

Father & Education

26 February 2026

What is education?

- Many misunderstandings. For example:
 - Technical or vocational training
 - Merely academic
- In the end of the day, it is a transmission of a comprehensive way of life
 - Another way of putting this: a ranking of activities which make men good and life worthwhile
 - What things are urgent and necessary and what things do we choose to do when we are free to dispose of our time? In fact, why are the things that are urgent and necessary done at all? What makes them worthwhile?

Who is responsible for Education?

- Church
 - Pius XII (5 May 1952): Again it is the inalienable right as well as the indispensable duty of the Church, to watch over the entire education of her children, in all institutions, public or private, not merely in regard to the religious instruction there given, but in regard to every other branch of learning and every regulation in so far as religion and morality are concerned. And this must be so, because the Church as a perfect society has an independent right to the means conducive to its end, and because every form of instruction, no less than every human action, has a necessary connection with man's last end, and therefore cannot be withdrawn from the dictates of the divine law, of which the Church is guardian, interpreter and infallible mistress
- State
 - Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*: It also belongs to the State to protect the rights of the child itself when the parents are found wanting either physically or morally in this respect, whether by default, incapacity or misconduct, since, as has been shown, their right to educate is not an absolute and despotic one, but dependent on the natural and divine law, and therefore subject alike to the authority and jurisdiction of the Church, and to the vigilance and administrative care of the State in view of the common good.
- Parents
 - But here, especially the father
 - Pius XII
 - September 1949: For whosever is a father is by that fact an educator, because – as the angelic doctor explains so clearly – the

primordial right to teach is based on no other title than that of paternity.

- St TA, IIa IIae, Q102, article 1: so too a **person** who, in some way, exercises **providence** in one respect, partakes of the character of father in a particular way, since a father is the principle of generation, of **education**, of learning and of whatever pertains to the perfection of **human** life:

What is he responsible for?

- He does not have right to determine what the ultimate goals of education should be.
 - Pius XI, *Divini Illius Magistri*: It does not however follow from this that the parents' right to educate their children is absolute and despotic; for it is necessarily subordinated to the last end and to natural and divine law, as Leo XIII declares in another memorable encyclical, where He thus sums up the rights and duties of parents: "By nature parents have a right to the training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end for which by God's blessing it was begotten.
- Rather, as indicated, he is chiefly responsible to see that what God wills the child to receive is transmitted to him. Tradidi et quod accepi
 - It belongs primarily to the Church primarily to communicate and articulate what God wills children to receive.

How does he exercise this responsibility?

- By knowing it & cultivating wisdom
- By directing child to the good proposed
 - Taking active interest in their development
 - Making a point to invest in them and communicate your wisdom
 - Ask them what interests them.
 - Protects them from what is contrary to their true development
- By delegating to competent collaborators their due portion
 - Firstly and chiefly wife.
 - But, we must be clear. Wife is not the one chiefly responsible for education. This means she must be given guidance and oversight.
 - Her contributions
 - Insight into where children are and how they are responding to things.
 - This is not the same thing as knowing what to *do*.
 - Ability to oversee many details which escape father's attention
 - She spends more time with children
 - Can invest, especially with the younger ones, in areas which help them grow.

- In some ways, she can better reach them
 - Care of daily schedules and transportation
 - Do not underestimate this. Acknowledge, show appreciation, etc.
- School
 - Preliminary remark: the School does not primarily receive its directions from families, but from the Church.
 - Pius XI *Divini Illius Magistri*: For this conformity, it is necessary that all the teaching of a school, its structure, personnel, curricula and books in every discipline be ruled by a spirit which is truly Christian, under the maternal vigilance of the Church, in such a manner that religion be the foundation and the crown of all instruction.
 - School does not replace parents' and fathers' role. It is a collaborator as well, providing a formation of the mind and heart that is meant to both reflect and deepen what the child is receiving at home
 - Pius XII, 5 January 1954 This is only one point among many to show that the collaboration between professors and parents ought to be constant and profound. We willingly encourage whatsoever will facilitate and render more tight the collaboration between the school and the family. The latter, in effect, chooses the professor to prepare the adolescent to live his adult life in the city and in the Church. The family ought not and cannot abdicate its duty to give a certain orientation; collaboration is therefore natural and necessary. But it presupposes – in order to be fruitful – a mutual knowledge, constant relations, unity of views, and repeated rectifications. Only then will professors be able to render effective their ideal; they are in the first place the delegate of the family.
 - Presupposes that father has an active interest in what goes on.
 - Talks with teachers
 - Talks with children about what is going on
- Friends
 - Children's peers
 - Older people they look up to
- Poets
 - Large sense of the term here. Anyone who paints a picture of what makes for a good life. This will include literary and historical authors, movie directors, popular musicians, influencers on social media. Each of them in some measure is offering a teaching about what makes for good human beings and what is choiceworthy in life.

- Fathers must consciously choose what poets they will permit to exercise an influence on their children

Conclusion

- This is, in a sense, the heart of what we are talking about in this crisis series. The crisis in fatherhood is a lack of understanding and conviction on the importance of the father in handing down a true way of life.
- Even if we may not have received as much as was possible from our own fathers, we can still cultivate our understanding of our role

Challenges

- **Theory**
 - Read *Educating a Child: The Art of Arts* by Fr Joseph Duhr
 - Listen to Fr Beck's conferences regarding parenting on Angelus+
 - Reflect on the state of the formation of your children.
 - What are your goals for them?
 - Is everything in your home supporting that vision? Are there elements in the home which are contrary?
 - Do they need to be modified or even eliminated?
- **Practice**
 - Schedule regular times with your wife to discuss the children
 - Ask what she sees. Just listen to her and process
 - Ask where she needs help. Follow up.
 - Thank her for her help. Show appreciation for the excellent job she is doing.
 - Reach out to children's teachers
 - to see how your children are doing, both academically and behaviorally. Listen to their observations without defending your child.
 - how you can help them with respect to your child
 - Tell your children's teachers that you appreciate their hard work and dedication to your children
 - Talk to your school-age children each night.
 - Give each one some individual attention.
 - At the least, inquire what most struck them during the day at school.
 - Show interest, not only in their requests for help with homework, but in what they are thinking about. Again, just listen.
 - Read to them regularly