**. We need **humility to be right**, to know it and to say so, especially courageous **humility to be good** when mocked as a "goody-goody" by those who spread, teach and practise the evils of worldliness.

WAKING UP

THERE ARE two kinds, closely related:-

1. "Waking up", to get up each morning, either "cranked up" by someone else or on one's own self-starter, and consciously, deliberately getting up to give glory to God as pledged in the Baptismal Covenant — with all its myriad details in the small print.
2. "Waking up" and taking one's place in the Church and in society, with personal commitment to the Lord Jesus and embracing the Christian adult mindset, the **Christian "word-view"** — in other words, completing a successful Christian adolescence.

DISCIPLINED LIFE-STYLE?

Most folk need some encouragement to embrace a life-style with a **set time of rising** and **rising with a definite purpose**. We need to conquer our laziness and impose on ourselves a timetable to put ourselves to bed at night at an hour early enough for rising for a better day on the morrow — the basic program for reforming dissolute youth in boot camps!

We all need a program of balanced activities: others can make suggestions, but we must impose it on ourselves. With this is the good habit of being able to say "NO!" to self — instead of reserving our 'no' for parents and other authorities in life.

What needs doing? "Needs!" We all **need to be needed!** There are people everywhere in need of help: friendship, spirituality, hunger, thirst, clothing, housing, tutoring the young, reading to old people. There are the Missions crying out for volunteers: the rewards are out of this world:-

That they cannot repay you means you are blessed, because recompense will be made to you when the dead rise again. Luke 14:14

Family Life International and **Parish Conferences** of St Vincent de Paul need helpers.

Parishes needs readers, servers, wardens, counters...

Our world is diving deeper into a gutter; we can turn it back to the Light, Life and Love of God.

THE CANCER OF SELF-PITY

AN ADOLESCENT needs friends of his own sex to talk to. It's not homosexual to have non-sexual **same-sex friendships** — it's an extension of siblings.

Non-sexual **opposite sex friendships** are essential too — better in company, not pairing off or dating before they've grown in self-control and self-forgetfulness in a group of young men and women. And tactful chaperoning is more necessary than ever.

The greatest therapy is simply talking with ordinary people: only severe cases need a psychologist. Talking keeps us going through the purple patches of life. Good friends can lift us out of ourselves and reduce depression, folly and self-pity.

It's good for youth to blow their minds in sport, and not just watching it. There's "healing in the bush", growing in virtues through camping and bushwalks.

MATERIAL PROSPERITY?

Responsibility breeds maturity. But much money, gadgets, luxury, idleness, often breed spiritual poverty:-

But Jeshurun (i.e. Israel, the Chosen People) waxed fat, and kicked; then he forsook God who made him, and scoffed at the Rock of his salvation.

Deuteronomy 32:15

SUCCESSFUL ADOLESCENCE

Many youngsters suffer an "involutional regression". Instead of spiralling upward and outward to manhood and womanhood, they **spiral inwards** and down, back into childish immaturities. On life's freeway they're "going the wrong way", or like a whirlpool plunging into its own gloomy depths.

They need extra help, as also do those who missed out on the pre-adolescent stage of "adult childhood" (*Handouts* n. 132), for it's tough facing up to that personal effort required to **conquer self, selfishness, sin and Satan**. Though they must do it themselves, they can be helped.

It is highly desirable to **spiral upwards and outwards** — going clockwise, too — heading for maturity, adulthood, marriage and parenthood.

MANHOOD, WOMANHOOD, SAINTHOOD

An eager adolescent keeps aflame his faith, hope and charity, despite stumbling and rekindlings. Confusion, uncertainty, gloom and darkness of the tunnel-syndrome in adolescence are a training course for young adults to emerge into the light of day.

After more or less completing the adventure of adolescence, getting **married** is an entry into a greater adventure, as also are **priesthood** and **Religious Life**.

There is also the single state of secular life lay apostles as unmarried men or women who sublimate their natural appetites in spiritual counterparts.

The culmination of all four holy states of life is in fatherhood and motherhood, or exercising spiritual parenthood in the priesthood or as Religious.

The celibate priest, of course, is spiritually married to the Church and like Our Lord, the Bridegroom.

Father James Tierney