

# Reflections

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## Are You Stuck In Serious Sin?

### St. Ephigenia of Ethiopia

## What is the Christian Doctrine of Salvation?

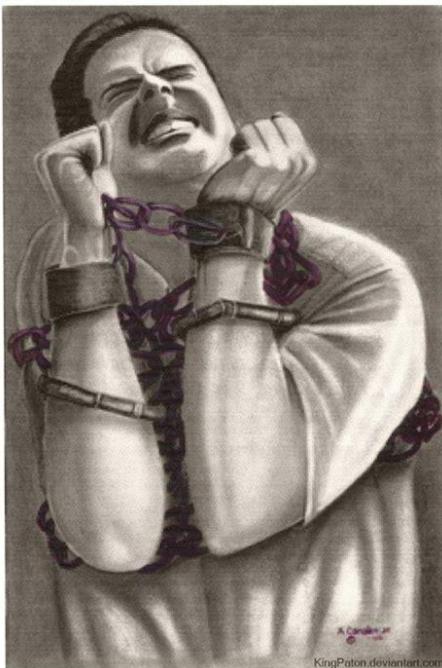
## The Importance of Dads

### Blessing to All:

**By: Richard Pickard**

If you are living in serious sin and think that *"one day I will repent and stop living in serious sin, but for now, I enjoy this sin too much, and don't want to give it up,"* you are risking your eternal soul.

If this is you, then what you are thinking is not from God, but a lie and deliberate deception from the Devil.



The chains that bind souls to serious sin are powerful and heavy.

I remember a parable of a young man, told to me many years ago. I forgot who told me, but it has meaning to many souls who are trapped in serious sin today. The sin this young man repeatedly committed, took the grace of God from his soul.

This is how the story goes. There was a young man, we will call him James, who was walking with Jesus and had his arm around Jesus' shoulder. He told people he was a Christian. As he was walking with Jesus, James spots a prostitute that he frequents regularly. She smiles at him and he smiles back. Then James, removes his arm from around Jesus'

shoulder and says to Jesus, "I'll be back later to continue our walk together. But first, I will go to be with this woman." After some time, James comes back to where he left Jesus, and puts his arm around Jesus' shoulder again and continues to walk with Him. James repeated this sin, many times in his life. He never changed. Jesus was always there waiting for him to seek forgiveness and to receive the graces needed to break the chains of impurity. One day James died. His spirit went to look for Jesus and after searching for many hours, he finally found him. "Ah, there you are my old friend. Let us continue with our walk."

Jesus turns to James and says, ***"For many years, you committed this same serious sin of impurity and never ask me to forgive you. Each time I was there waiting for you to ask for my forgiveness, but you never did. Now that you are no longer among the living, it is too late from my forgiveness."*** James was surrounded by demons which grabbed him and started pulling him to hell. James turns for a last look at Jesus and heaven. He then sees the woman in heaven who he committed sin with. ***"Why is she there?"*** he shouted.



***Jesus looks at him and says, "She saw me everyday with you and wondered who I was. One day, I found her crying and heard her pray, "If there is a God who loves me, please help me for I am a sinful woman and full of shame." I told her, "Come to me. I will give you rest and will forgive your sins. I forgave her sins, and she gave up the evil life she had known to follow Me. In your pride, you called yourself a Christian, but never repented of your sins nor changed your evil habits of impurity."***

The woman died the same day as James, but she had repented and ask for Jesus' help to change her ways. Whereas the young man was happy in his sins and did not change his evil ways.

Some reading this story may think that "you **can't** ask Jesus for forgiveness in the last moments of your life," but that is not true.

When Jesus was dying on the cross, one of the condemned men on the cross next to Him, asks Jesus to remember him, when Jesus entered into His kingdom. And

Jesus replies, "This day, you will be with Me, in paradise." **It is never too late to seek forgiveness.**

This story of James may be fictional, but represents people in serious sin, who do not ask Jesus to help them. They go about their everyday life, carelessly thinking, that **"one day, I will repent of these serious sins."**

If you are trapped in serious sin, no matter what it is, please say this prayer. **"Jesus, I need your help. This sin is too hard to break. It is a habit that controls me. Come into my life and guide me and forgive me."**

**What do you have to lose?** You have everything to gain. Your walk with Jesus maybe hard at first, but it will get easier in time and your life will change for the better. ***Stay away from bad friends. Stay away from things that lead you into serious sin. Stay away from Internet Sites that cause harm to your soul. Stay away from too much alcohol.***

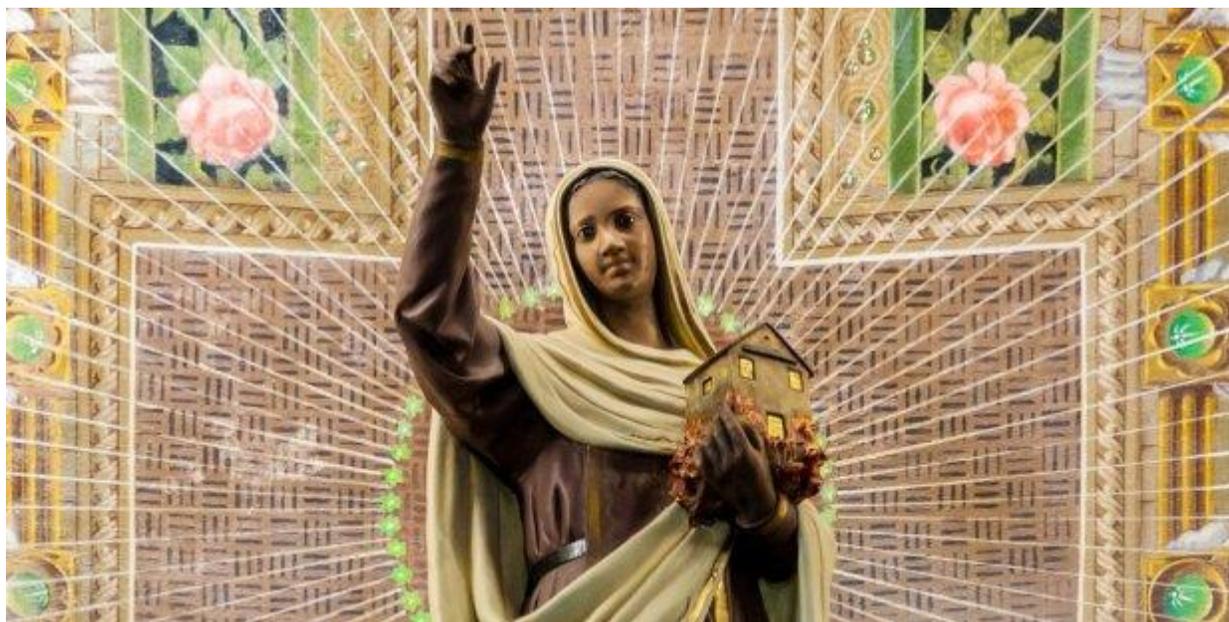


Jesus will help you break the chains of serious sin. Trust in Him.

The Devil does not want to lose you and will put up many roadblocks and temptations to lead you back into serious sin. ***But Jesus will be there for you, each step of the way. Pray each morning for his help. Stop thinking about your past sins and think about today and your future. You will win the battle against the Devil. Jesus is stronger and loves you. The Devil only wants to destroy you. Jesus wants to give you happiness and eternal life in heaven.***



Make today, the day you stop lying to yourself. You can change. Believe it and believe in Jesus. Amen.



### **St. Ephigenia of Ethiopia Heard the Gospel from St. Matthew Himself**

St. Ephigenia was born a princess to the Royal House of Ethiopia in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. As a nation steeped in the paganism of the era, Ethiopia was to become witness to St. Matthew the Evangelist, who spread the Gospel there and converted much of the people.

Though we know little for certain about the events that transpired, an idea of her conversion and the efforts of the Apostle can be garnered from *The Golden Legend*, a medieval collection of stories about the many saints and heroes of the Catholic Church. This legend gives detail to St. Matthew's travels in Africa; his story is closely bound to the Princess Ephigenia.

### **The Evangelist Converts the Princess**

St. Ephigenia was a princess of the Kingdom of Ethiopia when St. Matthew arrived and began to evangelize the people. Inspired by his words, she converted to the Catholic Faith and sought to consecrate herself to God. St. Matthew invested her with the veil, and she became leader of a group of some 200 virgins who also wished to consecrate themselves to the Heavenly Spouse.



St. Ephigenia is depicted with the burning Church she saved. It was not long before the Devil sought to undo the good the Apostle had brought to this land, and the newly reigning King Hirtacus saw Ephigenia and desired her to be his spouse. When Ephigenia refused him, the King besought the Apostle to persuade Ephigenia to relent to his wishes. In response, St. Matthew told Hirtacus to attend Mass the next day. The King assumed that St. Matthew would oblige Ephigenia to marry him there.

At first, it seemed to go as Hirtacus expected. St. Matthew opened his sermon with a long defense of the nobility of marriage, how it was a good and virtuous Sacrament founded by Almighty God in Paradise and sanctified by Christ. At the end, the Apostle left a long silence before continuing and Hirtacus thought his moment had come.

Suddenly, despite expectations, St. Matthew stated that marriage was good, but that stealing another's spouse was a crime. If it were wrong to violate marriage by stealing the spouse of another, how much more so was it wrong for Hirtacus, an earthly king, to try and steal the spouse consecrated to Almighty God Himself?

Hirtacus raged at this rebuttal, leaving the Church in a fury, and ordering his swordsman to slay the man who defied him so. And thus, it happened. St. Matthew was kneeling before the altar after Mass. A King's swordsman entered, and the Apostle was martyred.

Seeking to further avenge himself, King Hirtacus then ordered Ephigenia's convent to be burned. The fires were starting to engulf the building when this noble Abbess prayed for help to her preceptor, St. Matthew. The Apostle duly appeared and blessed the flames, causing them to turn against the Royal Palace. Soon after, the King's son became possessed and Hirtacus himself contracted leprosy and ended by committing suicide.

## The Modern Story

Beyond her relationship to St. Matthew and his martyrdom in Ethiopia little is known about St. Ephigenia. As an early Saint her case followed no formal

canonization procedure. Following Ethiopia's adherence to the Monophysite heresy (Council of Chalcedon 451 A.D.) there was little contact between Ethiopia and Rome, leaving details of this early virgin Saint scarce.



### **Processions honoring St. Ephigenia in Brazil, *above***

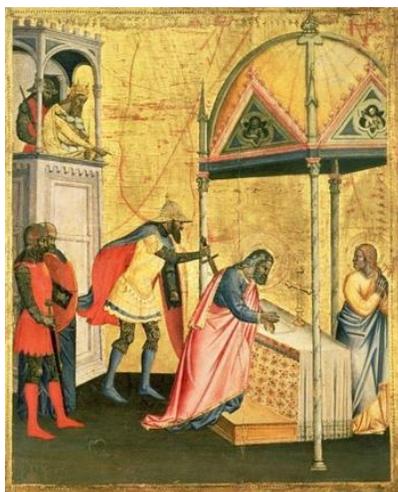
Yet, despite this apparent paucity of information, a strong devotion to St. Ephigenia exists today in the far-flung regions that once comprised the Portuguese Empire. When Portugal brought slaves from Africa to Brazil in the colonial period, there were many who had roots in the ancient Kingdom of Ethiopia. These men and women maintained their devotion to St. Ephigenia that had been alive in their native country. Thus, did devotion to St. Ephigenia take root in the New World, and she became the *de facto* patron saint of the African-descent Catholics in Brazil.



### **Procession in Lima, Peru.**

Today, many Brazilian Churches are dedicated to St. Ephigenia and processions honoring her are common. Devotion to this African Saint was also brought to Peru. She has been chosen as Patron Saint of many African-Brazilian brotherhoods and arts. Statues frequently depict her holding a convent in flames, a symbol of the religious house she saved through recourse to St. Matthew.

## The End of St. Matthew



The martyrdom of St. Matthew came about because King Hirtacus refused to recognize the superiority of the consecrated state of virgins over marriage. The role of St. Ephigenia as the catalyst for the martyrdom of the evangelist St. Matthew is pivotal. Following the suicide of King Hirtacus, Ethiopia converted, and many Churches were built. Tradition tells us that Ephigenia continued to lead the community of nuns for many years and that she died a peaceful death.

The martyrdom of St. Matthew depicted with St. Ephigenia watching, as a soldier kills him with a sword.

St. Ephigenia is an archetype of the early acceptance of the Faith in Africa, providing a saintly and fervent example to the newly converted. Through her we have an illustration of the vocation of Africa, a Saint ready to embrace the Faith and defy worldly ambitions and barbarous persecutions.

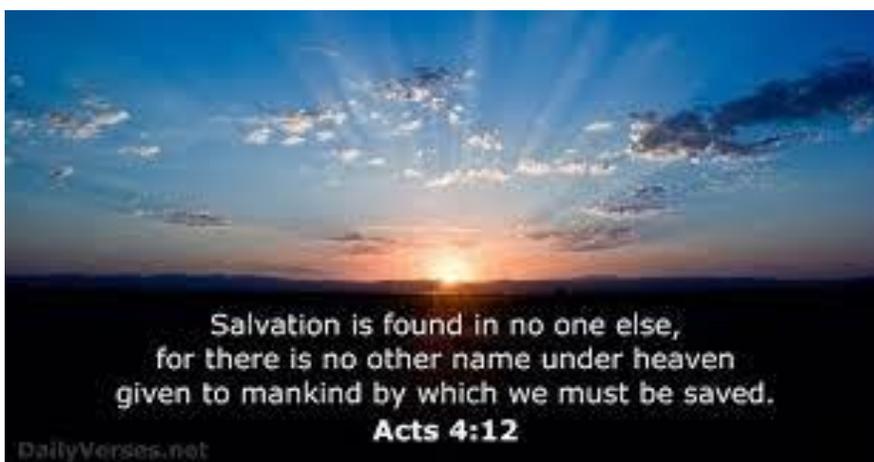
**It is very expressive to note that, with this example of St. Ephigenia, Africa stands as one of the first continents to accept the Gospel. All Catholics, no matter to what race we belong, are indebted to those first Africans who adhered to the Gospel of Our Lord Jesus Christ and helped to**

**spread it over the world.**



Let the life of St. Ephigenia of Ethiopia, inspire us with the same fervor and fidelity to our vocations. Like her, let us also stride for perfection and have no hesitation to have recourse to the saints, whose prayers before God so greatly excel our own.

## What is the Christian doctrine of salvation?



By: Billy Graham

How can we know where we stand with God? The Bible teaches that the assurance of salvation rests securely upon four unshakable pillars:

### **Pillar 1: God Cannot Lie!**

First, assurance is based on the absolute trustworthiness of Scripture. Throughout the New Testament, we read God's promises to save all who will believe upon His Son. The Bible says, "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved." This is a promise!

Jesus said, "The one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out." If you come to Jesus with genuine repentance and faith, He promises that He will save you. We can know Jesus will receive us because, quite simply, He said so! When the Bible speaks, God speaks. And what God said, He will surely do. He will save all who call upon Jesus Christ. You have His word on it.

### **Pillar 2: Jesus Paid It All**

Second, assurance rests on the finished work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus died on the cross, He bore our iniquities, enduring God's wrath, and cried out, "It is finished!" By this, He meant that the full atonement for all our sins-past, present and future-has been made. His work of redemption was now completed, our entire sin debt is paid in full.

Just as salvation comes from believing in Christ alone, so does assurance. As we trust in Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins, the certainty of eternal life floods our hearts. No matter how great your sin, God's grace is greater still. The Bible says, "Come now, and let us reason together. ... Though your sins are as scarlet, They will be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They will be like wool."

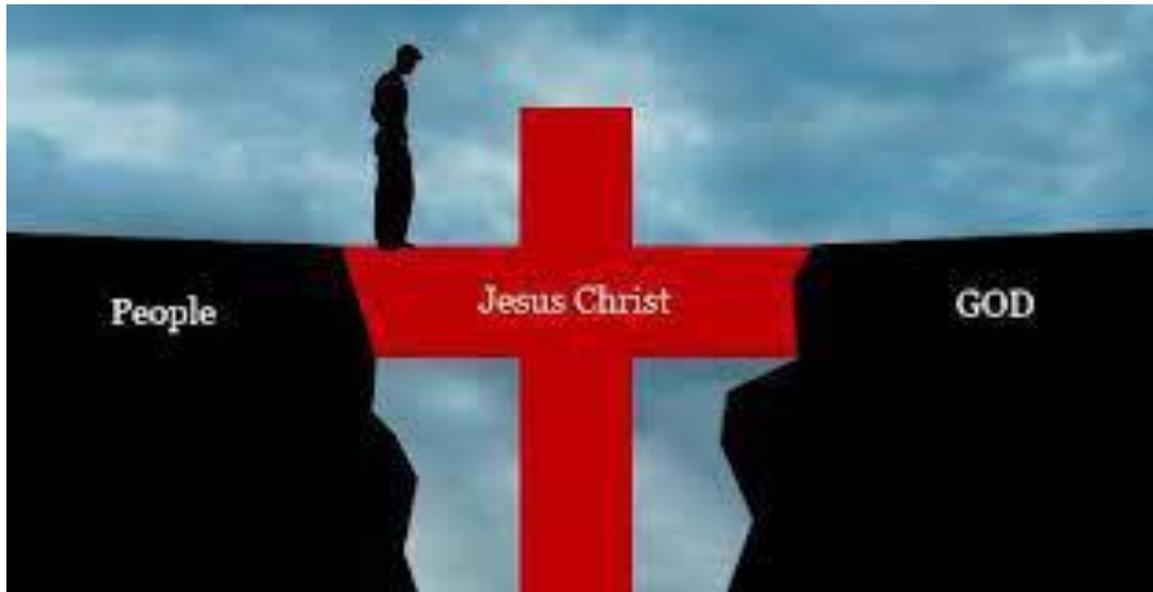


### **Pillar 3: The Great Convincer**

Third, assurance comes through the inward witness of the Holy Spirit. A divinely produced gift, assurance is bestowed by God's Spirit to all true believers. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to convince our hearts of our salvation.

The Bible says, "We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit which He has given us. By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." This means, the Holy Spirit who convicted, called and converted us also convinces us that we belong to Christ. It is the Spirit's inward witness that persuades us of the genuineness of our salvation.

## Pillar 4: New Life in Christ



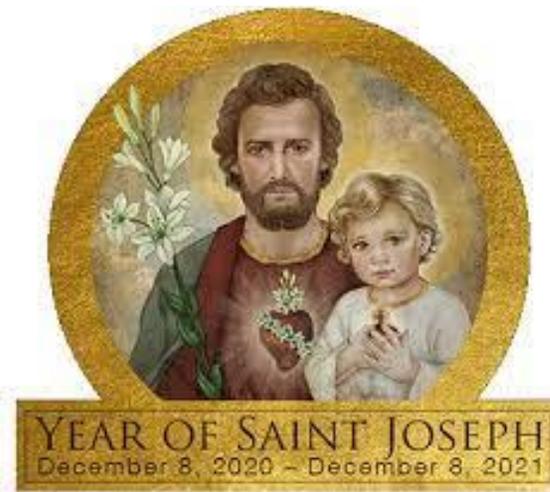
Fourth, assurance comes through the evidence of a ***changed life***. Ultimately, assurance is confirmed within us as we see God conforming us into the image of Jesus Christ. **While we will never become perfect in this life, we will, nevertheless, experience a changed life. It is this inward transformation that provides strong confirmation of our salvation.**

The book of First John details what are the vital signs of our new life in Christ. The Apostle John writes, “We know that we have come to know Him, **if we keep His commandments.**” In other words, we may be certain that we know Christ as we see within us a desired and willing obedience to God’s Word.

**Likewise, John writes, other vital signs will follow: Love for other people, love for God, refusing the world, understanding biblical truth, righteous behavior, opposition from the world and answered prayer. As we see this spiritual fruit produced in our lives, we may be confident that Christ lives within us.**

Here are the four sturdy pillars on which the assurance of our salvation rests. Giving “full assurance of hope” regarding our personal relationship with Jesus Christ, these pillars provide unshakable confidence of eternal life.

Assurance of salvation is God’s blessed gift for all who believe: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.”



## Stories of Dads - Real-Life Heroes

By: Charlotte Andersen

Originally Published in Reflections Newsletter October 2020

### He showed me how a man should treat a woman



“My dad is the definition of a hero—both as a veteran of the Air Force, where he worked to save lives every day, and as an example to me. When I was a little girl, my dad made it a part of our Saturday routine to share a banana split at our neighborhood Baskin Robbins. It wasn’t just about getting ice cream though. He would get me dressed up, pull my chair out for me, and basically show me how a gentleman should treat a lady.

These daddy-daughter dates were the highlight of my weekends. I didn’t realize it then, but he was instilling in me a sense of self-worth and love that has stayed with me my whole life. My dad is the standard that I hold all other men to!” — **Vanessa Parker**, founder of Pink Boss, Warner Robins, GA.

## My dad made me finish high school because he didn't



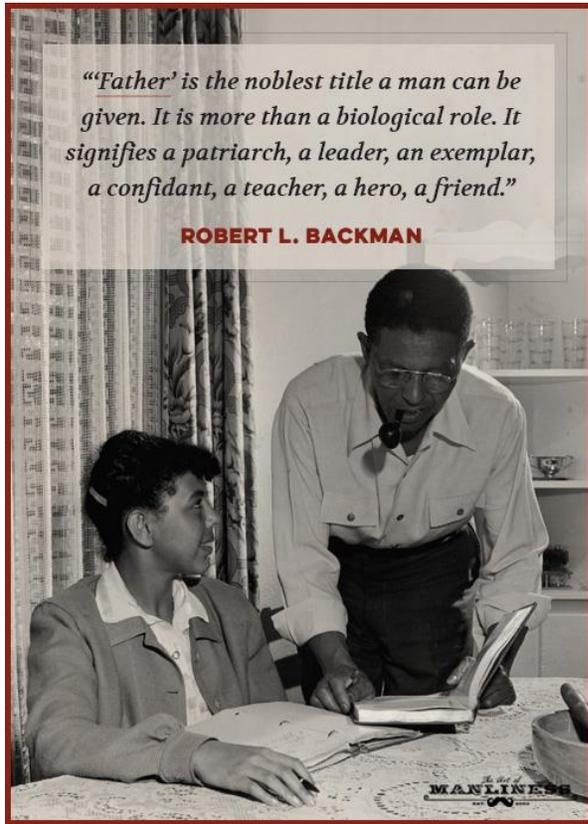
"By the time I was a senior in high school I was basically over it. I'd been 'homeschooling' but really, I just wasn't doing anything and didn't care if I graduated or not. But then I moved in with my dad and he decided I was going to get my degree and that was it. It was only seven months until graduation and I had nothing done, but he knew that I would need that diploma to be successful, and he wouldn't let me fail. He signed me up for Utah

Connections Academy, an online school, and pushed me to do it. He woke me up every morning and set a schedule where I did nothing but school for six hours a day, seven days a week. He checked all my homework and monitored my grades. He was pretty annoying, honestly, but I knew it was for the best. And hey, it worked. I got it all done and graduated with my class this month. I know he's so proud of me and I'm proud of me too. Now I am applying to culinary schools to follow my dream of being a chef, and I know with the 'get it done' attitude I learned from him, I can do anything." —Chase Cubelo, Moab, UT

## My dad was my invisible guardian angel



"My parents divorced when I was just four years old, and from that point on I rarely saw my dad. Both my parents remarried other people and I grew up thinking that he didn't care much about me—that is until I got married. It was then that my stepmother said my mom had warned him to stay away from us kids, blocking him from seeing us. But he loved us so much that every morning he would drive and park across from a crosswalk near our elementary school. It was a very busy road and he never went to work until he made sure we all made it safely across and into school. He did this every day until we all finished grade school. None of us kids ever saw him at the time, but after my stepmom shared the story with us, I was so touched. My dad was far from perfect, but I love that he watched over me and was with me, even when I didn't know he was there." —Ann Hetzel, Milwaukee, WI.



*“Father’ is the noblest title a man can be given. It is more than a biological role. It signifies a patriarch, a leader, an exemplar, a confidant, a teacher, a hero, a friend.”*

**ROBERT L. BACKMAN**

**To all the Dad’s out there. What you say and what your children see you do, will greatly influence them.**

**Father’s do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. (Eph 6:4)**

**Funny Things From the Mouths Of Children**

**Realizing that their home just wasn't big enough with the new baby in the house, Little Johnny's parents discussed moving to a bigger one.**

**Little Johnny sat patiently listening to his parents, then piped in, "It's no use. He'll just follow us anyway."**

**When my grandson, Billy, and I entered our vacation cabin, we kept the lights off until we were inside to keep from attracting pesky insects.**

**Still, a few fireflies followed us in. Noticing them before I did, Billy whispered, "It's no use, Grandpa. The mosquitoes are coming after us with flashlights."**

**Ask a Kid to Finish a Prover and You Get This**

**If You Lie Down With The Dogs, “You'll... Smell funny in the morning.”**

**Strike while the .....“Bug is close”**

**Never underestimate the power of.....“Termites”**

**Don't bite the hand that..... “looks dirty”**

### Bible Question to Kids

When was medicine first mentioned in the Bible?  
When God gave Moses two tablets.



**The International Catholic Family Newsletter  
Is Published Monthly**

**Our mission statement is to motivate people to pray and to be Christian examples in their work, home and with others, for those needing the Light in a world of Darkness.**

**<https://www.catholicfamilynewsletter.com>**

**I am watching over you. Pray my children,  
Pray, Pray, Pray My Rosary For The Salvation of Sinners**



**For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD,  
"plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to  
give you hope and a future. Jeremiah 29:11**

**Happy Fathers Day**