

**THE CATHOLIC  
EDUCATION  
SERIES; FIRST BOOK**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649050796

The Catholic Education Series; First Book by Thomas Edward Shields

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Cover @ 2017

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**THOMAS EDWARD SHIELDS**

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JESUS AND HIS COUSIN—*Pinturicchio*

# The Catholic Education Series

## FIRST BOOK

*By*

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THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION PRESS  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

*Educ T 5399. 17. 786*

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**Imprimatur**

• **J CARDINAL GIBBONS**  
*Archbishop of Baltimore*

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Entered at Stationers Hall, London

## PREFACE

This First Book of the Catholic Education Series has been in use for nine years and a multitude of teachers and children have expressed their enthusiastic appreciation of its value. The book was originally published under the title "Religion First Book" as it was desired to emphasize the fact that Religion is the central element in Catholic education and that everything else in the curriculum for the child of six years should be adjusted to this central theme. The title, however, gave rise to no little misunderstanding of the purpose of the book and hence it was changed to its present form.

The book is intended to be the only book to be put into the child's hands during the first year of his school life, hence its content will be found to embrace the germinal concepts of all that is to be taught by the aid of advanced and complex curricula in the higher grades and in the higher institutions of learning.

Great care has been exercised to secure unity of thought and its progressive development throughout the book. The vocabulary was chosen from the most vivid portions of the usual vocabulary of the child of six years and with direct reference to the language of the subsequent lessons and the language of religion and the Bible.

With few exceptions, the pictures are reproduc-



tions of great masterpieces. They were selected so that they might tell the child, in a language that would enter into his imagination, the story contained in the text. When the child is familiar with the coloring of the objects presented, the picture is produced in sepia. This plan permits the child to clothe the scenes in color from his own observation and thus lays the foundation for future creative work in art. The scenes from the New Testament are presented in color, first because the children have no means of ascertaining the original coloring of the scenes in question, and secondly and chiefly because it is desirable to carry over the emphasis of the child's delight in color to the religious scenes. The contrast between the colored and un-colored pictures will serve to arouse and to center the child's pleasurable emotions on the pictures in which Our Lord is the central figure.

The book is divided into five parts each one of which deals with one of the great instincts that determine the child's relationship of dependence upon his parents and aims at transforming the instinct so as to render it a suitable element in the formation of Christian character. The child is born into the world dependent upon his parents for love, for nourishment, for protection, for remedy and for imitative models. In each of these the instinctive attitude of the child is purely selfish. Upon these native roots must be engrafted

the corresponding Christian virtues which lift the dependence from our earthly to our heavenly Father and replace the selfish by a corresponding unselfish motive. In the first part the child is led to realize and count upon his Heavenly Father's love and he is taught that there is greater joy in loving than in being loved. And in the subsequent lessons he is taught that it is better to give than to take and that the only sure reliance is that which rests upon his Heavenly Father.

On examination, it will be found that each part of the book is cast in the essential lines of the parable. It begins with a nature study which is valuable in itself as a germinal element in the future scientific education of the child, but the chief value of the nature study at this stage of the child's education is to be found in its function as the basis of the parable in which the child is led into an understanding of the more intimate truths of his own life and of his relationship to God. The nature study is followed by a domestic study which is reflected in and grows out of the nature study. The nature study is intended to be dramatized by the children. The domestic study presents lessons to be lived out in the home. The nature study will be found to deepen the child's comprehension of his home duties and to develop a keener appreciation of his privileges and a more sympathetic attitude. Both the nature study and the domestic study are constructed in

such a manner as to form an adequate preparation for the religious lesson which follows.

The fourth element in each of the parts is represented by two songs. Music offers the natural channel for the expression of the child's emotions and by its aid the child's emotional nature may most effectively be cultivated and drafted into service in the formation of character. Of course, the child without other training would be utterly unable to sing the songs in the proper manner and unless he is taught to sing the songs beautifully he will not sing them with joy and the purpose of the work in the purifying of emotions and in the building of character will not be attained.

The necessary training which will prepare the children to sing the two songs at the end of each part of the First Book in such a manner as to render fecund the thought elements of the part is presented in the Catholic Education Music Course which was designed expressly for the accomplishment of this purpose. The children are, of course, expected to express the thought content of the book through the medium of the plastic arts. Drawing, painting in water color, cutting and folding paper, modelling in clay, should all be used to the same unitary purpose of developing and rendering fecund the thought content presented in the book.

It is expected that the teacher will take a large and important part in the develop-