

## THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS (11) CONCERNING CORRECTIONS (2)

### 2 — How not to punish

*"If it is desirable that a school be well regulated and in very good order, then punishments must be rare".*  
(Page 149).

#### 1) Some preventive means:

It seems that it is the teacher who is the cause of the need and frequency of corrections in the class because of the way he conducts the group, how he exercises his authority, and by showing mediocre teaching methods. This is why the Management affirms:

*"To avoid frequent punishment, which are a source of great disorder in a school, it is necessary to note well that it is silence, restraint and watchfulness on the part of the teacher that establish and maintain good order in a class, and not harshness and blows. A constant effort must be made to act with skill and ingenuity in order to keep the pupils in order while making almost no use of punishments".* (Pages 149-150).

Other means are likewise pointed out:

- do not always use the same method, for you run the risk of having the pupils get used to them
- however, in this regard, if a teacher wishes to make some innovations, he should first have his ideas approved by the Brother Director.

- If circumstances should constrain him to have recourse to "extraordinary punishments", then he must receive authorization for such:

*"and for this reason they will defer them, which is, at the same time, a very proper thing to do, in order to have enough time for thinking about it beforehand and to give more weight to the punishment; thus causing it to leave a greater impression on the minds of the pupils".* (Page 150).

#### 2) Concerning dissuasive conditions:

*"In order to be useful to the pupils, punishments should be accompanied by the following ten conditions."*

The Cahier Lasallien 24, pages 151 to 152 can be consulted to find these ten conditions which are simply mentioned here. Punishments ought to be:

- Pure and disinterested, that is to say, administered for elevated and religious motives
- Inspired by pure charity: "He who loves well, chastizes well".
- Just, and should appear so to the eyes of the pupils;
- Appropriate to the fault committed;
- Moderate, that is, neither too light nor too strong;
- Given and received calmly;
- Prudent and free from any subsequent anger by the pupil;
- Voluntarily accepted by the pupil who recognizes his fault;
- Respectful on the part of the pupil who receives it with submission;
- Silent, both on the part of the pupil and that of the teacher.

The needs prerequisite to each punishment are then very numerous. Before punishing, we must take these into consideration before punishing and we should recognize that punishment should be a last resort and one almost impossible to avoid.

It is significant to likewise note the religious and moral components which enter into account. In the seventeenth century, in the schools, one meted out punishment as exercising God's authority. Those who broke the laws were indebted toward God because they compromised their own perfection and also gave bad example.

On the personal plane, it should be understood that correction ought to show the self-mastery both of the one receiving it and of the one dispensing it. The subjective elements of the desire for revenge, anger, passion, or indignation and resentment, should never come into play. This self-mastery is one of the essential objects of education, in particular in the search "of good manners and Christian politeness", as the title of another work of De La Salle indicates.

Accordingly, the punishment should never sever the good relationship existing between the teacher and pupils, nor their mutual affection.

#### 3) Punishing with discernment:

This chapter on punishments also contains an article concerning "Children who should not be punished". It is an attempt at a psychopedagogical differentiation, which was the result of prolonged observation and the experience of the Brothers who re-edited the "Management".

*"There are five faults which ordinarily must not go by without punishment, 1. lying, 2. fighting, 3. stealing, 4. impurity, 5. poor behaviour in church".*

The Management next gives some explanations of each of these five "vices". Still, it can be easily seen that these deal with "relational" conduct and not with personal conduct: these failings concern either pupils or God. Here again, the idea of "good example" re-appears as it does so often in the Management. Each student, as well as the teacher himself, must unceasingly give good example in his relations with others and in the worship he is called upon to render to God.

It is for this reason also that penances or punishments should be given and administered publicly, for they have an "exemplary" value. It is precisely this exemplary-value which justifies the unbending attitude expressed in this paragraph.

On the contrary, the psychological observation ought to dissuade one from punishing certain pupils if it is judged that the punishment would be ineffective or even would lead to negative consequences for the child. Thus, one should avoid punishing:

- stubborn and ill-bred pupils who could be brazen, insolent, haughty, or frivolous.
- The stubborn who resist or murmur.
- Excessively timid children and those who are meek, dull, or pampered by their parents.
- Children who are sick, the smallest ones in the class, new-comers who are not yet familiar with the set up in the school.

Definitely, here we run the risk of having a large number of pupils "exempt" from punishment. It is very interesting, in the context of the period in which the Management was written, to examine the reasons which are given each time to justify these exemptions. It shows that the teacher ought to develop, through a series of empirical observations, what we would call a psycho-pedagogy.

#### 4) Faults to be avoided in punishments:

Still, sometimes necessity obliges a teacher to correct certain pupils. However, in view of avoiding any abuse, error, or over-haste, it is fitting that certain rules of prudence be respected. On reading article 4 on Corrections, one can see more than fifteen elements to be taken into consideration:

- Judge whether or not the punishment will be advantageous for the pupils and his companions.
- If possible, and after consulting the Director, see if the punishment could be deferred.
- Be sure that the punishment will in no way be harmful to the pupil concerned.
- Be sure that it does not lead to disorder in the class nor cause such bitterness at home, that the child will quit school.
- Examine yourself to be sure that you are not led by a certain aversion or lack of esteem for the one about to be punished.
- Do not correct after the pupil has shown a lack of respect or out of spite.
- Do not talk to the pupils too familiarly when meting out punishment nor use language which is too domineering.
- Do not use any words which are injurious or unbecoming.
- Do not use any other punishments than those planned.
- Moderate your anger and do not strike the pupil on the head.
- Do not exceed the number of blows authorized.
- Do not make any swift punishment, nor when moved by anger or impatience.
- Do not permit or allow any unbecoming posture, etc..

It is quite evident that the teacher who respects the prerequisite conditions, who exempts certain categories of pupils, who has enough self-mastery to respect the above rules, should not have too many occasions for punishing!

#### 5) Instructions on moderation

The preceding phrase finds its confirmation in some passages of the Management. In fact, here are some definite ones:

- That the ferule should not be used more than three times in a half-day, in a class of less than fifty pupils, "and to be used the third time, there would have to be some extraordinary reason". (Page 149).
- That usually only one blow should be give, with a maximum of two, and always on the left hand so as not to interfere with the pupil's writing, and never to any pupil who has an injured hand.
- That the rod should not be given more than three or four times a month, and generally three blows, or five, at the most.
- That a teacher who is less than 21 years of age cannot use the rod without the permission of the Director or whoever else is in charge of the school. Such a person should watch closely what goes on in the schools and should report to the Director twice a week.
- That teachers who are over 21 are subject to the same prohibition during the probationary period of six months and during the entire first year of teaching.

#### In conclusion

The wealth of precautions very evidently show that the teacher ought to really examine himself when he finds himself confronted with the question of punishments.

The essential thing is in the conducting of the class and in the affirmation of a serene and balanced authority. I do not think that anyone could speak about the first Brothers having a repressive pedagogy, for the Preface of the Management exhorts them in the following way:

*"The Brothers will apply themselves with great care to being faithful to observe all that is contained and prescribed for them herein, persuaded that they will have order in class only to the extent that they are exact in not omitting anything, and that they receive this book as being their gift from God, through the instrumentality of their superiors and principal Brothers of the Institute". (Preface of 1720)*