

Manners maketh Man

BRINGING UP CHILDREN is a tough job and parents deserve as much support as they can get in their noble work for God and society. See Handout n. 65

'CAUGHT IF TAUGHT' - one item a week

Usually the **IDEALS** and **IDEAS** herein are well taught by parents - which proves they *can* be taught. The young are more likely to adopt them if they are **caught** from good example: "What you are doing is shouting so loudly I cannot hear what you are saying!"

This brief revision of such good ideas and ideals might be a help even for parents already teaching them.

BASIC OUTLOOK - HUMILITY

Good manners are basically **Acts of Humility**. Many are also **good discipline** and **good morals**.

The humility of good manners can be beginning of that **self-mastery** which we urgently need to contend with the remaining effects of Original Sin, those which the grace of Baptism does not wipe away.

The childhood and adolescence of natural **growth to maturity in grace, virtues, manner**, self-control, self-restraint and self-effacement, reparation for sin, and, underpinning and transcending it all, humility.

What is more, without good manners, a child may get on the slippery slope to become a **liar, a cheat, a thief**, an adulterer, a blasphemer and an atheist.

The discipleship of the Lord Jesus is **not learned in one lesson**. The concentrated 52 items herein can be spread over 52 weeks, like laying one brick at a time. However, the order of treatment is not important.

BASIC MANNERS

1. Say *please* and *thank you* and *excuse me*, etc.

All three express humility in asking or receiving.

2. **Answer properly when spoke to**, with a name or proper title, Mr, Mrs, Miss, Father, Sir, Madam, etc.

3. **A smile is like a 'sacramental'** to match the spoken words in an answer or greeting. Children may become 'smilers of goodwill' if their parents are.

4. When called, answer 'Coming!' and **come at once**.

5. **Do what you are told straightaway**. Keep the Fourth Commandment. Non-instant or occasional obedience lacks the virtue of obedience. By the bye, in the army, there was a chargeable offence of 'failing to obey the lawful command' - which implies it was no offence to disobey an unlawful command.

6. **Don't splutter with protest** when elders correct you - it's contrary to Hebrews 12:5; 1 Peter 2:20

BODY BASICS

7. **Wash** your face and hands
8. **Clean your teeth**, do your hair, cut your nails
9. **Clothes are for modesty, to suit the weather and honour others**

'Others' depends on sex, age, the occasion: at church, at weddings and funerals, at solemn civil functions, visiting, at clubs, shops, office, housework, sweaty work, sport and recreation.

SPEECH

10. **Politeness in speech is beyond price** and costs nothing but a little effort to conquer contrary feelings.

11. Better to be known for **truthfulness and tact** than for being a liar or a lout.

12. **Shun all profanity** of God and Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 8:1, 4, 7, 10-113, St Paul warns against scandalizing those shocked at eating meat sacrificed to idols. Yet it was not objectively wrong to eat it because there was no intention of idolatry, but it was not charity to ignore the sensitivities of others or to be an occasion of sin for them. Hence it is better to avoid euphemisms such as 'golly', 'gee', 'gee whiz'. Shun also all obscene speech, dirty stories or anything suggestive of them (Perjury and blasphemy, are gravely sinful).

13. Avoid **argumentativeness**: anyone who always disagrees is earning a reputation for being disagreeable.

14. **Two year olds say 'no'** and **three year olds ask 'why'** often in a querulous sense. Alas when a teenager ceases to grow up and slips back to this!

MANNERS AT TABLE

15. **Say grace** before eating or wait for it to be said

16. Use **cutlery** and not fingers. Small children need small cutlery: they can't handle big pieces.

17. **Eat what you don't like first** and get it over, or mix small pieces of several things on the fork.

18. **Chew properly and swallow before talking**.

Don't wolf food like a dog or talk while chewing.

19. **Listen** to other people talk and don't interrupt.

20. **Help others** by passing things and help wash up.

21. **'A little of each, please,'** is not greedy

It is acceptable, especially from the young, when asked about dessert, even if the real answer is a big helping of everything. It is simply a euphemism for the maximum reasonable.

22. **Thank the cook**, as well as God, for the meal.

REFINEMENTS

23. **Stand as a mark of respect** for a visitor.

24. **When you are a visitor** entering the room, do not presume to sit down until invited to do so.

25. **Give up your seat** to the frail, the elderly, the blind, ladies and especially mothers with babies.

26. **Men and boys walk on the outside** of the footpath, to protect ladies from the traffic.

27. **Greet priests and Religious** even if unknown: Good morning, Father/Brother/Sister.?

28. **Control your eyes** - do not even glance at, let alone read, letters and papers on someone's desk.

In houses of religious formations such as seminaries, this is akin to 'The custody of the eyes', often referred to facetiously as 'Keep the custard in you eyes'

GOING OUT

29. **Say where you are going** when going out.

Say with whom, and when you'll be back.

30. **Shut the door gently**: don't slam it or let slam: it's bad for it and its hinges and people's ears.

31. **Sun glasses can conceal your identity**.

Take them off for people to recognize you.

32. **Take your leave while you're still welcome** - not after you've worn your welcome out.

33. Say **'Thank you for having me,'** to your host.

34. **Pianos, ornaments, TVs, computers etc, books** in someone else's house **should not even be touched.**

Wait till you're invited!. And don't ask to play the piano unless you have been taught. It is not a toy. Be sociable and don't flee to solitude with computer games etc.

FOR MEN AND BOYS

35. **Raise your hat** in greeting. Take it off indoors.

Honour ladies, parents, superiors, priests and Religious, and the Blessed Sacrament when passing a church. Its origin is medieval, when knights lifted face visors to be recognized. A soldier's salute with a right hand to his hat is based on it.

36. **Avoid vanity, immodesty, impurity:**

- boasting of your own prowess;
- showing off your body;
- gloating over female bodies.

37. Revise n. 9; best not come **shirtless** to table.

38. **Hold the door open for ladies** and those senior to you, and to let them go through first.

FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS

39. Women in **some cultures** wear less than in ours.

Revise n. 9: Don't be a copycat. It is better not to show 'as much as possible' or hint at it with tight clothes that emphasize curves.

40. Women who want to be distinctively women **less often dress like men and boys** lest they induce a mindset lacking esteem for women.

Men and boys need to look up to women as nobler beings whom they need to ennoble them. They need to learn refinement and sensitivity from mothers, wives and sisters. On the other hand, women who want to be like men often imitate their cruder qualities and they risk being treated as mere objects, even sex objects. Further, some men begin to treat other men like women. The unisex philosophy of the interchangeability of the sexes was rejected by Vatican II: see *Christian Education*, last para in §8.

41. There is a **Catch-22** for a gentleman because a gentleman will not tell a woman **she is tempting him to impure thoughts and deeds.**

He fears to giving offence, so she never finds out. Yes, he should learn self-control — and women and girls can help him. Also the note on n. 12 is applicable here.

PUNCTUALITY — consideration for others

42. **Be on time for church.**

If we're late for church, we're late for a solemn **appointment with God** and a preparation for our Particular Judgement. See *Handouts* n. 59, *Post Advent Resolutions for a New Year and Lent*

43. **Best be early for church**, for private prayer.

44. **Be on time for meals.**

Honour the cook and the company.

45. **Be on time for work, school and appointments.**

Honour your colleagues/teacher/speaker/group/job-interviewer. Being late could be dishonourable, disparaging or contemptuous.

RESPONSIBILITY

46. **Look after the people who work for you.**

47. **When you're handling someone else's money, make sure you write it down.**

48. **Raise your hand** to attract a teacher's attention.

In groups, classrooms and public lectures, do not interrupt with questions or comments until called upon to speak. If told to wait, do so with good grace. Likewise, be patient ringing a doorbell and don't ring it a second time under one minute.

49. **Be easy to get on with.**

50. **Patiently put up with prickly people.**

This may involve setting aside one's own rights and 'giving way'.

51. **Pay attention to details.**

'Trifles make perfection and perfection is no trifle.' It can save lives, properties, reputations. Also, clean up any mess you make.

52. **Responsibility matures** and we must seek maturity. Good manners help us to make ourselves do what is right when we don't feel like it.

Maturity means looking after yourself... like getting on with peers; children looking after younger children or being helpful to older ones; looking after other people's children; completing schooling and tertiary studies; getting married; having children; raising them in Godliness; becoming a saint — these are the maturities that God counts pleasing to Him.

FURTHER THOUGHTS...

- **Good manners** express courtesy, and...
- **'The grace of God is in courtesy.'**
- Hilaire Belloc (1870-1953). See his poem on Courtesy.
- **'Manners maketh man'**
...said Bishop William of Wykeham (1324-1404), English Churchman and statesman. Samuel Butler (died 1902) added, "Yes, and they make women still more." Francis Bacon (1561-1626) built on the original saying with his, "Reading maketh a full man; conference a ready man; and writing an exact man."
- Good manners express **many other virtues** rightly expected of the Christian lady or gentleman.
- Be grateful to **virtuous pagans** with good manners.
- Blessed John Henry Newman (1801-1890) said that it is almost the definition of a gentleman to say that he is **one who never inflicts pain.**
- *Primum non nocere* — First, not to harm! — from the Oath of Hippocrates (466-377 BC).

FURTHER INSPIRATION

- "Be ye perfect, as your Father is perfect," Matthew 5:48.
- Christ's Golden Rule, Matthew 7:12 (cf. Tobias 4:16); His Beatitudes, Matthew 5:3-11; and "If you love Me, keep My Commandments," John 14:15 (cf. Exodus 20:6);
- "Be ye holy, because I am holy," 1 Peter 1:16.
- "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ," 1 Cor. 11:1.
- "Be imitators of God, as beloved children," Ephesians 5:1.
- Kipling's challenging poem *If* on true manhood.
- St Francis's *Peace Prayer* of selflessness.

FURTHER READING

- The *Christian Gentleman*, by Brother G.C. Davy, published 1960.
- *Gentleman Junior*, by Brother G.C. Davy.
- *Christian Politeness and Counsels for Youth*, by The Christian Brothers, was published earlier.
- The *Screwtape Letters*, by C.S. Lewis (1942).
- *The Four Loves*, by C.S. Lewis (1960).
- *Dressing with Dignity*, by Colleen Hammon (2005).
- *The June Dally-Watkins Book of Manners for Moderns* by Christine Chaseling (1969).

This book by one of her pupils shows that June Dally-Watkins is full of common sense and consideration for others. There is nothing in it of pharisaic fastidiousness or fussiness. Alas, she tends to get condemned on hearsay.

- *Pure Attraction, A guide to human sexuality*, by Father Peter Murphy (2008).

SOME RESOLUTIONS

- Our standards must be the Way of the Lord Jesus.
- We should bring out the best in people, not the worst.
- Choices are before us every day.
- "No one loves what he endures but he can love to endure," (St Augustine, 354-430).
- We should not follow fads and fashions out of human respect, nor our own whims. We must toughen up spiritually in spite of the ease and softness of modern life.
- We must not give in to boredom, nor blame people, circumstances or mere objects by saying "They're boring" when we find them tedious.