

The perfect home school mom, and why you won't find her over here...

Do you ever read about or talk to another home schooling mother and feel *terribly* inadequate? I was reading one of those American home- schooling Blogs the other day (you know, those diaries of Supermoms who not only look so darned perfect, but seem to be permanently brimming full of fantastically creative ideas, enthusiasm for the job and bucket loads of love for -and patience with- their darling offspring) and it set me thinking about all the conversations I've had recently with home school mums on this side of the pond. Listen in on a bunch of Catholic home-schoolers here and you are unlikely to hear gushings forth about Johnny's first potty-time (with pictures of said potty passed around- he is so *cute!*), ravings about how the children just *adore* their latest (and very expensive) Montessori manipulatives, or - and this is real! - discussions on the relative merits of the entrants in this year's 'Loveliness of Living Rooms' competition (photographs, again). No, the talk might run more along the lines of, 'If Johnny empties his potty over his head one more time, I'll throttle him (even he is so cute!)', or, 'If that lot don't stop using those expensive maths manipulative as boomerangs, I'll throttle them!', or possibly, 'If any one else tries to turn my living room into a spaceship/ Aztec temple/ rabbit warren (delete as applicable), I'll.....' (well, you can guess the rest). Ah, I exaggerate, but you get the point.....

We are REAL mothers of REAL children, with all our own faults and failings as well as theirs to deal with, and we are not born, as some seem to think, with a special gene which allows us to put up with the trials of motherhood any more easily than the next person can: it simply comforts some people to think that way, as it does for them to think that somehow, miraculously, we take pregnancy, broken nights, screaming toddlers, stroppy teens, household chores and the myriad other joys that motherhood brings, in our stride. We do not! We get just as tired, just as exasperated, just as impatient - in truth, even more so, because we are home-schooling too and do not get the 'break' which schooling affords most mothers. We are not doing all this because we love it (though at times we might thank God for it), nor because we find it enjoyable (though at times we may), nor yet because we have some special talent for it (we don't, usually, we just beg God for the grace to do it well). Is it wrong (un-edifying, discouraging, letting the side down?) for us to admit that we don't always feel full of love and joy in our vocation? I don't think so. In fact, I think it is very healthy, for in doing so we achieve three important ends: we give encouragement to others who feel the same way but worry that 'everyone else' is so good, patient, creative, unruffled etc; we show non-home-schoolers that we do *not* have some special gene which enables us to sail through life's troubles unperturbed (and which would conveniently let those who do not possess this gene 'off the hook' regarding responsibility for their children's education); lastly, this sense of our own weakness in the face of the task before us throws us constantly back on the mercy of God and the sustaining power of His grace, and thereby keeps us humble.

So you see, even if I am not the 'perfect home school Mom' (I haven't the hair and make up for it anyway), even if I daily lose my patience with the children, even if at times I feel overwhelmed, lacking in ideas or just plain old *exhausted*, I can offer all that to God. Perhaps, in a mysterious way, this may be more pleasing to Him than the pride I might take in my successes, and if you look at it that way, you can't really lose. God *is* good!!