

# WATCH YOUR MANNERS

By  
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## **COURTESY**

Of courtesy, it is much less  
Than Courage of Heart or Holiness,  
Yet in my Walks it seems to me  
That the Grace of God is in courtesy.

*-Hilaire Belloc*

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## THE REAL MEANING OF GOOD MANNERS

A VERY kindly priest used to excuse the mistakes in etiquette which he noted in children by saying, “Well, it’s not so much the *manners* but the *manner* that counts.” He used to point out that if a cultured Chinese gentleman were to call on us immediately after arriving from China his manners would be all wrong as judged by our standards. But his *manner* would be *perfect*, courteous, serious, and respectful.

Keep in mind that we may forget which fork to use at a formal banquet, and in our nervousness we may forget the right thing to say when introducing people. But if the manner is that of a lady or gentleman with a truly kind heart, nobody will think the less of us.

Many have perfected their *manners* but they cannot hide the hurried, indifferent *manner* of their greeting. Many never make a mistake in form but their manner lacks warm sympathy for others. With whom would you rather live, the man of perfect manners who really cares nothing for you, or the sincere friend who occasionally slips on a rule of manners?

Perfect manners can be learned by a selfish, smart person with nothing but contempt for his fellows. But the kindly manner, the royal manner, the kingly manner that bespeaks a warm heart can come only from a true man and a true lady.

And how can one become a true gentleman, a true lady? How can one learn to treat everyone--the rude, the noisy, the impolite, the irritating, as well as the pleasant person--how can we learn to treat every person with good manners, a kindly manner, yes, with love? The answer is known to you. The Catholic boy and girl know that they must love their fellow men because in them they see Christ. This is the true spirit of Catholic manners.

### **The Holy Family**

Twilight is just setting over Nazareth. St. Joseph and Our Lady are seated with the Child Jesus in their humble dwelling after a hard day’s work. There is complete happiness in this home. It is this family which God placed on earth as a living example of the kind of happiness we can attain.

St. Joseph has spent a long, busy day in the carpenter shop. Quietly and efficiently, Our Lady has attended to her household duties and prepared the simple meals for her family. The Child

Jesus has occupied Himself with the simple duties of any child living in Nazareth. He has completed His daily studies, aided His mother Mary in a few errands, and helped St. Joseph in the carpenter shop.

What makes this small home in Nazareth a place of complete peace and happiness? The answer is simple: it is found in mutual love and consideration. The Child Jesus shows complete devotion to His parents. *Each member of the family does everything possible to help the others. Each knows the real meaning of love and sacrifice.* Sharing each other's affection is as close to heaven as we can attain in our daily lives. It is the way God wants us to live, and He blessed it with real, genuine happiness. Let us learn how to live that way!

## 1. The Catholic Home

*Your home is a sacred place; it is the principal source of your education. Genuine refinement and true manners are acquired at home.*

**W**HAT does home mean to you? Many a boy or girl who enjoys the advantages of a good home actually never appreciates it nor knows what it means. Is your home just a place where you sleep, eat, and toss your school books, to seek your pleasures elsewhere? Or is home the center of your interests where you enjoy the companionship of your brothers and sisters and the love and guidance of your parents?

**SOCIETY AT HOME.** The family is a tiny unit in the large society of the world in which you live. The members of your family--father, mother, sister, and brother--form a small but complete society. Your success in living in this small group can well measure your degree of happiness in later life. The happiest families are those in which the members co-operate, work together, play together, share the burdens, and confide in each other. Mother and dad are willing to make every sacrifice for your happiness. They are keenly alive to your problems and difficulties. A child who loves his parents, respects them, and confides in them, will know the secret of true happiness.

**GETTING ALONG WITH THE FAMILY.** Enjoying the company of your family is just the first step in getting along with

people in life. Nowhere else in the world can you find more real pleasure and happiness than at home. Stoneley, an Irish writer, gives us the real meaning of successful living: “Big things are very little after all--fame, fortune, reputation--are as dead sea fruit without the background of a happy home.”

**FAMILY CO-OPERATION.** Learning to do your part is proof that you are growing up. You can't depend on others all your life! You must take on some responsibilities at home. A boy should do the manly jobs around the house, such as cutting the lawn, running errands, and those tasks requiring physical strength; a girl is more skilled at domestic work, such as washing dishes, tidying up the rooms, and other light jobs in which she assists mother in the house. The important point is that you learn to do your part!

When Mary helps mother with the spring cleaning, and Joe does part time work at the neighborhood grocery to help meet some of the family expenses, they are learning the meaning of co-operation. They will soon realize that love and happiness are the result of all those small unselfish acts which endear the members of a family to one another.

**BEING CONSIDERATE.** Consideration is a virtue, and it generally means doing those things you *don't have to do*. Have you ever heard of children who *volunteer* to do all the work some evening so that mother and dad can go to a show? This type of news would make the front page of any newspaper. Why is it that some children expect to receive everything but never learn to show their gratitude by little acts of consideration toward others? A selfish child develops into a spoiled, unpopular and disagreeable person in life.

When dinner is over, it is respectful and considerate to help clear the table and offer to wash the dishes before going off to play. If you notice that your younger brother, Jim, is worrying over his composition in English, your timely help may save him from a failure. Perhaps, Betty needs help in preparing for a party. Any aid you give to her will not be forgotten. These little thoughtful acts seem very unimportant, but they are the reasons why your home can be the happiest place on earth!

**THE POWER OF EXAMPLE.** Example is more powerful than a sermon. Each member of the family can be an inspiration to the others. Frequent reception of the sacraments, grace before

and after meals, morning and evening prayers, the recitation of the Rosary every evening, an occasional visit to the church--these are small acts, but their effect and influence will be indelibly imprinted on the mind and heart of each member of the family.

The good example of the Christians in the early days of the Church was strong enough to inspire and finally convert a pagan world. In like manner, the conduct of a Catholic family in a neighborhood can exert a good or bad effect on the whole community. If Catholics attend church regularly, if they live in peace and harmony, if they are charitable and well-mannered, others will learn to admire and eventually will investigate a religion which influences the daily life and conduct of its followers. Every Catholic can be an example to his own community in order to regain the world for Christ.

**THE CATHOLIC HOME.** Is your home consecrated to the Sacred Heart? Our Lord promised Blessed Margaret Mary that He would shower His blessings on that home in which the members were consecrated to His Sacred Heart. A picture of the Sacred Heart or a crucifix should be found in every Catholic home. They are the means of lifting our minds and hearts to God.

Many Catholics are not prepared for the visit of a priest when someone is ill or dying. Every Catholic home should have holy water, blessed candles, a crucifix, or a "sick call set" to assist the priest in his spiritual duties. Pictures, rosaries, prayerbooks, and other religious objects may be considered only external evidences of Catholic devotion, but it is these little things which reflect the genuinely interior Catholic spirit.

## **2. Everyday Courtesy**

*Home is the laboratory of good manners. Your courtesy, personality, and ability to get along with people will never be better than their practice at home.*

### ***An Average Day at Home***

**ZERO HOUR.** "Johnny, get up. Time for school . . . . All right, girls, time for school. Up with you." There they are--the cruelest words that ever broke the magic spell of your dreams--even when it is mother who speaks them. If you are one of those rare individuals who does not mind getting up in the morning, just tilt your halo a little higher for us to admire.

A wise man once gave this bit of advice: “Every day do at least two things that are hard for you to do.” “Oh, I do that,” replied Will. “Every day I get up in the morning and go to bed at night.” The remark really makes sense. For most of us, it is hard to get up in the morning, and it is almost as hard to go to bed--on time.

**BEING A GOOD SPORT.** A good sport won't stay in bed while mother calls three or four times. It is hard on mother's nerves. Snap out of bed and get into the bathroom. Keep moving so that the rest of the family can have their turn without being forced to storm the bathroom door.

Just before you start to invade the dining room for breakfast, check off a few items. have you said your morning prayers? Are there any clothes lying around your bedroom? How's your hair, your shirt, your dress? Shoes polished? Clean handkerchief? Perhaps mother has asked you to throw back the bedclothes to air the bed or tidy up the bathroom. Last but not least: Turn on that smile for the rest of the family! Start the day right.

**YOUR ROOM.** One of the first things a soldier must learn in the Army is to keep himself and his quarters in perfect order. If you enter a soldiers' barracks you will find all clothing arranged in the proper placed, and all shoes in the same orderly way. Even the towel is folded carefully. In the Navy, too, everything must be “shipshape.” Inspectors are strict, and if things are out of place or untidy the man is “gigged,” that is, punished. You can't serve Uncle Sam carelessly!

Your parents are easier than the inspection officers of the Army or Navy. If your family has enough space to give you a room for yourself or one which you share, treat it right. Don't leave it looking as if an atomic bomb had struck it. Your room tells everybody what sort of a person you are. Does it look sharp and neat? You can't afford to form slovenly habits. They will stick to you through life.

### ***Society Manners at Home***

The best method of being kind and sociable is to practice these qualities at home. If your school friends drop in, introduce them to the members of the family. When a neighbor calls and you think you'll be bored, don't run out. Try to make her feel that you are glad to see her. Never deliberately offend the feelings of