

## **Eleventh Meditation: On the obligation of the Brothers of the Christian Schools to reprove and correct the faults committed by those whom they are charged to instruct**

### **First Point**

One of the characteristics and one of the effects of the zeal persons have for the well-being and salvation of souls is to reprove and correct those in their care when they fall into some fault. This is how Jesus Christ often made his zeal for the Jews manifest in the temple, when he went there and drove out those who were buying and selling the things needed for the sacrifices. At the time he made a whip of cords that he used to chase them.

Jesus acted similarly toward the Pharisees because he could not tolerate their hypocrisy, false piety, much less their pride which led them to esteem and praise their own actions while belittling and blaming the behavior of others. He condemned all their conduct because they satisfied themselves with teaching others but took no pains to practice what they taught. In all these encounters Jesus Christ rebuked and blamed them publicly. See what Jesus Christ did not only to the Pharisees but also to others on several occasions.

Saint Paul with similar freedom reproved the Corinthians for tolerating an incestuous person among them, telling them that they should have handed him over to the devil to be tormented in his body so that his soul might be saved.

You too must reprove and correct your disciples when they commit some fault, the more so because it is typical of children that they often make mistakes by doing many things without thinking. The reproofs and corrections give them time to reflect on what they have to do and cause them to watch over themselves in order not to be making the same mistakes.

Be exact, then, not to allow considerable faults in them without providing this remedy for them.

## **Second Point**

People are naturally so inclined to sin that they seem to find no other pleasure than committing it. This is seen especially in children, because their minds have not developed yet and they are not capable of much serious reflection. They seem to have no other inclination than to please their passions and their senses, and to satisfy their nature.

This is why the Holy Spirit says that it is as if folly is tied to the neck of children, and correction is the only way to cure them. The way to free the souls of children from hell, then, is to make use of this remedy which will procure wisdom for them. Otherwise, if they are abandoned to their own will, they will run the risk of ruining themselves and causing much sorrow to their parents. The reason for this is because the faults turn into a habit which will be very difficult to correct. The good and bad habits contracted in childhood and maintained over a period of time ordinarily become part of nature.

This is why those who guide young children must reprove them, as Saint Paul says, with all the force of authority to make them return from their wandering and rescue them from the snares of the demon who holds them captive to his will. In effect, it can be said with reason that a child who has acquired a habit of sin has in some sense lost his freedom and has made himself a miserable captive, according to what Jesus Christ says, the one who commits sin is the slave of sin.

It is for you who are teachers of those you guide to take all possible care to bring those under your guidance into that liberty of the children of God which Jesus Christ obtained for us by dying for us. To do this you need to have two qualities in your relationship with them. The first is gentleness and patience. The second is prudence in your reproofs and corrections.

## **Third Point**

What ought to animate you the more to reprove and correct the faults of your disciples, is the fact that if you fail in this you yourselves will be reprehensible before God, who will punish you for your weakness and neglect in this matter.

Since you are substitutes for their fathers and mothers and their pastors, you are obliged to keep watch over these children as the one who is accountable for their souls. So, if you do not watch over their conduct, you must realize that, since these children are not able to guide themselves, you will render an account to God for the faults they commit just as if you yourselves had committed them.

The high priest Eli is a very clear example, and a frightening one as well, of this truth. Because he allowed bad behavior in his children God announced to him through Samuel that he was condemning his house for all eternity because of his sin: and because, though knowing that his sons were behaving in an unworthy manner, he did not correct them. As a result God swore that this fault could not be expiated by sacrifices or offerings to the Lord, so great was the sin considered by God.

You, who hold the place of fathers and pastors of souls, fear that God will act the same way toward you, if you neglect to reprove and correct your disciples when it is needed, for you would have neglected the service with which God honored you when he put you in charge of guiding these children.

He has entrusted you especially with the care of their souls which is what God had most at heart when he made you the guides and guardians of these young children.

Fear that your negligence may not be pardoned any more than that of the high priest Eli, if you have not been sufficiently faithful to God in your work of striving to preserve in the grace of God these souls entrusted to your guidance.