

across a bad companion. Then follow curious revelations, disturbing in themselves, and doubly dangerous for the manner in which they are made: then immodest jokes, corrupt suggestions, and presently shameful conduct. How can you expect that child to resist? It is all so new, and so seductive. Curiosity, sensuality, vanity — all these conspire to drag it along. The child will then fall continually till the period of its First Communion. And do you imagine that the impressions of that solemn day will suffice for the complete uprooting of habits indulged in, perhaps, for years? Generally it will not. The child will go to confession once a month for the regulation Communion. Between these Communions it will fall into sin. This monthly approach to the sacraments will gradually become an irksome task, and in a few years, when at last emancipated from the control of parents and of parish priest, he will drop his monthly Communion, and will go to swell the ranks of those Christians who spend the greater portion of their lives out of the grace of God."

The majority of children, by the time of their First Communion, will most probably have learnt and done a good deal of mischief.

"They draw nigh to the Holy Table," says the council of Albi, "only after wallowing in the mire of vice and numberless sins. Alas! why do we wait for the age when passions will already have become strong, before bestowing the benefit of Communion? Let Communion be to little children a preservative from those sins of youth which David bewailed in the repentance of his old age. Let it be to them the Divine Bread, giving them strength to control their budding passions, let it be the wine begetting virgins, rather than the belated remedy for eventually removing faults already acquired. For, though repentance give back the dignity of a child of God, it can never restore the pure flower of innocence. Nothing can ever enable the soul that has been sullied to recover its primitive integrity, and it can never again address God, as the elder brother of the Prodigal did his father: 'Behold so many years have I served thee and have never transgressed thy commandments'."