

*A few tips to parents on*

## HOW TO PREVENT ELOPEMENTS

by Joseph I. Stoffel, S.J.



If your daughter elopes, does she violate the Fourth Commandment?

*Maybe. Maybe not!*

Maybe the parents are the ones who have violated the Fourth Commandment.

An elopement generally means that parental authority has broken down somewhere. Sometimes a foolish and sinful young couple disregard the prudent advice, well-founded on mature experience, which is given them by the best of parents. But it happens sometimes that parents are also at fault, and practically drive their children to sin. The basic cause of some elopements is the ironic fact that some parents, in trying to strengthen parental authority, are actually destroying it.

There are two ways in which some parents violate the Fourth Commandment and destroy parental authority, namely:

1. By abusing authority which they rightfully possess.

2. By usurping authority which they do not rightfully possess.

Let us consider these in reverse

order, — the more sinful violation first.

The Fourth Commandment obliges your children to love, revere, and respect you as long as you live; but it does not oblige them to obey you as long as you live. You always have the right to advise them, but your right to their obedience ceases when they are legitimately emancipated from your parental authority.

This is especially true in the matter of choosing a state in life. It is God, not the parents, who gives your son or daughter the right to become a priest or a religious or to marry the one he or she loves; and parents sin against the Fourth Commandment when they usurp authority which belongs to God. When your 21-year old son or daughter, after respectfully listening to your advice and carefully weighing it, finds that his conscience dictates acting contrary to your wishes, that son or daughter is by no means disobedient. There can be no disobedience in acting contrary to the prohibition of one who has no authority to prohibit.

And if, by violence or the abuse of reverential fear, parents prevent their emancipated child from exercising the authority given him by God to make his own decisions, it is the parents who are guilty of disobedience against the Fourth Commandment. They are attacking real, God-given, authority in unjustly exercising false, usurped, authority. And remember that he who attacks authority anywhere, weakens authority everywhere, including your own parental authority where it rightfully exists. Destruction of obedience to God's Law where you have no right to command, destroys obedience to God's Law where you do have a right to command. This usurpation of invalid parental authority where God has not granted parental authority is a fruitful source of elopements.

Another fruitful source of elopements is the abuse of parental authority where it does rightfully exist. Parents certainly have the right and the duty to supervise the lives of their minor children within the limitations of the Divine Order. But when parents ruthlessly guard their daughter against any possibility of acquaintance with future potential suitors and keep her locked up in a cage, as it were, carefully preserved until such day as the parents themselves will decide on a husband for her, such parents are acting contrary to the Divine Order of things and are abusing their parental authority. Moreover, their little canary bird might, in desperation, escape from her cage one day and fly off into sin with the first ne'er-do-well who dares to

break the lock, — with one whom she scarcely knows, and certainly does not love.

During adolescence and the years approaching marriageable age, young men and women have a natural, normal, healthy interest in one another. God put that interest in their hearts, and it is good. The function of parents is to guide that interest, supervise it, protect against its dangers, but not to suppress it. We cannot suppress it anyway, and if we try, we upset God's plan; we substitute our own program for the one which God has designed as His way of bringing about Christian marriages and the founding of Christian families. It is not easy to supervise the natural, normal preliminaries to your daughter's marriage according to God's program. It is much easier to lock up your daughter and drive all young men away from your home. But parents who act thus are not doing their duty as parents. They are violating the Fourth Commandment. How can your daughter choose a good husband and found a healthy Christian family if you give her no chance to make a reasoned selection, if you give her no opportunity to find that mutual love on which a healthy Christian family must be founded? Don't say that you will make the choice for her! God did not give you the authority to make the choice for her. God gave your daughter the right to decide whether she will be a religious, whether she will marry or not, and whom she will marry. God gave you the authority only to guide, advise, and help her in making her decision.

If you abuse your parental authority you militate against the idea of obedience as God has designed it, and you destroy that very parental authority which you wish to maintain.

Are these truths too difficult for Christians to swallow? Our Lord did not suppress Divine truths because some of His followers found those truths difficult to swallow and "walked no more with Him". Christ did not commission His Church to "go forth and teach all nations those truths which they like to hear". That is a Protestant idea. It is unfair and unjust for parents to fume against the parish priest because he helps their son or daughter to marry against their will, or to enter religious life. The priest is only doing his duty. It is God against whom such parents are fuming. Sometimes one hears the complaint that God's regulation of parental authority is contrary to our Filipino traditions. Surely any traditions which are contrary to the regulation of parental authority as God has designed it are not from our Christian heritage, but rather of

pagan origin. Such traditions are also strong in China and other pagan countries. Will we, the only Christian people of the Orient, allow the last vestiges of paganism to remain unpurged from among our glorious and ancient Christian Filipino traditions? We are Christians! Let us not prefer pagan traditions to God's Law. Let us cherish only those traditions which are Christian and therefore truly Filipino.

If we wish to strengthen parental authority, we must respect all authority wherever it rightfully exists, and keep it within its rightful bounds. For wherever authority exceeds its rightful bounds, true authority somewhere else is infringed upon, and all authority suffers. If we wish to prevent sinful elopements and disobedience on the part of our children, we must respect the rights of our children and the limitations which God has placed on our parental authority. If we wish our children to keep the Fourth Commandment, we must lead the way by keeping the Fourth Commandment ourselves.

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### THE ARTIST'S TASK

*To comprehend art not as a convenient means of egotistical advantages and unfruitful celebrity, but as a sympathetic power which binds men together; to develop one's own life to that lofty dignity which floats before talent as an ideal; to open the understanding of artists to what they should and what they can do; to rule public opinion by the noble ascendancy of a high, thoughtful life, and to kindle and nourish in the minds of men that enthusiasm for the beautiful which is so nearly allied to the Good,—that is the task which the artist has set before him.*

—LISZT