



## Brief Patristic Messages



### *“Serving as a Model, Not Laying Down the Law”*

*† His Eminence, Metropolitan  
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

**WE ARE ALL** witnesses to a particular drama that parents are facing in these difficult days of ours: the disobedience and rebelliousness of their children.

**Father** and mothers exhaust all of their resources of admonitory reasoning, use strictness and leniency, threaten and implore...; yet the angry child listens to nobody and to nothing.

**The** atmosphere which prevails in such a family environment is well known. And we constantly hear parents' complaints and their proclamation—ringing with conviction—that they have done everything they can, but the children just do not seem likely to improve....

**But** let us approach this important subject in greater depth, in order briefly to see how the Holy Fathers advise us with regard to the manner in which we must counsel others, so that our words might be accepted.

**First** of all, our instruction must be done with fear of God. That means that a profound awareness of our sinfulness and inadequacy is required.

*Just who are we who [dare to] instruct? How is it that we have the pretension to make others submit to our words, when we do not submit ourselves to the Divine will?*

**Such** thoughts lead us to self-reproach and to pray that the Lord might enlighten our children to understand and accept our admonition.

**In** other words, first and foremost we must speak to God about our children; and then, to a lesser extent, we can speak to our children about God.

**As a** consequence, a profound spiritual activity is required of parents, that they might attract the Grace of God and dispel their children's agitation and hardness of heart, as well as the demonic energy of disobedience and rebelliousness.

**Let us** not forget that the God-bearing Fathers advise us to be *"models and not lay down laws"* to others; for, undeniably, *"it is truly wise to teach not by word, but to instruct by deed."* *"One who teaches and does not do what he teaches"* toils in vain.

**How** will we make the Lord known to our children, when we have not created the preconditions for Him to be made known first of all to us?

**The** experience of our Fathers securely guides us: the Lord is hidden in His commandments. He who will keep His commandments will see God:

*"His presence is hidden in his commandments: 'He that loveth me will keep my commandments and shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.'"*

**In this** way, then, that teaching that is done with fear of God, with humility and self-reproach, but also with the necessary precondition of the carrying out of the commandments, is, in the end, a spiritual seed that must be cast in the field of a child's heart, simultaneously with the prayer and supplication that it be blessed

by our Lord, such that it may take root, inform, and bring about a positive change.

**One** wonders: do contemporary parents see and confront the problem of their children's disobedience in this manner?

**Could** it be that their words are authoritative when they have not yet submitted themselves to the sole authority of the Evangelical word?

*Third Sunday of St. Matthew  
All of the Holy New Martyrs  
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