

Ten Reasons I Can't Spank

A Catholic Counselor's Critical Examination of Corporal Punishment

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"How do you feel about corporal punishment?"

Few questions evoke as strong a reaction as this one. I know many good Catholics on both sides of the issue, those who feel strongly about using corporal punishment, and those who feel equally strongly about not using it. If ever there was an issue that should not be decided on the basis of feeling alone, it is this one.

The following is my journey. It reflects the research, thoughts, and prayerful consideration of a conservative Catholic, psychotherapist, father of two, and author on marriage and family issues. Ultimately, this article is the foundation upon which my wife and I build our commitment to disciplining our children without corporal punishment.

I do not presume to think that I have discovered the final answer to one of the most divisive issues in Catholic parenting, but I do think that I have uncovered some truths, or at least some nagging questions, that deserve to be reckoned with if you are a parent who has chosen to use corporal punishment in raising your children.

Whether or not you agree with my conclusions, a Christian's decisions must always be guided by a properly formed conscience. Such a conscience is developed by considering the well-informed positions of those who support and reject our own way of thinking. Whatever conclusions you ultimately draw, I ask you to consider the following ten reasons why I believe that are irreconcilable differences between Catholicism and corporal punishment.

1. Jesus' Own Example was Discipline, NOT Punishment.

There is an important distinction to be made between discipline and punishment. Jesus' own ministry favored discipline over punishment.

Punishment's main goal is to stop the present occurrence of inappropriate behavior. Anything else is gravy. It is less concerned with the future than with, "Stop that right now!"

Literally, punishment means, "to cause to undergo pain." At its very roots, it has nothing to do with teaching. Punishment establishes a police/suspect relationship between punisher and the punished. Punishment relies heavily upon the notion of external control. That is to say, the parent is very pessimistic regarding the child's desire, ability or willingness to behave properly, so the parent himself becomes the child's limit and consequence. Punishment tends to assume that "the y" (children) are bent toward evil (or at least no good) and are out to manipulate "us" (the police/parents). Punishment can lack in consistent application because the meting out of punishment tends to be subject to the mood of the parent. Its forms change over time - what punishments "work" at one age do not work at a later age. The philosophy that supports punishment asserts that compliance with the law for the law's own sake ("blind obedience") is a virtue. Spanking is the chief example of punishment. It is the height of external control.

Discipline assumes a teacher/student relationship, or Rabbi/disciple relationship if you prefer. The Latin root of discipline, "discipuli," means, "student".

Discipline's main objective is to teach the offender what to do instead of the offense, rather than merely stopping the offense. For example, where punishment would say, "Don't speak to me like that! Go to your room!" Discipline would say, "I know you are angry, but you may not speak to me that way. You may say (such and such) if you like. Now, tell me again, respectfully, please."

Discipline is less concerned with teaching compliance with the law than it is with teaching how to have deeper, more respectful, and loving relationships. Discipline recognizes that "Love does no wrong to a neighbor, therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:10)." The philosophy of discipline asserts that blind obedience, rather than being a virtue, is often pharisaic and hypocritical. Discipline does not assume malicious intent on the part of the offender. It assumes that the offender is ignorant of an appropriate/meaningful way to meet personal needs. Discipline has a deep regard for consistency. It assumes that the tools which helped me control my behavior when I am three should also help me control my behavior when I am thirty. As such, discipline seeks to only use those interventions that would be appropriate means by which to create change in adult relationships.

Discipline believes that good behavior is a teachable skill, not unlike math or reading. Because of this, it makes use of the tools that a good teacher would use. Tools like: good relationship/rapport building, teaching stories ("emotional word pictures"), following through with logical consequences, real life examples, personal sharing (discipling), redirecting, practice, and giving information in respectful, repeated and varied ways. People who

use discipline correctly do not necessarily differ in the number of limits they establish, so much as in the dramatically different ways by which those limits are taught and enforced.

Certainly you can see that Jesus' ministry was one which espoused discipline over punishment. Discipline recognizes that violence is not a good teaching tool. Imagine the following happening to you. Your child comes home from school and says that he was spanked because he missed a math problem. You call the teacher to say, "What were you thinking?"

The teacher responds by saying, "He did not do the problem as I taught him to."

"You should have told him again!"

"I told him plenty of times. He should have listened the first time."

You press further, " Even so, what do you think he really learned.?"

"Well, you can be sure he won't make that mistake again!"

What do you think of this teacher? Was he a good teacher? I don't think so. I wonder if God thinks the same of us when we use corporal punishment to "teach a lesson" to his children who are on loan to us.

The Holy Father refers to parents' "mission as educators" (The Gospel of Life). If we are educators, we must use the tools the best educators use. We must first use the tools Holy Father himself enumerates, such as, "word and example, . . . cordial openness, dialog, . . ." (The Gospel of Life). These are the tools of choice. Corporal punishment is curiously absent.

Jesus himself never used violence on people. When he became angry at the money changers in the temple, he turned over their tables, and he cracked a whip at the "sheep and oxen alike." (John 2:15) NOT THE PEOPLE. Even in this most dramatic account of Jesus' anger, he does not turn the whip on the offenders, who are fully accountable and culpable adults.

There are those parents who say, "If I don't spank, my children's salvation may be at stake. Spanking is an act of love that will bring them closer to God." Yet, on the one occasion when Peter attempted to use violence as an act of love on God's behalf (in the garden of Gethsemane) - to "save" Him - Jesus called Peter "Satan." Christ could not have given a more definitive response to violence - even when dressed up in the language of "Love."

You might say that a spank on the bottom is hardly the same as a sword on the ear." In one sense, no, but in another, violence is violence, regardless of degree, just as sin, whether venial or mortal, is offensive to God. As

always, Jesus said exactly what he meant. There is no occasion or excuse for Christians using violence on His behalf.

2. Scripture Does Not Support Spanking

The Old Testament does have two references to corporal punishment, which are the mainstay of its proponents' biblical defense. These are Proverbs 23:13 and Sirach 30:1-3. (In some translations, such as the N.A.B., the Sirach verse refers to discipline and education.) Yet, even Proverbs, taken by itself, is questionable, particularly when viewed as the rationale for a parent's disciplinary foundation.

I say these references are questionable because contextual interpreters of the bible (Catholic scholars - as opposed to literal interpreters) wonder if "rod" is not used metaphorically, as in a shepherd's rod. A shepherd would never beat his sheep - they are too precious and delicate. Also, could a "rod of violence" be used to bring comfort, as in "Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me." God's truths do not contradict each other. A shepherd uses his rod to gently guide his flock - not to strike them. (A note on sheep husbandry: it is known that the fright of sudden noise alone can induce in sheep a shock which suppresses fertility. A sheep's guardian, whose job it is to protect the economic value of his herd, is aware of the sensitivity of his flock's constitution.)

"Rod" may also be understood as a unit of measure that figuratively refers to the Torah (like our term "scales of justice"). In other words, we can interpret the proverb: "Spare your child the 'rod' (the Torah), and they won't 'measure up.'"

Ultimately, the Old Testament must be understood through the prism of the New Testament - the fulfillment of the law. Indeed, the Fathers of the Church, saints and prelates from St. Hilary of Poitiers, St. Cyprian, St. Ambrose, St. Martin of Tours and St. Leo, consistently declared that the severe sanctions of the Old Testament were abrogated by the mild and gentle laws of Christ. The New Testament has a very different way of dealing with sinners than did the Old Testament. As an example, let us examine the parable of the Prodigal Son.

A son hurts his father deeply by abandoning righteous ways and pursuing a life of sin and folly. This the father knows. In response, does the father hunt down the child to give him a beating for the "open act of willful disobedience?" No. The father, being a wise man, allows his son to experience the logical consequences of his actions until he is so racked with sadness, estrangement and guilt that he comes running back to his

father. The father then throws a party for the prodigal son. To celebrate the son's immoral behavior? No, to celebrate the victory of Love over sin.

Some punishment. Is God a pushover? No. He simply does not add any harm he could do to us to the harm we have already chosen for ourselves. The father of the prodigal concentrates on a more important motivator: building a relationship that is so strong, so undeniably loving, that the son will never want to "leave His house" again.

Through the wisdom of Christ's new mandate (John 13:34), we must learn the methods that will allow us to deal with our children's transgressions the way God deals with ours. To do less is to diminish in our children's eyes the very love of God. To do less is to live out the role of the servant in the parable who, forgiven his debts by the just King, exacts punishments upon those who owed him (Matt 18: 21-35).

When God reaches out to us with arms of love and forgiveness, but we treat our children to physical punishment, we are acting the part of the ungrateful servant. Will not God be faithful to his word and "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us?" (Matt 6:12)

3. The Universal Church Does Not Model Corporal Punishment

The family is the smallest unit of The Church. It is frequently referred to as the "domestic church". The "domestic church" must take as its model "The Church Universal". By "Universal Church" I do not mean one or two people, even well known or influential people, who claim to speak for the church. Rather, I refer to, "The True Church, the Whole Church and nothing but the Church," to coin a phrase. What does the Universal Church have to say about corporal punishment? To properly examine this question we must recall the venerable theological phrase, "Lex orandi, lex credendi" ("As the Church prays, the Church believes"). In other words, if you really want to know what the Church, the Mystical Body and extension into this world of Christ himself, has to say about something, look to the way she prays, or at the nature of the Sacraments.

How does the Church "pray about", or treat, sinful behavior? She employs the Sacrament of Reconciliation. When we do wrong, we go to our Mother, the Church for forgiveness. She hears us, holds us, forgives us, and, finally, as penance for our sinfulness, she sends us to spend time in prayer, learning and discipleship at the feet of the Master.

When I was young, I used to think that praying was an awfully stupid punishment. It would be stupid punishment, but instead, is meant to be wise discipline.

By sinning, I have wounded the relationship I have with God. So now, having confessed my sinfulness and been forgiven, I spend some quiet time with my Heavenly Father who counsels me, comforts me and holds me in His arms. Heavenly Father has dealt with me firmly. He has seen that I have been disciplined. He has done so by allowing me to experience guilt (the loving conviction of the Holy Spirit), the anger of those I have hurt, and the other natural consequences of my actions. This is what Holy Father means when he embraces filial fear, or the "fear of all that is an offense against God," and rejects servile fear, or the fear of physical reprisal as a means of gaining souls for God. (Crossing the Threshold of Hope, p.226)

It is prideful and wrong to ordain ourselves to do more than Holy Mother Church, herself, is ordained by God to do. In review, Her disciplinary process is as follows:

1. An offense occurs;
2. we experience loving conviction by the Holy Spirit (guilt);
3. we may experience the logical/natural consequences of our behavior;
4. we repent and receive forgiveness through God's ordained priests;
5. we spend time rebuilding our relationship with God through prayerful penance.

If the Church does not add to our suffering by physical punishment, how can we parents, in fulfilling our sacramental mission as "priests" in the domestic church, do so to our own children? There have been periods in Church history when penance included corporal punishment of the most excruciating nature. The sad legacy of the Inquisition is testimony to this fact. Yet, as the Church grew in age, wisdom, and grace, she abandoned such practices for those which more closely modeled the ministry and commandments of Christ.

Modern Catholic scholars reflect this conviction when they say that this legacy of corporal punishment ". . . reflect[s] neither the spirit nor the methods Christ who said: 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart.'" and that the Church should not "employ physical force to coerce the mind of man. . . Our only instruments in the domain of conscience must be reason, God's grace, human kindness and love."

4. Spanking Flies in the Face of Good Science

The Church respects good science because it simply describes the Natural Order created by God. To deny the validity of scientific inquiry, and the truth and relevance of its discoveries is to turn a blind eye to a part of God's revelation to man.

This validity of science extends fully to the study of human psychology. The Catholic Encyclopedia defines it as "the science of mind and behavior . . . concerned with the investigation of behavior and [human] experience by means of controlled observation, experimentation and measurement." The role of Catholic psychologists is to practice their profession to the highest scientific standards and interpret their findings in a way consistent with the principles of their faith. God's supernatural and natural truths cannot conflict. It is predictable, then, that modern psychology and the tenets of the Catholic Faith are utterly harmonious on the subject of discipline.

Yet, this harmony is not spelled out in so many words. As a result, many advocates of corporal punishment dismiss out of hand even the most common sense findings of psychology in pediatric development, marriage and family dynamics if it does not support their position. In turn, any who recognize its wisdom are deemed to be allied with the modern forces of evil, especially secular feminism and anti-family humanism.

The Church, through Holy Father, has this to say: "Marriage and family counseling agencies by their specific work of guidance and prevention. . .offer valuable help in rediscovering the meaning of love and life, and in supporting every family in its mission as the 'sanctuary of life.'" (Gospel of Life). In saying so, the Church is also validating the science upon which this counseling is built. Let me elucidate what this science has discovered about corporal punishment:

- In study after study, spanking has been found to increase deceitfulness, noncompliance, oppositional/defiant behaviors and violence in children.
- Research consistently demonstrates that corporal punishment creates and maintains "willful defiance" and other unmanageable behavioral problems. (Thus, the notion that "willful defiance" deserves corporal punishment is exactly counterproductive.)
- Children who are spanked have lower average intelligence scores, and demonstrate poorer school performance. This is not because they are less intelligent, but because they are more reluctant to demonstrate their intelligence for fear of being 'wrong' and, as a result, harshly judged.
- Spanked children show less creativity and are less inclined to take healthy and appropriate risks; yet are more likely to take inappropriate risks.

- Children who are spanked demonstrate a diminished ability to say 'no' in personally demeaning or dangerous situations (including drug use and sexual situations) - especially when encouraged by peers.
- Spanking has been shown to significantly increase violent/bullying behavior (especially in boys) and shyness (in girls).
- Children who are spanked have higher rates of constipation of the bowels, depression, substance abuse, suicidality, anxiety, and irrational fears/phobias.
- Long-term studies indicate that girls who are spanked show a greater risk of ending up in abusive marriages; boys who are spanked have a higher than average chance of becoming abusive spouses.
- Adults who were spanked as children tend to be less happy in their marriages.
- Adults who were spanked as children tend to reject the religion of their parents.

All of the above - and more - have been attributed not to abusive levels of corporal punishment or violence to children, but, rather, to commonly accepted level of spanking. These are the scientific findings of the profession.

Ignoring or disbelieving these findings does not make them less true.

The fact is, any mental-health professional who recommended spanking would be as suspect as a physician who, when asked about the dangers of cigarettes said, "Smoke 'em if you got 'em."

Granted, not every child raised in a home where corporal punishment is exercised develops the above symptoms. This fact often leads to the common objection, "I was spanked as a kid and I turned out all right." Be this as it may, there are also many children who did not develop cancer in spite of being raised in homes where both parents smoked, and many children who did not die in car accidents in spite of their parent's drinking and driving, but this does not mean that we should recommend such practices as being in the best interests of public health. In other words, just because you happened to dodge a bullet doesn't mean the bullet is good for you.

5. Spanking Is Violence

Webster defines violence as "physical force used so as to injure." Having scientifically established that spanking does cause injury (although, in

most instances, not immediately perceptible), it follows that spanking is a form of violence.

Holy Father, in his recent encyclical. The Gospel of Life, condemns violence of all forms. He quotes "Gaudium et Spes" which condemns any action which "violates the integrity of the human person, such as, . . . attempts to coerce the will." This pertains with specific accuracy to the objective of many Catholic parents to "break the will" of the child.

In fact, "attempts to coerce the will" is categorized among "torments of the body and mind" which involve it as a participant in the greater culture of violence which the Church rejects. Certainly, the human will must be channeled, trained and disciplined (see "Childrearing" in the Catholic Catechism), but spanking train so much as it coerces and subverts the human will. What parents must appreciate is that the same will that motivates a "no" from a two-year old is the same will which, if properly formed but not broken, will effectively say "no" to drugs, premarital sex and the other temptations presented throughout life.

About the culture that must exist in the family which espouses and lives the "Gospel of Life", Holy Father says this:

"It is above all in raising children that the family fulfills its mission to proclaim the Gospel of life. By word and example, in the daily round of relations and choices, and through concrete actions and signs, parents lead their children to authentic freedom, actualized in the sincere gift of self, and they cultivate in them a respect for others, a sense of justice, cordial openness, dialog, generous service, solidarity, and all the other values which help people live life as a gift." (The Gospel of Life)

The evidence is compelling that corporal punishment does not instill in our children or lead them toward any of these qualities. In fact, it tends to cultivate deceitfulness, violence, fear, and a rejection of parents' authority and religion as arbitrary and nonsensical.

Finally, the Church tells us that we must not resort to violence out of expediency. Consequences for wrongdoing must be "in conformity to the dignity of the human person." (Catechism of the Catholic Church). So strenuously does the Church maintain this that She protects even apostates and heretics against the loss of basic human liberties. "Religion, being a matter of free will, cannot be forced on anyone," wrote Lactantius. Centuries later, St. Bernard's rule, "Fides suadenda, non imponenda" ("Faith by persuasion not by violence") reflected this conviction. For the unrepentant, their eternal punishment would suffice. Spanking does not

pass St. Bernard's test: The violence which is at the core of spanking makes it inherently offensive to the dignity of the human person.

6. Spanking as Sin or Occasion of Sin

Most parents who spank are unaware that spanking causes pervasive and deep harm to its recipient. As a result, they do not manifest the willful intent required to commit a sinful act. However, as Catholics, we are called upon to use an "informed conscience" in choosing our actions. We have available to us the doctrine, tradition, teachings and advice to improve upon and modify our decision-making ability in accordance with our faith.

We must do what we can to understand what is expected of us . (This corresponds to civil authority's dictum "Ignorance of the law is no excuse.") For example, the Church's position on birth control is very clear and very easy to ascertain. While it is conceivable that Catholics of good faith are unaware of this teaching, a simple line of inquiry at their parish would enlighten them. It is incumbent upon all Catholics of good faith to try.

The Church's position on corporal punishment is not as obvious or immediate. However, this must not deter Catholic parents from evaluating their actions in the light of Catholic teaching and conforming it accordingly. In the case of corporal punishment, the comprehensive body of scripture, tradition, and contemporary Papal teaching is compelling.

Corporal punishment, regardless of intent or application, is misguided and counterproductive. As such, the debate among proponents of corporal punishment over how and when to use it is irrelevant. (Some fervently hold that it must occur at the time when the parent is provoked by the wrongdoing; others are equally adamant that punishment must be withheld and meted out dispassionately. Both sides find the other's inappropriate.) However, a point of agreement within both camps is instructive. Most parents who use corporal punishment admit to having struck their children "unjustly" (i.e. through some fault of their own, rather than the child's). This mistake is certainly one all parents have made, regardless of admission; and one most admit is sinful. If spanking unjustly is sinful, then the risk of sinning by spanking at all is unacceptably high. As Catholics, we are obliged not only to avoid sin, but to avoid the near occasion of sin, and entreat the Lord to "lead us not into temptation." Especially, we must avoid the temptation to do harm to the least of His children.

7. God's Justice is Subject to His Love

Parents who use corporal punishment often defend it by saying, "God is a God of Justice." Certainly, but His Justice is subject to His Love. If this were not so, could any of us, in light of our own sinfulness, justify our existence, much less the precious gift of Jesus' passion, death and resurrection? How telling are Scripture: "If you mark our iniquities, then who could stand?"; and Liturgy: "O felix culpa, quae talum ac tantum meruit habere Redemptorem" ("Oh happy fault, which gained for us so great a Redeemer").

Scripture tells us that the greatest of the spiritual gifts - of which Justice is one - is Love. Love is defined for us:

"Love is patient; love is kind. Love is not jealous, it does not put on airs, it is not snobbish. Love is never rude, neither does it brood over injuries. Love does not rejoice in what is wrong, but rejoices with the truth. There is no limit to Love's forbearance, to its trust, its hope, its power to endure." (1 Cor. 13: 4-7)

Holy Father says: "Before all else, it is Love that judges. God, who is Love, judges through Love." (Crossing the Threshold of Hope p. 187) We must fear, he continues, offending this pure Love through sin. "The authentic and full expression of this fear is Christ Himself. Christ wants us to have fear of all that is an offense against God." Again, Christ is the model of the behavior of Love which we are commanded to emulate (mandatum): meek, humble, ever patient, yet unwavering. Holy Father says, "This love, according to the words of St. John, drives out all fear (1 John 4:18). Every sign of servile fear vanishes before the awesome power of the all-powerful, all-present One." (Crossing the Threshold of Hope, p.226).

In administering Justice in our homes, we do not have absolute dominion over our children (although it can appear temporally that we do), but, as Holy Father says, "Man's lordship is not absolute. . . [it is] ministerial: it is a real reflection of the unique and infinite lordship of God. Hence man must exercise it with wisdom and love, sharing in the boundless wisdom and love of God." (The Gospel of Life)

As Christians, we are not called so much to be the administrators of His Justice ("Judge not, lest ye be judged.") as we are called to be the embodiment of His Love, perfected in humanity - and for humanity - by Jesus: "Love one another as I have loved you." St. Francis de Sales

instructs us in this Christlike love when he says, "All things need be done by love, not force."

8. Spanking does not Respect the Gift of Will

The Church, Scripture, and good science teach us that the will is a good and essential part of our humanity. We Catholics have what might appear to be a hopelessly optimistic and respectful attitude toward the human will. Scripture tells us that from our creation, the will is given to us as a gift from God. Holy Father and the Church have endorsed the goodness of the human will. Science has described the will as essential to survival and continuation of our human species. As Catholics, we hold a unique place in the support and defense of the dignity of the human person; and the will is integral to the definition of our human condition. We are responsible for living and educating our children to live in a way that respects the will - and its prominent role in the process of right living. To do less, to give in to non-Catholic pressure and influences which instruct us to "parent" in a manner which is demeaning or harmful to the will, is to deny this uniquely Catholic perspective toward our humanity.

Perhaps more so than many of our separated Christian brothers and sisters, we are given the grace to respect the gift that is the will. We are required to use this grace to live this dignity out in the everyday life of the domestic church.

9. Spanking Conflicts with the Church's Teaching on the "Age of Reason"

Spanking is used most often on children who are younger than the age of seven, which is the age of reason as defined by the Church. Most supporters of corporal punishment admit that spanking tends to lose its "effectiveness" past this age.

The problem in this regard for the adherents of corporal punishment is twofold. First, the Church uses the time before receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a time of education. Just as, during this period, a child gradually learns and improves his language and motor skills, so does he learn the fundamentals about right and wrong and the use of will to choose right. Second, She does not hold the child culpable of sin. This means that a child cannot sin until he can fully grasp the meaning of his actions. In the wisdom of the Church, this requires "full knowledge of and participation in a sinful act."

Any form of punishment which serves to debilitate the will, or works to subordinate it to the will of another; and which holds the child culpable before the age of reason is in conflict with the God given nature of the child and the teaching of the Church. Spanking is both destructive of the necessary educational process and punishing of those who are innocent of it.

10. Catholic Luminaries in Child-Rearing Oppose Spanking

Catholics whose life's vocations involved the care of children, and who received graces to fulfill these vocations, categorically oppose corporal punishment. St. John Bosco, St. Elizabeth Seton, Father Flanagan and Maria Montessori are prominent examples of Catholics whose love and wisdom helped shepherd thousands of children on a path to God, and who saw corporal punishment as antithetical to this mission.

It is true that there are Catholic saints who prescribed ritual mortification for themselves and their followers. Yet, these examples are concerned with self-discipline and adult spirituality. St. Francis flung himself naked into a briar patch to "crucify his flesh" for having impure thoughts. I daresay he would condemn such treatment of an animal, much less a child.

There are others who speak in passing of the corporal punishment of children. These are generally instances which reflect the disciplinary psychology of the times, and do not, nor are they intended to demonstrate a systematic childrearing methodology which is designed to reflect the fullest teachings, objectives and promises of our Faith. This was the vocation of those good Catholics whom I previously mentioned.

Conclusion

Well, there you have it - ten reasons I, as a Catholic, loyal to the teaching Magisterium of the Church, family counselor and father believe corporal punishment and Catholicism to not mix. I ask you to consider these reasons with an openness to the fullness of life as seen and taught by the Church, and with a real desire to seek the truth.

To renounce corporal punishment is a "conversion;" it is to begin the difficult journey which consists in "putting new wine in new skins." You will not be alone. The Wisdom, Grace and Love of the Holy Trinity will guide you.

Should you decide to continue spanking, you ought to prepare a defense to Christ's pronouncement of love: "What you do to the least of these, you do to Me."

About the author:

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Mr. Popcak is a member of several professional organizations and is the primary author of a chapter on family therapy in *The Casebook of the Brief Psychotherapies* (Plenum.) He has appeared as a mental health consultant to the local media and has published several articles for the general public on personal and family mental health issues.

He is an active member, as well as associate music director, of St. Agnes Parish, and resides with his wife, Lisa, and their two children in Steubenville, OH.

Mr. Popcak happily invites all intelligent, considered and charitable responses to this article.

Catholic Resources on Child-rearing, Discipline and Corporal Punishment:

It is worthwhile to read the articles of Herbert Ratner, M.D., a public health physician, former Consulter to the Pontifical Institute on the Family, and editor of *Child and Family Quarterly*. He was also an advisor to the La Leche League at the time of its formation. Back issues of *Child and Family Quarterly* are available from Child and Family, P.O. Box 508, Oak Park, IL 60303

Maria Montessori was a pioneer in child development. Her seminal ideas about the genius and individuality of children remain fresh today, and equally as important to a just and effective approach to child-rearing. Look for her books, which include *The Absorbent Mind*; *The Child in the Church*; *The Child in the Family*; *The Discovery of the Child*; *The Mass Explained to Children*; *The Mother, and the Child*; *The Secret of Childhood*.