

Ninth Meditation: On the obligation of those who instruct youth to have much zeal to fulfill well so holy a work

First Point

Reflect on what Saint Paul says, that it is God who has established in the Church apostles, prophets, and teachers, and you will be convinced that he has also established you in your work. The same saint gives you another expression of this when he says that there are diverse ministries but there are different operations, and the Holy Spirit manifests himself in each of these gifts for the common good, that is to say, for the good of the Church. One receives by the Spirit the gift to speak with wisdom, another the gift of faith by the same Spirit.

You must not doubt that it is a great gift of God, this grace he has given you to be entrusted with the instruction of children, to announce the Gospel to them and to bring them up in the spirit of religion. But in calling you to this holy ministry, God demands that you fulfill it with an ardent zeal for their salvation, because this is the work of God and he curses the one who does his work carelessly.

Let it be clear, then, in all your conduct towards the children who are entrusted to you that you look upon yourselves as ministers of God, carrying out your ministry with love and a sincere and true zeal accepting with much patience the difficulties you have to suffer, willing to be despised by men and to be persecuted, even to give your life for Jesus in the fulfillment of your ministry.

The zeal that ought to inspire you is meant to give you these dispositions, recognizing that it is God who has called you, who has destined you for this work, and who has sent you to work in his vineyard. Do this, then, with all the affection of your heart, working entirely for him.

Second Point

What ought to engage you further to have great zeal in your state is the fact that you are not only the ministers of God, but also of Jesus Christ and of the Church. This is what Saint Paul says when he expresses the wish that everyone should

regard those who announce the Gospel as ministers of Jesus Christ, who write the letter which he has dictated not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh which are the hearts of children.

For this reason, and in this spirit, you must have the love and the glory of God as your single aim in the instruction of these children for the love of God ought to impel you, because Jesus Christ died for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves but for him who died for them. This is what your zeal must inspire in your disciples, as if God himself were appealing through you, since you are ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

You must also show the Church what love you have for her and give her proof of your zeal, since it is for the Church (which is the body of Jesus Christ) that you work. You have become her ministers according to the order God has given you to dispense his word.

Since the Church has a great zeal for the sanctification of her children, it is your duty to share in her zeal, so that you can say to God as the holy King David, the zeal of your house has consumed me. For this house is none other than the Church, since the faithful form this building which has been built on the foundation of the apostles, and raised up by Jesus Christ who is the main cornerstone.

Act in such a way through your zeal that you give tangible proof that you love those whom God has entrusted to you, just as Jesus Christ has loved his Church. Help them enter truly into the structure of this building, and be in condition to appear one day before Jesus Christ full of glory, without stain, without wrinkle, without blemish. This will make known to future ages the abundant riches of the grace that God has given them by procuring for them the help of instruction, and the grace he has given you to instruct them and educate them, so that they may one day become heirs of the kingdom of God and of Jesus Christ Our Lord.

Third Point

Since your ministry has for its purpose to procure the salvation of souls, the first concern you ought to have is to procure this goal as far as you are able. You

must in this imitate God to some extent, for he so loved the souls he created that when he saw them involved in sin and unable to be freed from sin by themselves, the zeal and affection that he had for their salvation led him to send his own Son to rescue them from their miserable condition. This is what made Jesus Christ say that God so loved the world that he gave his only Son that whoever believes in him may not die, but may have eternal life.

See what God and Jesus Christ have done to restore souls to the grace they had lost. What must you not do for them in your ministry if you have a zeal for their salvation! How much you must be disposed toward them as Saint Paul was toward those to whom he preached the Gospel, to whom he wrote that he was not seeking anything they had, but that he was seeking only their souls.

The zeal you are obliged to have in your work must be so active and so alive that you are able to tell the parents of the children entrusted to your care what is said in Scripture: Give us their souls, keep everything else for yourselves, that is, what we have undertaken is to work for the salvation of their souls. It is also the only reason you have committed yourselves to take responsibility to guide and instruct them.

Tell the parents, too, what Jesus Christ said about the sheep of which he is the shepherd and which must be saved by him: I came, he said, that they might have life and have it to the full. For this had to be the kind of ardent zeal you had for the salvation of those you have to instruct, when you were led to sacrifice yourself and to spend your whole life to give these children a Christian education and to procure for them the life of grace in this world and eternal life in the next.