

Second Meditation: On the means that must be used by those who are responsible for the education of children to procure their sanctification

First Point

Consider that it is a practice only too common for the working class and the poor to allow their children to live on their own, roaming all over like vagabonds as long as they are not able to put them to some work; these parents have no concern to send their children to school because their poverty does not allow them to pay teachers, or else, obliged to look for work outside their homes, they have to abandon their children to themselves.

The results of this condition are regrettable, for these poor children, accustomed to lead an idle life for many years, have great difficulty adjusting when it comes time for them to go to work. In addition, through association with bad companions they learn to commit many sins which later on are very difficult to stop, because of the persistent bad habits they have contracted over such long time.

God has had the goodness to remedy so great a misfortune by the establishment of the Christian Schools, where the teaching is offered free of charge and entirely for the glory of God, where the children are kept all day, learn to read, to write, and their religion, and are always kept busy, so that when their parents want them to go to work, they are prepared for employment.

Thank God, who has had the goodness to employ you to procure such an important advantage for children. Be faithful and exact to do this without any payment, so that you can say with Saint Paul, The source of my consolation is to announce the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear me.

Second Point

It is not enough that children be kept in school for most of the day and be kept busy. Those who have dedicated themselves to instruct them must devote themselves especially to bring them up in the Christian spirit, which gives children the

wisdom of God that none of the princes of this world have known. It is completely opposed to the spirit and wisdom of the world, for which we must inspire children with a great horror, since it serves as a cloak for sin. Children cannot be too much separated from such a great evil, because this alone can make them displeasing to God.

Let this be your first concern, then, and the first effect of your vigilance in your work, to be ever attentive to your students to forestall any action that is bad or even the least improper. Help them avoid anything that has the slightest appearance of sin. It is also of great importance that your vigilance over your students serve to make them be self-controlled and reserved in church and at the exercises of piety that are performed in school. For piety is useful in every way, and it gives a great facility for avoiding sin and for practicing other acts of virtue because of the great number of graces it brings to those who have it.

Do you act in this way with your students? Adopt these practices in the future if you have not been faithful enough in the past.

Third Point

In order to bring the children whom you instruct to take on the Christian spirit, you must teach them the practical truths of faith in Jesus Christ and the maxims of the holy Gospel with at least as much care as you teach the truths that are purely doctrinal.

It is true that there are a number of doctrines which are absolutely necessary for us to know in order to be saved. But what would it serve to know them, if we did not take the trouble to practice the good to which we are bound.

Faith, Saint James says, without good works is dead. Saint Paul also says, If I knew all the mysteries and had full knowledge and all the faith, such that I moved mountains from one place to another, but have not charity, (that is, sanctifying grace), I am nothing.

Is your main care, then, to instruct your disciples in the maxims of the holy Gospel and the practice of the Christian virtues? Have you anything more at

heart than helping them find their happiness in these practices? Do you look upon the good that you are trying to achieve in them as the foundation of all the good that they will practice for the rest of their lives? The habits of virtue that are cultivated in oneself during youth encounter less resistance in corrupt nature and form the deepest roots in the hearts of those in whom they have been formed.

If you want the instructions you give those whom you have to instruct to be effective in drawing them to the practice of good, you must practice these truths yourselves, and you must be full of zeal, so that your students may be able to receive a share in the grace which is in you for doing good, and that your zeal draw upon you the Spirit of God to animate your students in the same way.