

# THE PASTOR'S DESK

September 20, 2009 - Educating Children in the Catholic Faith



## Dear Parishioners,

Again, in going through my books, I found a book of the Councils of the American Hierarchy from 1792 to 1919. As they do now, the bishops of the United States met periodically and, as a result of their meeting, issued a pastoral letter. They did not meet very frequently in those days, sometimes the meetings were several years apart. The one held in Baltimore in 1852 is the only one Bishop John Neumann attended. As we begin the school year and the catechetical year, I think it would be interesting to see that part of the pastoral letter dealing with the education of children. As someone dedicated to Catholic education, I'm sure Bishop Neumann had a great influence on this part of the letter. Although written in 1852, the letter seems as pertinent today as it did in its own time. Here is that part of the letter:

*"No portion of our charge fills us with greater solicitude than that which our Divine Master, by word and example, has taught us to regard with more than ordinary sentiments of affection—the younger members of our flock. If our youth grow up in ignorance of their religious duties or unpractised in their consoling fulfillment; if, instead of the words of eternal life, which find so full and sweet an echo in the heart of innocence, the principles of error, unbelief or indifference, are imparted to them; if the natural repugnance, even in the happiest period of life, to bend under the yoke of discipline, be increased by the example of those whose relation to them gives them influence or authority, --what are we to expect but the disappointment of all hopes which cause the Church to rejoice in the multiplication of her children!*

*We therefore address you brethren, in the language of affectionate warning and solemn exhortation. Guard carefully those little ones of Christ ! ... 'Suffer them to approach Him, and prevent them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.' To you, Christian parents, God has committed these His children, whom He permits you to regard as yours; and your natural affection towards whom must ever be subordinated to the will of Him 'from whom all paternity in heaven and on earth is named.' Remember that if for them you are the representatives of God, the source of their existence, you are to be for them depositories of His authority, teachers of His law, and models by imitating which they may be perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect. You are to watch over the purity of their faith and morals with jealous vigilance, and to instill into their young hearts principles of virtue and perfection. What shall be the anguish of the parents heart, -- what terrible expectation of judgment that will fill his soul, should his children perish through his criminal neglect, or his obstinate refusal to be guided in the discharge of his paternal duties, by the authority of God's Church. To*

*Christian education, that is an education based on religious practices and always subordinate to religious influence. Be not led astray by the false and delusive theories which are so prevalent, and which leave youth without religion, and, consequently, without anything to control the passions, promote the real happiness of the individual, and make society find in the increase of its members, a source of security and prosperity. Listen not to those who would persuade you that religion can be separated from secular instruction. If your children, while they advance in human sciences, are not taught the science of the saints, their minds will be filled with every error, their hearts will be receptacles of every vice, and that very learning which they have acquired, in itself so good and so necessary, deprived of all that could shed on it the light of heaven, will be an additional mean of destroying the happiness of the child, embittering still more the chalice of parental disappointment, and weakening the foundations of social order. Listen to our voice, which tells you to walk in the ancient paths; to bring up children as you yourself were brought up by pious parents; to make religion the foundation of the happiness you wish to secure for those whom you love so tenderly, and the promotion of whose interests is the motive of all your efforts, the solace which sustains you in all your fatigues and privations."*

Let us pray for our children as they begin the school year.

**God bless,**

## **Saturday Social is back on September 26th**

You are invited to a supper immediately following the 5pm Vigil Mass. The main course for the meal as well as beverages will be provided by the parish while parishioners will be asked to bring salads, side dishes and desserts. Those coming will need to sign up so we can sure to have enough food. At the conclusion of the meal, there will be activities for young children. The adults and older children will break into groups to reflect on and discuss the Scripture readings for the next Sunday's Mass. Then everyone will be invited to join in a sing along which will include both folk and sacred music. The gathering will end with a prayer around 8:15pm. We do need some volunteers to work with children; to receive side dishes; or help with set-up/clean-up.

## **Mark Your Calendars: October 6th at 7:00 pm**

St. Luke Productions presents "VIANNEY", the gripping story of the remarkable priest who battled the devil to save souls. Tickets will be \$10 for adults and \$5 for youth 17 and under. To reserve your tickets, send an e-mail or call the rectory at 301-977-5492. In this "Year of the Priests", this performance would be a great way in the spirit to pray for vocations.