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ENGLISH MEDICAL TEXTS

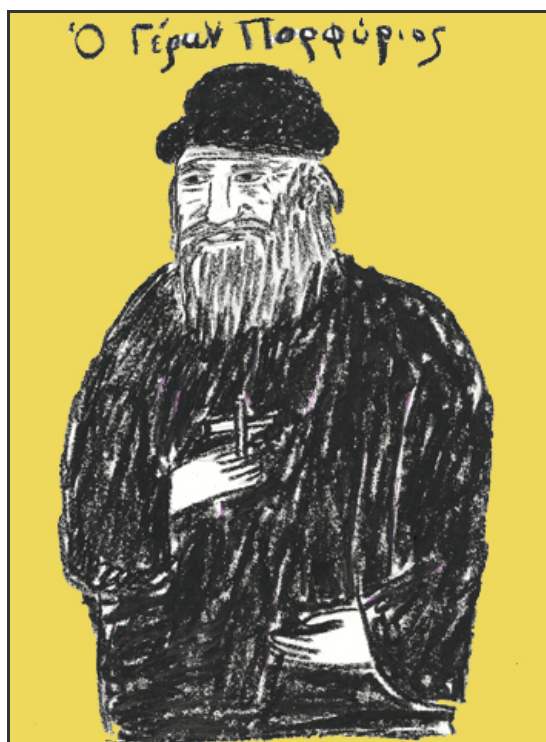
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Dr Dimitrios – James Manos  
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## WHAT ELDER PORPHYRIOS, A FAMOUS MONK, SAYS ABOUT HOW PARENTS & TEACHERS NEED TO TREAT THE YOUNG



*Father Porphyrios (drawing of the writer, September 2010)*

### WHO IS ELDER PORPHYRIOS?

Elder Porphyrios was a Greek monk – priest that was born on 1906 in the village 'Agios Ioannis' (Saint John) in the Greek island Eboia. Most people know him as a priest who preached in Athens (the capital of Greece), at the clinic 'Policlinic' at Omonia (Omonia is a square at the centre of Athens). He is the one that a maxim, says **'you can become a Saint even at 'Omonia' (i.e. in a buzzing and hustling city)**. He is also known for his **gift (given from God) to predict things** and he also had helped many people, often with miracles (ff course with the help of God).

He slept (died) on 1991 at the 'Agio Oros' (Holly Mountain) in his 'skiti' (cottage for monks) at Agios Georgios (Saint George) at the place Kausokalibia. He established a monastery (that was named 'Metamorphosi') at the place Milesi at Attica, Greece. Many people today believe that Elder Porphyrios is a modern Saint that should take his place from the formal church, amongst the rest Saints.

### ABOUT PARENTAL EDUCATION AND UPBRINGING

The education, says elder Porphyrios, lasts throughout life (lifelong education) and starts from fetal life, and constantly evolving. The most important educations and upbringing is the one held by the family.

According to elder Porphyrios, the family is the first physical means of upbringing and educating people. In the first 5 years of human life the family with all functions – visible and hidden, conscious and unconscious – helps on shaping the personality. The child and the adolescent observe the family roles played by parents. Children often identify themselves with the roles of parents. Sometimes, however, the children reject their parents and adopt a reactive behavior. This is obvious especially in dysfunctional families.

Elder Porphyrios teaches that the core of the personality of young people is organized in the framework of the dynamic relationships in the family. Elder Porphyrios in all the cases that came to him for confession, he studied their background of their intra-familial and marital relationships.

What makes good children, says elder Porphyrios, is the virtuous lives of parents at home. Parents should love God. **Parents, according to elder Porphyrios, should become 'saints', 'holy' near their children** and have gentleness, patience and love. They should be always available for their children, with enthusiasm and love for them. Then, with the grace of God, and their 'holiness' **they will transfer their good and virtuous feelings to their children.**

**For the bad behavior of the children, says elder Porphyrios, we should blame the parents.** Parents don't help their children with their advices and by 'lecturing'; neither by imposing a strict discipline, nor by controlling their life. If the parents don't 'sanctify' and become 'saints' and virtuous, they make a big mistake and send the wrong message to their children.

Love, unity and cooperation of parents and good understanding between them and their children gives a sense of security and confidence to their children. Otherwise, the children become unsafe and insecure. Often the unsecure children can lead to the 'safety' of a gang and/or obtain a violent behavior (as a reaction to a dysfunctional family).

**The behavior of the children is related to the situations they experienced in their family.** The negative attitude of parents creates wounds in the hearts of the children and leaves scars of injury in their souls that keep during their whole life. **These psychological scars are affecting their behavior and their relationship with the others, during the rest of their lives.**

In other words, the experiences the children carry from their childhood affect their lives and their behavior in relation to the others (family, sexual relationship, friends). **Children, says elder Porphyrios, become older, educated, but do not really change.** This is obvious even from the most minor events of their life.

Elder Porphyrios says that when you start from a young age with good memories and experiences, then when you grow up you don't have trouble to get good and virtuous, but you live goodness every day, you have it within you self, it is your property that does not vanish.

**The children with psychological problems (such as tantrum, frustration, isolation, violent behavior and other reactive behaviors), elder Porphyrios used to call them 'confused'.** Children with psychological problems, says elder Porphyrios, are usually created by negative experiences they lived in a troubled, with many conflicts, family life. Elder Porphyrios used to say that **'confused children come up from confused parents'**. The disturbance of homeostasis and balance of family bonds erases the educating and upbringing role of the parents.

**Elder Porphyrios says that family has a major responsibility for the mental status of everyone. He believes that the education and upbringing of children starts from the moment of their conception in the belly of their mother.** The fetus in the womb hears and feels, understands the movements and emotions of the mother. If the mother feels sadness, fear or anxiety, the feeling is transmitted to the fetus. **If the mother does not want her fetus, if she does not love it, this feeling is transmitted to the baby and creates wounds in its soul that carries throughout its life.**

Contrary, if the mother has positive emotions (joy, love for the fetus), it transmits them to the fetus. So a pregnant mother needs to pray much, to caress her belly, to love her baby and to live a 'holy', virtuous life. The pregnant mother has a huge responsibility and honour. She is responsible for the development of her kid, even during her pregnancy.

In relation to the teaching role of the parents, elder Porphyrios says that parents – especially the mothers – often know how to get nervous, distressed and also know to 'lecturing' their children, but they have not learned to pray for their children. **Advices, suggestions and 'lecturing' are often tiring for their children, says elder Porphyrios. Instead, the prayer goes immediately to their heart.**

**Prayer, silence and love help better from 'lecturing'.** However the parents love their children with human criteria and human means (however human love can often be pathological) and the children become 'confused' and their attitude is negative and reactive. But when the parents love each other and their children, children will not have problems. Elder Porphyrios summarizes his pedagogical teaching in one sentence: <<the 'sanctity' of the parents saves their children>>. But to do this, God's grace should visit the soul of the parents.

Elder Porphyrios says that the parents' life is the only thing that creates good children inside the house. **Parents should be very patient and 'saint'. They should truly love their children. And the children will share this love. For the bad attitude of the children, says elder Porphyrios, the parents are usually responsible.** The parents don't help their children with their repeating 'advices', the discipline that they impose and their strict rules.

If the parents don't become 'saints' and truly love their children, if they don't struggle for it, they make huge mistake and they convey to their kids their bad feelings that they have inside their soul. Then their children become reactive and insecure.

Contrary, says elder Porphyrios, **if the parents show love and communicate well themselves, then their children feel secure.** Their children's attitude is related directly with the attitude of their parents. When the children get hurt from their parents bad attitude (or the bad relationship between their parents), then they lose their strength to progress.

Once, elder Porphyrios met 2 young girls that came to him for confession (to confess their sins). He found out that one of the girls had a **dysfunctional life** that was related to her bad relations with her mother. The girl confessed that her parents had often arguments between themselves.

Another time a mother with her daughter visited elder Porphyrios. She said that she was desperate with her other daughter, because she expelled her husband from their home and for 2 years she pretended at her parents that her relationship with her husband was fine (however finding every time excuses for her husband for not appearing on the telephone). After conversation, the mother admitted that she had continually arguments with her husband and that had a negative impact on their relationship with their daughter who created a dysfunctional family, perpetuating the problems.

**Elder Porphyrios advises parents to knock on the door of the soul of their children gently, subtly and politely. They**

**should not become tedious and annoying their children with their 'lectures' and their overprotection.** So, says elder Porphyrios, most parents need to do a secret prayer for their children and say what they have to tell them secretly, to the soul of their children. **The perfect, as elder Porphyrios says, is the parents to talk to God and then God will speak to their children.**

**Children need people, and especially their parents, to make them a warm prayer. Cuddling and caressing them is not enough. They need better the spiritual touch of a prayer.** The child feels in the depths of its soul the spiritual messages that its parents (especially its mother) send, and feels safe and secure from this secret – psychic – embrace with its parents.

**Elder Porphyrios believes that the family is largely responsible for the psychological problems and the negative behavior of the children. The 'sanctity' of the parents prevents these problems.** The children need beside them 'saint' parents who love them (not in the sense of overprotection that 'chokes' them), and not to tire them with their 'lecturing' about moral issues.

Parents should not be limited to sterile words. Instead of only teaching, they should be themselves a good example. **They need to pray for their children and embrace them silently and secretly (mentally).** Elder Porphyrios states that even if parents do not quarrel with their child using physical violence, if they show resentment and glare them, then their child will understand their negative feelings.

Elder Porphyrios states that **children do not belong to the parents.** Their lives of their children belong to themselves, not to their parents. The role of parents is pedagogical, educational. **They need to respect their children and to behave democratically. They should see God in the face of their children and give God's love to them.**

**Parents, continues elder Porphyrios, need to understand that their words, their 'lecturing' and their suggestions do not work as effectively unless they follow what they say and also live a virtuous life.**

**Parents also serve as models, patterns.** With their experiences and their behavior they teach their children. As educators, they should improve themselves. Parents need lifelong spiritual perfection to achieve as educators.

**Elder Porphyrios says that the children in a dysfunctional family carry scars on their soul for their whole life and this influences their relationship with the others (including their partners, later) and they carry in their whole life these negative feelings.** It is totally a psychological phenomenon.

However, says elder Porphyrios, **parents should not 'change' their children with threats, strict rules, 'advices' and compulsions, because they rather make things worse. The parents should correct the situation by becoming more 'saint' themselves. If the parents give love, they will receive love. Children need love from their parents, and not threats, or parents that keep on lecturing to their children, however they do not follow the good example that they 'preach'.**

**Parents, says elder Porphyrios, shouldn't also 'push' their children. They shouldn't hurt their child by punishing it with a strict way or punishing it excessively.** They should avoid even to stare with a threatening way their child, because the child conceives a negative feeling and later when the parent are calm the child will react for the previous attitude and will not accept the 'sorry' or the caress of the parent, but will consider it as hypocrisy.

**Other parents tend to be overprotective on their children. They are stressed and anxious for their children and they transfer this stress on their kids.** Once, a mother complained to elder Porphyrios that her 5 years old child didn't obey her. The mother with her kid took a ride elder Porphyrios to a coast that was nearby. There, as the 2 adults were talking the 5 years old kid run towards the sea and jumped on a crag hill of sand and threatened its mother that it would lose its balance and fall into the sea!

The mother turned frightened, but elder Porphyrios asked her not to pay attention on her kid, but turn her back and ignore it (however he watched himself the kid with the side of his eye!). When the kid got tired challenging its mother, it slowly returned back and approached the 2 adults. **Children many times tend to 'test' their parents. Often they enjoy challenging them. It's always a reaction.**

Another mother complained to elder Porphyrios that her 3 years old son didn't eat all the foods, especially yogurt. The small kid 'tortured' his mother every day refusing to eat yogurt. Elder Porphyrios asked the mother a 'trick': to empty the fridge from all the food except yogurt! The parents should be patient for some days. They should only offer their child yogurt. If it doesn't eat it, it doesn't matter. He will finally get hungry and will eat it at last. The parents followed the elder's advice. Things happened as elder said and now yogurt is the favourite food for that kid!

This advice is different from a modern behaviourist approach where the parents 'play' their child's game and actually try to make it eat its meal. To my mind elder Porphyrios' approach is more educational and appropriate (with the behaviourist approach, parents tend to lower their level on their kids' level!).

**Mothers, says elder Porphyrios, that are continually up on their child's head and keep pressing it and treating it with an overprotective way have failed.** They should let their kid alone to take care for its own progress. Then it will achieve in REAL life. **When the parents are overprotective, their children become lazy, indolent, and usually fail in real life.**

Once a mother complained to elder Porphyrios that her son failed to pass the exams to enter at the university. He was the best student in the primary, the junior and the senior high school. Elder Porphyrios said to the mother that she was the one that oppressed her son all these years to be the best student, in order his family to feel proud. However all this pressure, that we call 'perfectionism', had a negative impact to the child. It was fed up from all this pressure and finally reacted to it by neglecting studying his lessons. Elder Porphyrios advised the mother not to press her son to be perfect, neither to be overprotective to it. Her son would move on, when his mother leave him free from this oppression.

Elder Porphyrios says also that **parents should also pray to God for their children. Their children's soul feels this prayer that secretly their parents sent. The children feel more secure when their parents (and especially their mother) pray for them.**

Once a mother visited elder Porphyrios at the monastery. She was desperate for her son that had not 'good' guys for friends, he was 'confused' and he returned home very late at night. Elder Porphyrios said to her just to pray for her son every night at a specific time. Elder Porphyrios also prayed the same time every night. He advised the mother not to press her son by 'lecturing' him because he returned late at home, but instead say him e.g.: 'My son, you can eat the food we have left you in the fridge'. She shouldn't say anything else. She just needed to treat her son with love.

About 20 days later the son asked his mother 'why aren't you talking to me?' (he meant: why isn't she complaining about his attitude e.g. for returning late in home). The mother said her son the words that elder Porphyrios advised. He also advised her to continue praying and not to complain and lecture her son's for his bad attitude. Her son, subconsciously, was torturing her because he wanted her to be punished for his (oppressive) attitude. He wanted to 'play' with his mother. When his mother stopped punishing him, he felt weird. He didn't have any more any reason for his reactive behaviour. Later, the kid visited elder Porphyrios without anyone speaking before for him. Today he is a very good young man that has joined the army force.

**Parents and teachers, says elder Porphyrios, should avoid extreme measures like excessive strictness, authoritarianism and violence** (physical, verbal, psychological, economical). **On the other hand, they should avoid offering too much freedom in their children, because that can often be akin to indifference.** They should avoid to over exaggerate, because they with this attitude they do not contribute to the intellectual and emotional maturity of their children. Instead, they help them with their moderation, their moderate indulgence and sometimes with their silence.

**Elder Porphyrios emphasized for the young the role of prevention, instead of treatment.** 'Prevention is better than treatment', Hippocrates (the ancient Greek doctor who established medicine as a science) used to say. The family should offer an atmosphere of love, peace and tranquility. Parents, says elder Porphyrios, should not exasperate their children, but educate them with their admonition to have a virtuous life.

**Elder Porphyrios sees God in the face of the people. Often he keeps silent, and with his silence he gives his advices. He also personalizes each case. He regards everyone as a unique personality. Thus, for the same incident he may give in two people two different advices.** In any unusual behavior he illuminates the causes it and then, with a distinctive way, he intervenes.

Elder Porphyrios accepts people as they are, with their weaknesses, their faults and their particularly behavior. He doesn't put all people inside the same mold. Neither he reacts to the (often extreme) external appearance, eccentric and provocative behavior (often of young people), but **always explores the root of their behavior, their soul and their motivation.**

In one case, religious and educated parents complained him that their son spends his teens in an explosive way. **He advised them to remain silent and to pray for their child and not overwhelm him with their moral issues and their 'lectures', otherwise they will strengthen the reactionary behavior** of their son. Their behavior infuriated their son.

**Elder Porphyrios teaches parents to learn to listen to their children and discuss the problems that preoccupy them.** He advised parents to always offer their parental arms open to their children, especially if their children feel loneliness, pain and rejection from their environment.

Elder Porphyrios emphasizes the value of **'positive action'** and stresses that benefits more people and helps developing the positive aspects of personality. He advises people not to deal with evil, which is like the thorns in the garden. People should not tackle the expulsion of evil. They should not deal with their passions. **Instead of fighting with evil, he advises that it is better (and easier) to direct the water, namely the strength of soul, towards the flowers of the garden. That is positive action.** Then they will rejoice and feel the fragrance and beauty of the flowers (namely with their virtuous life they will expel evil and get rid of the negative atmosphere).

In contrast, the **'negative action'** is harmful, says elder Porphyrios. Many parents (especially mothers) are characterized by a negative action towards their children, they oppress them, or contrary they are overprotective and are always over their heads. Then the children react and become sloth and fail in life, so then parents have failed their purpose. **Parents fail if they are oppressive or overprotective on their children. The authoritarian parents who impose by force or manipulation, and also the overprotective parents, fail.**

So parents, and especially mother, need to pray for their children, says elder Porphyrios. **'Pray more and say less words' elder Porphyrios used to say.** Parents should avoid bothering their kids. They should **rather pray, secretly.** By 'lecturing' to their kids, parents make their kids react with usually a negative behaviour.

**Mothers, says elder Porphyrios, should pray to God for their child. God will speak to the child Himself and the child will finally consider its behaviour and realize that it shouldn't frustrate its mother with its bad attitude.** Otherwise, the child reacts and subconsciously 'punishes' its parents for their oppression, by following a negative behaviour. **Traumatized and psychologically injured children react badly. Of course they usually regret for it.**

Parents shouldn't force their children to pray to God or follow them at the church. Children will react negatively if they sustain this oppression. It's not a coincidence that most people today do not believe to any kind of religion (namely are atheists or even nihilists). They were pushed from their parents to be faithful; however, they reacted to this pressure of their 'faithful' and religious parents.

Another kind of reaction, says elder Porphyrios, is with their peers, when the children have bad guys for friends, or they say vulgar lay words. Of course **parents should be the perfect example for their children and follow their own advices.**

**Parents should also teach their children to be humble,** says elder Porphyrios. **They should be very careful when they praise them.** They should not say their child 'you will accomplish everything, you are great, you are perfect etc'. **Most parents praise their kids. However, they don't help them with this attitude.** All the Saint people were humble. God is the only one who

is perfect. **Parents, by praising their children, don't make them ready for the difficulties of real life. The children can't adjust to real life and then they fail.**

**Too much care and overprotection are characteristics of parental anxiety. Often the parents are anxious about the future of their children (to get married and make a family and to find a job). Their stress creates anxiety in their children. Parents often try to fulfill their unfulfilled desires and dreams through their children.**

Parents often try, through their children, to ensure the status of the family (e.g. when their child becomes recognized on its profession). Elder Porphyrios notes that in a case a mother was responsible for the problematic behavior of her son with her perfectionism to make him first in everything in order to get into the 'high society'.

Elder Porphyrios says that **continuous and excessive praising of the children by their parents (or their teachers) is wrong because it makes them swell with pride. Then the children become selfish and egocentric. They grow in selfishness and can't adjust to society.**

On the other hand, **humble are more adaptive in the society, do not create problems to other people and do not get angry when someone shows their error.** Elder Porphyrios says that parents can teach their children to live simple and humble and not to seek praise continually. **'Humility is healthy', says elder Pophyrios.**

## THE EDUCATIONAL ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Those reported to parents apply to teachers as well. **The teachers can help their students to school with their prayer and their 'sanctity'.** They should ask for God's grace and not to try to correct their students in a human manner. **Often teachers transmit their anxiety to their students. With faith in God, their stress goes away. They also need to have distinction.**

Their love for students should be true and not human, as often parents do. They need to pray for each student. **Before entering the classroom, they should pray for their students. When they enter the classroom they should embrace with their look all the students.** After talking to them, they should offer completely themselves to their students. They should not say much about God at their students, because the young often react to religion. They need a proper preparation.

**So it is better to pray to God for their students. However, love requires sacrifice of time. If teachers are virtuous, then God will speak to the students in the classroom or the auditorium.**

**Teachers, says elder Porphyrios, should avoid praising their students, because in that case they become selfish and with this egoism they go away from God and they ignore their parents and teachers.** Parents and teachers shouldn't say any lie to their children/students, neither should they praise them. Praising the young makes them selfish. **They ask for praising in their whole life. If it is not given, they get frustrated.** They can't also adjust to society which is cruel for the unprepared. Later, these kids will end up to the psychiatrist's coach. **'Always tell the truth to the young. Don't praise them, neither over exaggerate',** says father Porphyrios.

**'We should also not ask for the others to love us, by praising them. We have to learn to love, without asking to be loved. We should love and make sacrifices. By praising the youth we cultivate their super – Ego, inflating their selfishness. We should not keep the youth away from the real values of life. We should teach the youth to be humble. Then they can change the world!'**, says elder Porphyrios.

The attitude of today's society harms the young, says elder Porphyrios. The result is that **today the young are frustrated and struggle to say their parents (and teachers) that 'you need to understand us'.** **However the parents/ teachers don't hear them.** The parents/teachers shouldn't lower themselves on the level of the young. Instead, they should pray for them. God will help them!

Teachers, says elder Porphyrios, should avoid using human 'educational' ways to 'correct' their students. Most teachers transfer to their students their own stress. **They should treat them with real love, as if they were their parents.**

If a student makes trouble, says elder Porphyrios, then the teacher should first make a general comment saying: 'Students, we are here for lesson, a very important job. I am here to help you. You are also tired to achieve in your life. I love you all. I struggle too to help you. So, please remain quiet to achieve our purpose'. The teacher should look the student that is troublemaker. If the student continues its bad behaviour, then the teacher should respond to it, not with anger, but with a serious and steady way. **Teachers need to impose in their classroom in order to affect their students' soul. Students are not responsible for their bad behaviour. It is their parents' responsibility.**

Teachers should also teach their students about love, says elder Porphyrios. They should say them that: 'only love makes all beautiful, fills our life and has a great meaning in it. **We all have 2 selves. One is mean and evil; and one is good. We have to cultivate our good part that offers progress, love and goodness. Our bad part wants as lazy and unconcerned for everything** (after all, today most people are selfish and egocentric). However, everything needs a proper preparation. Love needs sacrifices'.

Once a teacher was frustrated from the bad behaviour of one of his students and wanted to dismiss him from the school. On the meantime a new teacher came to the school. The old teacher informed the new one about the naughty student. He also informed the new teacher that the student liked a lot bicycles.

The second day the new teacher entered the class and said to the students: 'Students, I have a problem. My legs are tired when I walk long and I want to drive a bicycle, however I have never drove any. Is there anyone that can teach me how to drive a bicycle?' The naughty student replied 'I know!' Since then, the new teacher and the 'naughty' student became best friends. The old teacher

then felt that he wasn't capable to impose himself to that student.

## UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECTING THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Elder Porphyrios advises to rejoice in everything around us. **For the plants, the animals, the birds, the mountains, the sea, the sunset, the stars in the sky and in general all the animate and inanimate elements of nature that teach us and lead us to God. They are all signs of God's love.** Through them we come to love: to God. All those that are related to nature help us in our spiritual life, by the grace of God. Elder Porphyrios says that when he feels the harmony of nature, he cries.

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## NOTE

1. Of course the word 'love' in this text has anything to do with the sexual meaning of the word (as we say e.g. 'make love' instead of 'make sex') that our corrupted modern society has replaced, especially thru the media. Love here has a Christian meaning that most today forget.
2. I have added some small comments on elder Porphyrios' words, however without changing their meaning. I also haven't changed his original words (under quotations).