

We purpose to lay down upon this most important question some fundamental considerations from which to deduce practical consequences.

* * *

It appears to us that the ruling principle in this matter may be formulated in the following words: Children, boys and girls,—and what we say of children may still more forcibly apply to young people of both the one and the other sex,—ought to be allowed to communicate according to their need and capability. This ought to be the measure of Communion for them.

The need of children for Communion may be proved by so many reasons that, when considering them, we are tempted to ask whether their need is not more legitimate and urgent than that of adults.

First, their spiritual or supernatural life, as well as their intellectual, moral, and physical being, is in the state of formation. There is question of their developing a good supernatural temperament and vigorous spiritual health, which are capable of confronting and sustaining to the end the labors and combats of life. Now, if instruction and discipline are the necessary elements of this formation, Communion is its only nourishment properly so called. It ought to lay the foundation for it just as material food does for physical growth. The Divine Restorer of all things instituted it as the Food which substantially sustains life. It is the Sacrament of spiritual growth, which goes on increasing until it reaches eternal perfection. No lasting development of life received in Baptism can be hoped for except from the reception of Holy Communion.

Childhood and youth are the ages in which are contracted habits which, having once become second nature, will color the whole life. The mind is then docile, the heart easy to gain, the character has not yet assumed its definitive bias, even the body is supple; the whole being is, so to say, malleable, ready to take whatever direction may be given it, with the chances of always following them. — "It is a proverb," says the Wise Man, "A young man according to his way, even when he is old he will not depart from it." If we are zealous to give to the child habits of submission, studiousness, good breeding,

the
body
were
e so
but
And
hou-
Like
read
iting
from
ed to
To
l the
His
men
pain
d Its
them
incite
thers
l, for
men,
other
poses
is the
of the
son of