

CHILDREN AND THE BIBLE

Written by Rev. H.T. Burke

Jesus called them to Him, saying, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." (Lk.18:15-17)

When I was a child, my mother used to read to me from the Bible almost every night. Even when she didn't read to me, I used to like to look at the pictures. I was fascinated with them, and they told the sacred stories in a way that I could understand even without someone reading them. It can make a great impression on a young child to be alone and looking at the pictures from the Bible. It was a wonderful thing for me as a child to have my own Bible. I think that this had a great influence on my faith and my recognition of my vocation. I was not afraid to say I believed in God and Jesus. I received a good basic understanding of God and a strong faith from this simple encounter with the children's Bible.

Although this occurred when I was only five, I think it left a lifetime impression on me. The famous poem reads: "The child is the father of the man." The way a child is, he shall be as an adult. We learn so much in those first few years of our lives, and our minds are able to learn quicker as children than as adults. The most important knowledge we can have is about the One who created us, the One who died for us, the One Whom we will be closest to in eternity - God. In addition to learning the language, learning to love our parents, relatives and friends, learning to love God should be just as important for small children.

Many parents would like to know what to do to help their children keep the faith when they grow up, to help them stay out of trouble as teenagers, and to go to church willingly on their own. One of the best ways to do this, as well as possibly foster a religious vocation, is to read to children from the Bible when they are small. Between three and seven, children are very open to learning about God. The best way to teach them is to make use of a good picture Bible. The one I used as a child is still in print. It is called **The Children's Bible** by Golden Press, NY. Another one with great pictures is **The Bible In Pictures for Little Eyes**, by Kenneth N. Taylor. I was so impressed with it I bought it just for the pictures! Another good book for children would be **The Picture Book of Saints** by Rev. Lawrence G. Lovasick, Catholic Book Publishers, and **The Eternal Wisdom** by Rev. James Alberione, published by the Daughters of St. Paul. Both of these would make wonderful supplementary books to the Bible for children, to help them learn more about the Catholic Faith. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and for a little boy or girl, who is just learning about life, there's no better aid a parent can give to help them learn about the Creator of life than a good children's Bible - with lots of pictures.