

4th chap.) Even though the carnal mother should neglect them, the spiritual mother shall not. They are marked with the blood of her heavenly Spouse. Their names are written upon the palms of her hands. Her thoughts are ever busy about them; and she cries out unceasingly to the local pastor from the throne of the sovereign pontiffs and the sanctuary of every cathedral in Christendom to keep a vigilant eye upon the children, to know them by name, to love them and attract their love; to exhibit on all occasions a tender and paternal anxiety for their welfare; to gather them around him in the church, and, in presence of their living Saviour, to feed them with the "milk" of doctrine suitably to their age, and instil into their minds holy sentiments of virtue and holy abhorrence of vice by direct teaching, by examples and anecdotes and corrections and suggestions and all the countless methods that God's wisdom and the priest's zeal shall opportunely inspire. From the church to their homes, from their homes to the schools, from the schools to their play ground, and, through all the ways of youthful life, the pastor's warnings should follow the children, and his paternal vigilance safeguard them, so far, at least, as to assure himself that no evil example shall lie in their path nor any snare be laid for their innocence. There is no more imperative duty of the priesthood than this tender and assiduous care of the young. The good priest never tires of it. It is so like Jesus Christ, whose condescension to children is beautifully described in several episodes of the Gospel narrative. We are told that He loved to invite them to come near Him with confidence, and that He used to lay His divine hand upon their heads, and bless them. One day the mothers brought their boys and girls to Him in large numbers, and some of His disciples objected to the intrusion. The little ones were probably noisy and somewhat troublesome. At all events it was the opinion of some good men that they were unfitted for intercourse with the Teacher of Heavenly Wisdom, and their presence was treated as an interruption of better work. But "when Jesus saw it," says the Evangelist, "He was