

Fifteenth Meditation: On the reward that those can expect even in this life who have instructed children and have fulfilled this duty well

First Point

God is so good that he does not leave unrewarded the good work that is done for him and the service that is rendered to him, especially for the salvation of souls. If it is true that God rewards so generously even in this world those who have left all things for him, that they receive a hundredfold in this life, with how much more reason will he reward even in this present time those who have devoted themselves with zeal to spread his kingdom!

To reward so great a good work and a service which he regards so highly, God gives two kinds of reward in this world to those who commit themselves untiringly to the work of the salvation of souls. First, he gives them an abundance of grace; second, he gives them a more extended ministry and a greater ability to procure the conversion of souls.

The first of these rewards is set forth in the parable of the man who distributes his funds to his servants and gives one of them five talents in order to make a profit from them. When he learns later from that servant that he has made another five, in order to reward him he orders that the one talent given to the servant who has not made any profit, be taken away and given to the one who now has ten. For those who have will be given more, the Savior says, and they will be given riches in abundance.

Saint Luke expresses well the second kind of reward, the larger field of ministry, in the parable of the lord taking account of the money which he has given his servants. He rewards the first servant, who told him that his money had increased tenfold, by giving him the government of ten villages.

Oh, how fortunate you ought to consider yourselves, to be working in the field of the Lord, since Our Lord says that the reaper will infallibly receive his reward!

For the future, then, devote yourself with zeal and affection to your work, since

it will be one of the most helpful ways to assure your salvation.

Second Point

Another reward in this life which they receive who work for the salvation of souls, is the consolation they have to see God served well by those whom they have instructed, and that their work has not been useless but served to save those whom they were called upon to instruct.

It is in this spirit that Saint Paul writes to the Corinthians, to whom he preached the Gospel, that he has begotten them in Jesus Christ and that they are his work in our Lord. Similarly he finds joy to learn of their good will and this is what makes him boast about them because many persons have been stirred by their zeal. He adds that he hopes that the increase of their faith will attain so much glory that it will extend farther and farther to win souls through the proclamation of the Gospel. Yet it is in our Lord that he boasts. It is only in Jesus Christ, he says, that I lay hold to some glory for what I have done for God.

It was, then, the spread of God's glory by the preaching of the Gospel that made up all the consolation of this great apostle, and this must be yours as well, to make God and his Son Jesus Christ known to the flock confided to you. Oh! what glory for you to have this resemblance to that chosen vessel of election! With joy, then, say as he does, that the greatest cause of your joy in this life is to proclaim the Gospel free of charge, without having it cost anything to those who hear it. It is indeed a great glory for you to instruct your disciples about the truths of the Gospel solely for the love of God. It was this thought that made the Teacher of the Nations always find consolation and according to the testimony he has given, filled him with overflowing joy in the midst of his afflictions. You, too, must consider it great reward for yourselves, the consolation you feel at the bottom of your hearts, that the children whom you instruct are well-behaved, know their religion well, and live a life of piety. Thank God with all your heart for all these kinds of rewards that he gives you in advance in this life.

Third Point

You can expect yet another reward which God will give you in advance in this life if you devote yourselves generously to your duty and, if through zeal and the grace of your state, you have known well how to give your disciples a foundation in the Christian spirit. This is the very special satisfaction you will have when they grow up and you see them living with justice and piety, keeping free from evil associates, and performing good deeds.

For the instructions you have given them have not consisted in words only, but have been accompanied by a great abundance of grace for those who have profited from them, which will maintain them in the practice of good. Their perseverance in piety will be a great cause of consolation for you when you call to mind the result of their faith and of your instruction, knowing that this makes them dear to God and places them in the number of his elect.

What a joy it will be to see that they have received the word of God in your catechism lessons not as the word of men but as the word of God which is powerfully at work in them, as will be dearly apparent in the virtuous lives they continue to live. For this reason, in the consolation you have to see their perseverance in piety, you will be able to say that they are your hope, your joy, and your crown of glory before our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look upon this, then, as a considerable reward that God gives you even in this world, to see that religion and piety are increased among the faithful, especially among the working class and the poor, by means of the establishment of the schools which have been placed by God under your guidance.

Thank God every day, through Jesus Christ our Lord, that he has been pleased to establish this benefit and to give this support to the Church. Ask him fervently, too, that he will be pleased to make your Institute grow and produce good day by day, so that, as Saint Paul says, the hearts of the faithful may be strengthened in holiness and in justice.