

Father Hardon Speaks on the Importance and Necessity of Homeschooling

by Amanda Evinger

Sunday School on the Prairie by Alfredo Rodriguez

On days when your homeschooled children lather their eyebrows with puffy paint while their teacher (Mom) is on the phone putting in an order for a case of Organic Chocolate Chip Cookie Dough Ice Cream; make Rubix Cubes out of their spelling tests; and seem to have suddenly forgotten everything they have ever learned in Arithmetic, we should be grateful we nutty homeschooling parents have a resource to turn to in the thick of it all – the words of Servant of God Father John A. Hardon. On days where the lesson plans feel like long-lost treasure maps and the “domestic drama gauge” is bursting due to our little people having the flu (with a freshly watched episode of *Little House on the Prairie* where everyone was quarantined due to Scarlet Fever, oh-so-alive in their little minds), we should be downright tickled that we

have good ol’ Father Hardon to lean on. On the days when we don’t feel that maybe teaching our children is such a sane idea after all, at least we can remember that he – a Servant of God – does.

“Catholic home schooling is the planned and organized teaching and training of children at home, for their peaceful and effective life in this world, and for their eternal salvation in the world to come,” Father Hardon once said.¹

Or what about those days when the chummy UPS man, who probably doesn’t know that homeschooling is actually legal in your state, decides to deliver a package, stepping inside your home at the most inopportune moment. Oh, you

know, one of those “loopy Catholic moments” when your children are playing Holy Mass – the altar being the clothes dryer, rumbling and tumbling away, clad with a lacy gold sheet and lit candles, shaking as well – and your son being the priest, *in persona* Saint Padre Pio, his “stigmatized”

hands swaddled with ripped cloth diaper rags that were soaked with maroon Crayola marker; toddler teething wafers being reverently received on the

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tongue by your daughters (wearing handkerchiefs on their heads as chapel veils, of course) completing the scene – all for the UPS man to carefully recount to his incredibly concerned wife that evening.

After all, at one time, Father Hardon did write, “Home schooling, in our country, is that form of teaching and training of children at home in order to preserve the Catholic faith in the family, and to preserve the Catholic faith in our country. Home schooling in the United States is the necessary concomitant of a culture in which the Church is being opposed on every level of her existence and, as a consequence, given the widespread secularization in our country, home schooling is not only valuable or useful but it is absolutely necessary for the survival of the Catholic church in our country.”

The other day, I spent an inordinate amount of time in the non-educational toy section at the grocery store, during school hours, with four of my little kids tagging along with me. As their teacher, I pondered over and over which of the inflatable foam figurines (the nifty kind that come out of rubber capsules when they are dissolved in hot water) would provide the most educational experience for my children. It was a terribly tough choice – sea creatures, wild game, or zoo animals. After sufficient reflection, I opted for the colorful sea creatures. After all, I wasn’t sure if my nine-year-old daughter even knew what a Macaroni Penguin was, and these figures would be the ideal way to teach her. Soon after I recovered from my lesson planning session, I encountered a public school teacher from our local small-town school. She, being a caring person, inquired about the children, remarking how often she would see my daughter’s name show up on the school’s roster, although she wasn’t actually attending school. She knew we homeschooled, but seeing my daughter’s name appear time and time again got her thinking about us with a bout of concern. And, of course, seeing their “Oh-so-professional-looking” teacher (me) at the store during school hours with my

gang of inquisitive students tagging along only heightened her sense of responsibility to ask me about it. It was an awkward trip to the grocery store, I decided, with my rubber-capsuled foam figurines in hand. There’s no way around it – many people think we homeschoolers are dysfunctional or, at best, super weird.

What to do?

Oh, Servant of God, Father Hardon, where were you when I needed you?

He was there then, and he is here now. Father Hardon, Our Lady, Saint Joseph, and all of the Angels and Saints are there for all of us homeschoolers when we need them the most. They are a source of unanimous strength, and they remind us why we need to keep on doing what we are doing and not look to the right or to the left. The souls of our precious children have been entrusted to our care by Almighty God Himself. In the recesses of His Most Sacred Heart lies His plan to guide our children through this valley of tears onto the eternal enjoyment of the Beatific Vision. And for some of us families this means taking the homeschooling route, foam figurines and all.

Home schooling has been necessary in the Catholic Church since her foundation,” Father Hardon wrote. “The necessity, therefore, is not the necessity that is the result of an emergency. No, Catholic home schooling is necessary – period ... How do we know that home schooling is necessary? First, we know it from divine revelation.

I don’t know about you, but this homeschooling mama loves the sound of that one! Next time Nosy Nancy from down the street wonders what we hooligans do all day at “school” in our home, I can respond with a bolt of confidence, “We are merely responding to an invitation made by divine revelation.”

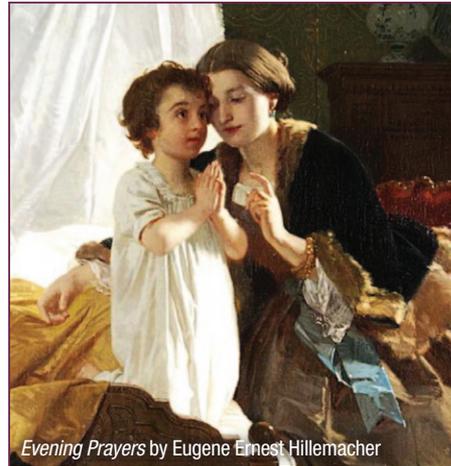
And according to Father Hardon, if one takes history into account, homeschooling is actually an organic result of what Christian education has grown into over many trying years.

The early Church is normative, not only on what we should believe as Catholics but on how we ought to learn our faith... and live it. There were not

established Catholic schools in the Roman Empire back in the first 300 years of the Church’s history. Except for parents becoming, believing, and being heroic Catholics in the early Church, nothing would have happened. The Church would have died out before the end of the first century. The necessity for home schooling is not only a natural necessity, it is a supernatural necessity.

And yet, just because homeschooling may be a natural consequence, that doesn’t mean it’s for the faint of heart – nothing authentically Catholic is, anyhow.

“For Catholic parents to live good Catholic lives in our day requires heroic virtue,” Father Hardon once said. “Only heroic parents will survive the massive, demonic secularization of materially super-developed countries



Evening Prayers by Eugene Ernest Hillemecher

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like America. And consequently, far from being surprised, parents should expect that home schooling will not be easy. Any home schooling in the United States which is easy today is not authentic Catholic home schooling. If it is easy, there is something wrong.”

For those of us who have been called to homeschool, the call is irresistible indeed. If we try to run from it, it will haunt us. If we accept it as a saving grace from Our Lord, Who loves our family infinitely, divine joy will overcome us. Father Hardon writes, “He [God] wants them to come out of the dream that so many parents

are still sleeping in – and arouse them to the gravest, and I mean *gravest* – duty they have before God. What is this? *To pay whatever price they have to, in order to educate their children for eternal life.*

Of course this will not be easy... to become parents for eternal life demands *heroism*.” On the days when we are sitting on the fence, we may want to ask ourselves if we are willing to be heroes

or not. We may ponder the lives of the martyrs, the mega-Saints, and the Desert Fathers and ask if our life of sacrifice pales a bit in comparison. Most parents would be willing to do anything to feed their children if they knew their bodies were starving. Many would even die, if it meant their children could live on in peace. Yet, what about their hearts, minds, and souls? If our children’s hearts, minds, and souls are starving in the public school system (or parochial schools that are not orthodox), are we willing

to do anything to save them? Are we parents willing to die to ourselves – die to a fluffy pocketbook, a respectable reputation, and free time on our calendar – so that our children’s hearts, minds, and souls can flourish instead of famish? Are we willing to pay the price of homeschooling to guard the innocence, chastity, happiness, goodness, and spiritual health of our children?

Evidently, the hearty seeds of sacrifice that homeschooling parents have been planting over the years are bringing forth a capacious harvest of graces. The financial sacrifices, loneli-



Boy with a Squirrel by John Singleton Copley

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ness, impressive dedication, and humiliations that homeschooling families endure do not go unnoticed by the Crucified One, Who was born into utter poverty and died the poorest death of all. Almighty God is blessing homeschooling families from one generation to the next, allowing His benediction to rest on those whose homes exemplify, textbooks and all, a true domestic

church. A home where homeschooling happens is a seedbed for the sacred. Parents who homeschool satiate Christ, crying from the Cross, “I Thirst.” They console Our Lord in His great agony, because they bring the souls and minds of their children to love Him, day after day, hour after hour. They give their children the waters of Truth, flowing from the most clement, omniscient heart of the Heavenly Father. They bathe their children in purity that they may walk as children of light in the midst of this “perverse and lost genera-

tion,” this culture of death. They heed the magnificent words of Scripture that say, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

“Today, Catholic parents must not only endure the cross, resign themselves to living the cross, but they are to choose the cross,” Father Hardon writes. “In case no one has told you, when you chose home schooling, you chose a cross-ridden form of education. This is the age of martyrs ... and a martyr is one who suffers for the profession of his faith. There is red martyrdom and white martyrdom. There is bloody martyrdom and unbloody martyrdom. You have to live a heroic Catholic life in America today. God will use you and provide you with the knowledge and the wisdom, providing you are living the authentically heroic Catholic life.”

Homeschooling can be an extraordinary way to testify to the truth of Catholicism on many levels. In numerous ways, many of them yet to be realized, it is raising up a resurgence of die-hard Catholics who will be proud to go to battle as the Church Militant in the future of our nation and world. In fact, data is coming in from various studies that clearly show that homeschooled children truly are the “hope of the Church.” According to an article published recently in *Seton Magazine*:

Across the country, a noticeable trend is on the rise. Data indicates young men with a homeschool background are four-times more likely to enter seminaries than those educated in Catholic institutions. Data collected for the 2017 survey, conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, found the following: Eight percent of seminarians on schedule for ordination had homeschooled for a length of seven years, on average, with discernment occurring approximately at the age of 16.²

Thankfully, the overflow of graces that abound from a deep union with Christ can truly allow us homeschooling parents to accomplish the most daunting of challenges. Homeschooling allows for a somewhat serene lifestyle permeated so beautifully with prayer and the contemplation of the good, the true, and the beautiful. It allows the entire family to embark on the journey of embracing knowledge of the highest things the universe has to offer, together, as one family, towards the ultimate end – the worship of Almighty God.

As Father Hardon writes:

“Finally, to be authentically Catholic, homeschooling must be prayerful. The single most fundamental thing you can teach your children, bar none, is to know the necessity and method of prayer. You must pray

yourselves. Without prayer, all the schooling in the world will not produce the effect which God wants home schooling to give, because home schooling is a communication of divine grace, from Christ to the parents to the children. And the principle way parents communicate from Christ to their children, the grace upon which those children will be saved, is prayer.”

Ultimately, the fully Catholic homeschooling lifestyle fosters a glimpse of the Beatific Vision in our souls. Permeated by the spirit of Christian truths, it allows us to lift up our minds to the sacred, hour by hour, and not be led astray by false doctrines of this world. It shows both parents and children that the only worthy end of all of their intellectual efforts is to please the King of Kings;

to be intelligent servants of the Master of the Universe, to develop their talents that they may bring forth His sovereign kingdom on earth. When we allow prayer to be the guiding post of our educational efforts, we will be not just successful, but, more importantly, faithful. Embracing the life of homeschooling is a powerful way of embracing the value of family. When we say “yes” to the sublime challenge of Catholic homeschooling, we are showing our children that we are saying “yes” to them and to the joy of nurturing them the best way we possibly can. They feel immensely loved – and this love crafts a founda-

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tion of security and confidence in the goodness of God, and even of life itself. The intimacy parents can have with their homeschooled children is simply unparalleled, and the bond that home education can forge between parent and child is as strong as it gets. As the late great Father Hardon reminds us:

“The parents’ primary duty is to cooperate with God as Author of nature and grace to draw out these latent powers in the child whom they brought into the world. Under God, of primary importance to enlighten and inspire us are our parents. Parents, in turn, are to recognize that the children brought into this world are not meant for this world. The children’s destiny is eternal. It is the parents, more than anyone in the world who are to prepare their children, in time, indeed, but for eternity. The purpose of marriage is to raise families for heaven, nothing less, and there can be nothing more.

One of the great blessings of mod-

ern home education is that it is waking up so many parents to their God-given responsibility.”

A Prayer Composed by Father Hardon for Homeschooling Families

Jesus, Mary, Mother of the Holy Family, Saint Joseph, obtain for all Catholic parents the grace to raise their children for a heavenly eternity. Mary, teach us parents to do everything which your Divine Son tells us to do. If we do, we shall be reunited, not only as families. We shall join the Family of the Most Holy Trinity. Make us parents courageous and firm and clear in understanding – that we are the primary teachers of our children – to prepare them for that final graduation on the first day of a heavenly eternity. Mary, Mother of God and Mother of the Holy Family, obtain from your divine Son the graces which home teaching Catholic parents so desperately need in our day, the grace to see themselves as channels of grace for their children, and the grace to serve as the channels of grace, even at the cost of a living martyrdom in our day. Amen. ✠

Notes

1. Retrieved from: http://www.therealpresence.org/archives/Education/Education_001.htm
2. Retrieved from <http://www.setonmagazine.com/catholic/boom-in-religious-vocations-from-catholic-homeschoolers>.



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