



What a Bouquet!

Harmony in our Efforts — *Such a recognition of the work of the Holy Spirit as the Educator of mankind, in things intellectual as well as in things moral and spiritual, gives us 'new thoughts of God, new hopes of Heaven,' a sense of harmony in our efforts and of acceptance of all that we are. What stands between us and the realisation of this more blessed life? This; that we do not realise ourselves as spiritual beings invested with bodies, living, emotional, a snare to us and a joy to us, but which are, after all, the mere organs and interpreters of our spiritual intention. Once we see that we are dealing spirit with spirit with the friend at whose side we are sitting, with the people who attend to our needs, we shall be able to realise how incessant is the commerce between the divine Spirit and our human spirit. It will be to us as when one stops one's talk and one's thoughts in the springtime, to find the world full of bird-music unheard the instant before. In like manner we shall learn to make pause in our thoughts, and shall hear in our intellectual perplexities, as well as in our moral, the clear, sweet, cheering and inspiring tones of our spiritual Guide. We are not speaking here of what is commonly called the religious life, or of our definite approaches to God in prayer and praise; these things all Christian people comprehend more or less fully; we are speaking only of the intellectual life, the development of which in children is the aim of our subjects and methods of instruction.*¹

Homeschooling is challenging and requires sacrifice to do it well. Practicing Charlotte Mason's philosophy of education at home is additionally challenging in that being faithful to this work necessitates that the parent-teacher engage deeply with the texts and materials and participate actively alongside the children. This often occupies much of the day, and then it takes time to prepare for future lessons. This work is not to be taken lightly and beckons one to such virtues as patience, fortitude, and temperance.

As followers of Christ, we know children are a gift from God. And not only are children a gift, "they are like arrows in a warrior's hands" . . . and one should be joyful "if his quiver is full of them." And we are. But sometimes, in the day-to-day routine, we may need to be reminded of the preciousness of the gift of a "full quiver."

An Ambleside homeschool mother shares a poem born out of struggle and inspired by an idea from a wise and winsome priest – a priest "who didn't look on me in sympathy when I said I have seven daughters but instead said, "What a Bouquet!" In a moment, these three simple words shed a better light on a year's work of daily lessons and nurturing and mending relationships. In her poem, she describes each daughter as a unique flower in a beautiful bouquet, purposefully turning her thoughts from frustration to what is good, true, and beautiful. How lovely our thoughts and actions may be when directed

toward God with a simple idea of finding beauty in struggle and contentment with our lot, whatever these may be. May this be an encouragement and a reminder to “not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap . . .”²

Sunflower

Her petals attract the rays of sunshine that have travelled through the heavens just for her.

She moves only to be receptive to her gift from above.

Ivy

She winds her way on and forward finding the smallest of homes for her tendrils.

Then she holds on tenaciously, courageously, growing in impossible places.

Peony

How extravagant she is! She holds nothing back, sharing herself completely.

Rose

She is the reward of the most patient of caretakers. She is abundant in the hands of a master who lives to witness her blooms, her full perfection.

Carnation

She is hearty and careless for herself, sacrificing herself often for the whims and cares of others.

Forget-Me-Not

Every petal she has is so small and delicate, forming each flower, then strung together like a river that starts with a drop of water and eventually carves and shapes rock itself.

Violet

Purple–royal–sacrifice. She can be found in average places; always a remembrance that often there is extraordinary in the ordinary.

Daffodil

She knows what it takes to push through, to grow. She knows how fragile she is but doesn't save herself for a better time or an easier life. She will find a way.

Lily

She is simply lovely, not needing to draw attention, but able to stand as she is.

Knowing she is all she will ever need to be.

Dandelion

She won't take no for an answer, but persists unceasingly for a spot with her sisters.

What a bouquet!

Each is so different, a bounty of beauty in many forms.

If the rose said, "My beauty is complete,"

Would it diminish the beauty of the daffodil?

It could not, for beauty is not a thing to be had but a gift bestowed.

*It can be appreciated, mimicked, ignored, neglected, or desired, but the purpose of beauty is always the same:
to reflect its source.*

¹ Mason, Charlotte. *Parents and Children*. London, England: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd., 1904.

² Galatians 6:9

Image "Violette Heymann" by Odilon Redon