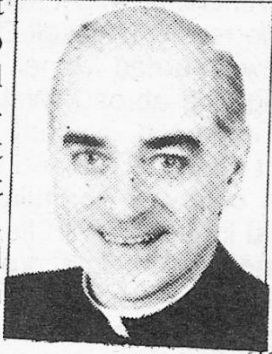


Father John Catoir

Develop Will Power

Are we raising our children and teenagers in such a way as to insure their unhappiness in later life? The answer is yes, if we are not training them to develop their will power. The message is one that youngsters don't like to hear it. Develop your will power early or you won't have the spiritual muscles to cope with the problems that life will thrust upon you in the future. Don't become a couch-potato with flabby muscles and a flaccid will. Do your chores and discipline yourself to study hard. Train yourself to perform difficult tasks promptly and joyfully.



I encourage you to pray now for the grace of a happy marriage. Try to go to Mass with a spirit of reverence no matter what your whims dictate. Public worship is a primary responsibility in life. God commanded that we keep holy the Sabbath. He wants His people to come to Him as a family. Those who sleep-in on Sundays are shirking an important responsibility. God's graces flow to those who try to be faithful.

TV commercials are always encouraging us to indulge every whim. We are manipulated from morning to night to desire products and services. This becomes a habit. St. Augustine wrote, "a habit becomes conditioning and conditioning binds our responses hand and foot."

Unwittingly, we can become chained to our whims if we are not careful. When this happens we grow weaker in our

courage and perseverance. Our will power becomes mushy as we lose the sheer grit it takes to make virtue possible.

Among other things good character is based on the will to bear discomfort. Performing one's duty in life requires determination and if our capacity for true love is to grow, we need a strong will.

What is the connection between love and will power? Romantic feelings fade but true love perseveres. True love is a choice. The will says yes or no. Love always involves the cross whereas indulging one's whims always leads away from the cross. Many marriages have been ruined by infidelity without a thought to the long-term consequences.

I want to impress upon our teenagers that unless they think deeply about strengthening their character they will be like a ship without a rudder. Don't be one who is destined to live on the slippery slope of self-indulgence. Duty is always a tremendous challenge and those who are in the habit of getting their way all the time shirk their duty time and time again.

One of the most important things to remember is that even the strongest will has its limits. Don't put yourself in harm's way, consciously or unconsciously. Even a strong person has limits.

It might help to repeat the Jesus prayer frequently: *Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.* Say this prayer in times of stress and you will persevere in your good intentions. Turn your life over to the Lord and trust Him to supply what is lacking in you. Ultimately our hope is in God's strength not our own, but grace builds on nature and we must do our part. With God's grace, all things are possible.