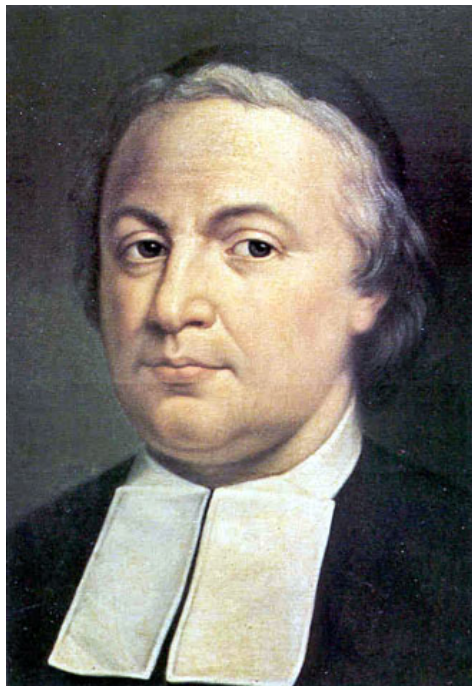


# The 12 Virtues of a Good Teacher

*Essay*

Br. Agathon

*Superior General (1777-1795)*





Compiled and Provided by  
The Lasallian Resource Center  
4403 Redwood Road  
Napa, CA 94558  
Br. George Van Grieken, FSC, Director

[www.lasallianresources.org](http://www.lasallianresources.org)

[www.dlsfootsteps.org](http://www.dlsfootsteps.org)

## INTRODUCTION TO THE PRESENT TRANSLATION

***The Twelve Virtues of a Good Teacher*** [*Les Douze Vertus d'un bon Maître*] by Brother Agathon, fifth Superior General of the Brothers of the Christian Schools from 1777 -1795 is, in my view, after the monumental text we know as *The Conduct of Schools*, the most significant work in education in the Lasallian heritage. Some 100 years after the first schools, it affords a kind of benchmark by which to judge the fidelity of the Institute to the founding vision. This significance is primarily because of the inherent value of the text itself, but also because of its wide diffusion outside of the Institute. Translated from the original French into Italian in 1797 and into English, Spanish, Dutch, and German during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the work was a major text in many Catholic Teaching Colleges until the 1930's.

### **Addressed to the Brothers.**

The work was addressed to the Brothers in 1785 as the first printed circular letter at a time when, novices included, there were close to 1,000 members of the Institute. It was, according to Brother Agathon's original preface, a complement to an earlier letter in which Brother Agathon had reflected on the religious duties of the Brothers. The writer takes the twelve virtues, listed by John Baptist de La Salle both in the manuscript *Conduct of Schools* of 1706 and in the *Collection of Short Treatises* of 1711, but without any further development. The fact that Brother Agathon was working in the 1780's on an updated version of the *Conduct* [the manuscript of which we possess] to meet the diversified needs of the Institute 100 years after the first school in Rheims, may have been the spur which led to his launching this new work.

In the same preface, Brother Agathon insists on following "*the plan given us by M. De La Salle*" and "*in accordance with his principles and maxims.*" After discussing the possibility of another order for the twelve virtues, Brother Agathon explains that "*we felt that we should follow the order that M. De La Salle himself considered proper to indicate to us.*" He does, however, add to the text a postscript, "*some reflections on the conditions which he (De La Salle) calls for so that correction may be salutary both to the one who inflicts it, and to him who receives it.*"

If the text is redolent in so many ways of "*the principles and maxims*" of De La Salle, it is enriched by what Brother Agathon has drawn from his own experience and "*from the most reliable authors.*" In fact, the principal "other" source is the *Traité des Études* of Rollin (d.1743) from whom, a century or so later, the Institute was to adapt the *Prayer of the Teacher before school*.

### **Brother Agathon himself.**

Brother Agathon himself, "*le grand Supérieur*" as the historian Georges Rigault called him, tried vainly to save the Institute from extermination in the suppression of all Religious Communities in 1792 during the French Revolution, was imprisoned in three different prisons, and finally released to die alone in 1798. In the meantime, his text had reached the Brothers community in Rome where an Italian translation was made in 1797. A subsequent edition - that of Marietti in 1835 - became a favorite book of Saint John Bosco during his time as chaplain to the Brothers' school at Santa Barbara in Turin. The Irish Christian Brothers produced the first English translation in Dublin in the 1840's. The text was translated and introduced into Spain some 25 years before the Institute opened its first communities in Spain. The incorporation of the text as a kind of appendix to the *Conduct of Schools* may have contributed to its never attaining the same independent importance in France as it did in other countries, although it should be noted that it was included in at least seventeen separate editions during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Readers of the text, besides noting the vigorous direct style of the author, soon realize that they are reading the work of a man who has had a broad experience of the classroom and has long reflected on the heritage received from M. De La Salle and the first generation of Brothers.

Indeed, Brother Agathon as a teacher is known to us as the author of a treatise on arithmetic and another on double-entry accounting. He had taught both mathematics and navigation as part of the specialist work offered by the Brothers to French naval officers at both Vannes and Brest. His reputation for good judgement and his ability at synthesis had brought him as secretary to the General Chapter of 1777 where, to his great surprise, he found himself proposed as Superior General.

### **A Traditional Christian understanding of Virtue.**

Virtue has been defined as “*conformity of life and conduct with the principles of morality.*” Virtues, therefore, are the practices and habits which are followed out in accord with these principles. Four natural or cardinal virtues - prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance - are seen as the “hinges” on which other virtues can be cultivated. This concept of virtue is discussed by Socrates, found in Plato and Aristotle, adopted by Roman writers, and taken over by such distinguished Christian writers as Saints Ambrose, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas. The Christian writers add the so-called theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, giving preference to the greatest of the three - charity, or love.

While Greek thought saw the virtues as somehow innate to the nature of mankind, the Christian writers attributed them to God’s revelation through Christ. Virtue is always the just balance between excess and defect: [*virtus in medio stat*]. Virtues can be acquired by the cultivation of regular actions which build up to a habit. [*habitus*] While modern psychology may have certain reservations about too mechanistic an approach to the cultivation of virtue, certain kinds of learning experiences, e.g., learning another language, are based on such an approach.

### **Some editorial notes.**

I have been able to make use of two different translations of this text, one done by the late Brother Oswald Murdoch (Australia) and the other by Brother Richard Arnandez (New Orleans-Santa Fe), but have allowed myself a certain latitude in modifying certain expressions and sometimes whole sections so that they may be better understood by contemporary audiences.

The basic French structure of the text has been maintained, especially in the use of the semicolon to indicate the subordination of ideas. While this is not the same way as the semicolon is used in English, the logic and force of the original text is better preserved by than by breaking up the text with periods [full stops].

Secondly, although the French makes regular use of the word “*enfants = children*” and “*élèves = pupils*” to describe the young people in the classrooms which Brother Agathon and the Brothers knew in the late years of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, I have settled for the word “students” so as to make the most appropriate connection with the young people in Lasallian schools today - except where it has seemed important to indicate a particular emphasis of the original text. By the 1780's, the Brothers had eight Boarding and Correctional schools on the Saint Yon model. Their pupils were no longer simply children who remained only for two years to learn the elements of reading, religion, writing, and arithmetic, but often adolescents or young men who may have already had six or seven years of schooling.

Thirdly, since this is a translation of an original work in which Brother Agathon wrote for the Brothers of his day who taught boys only, there has been no attempt to change his original way of speaking about boys and young men, or of addressing only teachers who were male. I think all Lasallian teachers, nevertheless, will make the necessary adjustments as they come to appreciate the wisdom and practical importance of this great Lasallian text.

## Brother Agathon's Foreword of 1785

My very dear Brothers,

It would not be enough for us to know the duties imposed on us by our vows if we remain ignorant of the means we need, so as to correspond, as we should, with the end of our Institute, which is the instruction of children. This is why we intend, in the following pages, to discuss the virtues characteristic of a good teacher.

You will certainly, very dear Brothers, eagerly welcome a work which is of such great importance for you. We have followed the plan given us by M. de La Salle, our venerable Founder. We have composed this treatise in accordance with his principles and maxims; and what we have drawn from others was taken from the most reliable authors.

The virtues, or, what comes to the same thing, the qualities and characteristics of a good teacher are: Gravity, Silence, Humility, Prudence, Wisdom, Patience, Reserve, Gentleness, Zeal, Vigilance, Piety, and Generosity.

We do not intend to speak of these virtues in theory; we are satisfied, and must be satisfied, with simply making an application of these virtues to the end we propose to attain; and it is in this perspective that we shall consider them in the pages that follow.

Here is the order to which we shall conform. We shall explain the true character of each virtue, the particular traits proper to it, and the defects opposed to it. Thus, we are going to offer you a series of tableaux, as many as there are virtues to consider. In beholding these, an intelligent and attentive teacher will easily perceive what he needs to do and to avoid, so as to make his teaching more effective.

Before beginning, we might observe that it would perhaps be easy to find a link concerning all these many virtues. Thus, we might list Wisdom first, because it presents the main objective, the total objective that a teacher should propose to himself. Prudence might be placed second, because it makes a teacher know how he should act so as to fulfill his role properly. Then the other virtues should follow, each in its place, and the work might end with Gentleness, the crowning virtue of a good teacher, thanks to the value given it by Charity, the queen and mistress of all virtues. But such an arrangement seemed to us a merely artificial one, of no real utility. We felt that we should follow the order that M. de La Salle himself considered proper to indicate to us.

We have added, as a sort of post script, some reflections on the conditions which he calls for so that correction may be salutary both to the one who inflicts it, and to the one who receives it.

### I. Gravity [Seriousness]

**Gravity [seriousness]** is a virtue which regulates the exterior of a teacher, conformably to modesty, politeness, and good order.

A teacher possessing this virtue holds his body in a natural position, without either affectation or awkwardness; he does not shake his head or turn it lightly from side to side at every word he utters. His glance is assured and serene, without either affectation or severity. He does not laugh while talking, nor does he make unseemly gestures. He keeps an affable air; he speaks little, uses a moderate tone of voice. In what he says there is nothing bitter, stinging, supercilious, crude, or offensive to anyone.

Since he is convinced that gravity, modesty, and reserve do not exclude kindness or tender affection, he seeks by his lovable qualities to win the friendship of the students, for he knows by acting thus that they will show more interest in coming to his lessons, more docility in accepting

them, and more faithfulness in putting them into practice. He does not, however, show himself too free with them, nor does he entertain any familiarity or intimacy with any of them.

Far from seeking only to make them fear him, his main aim is to win his pupils' confidence, the better to know the virtues they may possess, so as to cultivate and develop them; and the more easily to discern their vices and defects, in order to correct these, if not entirely, at least as far as he can. For this purpose he carefully eliminates from his behavior whatever might smack of harshness, overbearingness, bluster - in a word whatever might make him unfeeling, ill-humored, indifferent, or hard to please. He also avoids a menacing tone of voice, a too demanding attitude which prevents the students from showing themselves for what they are, causing them to avoid the sight of their teacher and to hide the evil traits which he might be able to remedy if he knew about them, thus depriving them of the possibility of letting the seeds of their good qualities germinate and grow.

The teacher should, moreover, seek to win their esteem and respect; for students would not listen to what is taught them by a master whom they cannot look up to. Hence, he never forgets his duty of being for them a continual model of all the virtues. He exhibits in all his external appearance the restraint and decorum which result from the maturity of his mind, from his piety and his wisdom. Above all, he takes care to preserve calm through his even temper and good humor. He does not allow himself negligent or immodest attitudes, too much playfulness, all frivolity, all buffoonery, and whatever might suggest trifling. Still, since gravity carried too far would make him ridiculous, and obnoxious, he keeps it within appropriate limits. Thus, this virtue, properly understood, establishes good order in a class, affords a teacher true elevation of sentiments which preserve him from being wanting in his duty, maintains the students faithful to their obligations, and inspires them with attachment, confidence, and respect with regard to the teacher himself.

Besides the defects contrary to gravity which we have mentioned above, there are others which a teacher should carefully avoid: all outbursts of temper, violent acts, fierce and menacing looks, impatience, crudeness, childish behavior, an imperious tone of voice, biting words, or those inspired by a simulated and feigned mildness.

Not only must the teacher avoid these defects, he must also refrain from making faces, joking, striving for humor, giving penances which disturb order, which provoke laughter, which might be unbecoming; acting and speaking in ways inappropriate for a classroom, taking on scornful manners, gruff behavior; making certain sounds or affecting peculiar accents when speaking; indulging in a ridiculously affected manner, like talking in a deep voice, supercilious ways, too magisterial, too absolute, too pedantic airs. He should avoid a too mysterious, stilted outward appearance, conceited, angry and exaggerated behavior, moving his body in too sudden a manner, shrugging his shoulders, overemphasized gestures, banging on the platform, the desks, or tables to arouse or frighten the students.

## II. Silence

**Silence** is a virtue which leads the teacher to avoid talking when he must not speak and to speak when he should not be silent.

This virtue, therefore, includes two functions. It teaches the art of being silent, and that of speaking opportunely. Thus, it causes one to avoid two opposite defects which it condemns: taciturnity and loquacity.

The first effect of silence produces order and calm in the classroom, insures the progress and advancement of the students, gives the teacher some rest and preserves his health - three things which a teacher cannot afford to neglect without exposing himself to serious consequences.

Indeed, if he speaks too much the students will do the same. They will ask and answer questions out of turn; they will meddle in what is none of their business; they will excuse themselves and try to excuse others; the class will resound with a steady hum.

Moreover, experience shows that the teachers who talk a lot are hardly listened to, and that little account is taken of what they say. But if they speak rarely and to the point, the students pay attention to what they are told, like it, remember it, and profit by it.

Experience also shows that teachers who like to talk too much live in perpetual agitation, and weaken their lungs severely. Teaching, in itself, is very taxing; to devote oneself to it properly, no doubt a good teacher will willingly sacrifice himself; but he must do so prudently. Hence he avoids all imprudence and in particular eschews any manner of teaching which, without being truly useful, proves injurious to his health.

The class signals we use afford us the great advantage of keeping silence while teaching. These signals have been established so as to warn and correct the students, and to indicate to them what they have to do; thus the teacher needs to speak only when he cannot make the children understand, by signs, what he wants of them. Thus, these signs, while reminding the teacher to refrain from speaking, at the same time indicate to him to speak when the signals do not suffice. This is where the teacher begins to apply the second function of silence.

But this he must do only on three occasions: in reading, to call attention to mistakes that no student can correct, and to give needed explanations, warnings, orders, and prohibitions; then during catechism, to explain the text and help the students to answer properly; and finally, during the morning and evening prayers to exhort the students and to make some reflections for them. On these occasions he should say only what is strictly necessary. If he spoke more than this, he would offend against the first aspect of the virtue of silence.

Besides, the main aim of the teacher is to bring up the student in the Christian virtues. In general, he should enlighten their minds and move their hearts by means of these truths which he should teach them. In instructing them he must prepare himself, as we have already mentioned in our first letter, and as we shall explain more fully when treating of the virtue of Prudence. To make his language more appealing he must seek to convince himself of that with which he wishes to inspire his disciples. "If you wish to persuade," says St. Bernard (Sermon 59, #3 on the Song of Songs), "it is rather by affectionate sentiments than by studied declamations that you will succeed in this." Indeed, any number of examples prove that while a skillful and eloquent teacher exhausts himself in vain by efforts which are all the more wearing as true zeal enters less into them, another, perhaps much inferior in talent, but fully convinced of what he teaches, will bring about the most salutary results.

A good teacher will in general consider as faults against silence which should be avoided:

- 1) speaking without necessity or remaining silent when he should speak;
- 2) expressing himself badly when he does speak, because he had not foreseen the topic, the need for speaking, the proper times and circumstances for it, or the good or the evil which might result from it; or again expressing himself without force or precision, without exactness, hesitantly, groping for the right words, as if not knowing what he is saying, or by being too prolix and unmethodical;
- 3) remaining too long in conversation with certain students or their parents, with other outsiders, or with his fellow teachers, even though he has some reason to talk to these persons;
- 4) being preoccupied with the news of the day, listening to what the students wish to relate to him about these events;
- 5) finally, talking too much or too quickly or too slowly, confusedly, too loud, or so low that students cannot hear, or cannot easily grasp what is being said to them.

### III. Humility

**Humility** is a virtue which inspires us with low sentiments of ourselves; it attributes to us our just due.

It makes us realize what we are, according to these words of the Apostle; "*What have you that you have not received? And if you have received it, why glory in it?*" (1 Cor. 4:7). Thus, it directly opposes pride which gives us an unjustly exalted notion of our own excellence; yet in truth this vice does not indicate any solid good in us, for it is only a swelling which puffs us up and makes us appear in our judgment greater than we really are.

Our divine Savior teaches us the necessity of this virtue when He tells us: "Unless you change and become like little children, you will not enter into the kingdom of God." (Matt.18:3). This terrifying threat applies most especially to those who are in charge of instructing youth.

Now, which are the true characteristics of the humility proper to our state, considering it as the function of teaching? We shall explain this now.

The humility of a good teacher must be Christian. Hence he will be faithful to what he owes God and to what he owes his neighbor, not only his superiors, but also his equals and his inferiors. Thus, a Brother who may be the first among others should carefully refrain from exacting, and even (on the pretext that he is placed above them) from tolerating that others should render him any base or lowly services that he can do for himself. If he demanded such services he would be acting very contrary to humility. A good teacher will be humble in mind, knowing full well his own insufficiencies; he will be humble of heart, loving his lowliness; he will be humble in action, by behaving in consequence in all he does.

No doubt, he will never lose sight of the excellence and nobility of the end for which he was created; but at the same time he will keep in view the wretched state in which he is as a consequence of the sin of the first man: obscurity in his understanding, which even if not total, is still very notable; still greater weakness in his will, real powerlessness to do any supernatural good without God's help. Such is the sad inheritance of human nature, as religion teaches us. He does know, of course that God will never abandon him in his need, unless he has first abandoned God. But even when he thinks "that he stands" must he not always fear "lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12)? And consequently, must he not work out his salvation with fear and trembling, without being able to find reassurance save in these beautiful words of St. Peter the Apostle: "*Labor the more, that by your good works you may make sure your calling and election.*" (2 Peter 1:10,11).

Humility is accompanied by modesty. Thus, a teacher who really possesses this virtue considers himself highly honored to labor at the salvation of souls following the example of Jesus Christ and of the Apostles, in a role which a great number of the Saints who have made the Church illustrious by their lights, and edified by their virtues, have gloried in.

If he is talented, he does not make a display of it; he does not show conceit, pride, overbearing manners; he avoids attitudes and gestures, airs and ways of acting that might make him conspicuous in the eyes of men, or might draw attention to the qualities he thinks he possesses. He takes no pleasure in his wit, in the knowledge he may have acquired. With all the more reason he does not look down on his Brothers nor on what they do. He does not seek to be praised for what he does, nor applauded for his success; he does not attribute to himself the glory which is due only to the One who distributes talents as He sees fit; he refers all such esteem to God alone (1 Tim. 1:17). If he does not always achieve among his pupils all the good he hoped for, and even if he does no good at all, he blames himself, seeking to know what he did wrong, so as to correct it. After this, he remains in peace, submissive to Providence, knowing that it is not he who plants nor he who waters, but God who gives increase.

Humility excludes all vainglory as a motive of acting. Nothing, in fact, is more silly than to

desire the esteem of men; it is, says Pierre de Blois, “a burning wind which dries up the rivulets of grace.” Such a desire is, moreover, incompatible with the principles of the Gospel. Jesus Christ said to his disciples: “Do not desire to be called master, nor to be greeted as teachers. It matters little for you to be known by men. What you do need is that your names be written in heaven.” (Matt. 23:10; Luke 10:20).

Humility is without ambition. Since a truly humble Brother thinks himself fit for very little, he does not seek more exalted positions or employments. He does not want to teach one class rather than another, but convinces himself that the class to which he has been assigned by obedience is better for him than any other, will provide him with more means of glorifying God, and draw down on him more graces to use those means properly as far as possible.

Humility eliminates jealousy. A humble Brother, far from feeling chagrin over the achievements and success enjoyed by others in the same type of work will, on the contrary, be pleased to see that they equal and even surpass him; that they succeed better than he in teaching. Thus, he will never try to put himself forward as having more merit than another. Nor will he allow himself to display coldness toward others who may be ranked above him; in the same way he will not nourish any bitterness toward those who classify him below other Brothers.

Humility is not overconfident about its own views. Thus, if a Brother truly possesses this virtue, he will conform to the principles established in the Institute regarding teaching; he will not insist on following his own ideas; he will go along with his confrères; he will preserve uniformity of conduct in their regard; he will not make use of any special methods, any extraordinary practices to teach in his own way, keeping in mind the harm that might be done to the students as a result, and the difficulties he might create for the teachers who would come after him. Since he is not rash in what he does, he seeks to reassure himself by relying on the expertise of others; he consults them, willingly accepts their advice, warnings, instructions; in a word everything that might help him to do a better job.

Humility makes a teacher glad to share his knowledge with the simple. He shows great zeal in evangelizing the poor, in instructing the ignorant, and in teaching children the basics of religion. But if his knowledge is not accompanied by humility he will readily turn aside from those areas of teaching which are less highly considered, even though they may well be the most useful.

The humility of a good teacher makes him courageous. He does not turn away from whatever may be lowly and uninviting in the schools and in the students. He welcomes them with kindness and mildness; without showing any distaste he puts up with their natural defects: their rudeness, their ineptitude, the flaws in their character. He patiently bears with their indocility, impoliteness, ingratitude, oppositions, and even insults, without yielding to resentment or revenge, even when these faults are directed at him personally. Still, he does not forget that he must always repress whatever might weaken his authority and give rise to disorder, insolence, lack of application, or to other forms of misconduct on the part of the students.

Humility makes a good teacher treat both his equals and his inferiors with esteem, cordiality, friendliness, and kindness.

Humility makes a good teacher endure without chagrin the confusion that his mistakes, his blunders, his lack of success may draw down on him. The students can only be edified by his example on such occasions, and be led to imitate it themselves later on, when they find themselves in like circumstances.

The humility of a good teacher makes him charitable, affable, obliging, easy to approach, especially by the poor and those whom he might find less interesting to deal with. Never does he assume, when addressing the students, an arrogant, disdainful, or scornful attitude.

Finally, besides the defects of which we have been speaking, humility also condemns in general these that follow: lack of tact, indifference toward others, self-importance, affected and pretentious ways of acting toward Brothers or students; egotism which leads the

teacher to concern himself only with his own person and which is nothing but false humility; this is especially to be condemned in the case when, fearing to fail, he refrains from making all the efforts that the glory of God and obedience demands. The good teacher avoids the spirit of independence, which makes him follow none but his own ideas, and refuses to be subordinate to anyone in the exercise of his employment. Thus, only reluctantly does one show to a visitor, Director, or an Inspector, the marks of common politeness and courtesy due to them such as asking them to take the teacher's chair during class, finding out from them what they would like one to do, accompanying them in order to answer their questions, explaining to them whatever they might wish to know; showing them the students' copybooks, and receiving their observations and their advice.

#### IV. Prudence

**Prudence** is a virtue which makes us understand what we need to do and what we need to avoid. It indicates to us the sure and legitimate means of attaining a praiseworthy end. It, therefore, determines the use we must make of our intelligence and of our mind to turn us aside from what we might have to regret in the undertakings or actions of life. Besides, the means it uses will always be legitimate if they are inspired by reason or by faith; and they will be sure that they are neither insufficient or excessive.

Since the good teacher's main aim is the education of the children, prudence enlightens him about the means he must use to bring them up properly by educating their minds and hearts. Hence, this virtue is highly to be esteemed; it is even a most excellent art, says St. John Chrysostom because, as he adds, a good teacher stands far above a clever painter, a skillful sculptor, and other similar artists; from which we may conclude that to such a one especially we may apply the words of Holy Scripture: "*Happy the man rich in prudence!*"

Since the operations of this virtue are: to deliberate carefully, to judge rightly, and to order all things properly, a teacher must seek to accomplish all these goals. He cannot, in fact, achieve his objective which is the education of the children, unless he is sure of the infallibility of the means he uses in bringing them up correctly; and he cannot be sure of this unless he has examined, discussed, sought for and found what these means are.

Still, it is possible in general that he may be mistaken in his judgment; but he will not be if he acts with prudence, for the matter he is judging is either evident or doubtful. In the former case, he cannot be mistaken; and in the latter, before deciding he brings in all the requisite attention to make sure that he says only what he knows as true, and that he takes as conjectural only what is doubtful.

But to carry out the functions of prudence properly, he takes care to make use of the different elements it includes, which are eight in number: memory, intelligence, docility, skill, reasoning, foresight, circumspection, and precaution.

1) **Memory.** Prudence requires that we apply to the future the experience of the past. Nothing is more like what is going to happen than what has already happened. A good teacher, then, will profit by what he has learned; he will gather useful lessons from the failure and the success of others which he has heard about; and will not fail to follow faithfully the book of the *Conduct of Christian Schools*, which was drawn up and is based entirely on the careful consideration of long experience.

2) **Intelligence.** Prudence requires that we grasp fully the matter we are dealing with, and the means most appropriate for imparting it to the students. Thus, a teacher will seek first of all to study carefully and in depth the temperament and the character of the students, to adapt his lessons to their capacity and their needs, thus making them useful. For instance, one boy can

be controlled by fear, while another is discouraged and disheartened by it; some students can be found from whom nothing can be gotten except by dint of effort and application; there are others who study only by fits and starts. To want to put them all on the same level and subject them all to one and the same rule, would be to do violence to nature. The teacher's prudence consists in holding to a middle course, equally distant from both extremes; for in this area, evil is often right next to good, and it is easy to mistake one for the other. This is what makes guiding the young such a difficult enterprise.

Secondly: the teacher shall carefully prepare the matter for every lesson he wishes to teach. This leads us to explain again, as we announced above, this topic which is so important, and which moreover should naturally make up part of a work which seeks to explain the virtues of a good teacher. Thus, we say that Prudence requires of a teacher to prepare himself carefully before each lesson he gives to his students. For he needs to recall to mind with precision the principles which can easily slip his memory, and which, if forgotten, might lead him to serious mistakes. He needs to search for arguments to back up his principles, to gather them together with discernment and discrimination; he must not haphazardly seize upon whatever might offer itself to him in a quick and superficial reading. He must give clarity, order, and proper arrangement to what he has to say, to make it more easily grasped and to prevent the disorientation which confusion and disorder would infallibly produce in the students' minds.

Finally, he must determine how to express himself with the dignity and propriety which become a teacher, and without which what he says might often inspire boredom, lack of interest, and even sometimes the scorn of those who have to listen to him. All this obviously demands preparation and effort; and if, while neglecting either, one expects God to make for the deficiency by an extraordinary help, this expectation would resemble the temerity of a man who tempts God, rather than the security of the one who rightly trusts in His goodness and power.

There are, it is true, teachers so richly endowed with everything that can contribute to the instruction of their pupils that they often undertake to teach various topics without any preparation. These Jesus Christ compares to a father of a family who is always ready to draw from his treasure-house riches both ancient and new; for their assiduous efforts in the past have acquired this happy state for them. But we must admit that this readiness and this abundance, which are the result only of a superior talent joined with a long practice of teaching, are not the lot of the many; and that for most teachers, to undertake without due preparation to deal in public with the principal truths of religion is an act of temerity, presumption, or perhaps a sign of deep lack of esteem for the educator's role.

3) **Docility.** Even those whose more mature age has provided them with experience must be ready to learn more if they wish to be prudent. For St. Thomas says that no one is always entirely self-sufficient in what pertains to prudence. A good teacher, therefore, will mistrust his own lights, as we mentioned previously, and will never undertake anything of importance without consulting whomsoever he is bound to consult.

4) **Skill.** This concerns the carrying out of the just projects one has decided upon. Thus, prudence demands that a teacher should always prefer the means which seem to him the most proper to insure the success of what he undertakes. It also demands for example, that he should give his words and actions the same attention he would use if he were acting in the public view. He must give proof of perfect discretion, without which he cannot succeed; he must be so reserved that the students may not always know what he is thinking, and everything he plans for them.

5) **Reasoning.** This means the art of reasoning correctly so as to avoid the errors one might fall into. The prudent teacher must excel in this art, so as to lay down incontrovertible principles in the subjects he teaches, and to deduce therefrom certain and sure consequences, which will succeed in convincing the minds of the students.

6) **Foresight.** This is the wise arrangement of the means which lead to the end desired or, if one prefers, it is the action of the mind by which we recognize in advance what may happen, following the natural course of events. Under the first aspect, prudence requires a time to deliberate, if one does not wish to expose himself to see an undertaking fail; in like manner it forbids him to spend too much time deliberating, if he does not want to lose the occasion for acting appropriately. Prudence, moreover, regulates and modifies the other virtues of the good teacher: thus, it assigns its proper rule to each thing; it considers how it foresees and coordinates all the virtues, the proper means for practicing them, and the proper application that must be made of them.

Under the second aspect, prudence makes the teacher look ahead at how useful or not the means he may use will turn out to be, so as to reject them or make use of them in greater confidence.

7) **Circumspection.** This is a reflected attention which thoroughly examines a plan before giving it final approval. Thus, a prudent teacher will not act unless he has carefully considered what he has to do; he will make it a practice to choose the most appropriate methods, given the circumstances of time, place, temperament, and persons.

8) **Precaution.** Finally, precaution carefully avoids the inconvenience in what one may wish to carry out. This is why a prudent teacher will never punish students without witnesses present, and will never be alone anywhere with a student unless he can be seen by someone. This will also lead him not to do or say anything in the presence of the students which they may blame him for, or may be scandalized by. So also, when reproving in public faults publicly committed he will not always make known to all the students the faults which all of them may not know, because loss of reputation, or scandal, might ensue. Finally, it is through prudence that he will so regulate all his external conduct that his students may never have any reason to think that he is afraid of them on account of the natural defects which they may observe in him.

From all this it is easy to conclude that a teacher with good judgment, with ordinary knowledge, and with the information gained from study, will carry out perfectly the duties imposed by prudence; and it is clear, also, how necessary this virtue is for him.

One sins against prudence in two ways, by defect or by excess.

One sins in the first way by hastiness, thoughtlessness, temerity, lack of attention to what one is doing by lack of consideration; by light-headedness, negligence, inconstancy, blind attachment to one's own opinions, blind confidence in merely human resources, etc.

One sins in the second manner by false prudence, which Scripture calls "prudence of the flesh." It judges only by the senses and has no other object in view than to satisfy some ill-regulated love, or too high an opinion of self; thus it anxiously bothers about temporal concerns, either in the present or in the future; and the means it uses to succeed in what it undertakes are guile, fraud, and deceit.

## V. Wisdom

**Wisdom** is a virtue which gives us knowledge of the most exalted things through the most excellent principles so that we may act accordingly.

It differs from prudence for the latter merely presupposes a praiseworthy end, whatever it may be. Whereas, wisdom considers directly its object, and does so not only as good and praiseworthy but also as being very great and important.

It can even happen that one of these two virtues may be present while the other is not. Let us give an example in general terms. We wish to have the last sacraments administered to someone suffering from a malady said to be serious and life-threatening. This is obviously an act of wisdom. But is it always an act of prudence also? No, doubtless; for we need to be morally

sure, or to have at least a reasonable suspicion, that the illness is real and dangerous. In such a case, it is possible to be mistaken and to fail against prudence if, to inform oneself about the facts, one fails to fulfill the dictates of prudence, namely, by not carefully examining the circumstances, by judging of them too hastily, and in consequence, by acting in a manner lacking in consideration.

Let us take another example, referring to the subject which we are discussing at present. A teacher wishes to give his students a lesson on the subject he teaches them, let us say, catechism. This is obviously an act of wisdom by which he seeks to fulfill his duty. But if he speaks to the children in too high-flown a manner, so that they do not grasp what he tells them, or if he makes use of vulgar expressions inappropriate for dealing with the dignity of the truths he must teach them, he certainly sins against prudence. There is, then, an essential difference between the two virtues we are here considering.

In what, then, does the wisdom of the good teacher consist? It consists in making him know, love, and fulfill the exalted and infinitely precious object which he is responsible for; from this it follows that a good teacher must begin by imitating the example of Solomon who spoke humbly to the Author of all good, the God of Knowledge, the Father of Lights: (Wisdom 9: 4, 10, 11, 12) *"Give me,"* said this prince, *"wisdom, which is seated by thy throne and reject me not from the number of Thy children. Send her forth from Thy sanctuary in heaven, and from the throne of Thy grandeur, so that she may be with me and work with me, and that I may know what is agreeable to Thee; for she is the knowledge and intelligence of all things; she will guide me in all my works with circumspection, and will protect me by her might; and thus my acts will be agreeable to Thee."*

However, it is not enough for a good teacher to pray; he would act imprudently if, while teaching the students, he did not seek to instruct himself concerning what he wishes to teach them. Thus, he will apply himself to study, as we mentioned in speaking of prudence, but wisdom will also show him, and make him deeply cognizant not only of the truths he is obliged to teach, but of the principles of these subjects. Otherwise, he would be a reciter of formulas, and the students would only learn names, which they would promptly forget.

Moreover, while imparting to them what he knows, he should take great care in particular not to tell them anything offensive or disdainful, or that might lead them to become ill-disposed towards himself or the school. He should never be led by hazardous opinions, nor by false prejudices, but always by Christian principles, by divine and human laws, and also by those of his nation.

To teach children with greater benefit, wisdom requires that he himself should practice the virtues which he must cultivate in them. *"If you show yourself firmly convinced of what you teach,"* says St. Bernard, *"You will give to your voice the voice of power; the voice of action is much more impressive than that of words; act as you speak..."* (Sermon 59 on the Song of Songs). Thus he will teach his students how to direct their actions in conformity with the true rules of behavior; to moderate and correct their passions; to become truly and genuinely happy. He will, therefore, make sure to give them the example of what he wishes to teach them; he will strive for his own sake and for the sake of instructing them, to distinguish what is truly good from what is such only in appearance; he will lead them to choose rightly and to persevere in every enlightened choice; to arrange all things with order and measure; in a word, to fulfill exactly their duties toward God, toward themselves, and toward others.

In this way he will acquire this sublime wisdom which includes the most excellent science of all, without which all others are nothing in comparison: the science of salvation, which makes the soul relish the things of heaven, because it show to us all the sweetness and suavity of these things. It teaches us to follow what religion urges us to do; for example, to find our wealth in poverty, joy in suffering, true elevation in God's eyes, in lowly occupations and in those which

men hold in slight esteem; to make good use of the blessings and the ills of this life; not to take any resolution save with upright and worthy views; not to pursue our aims except by legitimate means; to unite, in dealing with children, a just firmness with a praiseworthy mildness; example with practice; always to seek the spiritual advantages which enrich us for eternity rather than the temporal benefits which are only fleeting, being firmly persuaded that it is of no use for a man to gain the entire world if he then loses his soul; that earth and all its goods will pass away, but that whoever does the will of God will abide forever. Such, in fact, is true wisdom, which St. James exhorts us (James 1:5) to beg of God, and which above all will be the glory and crown of a good teacher.

The defects contrary to this kind of admirable wisdom are: first, to prefer a merely human satisfaction to an act of supernatural virtue, and to the perfect accomplishment of God's will; for instance, to show oneself more eager to acquire external talents and profane science rather than the necessary knowledge of religion. Second, to apply oneself more willingly to teaching what flatters one's self-love rather than to what can form Jesus Christ in the hearts of the students, to seek their friendship rather than to correct them of their defects, etc.

There is another kind of wisdom which does not come down from on high, but on the contrary is earthly, animal, diabolical, as St. James says (James 3:19:62). This is a false wisdom blinded by passion: it follows only the suggestions of the malignant spirit; it adopts exclusively the maxims of the world, while rejecting those of the Gospel. It takes more pains about acquiring the virtues which may be agreeable to men rather than those which can please God. It acts only according to interested motives, seeking only what can be of benefit to itself. Moreover, in order to deceive and lead others astray more easily, it strives to disguise itself by appearing affable, mild, friendly, and polite; but it does not hesitate to make use of intrigue, ruse, fraud, artifice, subtlety, and trickery to achieve its ends. This is therefore nothing but true folly, as its unfortunate consequences - contention and jealousy - only too clearly show.

## VI. Patience

**Patience** is a virtue which makes us overcome, without murmuring and with submission to the will of God, all the evils of this life, and especially the cares inseparable from the education of youth.

It does not, in truth, do away with suffering: but, says St. Francis de Sales (*Introduction to a Devout Life*, L, 111, Chapter 111.), "*it alleviates it by often making us remember that Our Lord saved us by enduring suffering, and that in the same way we must work out our salvation through trials and afflictions, enduring injuries, annoyances, and vexations, with as much meekness as we can.*"

Patience is not only necessary, but even useful in all our ills.

It is necessary because the law of nature obliges us to bear trials patiently, and because murmuring about what happens is to outrage Providence. It is useful because it lightens our sufferings, making them less dangerous, and shortening them.

The fruit of Christian patience, says Our Lord Jesus Christ, is the peaceful possession of our souls (Luke 21:19). According to St. Francis de Sales, the more perfect our patience, the more fully will we possess our souls.

Patience restrains the soul's faculties within the due bonds which they should not transgress; thus, it prevents all outbursts in trying occasions, it matures our plans and makes executing them easier; whereas precipitation, on the contrary, often makes well thought-out projects valueless. It soothes our pains and calms the mind; it banishes spells of sadness; it forbids bitter words, spiteful remarks, ill humor, discouragement, worry, unreasonable over-eagerness, bustle, and vivacity of humor.

The practice of this virtue consists, then, as we mentioned, in accepting without complaint,

all the ills that befall us. Regarding the wrongs done to us here is what we are advised to do by the saint just quoted: *“Complain about them as little as possible; for it is certain that as a rule whoever complains, sins. Self-love always makes us feel such injuries as greater than they really are. Above all, do not address your complaints to persons quick to grow indignant and to speak ill of others. If it is expedient for you to complain to someone, to remedy the offense, or even to soothe your own mind, let it be to someone with a calm disposition, who loves God; for otherwise, instead of relieving your heart, you would provoke it to even deeper disquiet; instead of removing the thorn which hurts you, you would be driving it in deeper.”*

All that we have just said concerning patience in general applies very aptly to the good teacher. As he is nearly always with his students, this virtue consists, in his case, in supporting the disagreeable and unpleasant occurrences which may be met with in his employment. Consequently, he will not take to heart the students' whims, jokes, and bad manners, or those of their parents; he learns to feel sorry for the limited powers of reason displayed by the students, due to their age, their light-headedness, and their inexperience. He never grows disheartened or weary from repeating the same things to them often and at length, but always does so with goodness and affection, so as to make them remember these things, no matter how difficult and boring he finds this to be. For the fact is that by instructing, warning, remonstrating, and correcting students one sooner or later attains the end sought: the correct and reasonable notions which one has consistently presented to them begin, as it were, to take root; pious and Christian sentiments, the principles of honesty and uprightness insensibly sink into the hearts, which are tender and are easily moved, of those children who are well disposed; and in the end the fruit one gathers will be all the more abundant, since it has been awaited for a long time. A good teacher never forgets these words of St. James (James 1:4): *“Patience has a perfect work.”*

The defects opposed to this virtue are: to rebuff the students by offensive, crude words; to treat them roughly, using harsh language, violent and excessive acts, striking them with the hand, ferule or signal, punishing them unjustly because of uncontrolled outbursts of self-love due to an impetuosity which does not take the time to reflect before acting or speaking.

## VII. Reserve

**Reserve** is a virtue which makes us think, speak, and act with moderation, discretion, and modesty.

It differs from patience. Both, in truth, must be accompanied by modesty; but the former does so in order to forestall evil, while the latter does so to endure it. Reserve differs from the aspect of prudence named precaution, because it directly forestalls evil, either within itself, or outwardly; whereas precaution does so directly or exteriorly.

Finally, this virtue differs from gravity. This latter's principal object lies in the exterior, but reserve's essential object is not only what is external but also what is internal.

By this we understand in general that reserve is distinguished from precaution and gravity as a cause is distinguished from its effects, as a spring differs from the rills flowing from it. But, at the same time, we can understand how the virtues of a good teacher, although differing from one another, are yet so intimately united that they hold together as though by indissoluble bonds, so that one cannot fail in regard to one without often failing against several others.

Reserve, then, consists in controlling ourselves in circumstances where we might grow angry or upset; in not allowing ourselves anything not entirely proper and beyond the reach of any just criticism or evil suspicion. It teaches us to regulate all our conduct so that the student may not remark anything not imitable and edifying in us. It requires us to act everywhere with due consideration for the concerns, the understanding, and the precautions demanded by the innocence of the children, the weakness of their age, their impressionability, and their tendency to

imitate evil. A word, a gesture, a smile, a wink, something insignificant in appearance, can call into play their imagination, becoming for them a fruitful source of reveries, a rich fount of unjustified conclusions, and sometimes of dangerous moral decisions in the future.

This virtue also avoids all dangerous friendships or relationships with them. It forbids us even to touch or caress them, to joke with them, to let them hug us. It never loses sight of the opinion usually entertained by children, that persons consecrated to God must be without defects and above the ordinary weakness found in other persons. We must do nothing to disabuse them of this opinion, and should also remember that among these children there may be some sufficiently perverse to give the most malignant interpretations to words and actions in which only the malice of an already corrupted heart would discern the appearance of evil, when none is present.

As reserve in thought leads to reserve in word and action, it is very important to learn how to think properly, that is, to reflect carefully on things, as well as to judge rightly of them.

We fail against reserve when we do not seek to give good example, to show decorum in all our external conduct, to avoid every offensive or coarse manner of acting, whatever would be the result of a poor education, whatever might in the slightest degree offend the eyes or the ears of the young, or give rise to rash judgments, or lessen the consideration and the reputation a teacher needs in order to do any good and to deserve the esteem and confidence of his students. In fact, they lose respect and submission to him the moment they see that his conduct is not irreproachable.

Another effect of reserve as of gravity, is to impress the students, to make them very reserved also, and to prevent them from taking liberties; for various virtues can produce the same effects because of differing principles.

## VIII. Gentleness

**Gentleness** is a virtue which inspires us with goodness, sensitivity, and tenderness.

Jesus Christ is the most accomplished model of this virtue. He recommends it to us especially by these words: *“Learn of me for I am gentle and humble of heart”* (Matthew 9:29). Gentleness is, according to the Bishop of Geneva, as it were, the flower of charity. He adds, following St. Bernard, that gentleness is the perfection of charity, when it is not only patient but, over and above, meek and good natured. (*Introduction to the Devout Life*, 3rd part, c. 8).

In general, we can distinguish four kinds of gentleness. The first is that of the mind, which consists in judging without harshness, without passion, without considering one’s own merit and one’s supposed superiority. The second is that of the heart, which makes us want things without being stubborn about it, and seeks them in a righteous manner. The third is that of manner, which consists in behaving according to good principles, without wanting to reform others over whom we have no authority, or in things that do not concern us. The fourth is that of our conduct which makes us act with simplicity and uprightness, not contradicting others without reasonable cause, and without any obligation to do so; and observing, in this case, a reasonable degree of moderation.

All these different forms of gentleness, in order to be genuine, must be very sincere; for says St. Francis de Sales, *“It is one of the enemy’s favorite ruses to make people amuse themselves with words and conversations about gentleness and humility, without paying much attention to their inward affections. They think they are humble and gentle, but are really not such at all. This is recognized because, in spite of their ceremonious gentleness and humility, at the slightest cross word one may address to them, at the least injury proffered to them, they rear up with unexpected arrogance.”*

What we have just said gives us to understand how singularly admirable is this virtue of

gentleness, since it has humility as its companion, and because, when it is patient, it is in truth the perfection of charity. It follows, therefore, that under its first aspect, it restrains our fits of anger, smothers our desires for vengeance, and makes us face the misfortunes, disappointments, and other evils that can happen to us with entire equality of soul. Under its second aspect, which is its most distinctive mark, it wins the friendship of the students. It is a general principle that love wins love; a teacher should then, above and before all, cultivate the feelings of a father toward his pupils, and look upon himself as holding the place of those who entrusted them to him. He should borrow from the parents the sentiments of tenderness and goodness which are natural for them. He does this by showing gentleness; it inspires him, in regard to the students, with affection, tenderness, good will, winning and persuasive manners. It removes from his commands whatever might be abrupt and austere, and blunts their sting. Thus, it makes the children happy and attaches them to the teacher; and if they are reasonable, will they not always willingly yield to his insinuations and his gentleness, rather than to constraint and force?

Let us give further consideration to the means by which a teacher can make himself loved by his students, thanks to gentleness.

- 1) He will begin by avoiding the defects that he must correct in them, for example rough and shocking manners.
- 2) He will require good order and discipline that are neither harsh nor forbidding.
- 3) He will be simple, patient, precise in his manner of teaching; he will count more on his own consistency in having the rules followed, than on an excess of application on the part of the pupils.
- 4) He shall show equal kindness toward all, without any partiality, preference, or particular attention to anyone.
- 5) He should not overlook the mistakes which need to be pointed out, but it should be done gently and carefully. When he corrects, he should not be either bitter or offensive or insulting; and immediately after he has punished anyone he shall take care to dissipate the fear that the punishment may have caused the child, by making him acknowledge his fault, and the rightness of the punishment, and by recommending to him not to put himself in the same situation again.
- 6) He will be consistent in his dealings; this is all the more essential since if each day found the teacher in a different mood, by a change in his humor or his manner of speaking, the children would never know precisely what to count on, and would not fail to lose respect for him, and to find his constant changes ridiculous, unbearable, and very apt to make them lose interest in school or even to inspire them with aversion for it.
- 7) He shall give them the liberty of making known their difficulties, and he shall answer them willingly and with kindness in so far as it is necessary.
- 8) He praises them appropriately when they deserve it. Although this praise may be feared because of the vanity that it might arouse, it is necessary to make use of it in order to encourage them without elating them too much; for of all the motives capable of touching a rational soul, there is none more powerful than honor and shame; and when one has been able to make children susceptible to them, one has gained a victory. They derive pleasure from praise and esteem, especially from their parents and from those on whom they depend.
- 9) He shall often speak to them of virtue, but always appropriately and in praise of it, as being the most precious of possessions, in order to inspire them to love it and to model their behavior by it.
- 10) Every day he shall tell them something edifying which may help them toward leading a Christian and virtuous life.

11) He shall teach them the politeness which they need and the proprieties which they must observe in order to be esteemed in society and live there honorably; thus he shall take pains to make them respectful, gentle, honest, considerate, obliging toward their superiors, their companions, and to everyone.

It is very important, indeed, to oppose certain tendencies in young people which are directly opposed to the common duties of society and of civil converse: a rough and unrestrained uncouthness which prevents them from thinking about what may please or displease those with whom they live; a self-love which pays attention only to their own comfort and advantage; an overbearing and haughty attitude which makes them think that everything is due to them, while they owe nothing to anyone; a spirit of contradiction, of criticism, of mockery, which condemns everything and seeks only to wound others. Such are the defects against which open war must be declared. Young people who have been brought up to be considerate for their companions, to give them pleasure, to yield to them on occasion, never to say anything outrageous about them, and not to take offense easily at what others say - such young people will soon learn, when they take their place in the world, the value of politeness and of civilized behavior.

12) A good teacher educates the heart, the mind, and the judgment of his pupils by the following means:

a) **To educate the heart** he will forestall the passions and vices; this is done by inspiring the children with aversion and horror for the occasions of sin, by combating the evil inclinations which they display; by leading them to love Christian virtue; by teaching them the necessity of practicing these virtues and indicating to them the occasions when they should do so; by helping them acquire good habits, making them understand, for instance, the difference between a boy who is honest and sincere, on whose word one can rely, and whom one can trust implicitly, who is considered incapable not only of lying or deceit, but even of the slightest dissembling; and another boy who always gives rise to suspicion, whom nobody feels safe in trusting, and whose word one cannot believe, even when he happens to tell the truth.

b) **To educate their minds**, a teacher will instruct his students zealously and with affection in the dogmas and duties of religion, and in whatever can make them men capable of directing themselves by right reason, and so becoming citizens useful to society. This further requires that he should always think of and speak with them correctly, with reason, with good sense, and should accustom them to do likewise in all the occasions which come up. He points out errors to them and calls them to order when they fail in this; he catches their mistakes when they judge badly or talk nonsense, or take things the wrong way. He accustoms them to act with so much discernment that they may always have a praiseworthy end in view, and may always be prepared to give valid reasons for what they want, do, and say.

c) **To educate their judgment**, he will point out to them the relationships things have with one another, and the properties which distinguish them from each other. He shall make them speak of these things according to the understanding which they should have at first gained of them themselves, and do so always with correctness and precision; he shall present to them the comparison of what is reprehensible in their conduct with what they should have thought, said, done or not done.

Even so, when striving thus to educate the heart, the mind, and the judgment of his students, a teacher still cannot expect to succeed unless he avoids whatever smacks of harshness.

A teacher fails by harshness when he demands of his students what is beyond their capacity, requiring them, for instance, to recite lessons of catechism or of other more difficult matters which their memory does not allow them to retain; or by imposing penances on them out of proportion to their faults; he should consider that he himself would be as culpable, by giving excessive punishments, even if merited, as though he had punished someone who had not deserved it at all.

He would fail again if he demanded things with so much over-bearingness and pride that the students would obviously not be disposed to conform; if he exacted such things when they are ill-disposed, without paying attention to the fact that they are not ready to profit by the efforts of his zeal, so long as they listen only to passion, resentment, and their ill will.

He would also fail when he shows equal insistence on things of trifling importance and on those which are more essential; when he never listens to the pleas or the excuses of the students, thereby depriving himself of a means of correcting his own mistakes; or by never pardoning them their faults, even though he should forgive a good many in which there is neither malice nor evil consequences to fear, such as failures arising from ignorance, distraction, forgetfulness, frivolity, heedlessness, and other defects which are normal at such an age; when he shows himself perpetually dissatisfied with the behavior of his pupils, whatever it may be, never appearing to them save in a grouchy mood or with a freezing air; never opening his mouth except to say cutting, disagreeable, improper, injurious remarks; when he shows continual bias against them, interpreting badly everything they do; when he exaggerates their faults; when he acts toward them as though they were irrational beings, without any feelings: for instance, by jerking them, pulling on them, striking them violently in anger. (Such behavior can only be the result of a fit of temper, of which a teacher, more than anyone else, should be incapable); when he does not inform the children why he is punishing them; when he punishes doubtful infractions just as he does the ones he is sure of; when he never lets himself be moved by the students' pleas, never pardons anything even when they have committed only minor faults such as having accidentally written a page badly, or having come late to school once, or having been caught not following the lesson; when their faults are neither against religion nor good morals, such as words or actions contrary to purity, swearing, fighting, disobedience, stealing, lying, lack of reverence in church and during prayers. All such conduct on the teacher's part makes the pupils lose their love of work, their liking for what is good. It disheartens them and makes them complain of injustice.

A teacher should convince himself:

- 1) that punishment itself does less to correct faults than the manner of imposing it;
- 2) that if the teacher inspires excessive fear by inflexibility and harshness, he bestializes the children's minds, robs their hearts of noble sentiments, makes them lose all worthy sentiments, and gives them a hatred for the school and for learning;
- 3) that by wanting to spare no fault, he will prevent his corrections from being useful;
- 4) that by wise moderation he can win over those whom he would only irritate by indiscreet harshness.
- 5) that he will never succeed in making the pupils fear him save by inspiring them with the fear of God, of God's judgments and sanctions. If they pay no attention to these, or if these things make no impression on them, all his authority will remain powerless to make them fear him. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that if gentleness is full of charity, it must still be firm. Charity can indeed for a time attract the hearts of the

students, but it does not suffice; when they begin to take things easy, as they do from time to time, then firmness must take over to keep them within the bounds of duty, or to bring them back when they have departed therefrom.

“My son,” says the Wise Man (Eccl. 3:19), “*let your deeds be done in gentleness and you will draw down on yourself not only the esteem but the love of men.*” On this a commentator observes: “*The Wise Man wishes to see gentleness employed; and at the same time he wishes us to do perfectly what we are about; this is to show that he wants this gentleness to be firm.*”

Firmness, therefore, according to the words of Scripture which we have just quoted, consists in complete faithfulness in observing everything that can lead to the end proposed; thus, it requires of a teacher strength, courage, and constancy:

**a) Strength** to oppose whatever might be contrary to good order, not letting the difficulties and pains found in teaching dishearten him. This is necessary, for instance, when a teacher arrives for the first time in a class; for the first concern of the students in such a situation is to study the new teacher and to size him up to discover whether he has some weak point, and if so, to profit by it. When they see, on the contrary, that the teacher quietly and in an unruffled manner opposes a gentle and reasonable firmness to their tricks and their attempts at disturbing him, they soon submit and come back to the path of duty.

**b) Courage** to keep trying to do whatever may produce or preserve good order, and the progress of the students.

**c) Constancy** to persevere unflinchingly in one’s good dispositions; quietly to confront obstacles, opposition, problems even in spite of little hope of success.

The main point here is to apply a firm gentleness to the guidance of the students, and for this it is essential to pay attention to the special circumstances in which they are, in order to combine wise gentleness with firmness. Thus, gentleness does not prevent a teacher from punishing the faults which should be corrected, but it does not allow him to show himself inflexibly firm, save when the method of gentleness and exhortation and all his efforts, repeated warnings, written punishments and other sanctions, along with other reasonable procedures have been used without correcting or overcoming a stubborn attitude, a disobedience maintained with obstinate ill-will, a mocking air, and an attitude of rebellion, an invincible laziness, missing school, notable and habitual negligence, disinclination and aversion toward study, duplicity and underhandedness, flattery, a tendency to tale-bearing, provoking divisions, slander and a mocking spirit. However, a teacher must never forget that inexorable strictness on his part will, as a rule, alienate the students, spur them to revolt, indispose their parents, and everybody else.

Gentleness does not even permit us, when punishing, to appeal to our authority exclusively. When naked authority is invoked, it can indeed constrain the guilty party, but it does not correct him. If imperious manners inspire the boys with forced respect, they will obey while they are observed and while the teacher is with them, for they cannot do otherwise; but they come back to their old ways the moment they are out of his sight.

Thus to reach a proper combination of gentleness with firmness we must not fall into any of the drawbacks of either. It is this happy medium which gives a teacher the authority which is the soul of government, and which inspires pupils’ respect, the best source of obedience and submission. Thus, what should characterize the relationship on both sides, and be the principal consideration for both teacher and students, is gentleness and love.

One should moreover carefully shun all the defects opposed to firmness. Thus, one will, in the first place, avoid weakness. A teacher sins by weakness when he fails to realize

that he incurs guilt if he does not punish the faults which he should punish, or when he allows the students to do whatever they like, to violate order while feeling sure that they will not be punished for their misconduct.

In the second place, he should avoid cowardly complaisance and spineless condescension. A teacher fails in this way when he does not use all the means given to him to succeed in his task; when he is inconsistent in his conduct and backs off ill-advisedly from proper firmness; when he considers as light or indifferent what might be a real and considerable evil; when for personal considerations of whatever kind he tolerates what should not be condoned; when, not wishing to take the trouble, he does not pay sufficient attention to the proper discipline in the class or to the progress of the students, and does not correct even the slightest faults contrary thereto; when he lets the students neglect or despise what he has rightly ordered or recommended; when he speaks ineffectually, acts in an indolent and indifferent manner, failing to show that he really wants the students to do their duty; when he is content with issuing ineffectual warnings.

In the third place, he should avoid too much communication with the students. This leads them to despise the teacher, to become insubordinate, to show a distaste for work and application. It makes the students willful, undocile, rebellious; it encourages laziness and other vices, threatens their progress, allows evil habits to take root. When the teacher lacks the necessary determination and firmness, he is made fun of by the students, and lends himself inappropriately to their desires because of his own cowardice and reprehensible timidity. There is no doubt that he should be affable with his students; but this does not allow him to become familiar with them.

In the fourth place, he should avoid the other defects contrary to firmness, which are: inconstancy; excessive timidity; a hang-dog look; a naive, unnatural, troubled, embarrassed air, as well as stubbornness, obstinacy, presumption, an inflexibility which never gives way, a rigidity that never yields either to reason or to legitimate authority, or even to force.

Let us now go on to speak of punishments. We have seen that a teacher procures the good of his students by charitable gentleness, and that he maintains it by a firm gentleness. We must now show that he forestalls or corrects evil by his wise and prudent gentleness.

First of all, he rejects the use of the rod or the whip.

- 1) These punishments are improper; they are also servile and demeaning and lead to serious consequences.
- 2) In correcting, one should use the means which will afford the greatest benefit to the students, through shame for having acted badly, preferably to those which would prevent them from falling again into a fault through fear of corporal chastisement.
- 3) Such punishments inspire aversion for the teacher who uses them and for the school.
- 4) They do nothing to change the heart and of themselves do not modify the nature.
- 5) They often brutalize the mind and harden the culprit in his evil ways
- 6) The students get used to them and become unaffected by them so that in the long run they derive no benefit from them.
- 7) They expose the teacher to scorn, insults, and humiliations.
- 8) They are not really necessary. The best teachers, and the great majority of them, succeed in school even when they do not make use of such punishments.
- 9) There are other ways of punishing the students' faults which are more helpful both for the teacher and for the students themselves.

It is true that Holy Scripture speaks of “*the rod*” with reference to the correction of children, but, says a commentator: this means that “*when it is necessary one should correct them with a holy severity. It is not being kind,*” he adds, following St. Augustine, “*it is rather being inhuman to favor vices and evil habits in a child, in order to spare him a few tears; whoever lets him go ahead in his evil ways, through this cruel indulgence, does not treat him like a father, but like an enemy.*”

Moreover, if parents (to whom Scripture is speaking here) are obliged to correct their offspring by using the rod, this kind of correction does not have, for them, the same inconveniences which it would have for a teacher. When their children show a character which is churlish, stubborn, hard-headed, indocile, unaffected by reprimands and appeals to honor, parents are certainly justified in opposing these nascent vices by using corporal punishments capable of mastering those who cannot be corrected by other, less violent, means. But the wisest thing for a teacher to do when confronted by students whom he cannot bring back to the path of duty save by punishments, is to send them back to their parents, while observing, of course, the measures prescribed by the *Conduct of the Christian Schools* in such cases.

The following means can be used to avoid having to inflict punishments, or to make them rare, and to insure their effectiveness:

**1)** Early on, the students should be trained in docility; for this the teacher should show a firmness and a consistency of conduct from which he will never depart. When the students do something wrong, he must reprove them in an authoritative way, that is, a certain manner of speaking and acting which betokens energy and strength, and which suggests the master, the superior. Otherwise, the pupils would rebel against their teacher, or put themselves on the same footing as he, refuse submission and order, and do as they please.

**2)** The teacher should never allow himself to act through passion, ill humor, or caprice. This is one of the worst faults an educator can commit, because this never escapes the sharp eyes of the students; it sometimes nullifies all the teacher’s other good qualities, and robs his advice and his remonstrances of practically all authority.

**3)** The students should be brought to feel remorse and shame for their faults, rather than to fear the punishments they may have deserved.

**4)** The teacher should carefully distinguish between the faults which deserve punishment and those which he should forgive; moreover, he should not punish in the same way involuntary and inadvertent faults, and those committed with forethought and malice.

**5)** The teacher should attach the notion of shame and punishment to any number of things which may be indifferent in themselves, such as kneeling in a certain spot which might be called “the corner of dishonor or ignominy.” (The culprit should not, however, be left there for too long a time lest he be harmed.) A child may be put in the last place at a given table or bench, or near the door, or last in ranks; he may be made to sit in the middle of the classroom, or to stand in a certain place near a wall without touching it; or holding a book with both hands for an hour while standing in the middle of the classroom, under penalty of further punishment if he fails to act properly. All the while, the teachers should show him a cold, dissatisfied face, for as long as he does badly, or does not do all he should.

**6)** No penances should be imposed which are not just; and preference should be given to those which are less severe when these can bring about the desired effect. The teacher shall always avoid those which might detract from the lesson, such as hitting a student when he is not expecting it. This would keep the students in constant fear, trepidation, and apprehension whenever they saw the teacher approaching them; it would make them more attentive to warding off possible blows which the teacher might aim at them unexpectedly, rather than to paying attention to what he wanted to tell them for their

instruction.

**7)** The fear which children should be inspired to feel should not always be the fear of being punished, but of the wrong they might be guilty of, and which they should carefully try to avoid.

**8)** The teacher should prefer useful penances to corporal chastisement, even to the ferule, which should be used rarely. He will then give them, along with the other penances already mentioned, a few chapters of the catechism, or some other book, to be studied and recited by heart; some page of penmanship or spelling, or arithmetic problems; some of this could be done at home. Such punishments have the double advantage of keeping the children usefully occupied outside of school time, of getting them used to working harder, of keeping them away from gambling and bad company, and of helping them learn more.

**9)** He should not make a given penance something habitual, or of daily use. The students would not fear it anymore; they would make a joke of it. He should diversify his penances.

**10)** The teacher should take care to wait for the favorable time and manner of imposing a penance, so that it can prove more fruitful. Thus, he should not always correct a child at the moment he commits a fault, especially if he is not well disposed; this might only irritate him more and incite him to commit new faults, by pushing him beyond endurance. Let the teacher allow him time to realize what he has done, to enter into himself, to admit his wrongdoing, and at the same time, to acknowledge the rightness and the necessity of the punishment. By this means the teacher will bring him to the point of being able to profit by the correction. On his part, the teacher must never punish out of anger, especially if the fault refers to him personally, that is, a lack of respect, insolence, an insulting or disrespectful word. No matter how little emotion appears on his countenance or in his tone of voice, the student will immediately notice it; he will feel that it is not zeal for duty but the flame of passion which lighted this fire; and this is all it takes to make the punishment lose all its efficacy, because children, young as they are, feel that nothing but reason has a right to correct them.

The second means for making punishments rare, or to forestall them is to instruct, reprove, and threaten before resorting to punishment. The teacher should, therefore, begin by instructing the students carefully about their duties. If they thereafter fail to conform to these rules, what then? If it is because of impossibility or incapacity, they should be excused, because we cannot require the impossible from anyone. If it is through forgetfulness, or inattention, but without malice, they should be warned. If it is through malice, they should be warned also, but sternly; if they persist, they should be reproved; if they fall again, they should be threatened; then if there is no amendment they should be punished. Thus, punishment is the final effort that the teacher's authority should make him use to bring a recalcitrant pupil to submission.

For ordinary faults, warnings should be frequent, as often as the pupils give occasion for them; they should always be polite, spoken with kindness, and in a manner which induces the pupils to receive them willingly. The teacher should therefore avoid making the students think that he is prejudiced against them, lest by attributing these warnings to partiality, they thereby protect themselves from the defects pointed out to them. Nor should they have any reason to think that they are being warned because of some natural interest, or some special passion; in fact, for any motive other than their own good.

Use of reprimands should not be frequent. This is the big difference between reprimands and warnings. The latter spring rather from the kindness of a friend than from the authority of a teacher; they are always accompanied by a gentle air and tone of voice, which makes them less disagreeable to accept, and for this reason they can be used more often, as we

have said above. But as reprimands always sting self-love to some extent, and are often accompanied by a severe look and stern language, they should be reserved for more considerable defects, and hence should be used more rarely. Still, they should always be given without harshness, mockery, or exaggeration, without angry words; without partiality; and in such a manner that if the students are properly disposed they may be ashamed, and feel sorry for their faults, may resolve to correct themselves and take a firm resolution inspired by the good motives suggested to them. One should, however, be careful, immediately after reprimanding someone, not to show him the same serenity and the same affection as before; for he would get used to this little charade, convinced that these reprimands are only a summer shower, soon dissipated, and that he only needs to wait until they pass. The teacher should, therefore, not pardon him right away, until his application to doing better has proven the sincerity of his repentance.

As for threats, since they come closer to actual punishment than reprimands, they should be even rarer. They should not be employed save for very legitimate reasons, and never without having first examined if we can or should carry them out. Otherwise, they should not be used; for if we make threats inconsiderately, they grow ineffective, and the guilty parties will be emboldened in their evil ways, by a sort of assurance of impunity.

A third means of forestalling punishments or of making them rare is to prevent the faults of the students and make them rare. This can be done by using various procedures that can bring them to do their duty and continue doing it, such as words of praise granted appropriately and justly, but in such a way as not to encourage the students' vanity, as we mentioned before, nor to lead them to despise others. Another means is to show satisfaction and pleasure to those who do well, giving them special marks of consideration and esteem; granting them privileges and outstanding awards which should consist not in frivolous gee-gaws or useless claptrap, but in worthwhile and edifying objects. Again, the teacher should give positive accounts of them to their parents and others interested in them; he might advance them in ranks as far as this is possible; he should point out to them the advantage there is in being well-versed in many things which make a man better qualified in whatever business he engages later on. There is no doubt that all these ways of threatening affect the minds of the students more powerfully than all threats and punishments.

According to everything we have been saying, it is easy to conclude that the wise and prudent meekness of a good teacher does not prevent him, when punishing, from pursuing the end he has in mind, and that it is only for their own good, out of necessity, with regret that he punishes them; that he would do them a great deal of harm if he allowed them to give in to their evil inclinations and to contract wicked habits; that it is at their age that they are becoming what they will be for the rest of their lives; that to live honorably in the world and to be faithful to the duties awaiting them there, nothing is more important for them than to be rightly brought up and corrected when they deserve it; that the sorrow they feel at the moment will yield great advantages for the rest of their lives; and that they will be glad, when older, to have acquired the habits whose true value they will then appreciate, habits which will make them more acceptable to those they will have to deal with.

It is also easy to understand that the true gentleness of a good teacher consists in seeking among the sentiments of goodness which fill his heart, only the amendment and the real benefit of those whom he punishes, the success of his ministry and of his efforts. He requires nothing save with circumspection, and awaits patiently for the opportune moment for obtaining what he wants of his pupils.

Finally, it is easy to understand with what care a teacher should avoid ironical and biting language. Far from being a means apt to correct students, such words, on the contrary, can only dispose them unfavorably against the teacher and make the efforts of his zeal useless

or nearly so. For it is clear that a student who lacks esteem for and attachment to a teacher whose insulting manner has wounded and ulcerated his heart will, as a rule, accept with repugnance not only the teacher's corrections and advice, but also all his instructions. He will nearly always remember that his teacher had the meanness, the offensiveness, the cowardice of making fun of him and ridiculing him for defects of body or mind, or others, instead of correcting or warning him gently, so as to win for him the friendship of his companions.

Here are several other defects contrary to gentleness: petulance; the impetuous sallies of an over-ardent nature; bizarre, black moods; unpredictable, surly reactions; cross, somber airs; harsh and contemptuous ways; arrogant and supercilious attitudes; proud looks; severe, bitter, and peevish words filled with bile; insulting language (which students never fail to report back to their parents, to indispose them against the teacher and to explain their own dislike for him and their aversion for school); violent agitation; restlessness; precipitate, indiscreet, brutal, over-severe corrections lacking in any just reason and extending beyond the limits of justice and charity. All this debases authority and makes it detested. For in such cases it is regarded merely as tyranny; this cannot fail to cause mutiny, hatred, cursing, and a hypersensitivity which explodes when the child is the object of some scorn or insult.

There is, however, a type of anger which is virtuous. This is the kind which is aroused only by a vehement desire of doing good, or opposing evil, of maintaining right order and the discipline which must be maintained. Such anger is necessary, but it must be governed by reason, proportionate to the faults committed, and to the interest one should take in what happens. It should always be such that one keeps self-control. In such circumstances, one should manifest this kind of anger, either to show that one is right in exacting what is good, and in being indignant at the failures one seeks to correct; or to lead those who do wrong to condemn and reform themselves; but this must always be done as the Prophet enjoins: "*Be angry, and sin not.*"

The anger we should be on our guard against, and which is a sin, is that which arises from an ill-regulated emotion of the soul. It leads to acts of revenge, or to violent responses to what displeases us. Such anger unsettles the judgment and blinds reason

## IX. Zeal

**Zeal** is a virtue which makes us procure the glory of God with great affection.

A zealous teacher instructs his pupils, in the first place, by his good example. This is the first lesson he gives, thus imitating Jesus Christ who began by doing before teaching. In fact, he may wish to attain the proposed end, but he will do so only by the longest path if he is content with speaking; the shortest path is that of example. Children learn more by seeing than by hearing. "*The most striking and effective discourse,*" says Saint Bernard in his second sermon on the Life of St. Benedict, "*is the example of good works. Nothing better persuades others of what we say than the example which shows how easy it is to practice the counsels we offer.*" A teacher is like a lamp placed on a lampstand, which of course gives light by its shining, but which must also warm by its heat. Thus, he procures the glory of God with great affection when he labors in a truly effective manner at his own sanctification.

Next, he instructs by solid teaching. This is the second kind of instruction he gives his pupils, and a most important one it is, because he teaches them things they were ignorant of, and which they need to know so that they may know, love, and serve God. This function is most honorable, no doubt, but as we have already said, how many trials, fatigues, labors, and disappointments one must endure to fulfill it properly! Thus the teacher procures the glory of God with great affection when he labors generously and without any material interest in view, for the salvation of his neighbor, by leading him to the practice of what is right.

Finally, he teaches by wise and moderate corrections; such is the third lesson he gives, and it too is essential. How many faults which need to be corrected are there not in a child, an evil leaven, a defective germ which the teacher must eliminate; but which he will not exterminate save in so far as he admonishes the students without ceasing, remonstrating with them at the proper times, and even punishing them when necessary, but always in a gentle and charitable way. Thus he will procure the glory of God with great affection when he labors for the salvation of his neighbor, by employing an unflinching diligence, assiduous attention and unshakable courage to bring them to flee evil.

In a teacher, zeal is thus a most excellent virtue, and it is for this reason, says St. John Chrysostom, that he who chastises his body by austerities has less merit than he who wins souls for God. St. Gregory adds that there is no sacrifice more agreeable to God than zeal. (*On Ezechiel, Homily 2*)

Characteristically, this virtue is active: this is its distinctive mark. With what eagerness, what exactness does not a good teacher, for instance, fulfill the duties of his state, if he has real zeal?

First, his religious obligations. His first duty is to achieve perfection. In order to maintain himself in piety, to preserve the spirit of his calling, and not to succumb to dissipation of mind or the drying up of his heart, (the common result of profane studies), he will look upon as more necessary than ever the religious practices ordained by his Constitutions, especially daily meditation, spiritual reading, examen of conscience, the fervent reception of the sacraments, annual retreats, etc. In general, he will strive not to fail against any point of regularity. When he has to, he makes it a point to arrive before the exercise begins, rather than afterward. Whether the thing he has to do is more or less important, easy or difficult, it suffices that obedience should require it or recommend it, and he will be ready, he will fly wherever the Rule calls him; he will be pleased to be there, and will remain there as long as duty demands it.

Secondly, his responsibility for educating the students. The education of youth demands, on the part of those who are charged therewith, the most assiduous attention, the most constant efforts, and concern for the most minute details. How could a teacher bear the weight of a ministry which might daunt the boldest courage, unless he is filled with great zeal for the salvation of his students? He should therefore experience something of the tender and restless affection of Saint Paul who felt, in regard to the Galatians (4:19) *“the pains of childbirth, until Jesus Christ is formed in you.”* Thus he will draw all his satisfaction, all his joy from teaching all the children, without any shirking, without any distinctions, without any preferences, even though they may be ignorant, inapt, scantily endowed by nature, rich or poor, well- or ill-disposed, Catholics or Protestants, etc.

Ardently desiring the salvation of his pupils, he will labor for this as much as he possibly can by his good works, by his prayers, by his communions. In a word, he will with all his heart seek to save all of them without exception, being convinced that there is no soul which has not cost the blood of Jesus Christ; and he will teach them what they need to do so as to profit by this admirable redemption.

But genuine zeal is not only active: it is also enlightened and prudent. A teacher truly zealous for the instruction of his students makes himself all things to all, following the example of the Apostle (1 Cor. 9:22) becoming little with the little ones, that is, conforming himself to their level of understanding and manner of appreciating things; he will take into consideration their weakness, their limited degree of intelligence and reason, while using more elevated language with those who are capable of understanding it. In all this he acts so as to instruct all with the greatest profit.

Nor should he limit himself to formal instructions, following the rules of discourse, with order and method. He will cleverly make use of the occasions which always happen, to bring in

as though by chance some moral maxims which, not being expected, are all the better welcomed and ordinarily make more of an impression than carefully constructed lessons, against which, sometimes, the students are on guard.

Finally, zeal must be charitable and courageous. Thus, it makes the teacher act with strength and gentleness. With strength, because it is magnanimous and incapable of getting discouraged when encountering pains and difficulties: with gentleness, because it is mild, tender, compassionate, humble, in a word, conformable to the spirit of Jesus Christ.

A teacher lacks zeal:

- 1) when he is indifferent and does not do all he can to spread the kingdom of God in all the ways we have indicated, and especially by giving nothing but good example to the children. They naturally imitate what they see their guides do and, unfortunately, the wrong more easily than the right. They remember the example of a single defect rather than that of many virtues.
- 2) when he has no genuine desire to work for the salvation of his students, and neglects to procure for them the means of achieving this goal as far as his profession obliges him to do.
- 3) when he is not active in trying to instruct them well, and lacks ardor in applying himself to his own perfection.

There is, however, a false zeal which can easily be recognized:

- 1) when passion is its principle;
- 2) when it is set in motion by an annoyance offered, an affront, an act of hatred, a disappointment, or an antipathy;
- 3) when it is the effect of nothing but ill-humor, inclination, aversion, self-love;
- 4) when in teaching one seeks to teach one class rather than another, or to remain in a city where one's vanity, laziness, and love of ease more readily find satisfaction;
- 5) when one prefers certain students to others because they are more agreeable to deal with;
- 6) when one seeks to publicize one's success, or the pains one takes to make the students improve;
- 7) when one loves applause and praise;
- 8) when one is peeved because others succeed better than oneself;
- 9) when one threatens or reproves using injurious terms, cutting language, bitter or angry words, or words lacking in discretion, without considering that imprudent zeal often does more harm than discreet zeal does good;
- 10) when one shows himself restless, biting, bitter, and excitable;
- 11) when one gives in to complaining, murmuring, sadness, discouragement, and malignant interpretations;
- 12) when one seeks temporal benefits rather than the glory of God and one's neighbor's spiritual advancement;
- 13) when one shows oneself without indulgence or mercy, without patience, humility, or charity;
- 14) when, in extraordinary or unusual circumstances, one fails to take advice from those who are there to guide and direct.

## X. Vigilance

**Vigilance** is the virtue which makes us diligent and painstaking in fulfilling all our duties.

A teacher needs this virtue both for himself and for his pupils.

He must watch over himself, i.e., over the thoughts of his mind, over the movements of his heart, over the use he makes of his senses, and over his entire person so as not to do anything save what is good, and to fulfill his obligations worthily. The faults he might commit, through lack of vigilance, in any one of all these different manners, would obviously jeopardize the education of the children, and might even inspire them with lack of esteem and liking for him.

A teacher should be vigilant over his pupils: he is their guardian angel. If his absence or his inattention (they amount to the same thing) gave the devil who constantly goes about, an opportunity to rob them of the precious treasure of their innocence, what would he be able to reply to Jesus Christ who will ask him for an account of their souls, and will reproach him with having been less vigilant to protect them than Satan was to ruin them?

From all this it follows:

**1)** A good teacher will not leave his class under the pretext that his colleague in the next room will maintain good order in both classes. If he is obliged to absent himself it should be only for a very serious necessity and always for as short a time as possible. In fact, his presence contributes much to making the students more attentive, by fixing and arresting their imagination; it also spares them many distractions and negligences which give rise to many faults; these lead to reprimands and punishments which the teacher might have prevented, if he had not been absent.

**2)** When he is in class, the teacher observes everything; he misses nothing; he sees all that goes on. In this way he maintains the students in order and application. Vigilance makes them come to school on time, and to do all the work given them; it ensures that they keep everything they use, their books, copybooks and papers in good order. It can be said, in short, that the teacher's vigilance must extend to everything; it directs, maintains, and inspires everything: prayer, reading, recitations, catechism, the manner of following Mass, writing, arithmetic, spelling - in short, there is nothing which it does not affect.

**3)** A good teacher watches over the behavior of the pupils, generally everywhere that he finds himself among them; acting with prudence however in order that he can prevent their noticing that they are being studied. Besides, he must continually apply himself in order to discover, to know everything that goes on not only in the class, but also in the streets either before or after school; and, if he cannot himself see everywhere, he makes skillful use of inspectors whom he chooses from among them: he even makes still better use of his companions, with whom he maintains a praiseworthy agreement inspired by charity, for the good administration of the school, following in this, the advice which the Apostle gave to the Romans, saying: *"It can only be to God's glory then for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you."* (Romans 15:7).

**4)** It is especially in church that the teacher's application, care, and attention should be concentrated on the students to maintain them in order, modesty, and the respect due to the sanctity of the place. For this purpose, he carefully avoids looking around or fixing his gaze on other objects; he restrains his curiosity and absolutely forbids himself whatever might distract him from watching over the children; he should not even stop to pay attention to the progress of the ceremonies of divine worship, if this could weaken the attention he should pay to his pupils; for he should be convinced that, if he happened to forget himself on these points, the boys would quickly notice it, and would not fail to misbehave (not being seen by him), to be scandalized, to imitate the bad example of others, and to hope to escape with impunity.

5) Finally, the vigilance of a teacher extends even to the future. Past experience suggests to him the precautions that can be taken against what may happen and which reason may foresee. His attention, then, will lead him to get rid of whatever might harm his students, and also to prevent their faults as well as the sanctions which would follow from them; he should not allow them to have, if possible, either the means or the occasions for committing sin. It is much better, in fact, to prevent evil rather than to punish it once committed. This is what the constant presence and the attentive eye of the teacher bring about; for as a rule the students, before doing something wrong, begin by looking around to see whether they may not be surprised and noticed by the teacher. They often fear his looks more than his corrections.

Still, the teacher's vigilance should not be restless, suspicious, worried, accompanied by ill-founded conjectures. Such action could be against charity and justice. It would also be mortifying for the students who might notice it, as well as uncomfortable and bothersome for the teacher himself. His application should be peaceable, without agitation, trouble, constraint, or affectation; it will then be all the more effective. Just as nothing should be omitted which is required by careful supervision, so too one should not go to extreme lengths in one's precautions. For, while striving to protect the children's morals, one should act in such a way that they do not develop into hypocrites.

The teacher should avoid the following defects as being contrary to vigilance. He should not occupy himself with something other than his duty at any given moment; he should avoid laziness, torpor, useless conversations with the students, with outsiders, even with the other Brothers in school. He should avoid distraction of mind, distaste for school work, inattention, indolence, a kind of paralysis which robs him of the capacity for action, presumption, temerity, laziness, and sluggishness.

Besides these defects a teacher should also avoid too much anxiety, jerky and agitated motions of the body, of the head, the eyes or the arms; negligence in observing everything the students are doing, and whether they carry on their class work with due diligence; failure to apply himself carefully and constantly to whatever can establish order and diligence.

## **XI. Piety**

**Piety** is a virtue which makes us fulfill worthily our duties toward God.

This we do when we perform them with respect and zeal; for the infinite majesty of God and His immense goodness require that we pay Him our most reverent homage, and that we show the greatest zeal in serving Him as He requires.

A teacher should possess the virtue of piety in an eminent degree, i.e., his piety should be both interior and sincere for otherwise he would be only a hypocrite; it should also be outward and exemplary because he should show exteriorly the sentiments which fill his heart.

What, indeed, is a Christian teacher charged with the education of the young? He is a man into whose hands Jesus Christ has placed a certain number of children whom He redeemed with His precious blood, for whom He gave his life; in whom He dwells as in His temple, whom He looks upon as His own members, His brothers and co-heirs; who will reign with Him and glorify God through Him for all eternity. Why has Jesus Christ entrusted these children to Him? Was it merely to make them good penmen, great mathematicians, clever calculators, learned savants? Who would dare say or even think in this way? He entrusted them to the teacher to preserve in them the precious and priceless gift of innocence which He placed in their souls at Baptism, so that they become true Christians. Such is, in fact, the end and the purpose of the education of children: all the rest is accessory.

It follows that a teacher must have the greatest care to bring up his pupils in religious

sentiments; and so he will apply himself, as we have said elsewhere, to instruct them in the mysteries of faith, especially in those truths which they must by all means explicitly believe: in the Creed, in the truths of a practical nature, such as the Commandments of God and of the Church, the dispositions required for receiving the Sacraments profitably, etc.

Nor shall he fail to speak to them of the obligations contracted in Baptism; of the reconciliations which they consented to in receiving this sacrament, of the esteem they should have for the graces given to them, and of what they are bound to do to preserve these.

We shall explain to them what concerns Holy Mass, the obligation of hearing Mass on Sundays and Feasts, the precious benefits which they will derive from attending Mass daily, and the manner of doing so. He shall teach them to be assiduous in frequenting religious functions, and he shall instruct them how to behave in church.

He shall teach them how necessary prayer is, how and when one should fulfill this essential duty e.g., in the morning, at evening, and in so many other circumstances of life. He will make sure that they know the usual formulas of prayer, that they recite them well and distinctly.

He will also teach them how to make their actions meritorious by offering them to God and asking for His help to perform them well; how they should profit by the pains and sorrows of life; how to submit with resignation to the will of God in sickness and other unpleasant happenings; how to carry out the duties of their state of life; how to avoid occasions of sin; how never to a cause of scandal for others, etc.

He shall make them understand well the Christian and moral virtues: faith, hope, charity, justice, goodness, honesty, wisdom, prudence, fortitude and temperance, modesty in talk and in all their conduct, the respect and submission they owe to civil and ecclesiastical authorities, the immortality of the soul; the last ends of man; grace, sin, etc.

He will inspire them not only with solid piety with regard to God and to Our Lord, but also a special devotion to the Most Blessed Virgin, to St. Joseph, to their holy Patron, and to their holy Guardian Angel. He should instruct them on the reasons for these devotions, and recompense those who take them most to heart. In the proper circumstances he should mention certain striking examples from the lives of the Saints and of other illustrious persons. Good examples of themselves impress the minds of the students more deeply than long discourses. Even the most careful prepared ones.

Finally, he will without ceasing impress on the pupils the duty of preferring their own salvation to anything else; by all these instructions he will form in them the qualities which make a good Christian, a good citizen, a good father of a family, a good magistrate, a good soldier, a good businessman, etc., depending on the various vocations to which each may be called by divine Providence.

But let us not forget to observe here that we must above all teach religion well to the children, and for this we need to diversify, as we mentioned above, and simplify the instructions given, depending on the students' needs. It is not enough to have them study the Catechism and make them learn it every day; we must in addition illustrate Christian doctrine for them, giving them clear explanations according to their capacity. If a teacher does this, if he provides them with an example of all the virtues, he will infallibly produce great results.

Furthermore, it should not be necessary to mention that all exercises of piety should be performed with respect, with modesty, with interior and exterior recollection. At such times one should never permit anything which might distract the children from applying themselves to what they are doing. At church one must also require that they have their prayer books in their hands, and follow in them assiduously.

Such are the principal objects about which a teacher should instruct his students. But, once again, how could he give them such an education and form them properly to a Christian life if he himself were not filled with all that he is trying to teach them? We were right, then, in

saying that his piety should be outstanding. But to make it solid he must not fail to take Jesus Christ as his model, the morals of this divine Savior as the foundation and the principle of his conduct; thus he will scorn the passing goods of this world, the praises of men bereft of all substance, the pleasures of this life which are only a danger and an illusion.

A teacher would lack piety if he spoke of God in a lifeless manner, without any feeling, without being convinced of the truths of religion; by saying or letting another say the prayers with overhaste, without marking the pauses, or too loud, or without modesty, respect, or attention; by neglecting or by performing languidly and without fervor certain practices of devotion such as using holy water, making the sign of the cross, joining his hands, bowing his head, kneeling at the proper times and places, especially if he failed to do so out of human respect.

## XII. Generosity

**Generosity** is a virtue which makes us sacrifice voluntarily our personal interests to those of our neighbor, conformably to the example of St. Paul who said that he did not *"seek what is profitable to myself, but to many, that they may be saved."* (1 Cor. 10.33)

This definition shows us that generosity is not a common and ordinary virtue, but a very noble one. In fact, the sacrifice with which it inspires us is performed freely, and the object of this sacrifice is something quite considerable.

It is freely done. A man is not generous when he gives to others only what belongs to them. Its object is something of considerable moment for, in general, a person is not generous save in so far as he gives up his rights in favor of another, and gives him more than he can demand. We can, therefore, consider generosity as the most sublime of all sentiments, as the motive of all great actions, and perhaps as the root of all great virtue.

Let us apply to a good teacher what we have been saying: it is easy to conclude from this application that generosity is an attitude he needs, and that it is proper to him even in a most sublime manner.

He makes a great sacrifice, and one that is completely free, since he devotes himself willingly to something highly important for his neighbor, namely the instruction of children, especially of poor children.

What is sublime, moreover, about these sentiments? The better to instruct others, he consecrates himself to God in a state where he renounces all earthly goods by the vow of poverty; the most legitimate pleasures by that of chastity; his own will, which means his personality, by the vow of obedience. Is this not on his part, a true holocaust, an admirable disposition, a heroic attitude?

Although he confers advantages of a well-nigh infinite importance on his neighbor, he is far from drawing therefrom any earthly benefits. His claim to glory is his perfect disinterestedness. What a beautiful act this is, motivated as it is by generosity.

He devotes himself, not momentarily, but for life, to a career most honorable in itself, no doubt, but also very laborious and very tedious for nature, and which, far from appearing honorable in the eyes of men, seems to them on the contrary commonplace and lowly. Nevertheless, he considers it as the sole object worthy of his labors, of his continual application, of his cares and study; and what he proposes to himself is to make his students derive all the benefit from his efforts, so that he can say to them with the Apostle: *"For myself, I most gladly will spend and be spent for your souls."* (2 Cor. 12.15) How many virtues does generosity not give rise to!

Let us further explain this matter of generosity. It is said to be a sentiment as noble as magnanimity, as useful as beneficence, and as tender as humanity. But does not the generosity of a good teacher possess all these traits?

It is as noble as magnanimity. It rises above injuries which it never seeks to avenge save by doing good; above contradictions, tedium, boredom, the efforts required by very constant labor, in a word above all that is most difficult, most irksome, in order to bring up children properly.

It is as useful as beneficence, for it confers very notable benefits on the children, both as regards their souls and bodies. It pours out on them for this purpose continual care; it forms them to the Christian and social virtues; it teaches them very interesting things from which they can draw much benefit in leading good lives.

It is as tender as humanity. It seeks to make others happy, whether by instructions, or by advice, or by good example. It procures for them all the helps it can; it takes pity on their weakness; it forearms them against evil habits; it makes them acquire good ones; it corrects their vicious inclinations such as insolence, haughtiness, pride, exaggerated self-esteem, laziness, stubbornness. It accustoms them to alleviate their sufferings by the solid consolations found only in religion, about which he is zealous enough to teach them. He puts up with their faults and corrects them only when they deserve it; he suggests to them the means of preserving themselves from this world's corruption. He does all this out of the most affectionate charity, to form in them Christian men and useful citizens for society.

Let us add that generosity includes the sentiment of liberality, but of a wise and rational liberality, as becomes that of a good teacher. He must indeed give awards to his students to spur them on by emulation, to arouse them to do better and to avoid evil; but he must hand out these rewards only to true merit, with discernment, without partiality, and rarely; for if they become too frequent they would lose all meaning; and even if they were in themselves worthy of consideration, before long the pupils would not take them much into account.

To acquire the virtue of generosity the teacher must prize his task. He should carry it out with affection, without neglecting anything. He should love to be of service to his neighbor, and to do him all the good he can; multiplying his instructions and doing so with praiseworthy profusion, either in the general lessons or in the particular ones which he is sometimes in a position to give; this he should always do gratuitously, with no other motive than his neighbor's benefit and God's glory.

But he would fail against this virtue if he allowed himself too many comforts under the pretext that teaching is so fatiguing, or is affecting his health adversely; if he sought his own satisfaction rather than the progress of the students in their studies; if he failed to learn the things he needs to teach them about.

He would fail again if he kept for himself, or to give to others rather than to his pupils, the rewards he might have received for them. He would also fail in this case against poverty, which forbids him to dispose of such things in this way.

He would fail, finally, if he accepted presents from his students, if he kept back something belonging to them, if he sought to win approval and praise, or to be flattered.

## **CONCLUSION**

There you have, very dear Brothers, the explanation of the virtues of the good teacher. As you can perceive, this has been entirely written in line with what we have learned from M. de La Salle; it is only the development of the general outline he laid down for educating children properly. And with what amazing success did he not carry out this plan! His outline, in fact, includes the four main means which the most skillful teachers use to succeed in educating the young: to make themselves esteemed, loved, respected, and feared. Obviously, the Twelve Virtues of the Good Teacher include all these means, for not even one virtue fails to involve one or several more. What help, then, will they not provide to a teacher when they are all gathered together, and he possesses them all in a high degree?

Was it not by adhering closely to what M. de La Salle taught us that you have so successfully continued his work? Persevere, then, in following in his footsteps. Be sure that, like the Apostle, *"He who has begun this good work within you will continue, and make it perfect even to the day of Our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Phil. 1.6). If some of you have not yet perfectly attained of the virtues of the good teacher, we hope that you will, in the future, stir yourselves up to new fervor in acquiring them to the degree to which you should possess them, and in avoiding with more care than ever the defects opposed to these virtues. This is the right way to make our Institute flourish more and more vigorously, or rather to procure all the more glory to God, and to make more effective the education we are giving to the young.

What we have said on this topic, my very dear Brothers, gives you to understand that, when we seek to educate youth and willingly sacrifice ourselves for this end, we can apply to ourselves, in all justice, these words that the Apostle addressed to Timothy: *"in doing this you will save both yourself and those that hear you."* Thus, we have every reason to hope - if we are faithful in carrying out our duties, to receive *"the crown of justice which the Lord, the Just Judge, will render to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to them who love His coming."* (2 Tim. 4. 8). That crown will be infinitely glorious for us; for as you must have noticed in a passage from St. John Chrysostom: *"He who macerates his body by austerity has less merit than the man who wins souls for God."* "There are," adds this same Saint, *"two paths leading to salvation. In the one a person labors for himself alone, and in the other he takes interest also in the service of his neighbor. It must be acknowledged that fasts, corporal austerities, continence, and other like virtues are useful for the salvation of the one who practices them. But almsgiving, teaching, and charity, which reach out to one's neighbor, are much more exalted virtues."*

He further remarks, on the passage: *"who is the faithful servant...?"* *"A single soul which we have won for Jesus Christ can make up for an infinity of sins in us, and be the price of the redemption of our soul."*

Let us then highly prize our good fortune in that after embracing one of the most austere forms of religious life in the Church, we add to this what many of the others do not possess: the precious advantage of instructing others, and of laboring for the salvation of souls.

*May the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit; grace be to you all, Amen.*

## POST SCRIPTUM

We shall complete our work by a short explanation of the conditions that M. de La Salle requires for correction to be of benefit to the one who inflicts it, and to the one who receives it. We could have discussed this question in the treatise on the Twelve Virtues of the Good Teacher, the two topics being closely connected, but we preferred to deal with this matter here, and in fact such is the order observed by our venerable Founder.

It is true that the *Conduct* discusses the conditions which correction should have in order to be of benefit; but one finds there prolix passages, generalizations, inversions, omissions, lack of clarity in the divisions and the sub-divisions. Such are the drawbacks which we have thought it wise to remedy in this Postscript, until a new edition of the *Conduct*, that excellent work, is published.

The conditions that correction should have are ten in number: the first seven are those which correction should have in order to prove useful to the one who inflicts it; the last three, the conditions it should have to be helpful to the one receiving it.

The seven conditions that Correction must have if it is to be of benefit to the one inflicting it, are:

**1) It should be pure.** No doubt we should have in view, when correcting, as in all our actions in general, the glory of God and the fulfillment of His holy will. But, in addition, we should intend the amendment of the student we are correcting, so that there may not be any intermingling of ill-humor, aversion, antipathy, caprice, revenge, or resentment in what we do.

**2) It should be charitable.** The child should be corrected because we love him. A teacher is like a doctor, not an enemy. *"It would seem,"* says St. Augustine, *"that the doctor persecutes his patient; but in reality he is persecuting his malady only. He treats the illness because he loves the sick man; and he makes the later, whom he loves, suffer, only to deliver him from the malady that makes him suffer."* Thus does a teacher act with regard to the child whom he corrects; his apparent severity is a grace, and the pains he causes are remedies.

**3) It must be just.** All punishment necessarily presupposes a fault; we should, then, correct only for a fault which is certain; similarly, a severe punishment must not be used save to sanction a fault which is serious either in its quality or in the consequences which it may entail. Punishment may sometimes err on the side of leniency. But it must never be more severe, otherwise we would violate not only justice, but even reason; it would mean being guided by prejudice, and even might make it appear that we punish for the pleasure of punishing, or from some other evil motive.

**4) It must be proper.** We need to pay attention to the age, the character, the temperament, and the dispositions of the student we are about to correct, and even to those of his parents, so that the punishment may be exactly proportioned to the fault, the circumstances, and the end we have in view.

**5) It should be moderate,** neither too harsh nor too precipitate. If it is too severe it might embitter, might incite rebellion, might give rise to hatred, or might discourage the child. If it is too precipitate, it may well be neither just nor proper.

**6) It should be peaceable,** i.e., performed without trouble, impatience, excitement or bluster, and even, as a rule, in silence; unless we speak in a low tone, and only if this is absolutely necessary.

**7) Finally, it should be prudent.** This is one of the conditions to which special attention must be paid. Prudence demands that before punishing we should ascertain the dispositions of the culprit, and those in which we ourselves are. We would punish in vain a student whose feelings are lacerated, who is in revolt, full of bitterness and anger; he should be prepared to receive the punishment, if he is capable of reason; and the teacher must himself be prepared to inflict it after calm reflection.

Prudence requires that we judge both the fault and the punishment which should be imposed. As there is a difference between faults committed through malice or stubbornness, and those due to inattention, weakness, etc. there should also be a difference between the chastisements inflicted on those who commit them.

Prudence requires that the students should not become too used to punishment; they might become unaffected by it, and the sanctions would be fruitless.

Prudence also demands that we examine the manner of punishing; the time, the circumstances, the occasion - in a word what is apt to make the correction more useful. It demands that we consider the character, the age, the temperament of the student and whatever else pertains to him, so that we can determine the best manner of imposing the correction. For punishment should be inflicted with such perfect consideration of all the angles, that far from having any ill effects, it may on the contrary procure only advantageous consequences for the culprits.

This is why we should not punish children who are timid and usually docile, who admit their

faults, in the same way as we punish those who are unruly, hard-headed, stubborn, who deny their faults, who fight back, etc. It is also for this reason that we should, as far as possible, spare the older pupils especially the shame of being chastised;

- 1) their faults are not known to the others;
- 2) so too we should keep secret the punishments given to faults against purity when these are not known, or known only to a few; this to preserve the good name of the culprits.

II. The three conditions that correction should have to be of use to him who receives it.

**1). It must be voluntary.** This means that it should be received without any resistance, and accepted willingly. The motives we should use to bring the one we are punishing to consent to it are: to show him how serious his fault was, and the need for him to make up for it both for his own personal good and for the good example he should give to his companions.

**2) It should be respectful.** The student being punished should recognize that the teacher is obliged to punish him for his faults, and as a consequence, that he himself should submit to the punishment when he is guilty.

**3) It should be silent.** The culprit must receive it without speaking, without crying out, without complaining or murmuring, otherwise he would show that he is receiving it neither voluntarily nor with respect.

Given at Melun,  
12th February 1785  
Brother Agathon.

---

### Footnote on authority...

Authority is a certain air, a certain ascendancy which communicates respect and obedience. It has nothing to do with age, appearance, tone of voice, or threats; authority is accorded to an even-tempered, firm, moderate, self-possessed person, guided by reason at all times; someone who does not act either capriciously or in anger. Moreover, it is a wise blending of gentleness and firmness, of love and of fear. Love has to win children's hearts without spoiling them, and fear should control them without making them feel rejected.

We are going to retrace the principal means for establishing and maintaining authority. Many of these aspects are found scattered throughout the present work but we think it worthwhile to group them here.

They are:

- 1) Never use authority excessively without good reason, or without reflection, nor for matters of no consequence;
- 2) Always insist that things properly ordered be carried out;
- 3) Be firm to the point of never giving in to what has been rightly refused when the circumstances have not changed;
- 4) Do not easily utter threats, but hold to those already made provided the students have some room to maneuver and there is no injustice involved;
- 5) Communicate and maintain a respectful fear among the students;
- 6) Always be well-organized in the guidance of students;
- 7) Be consistent in your behavior so that students always find their teacher someone who insists on duties being done and orders respected;
- 8) Be even-handed toward all, with no favorites, because those who enjoy an exclusive friendship become daring and cheeky, while other students become jealous, rebellious, stubborn, and uncooperative. This does not mean that there can be no expression of satisfaction, praise, and rewards for those who cooperate, and dissatisfaction for those who behave badly;
- 9) Do not become familiar with students;
- 10) Always act in such a way that you cannot be accused of making a mistake with students;
- 11) Do not look upon students in any way as slaves, but at the same time act toward them in such a way that they would never think of putting themselves on a par with their teacher;
- 12) Give all things their rightful importance; it would be ridiculous to accord great importance to matters of no consequence. At the same time, let there be no lack of balance in essential matters, in the general order of the class or in the general interests of the students;
- 13) When something has been prescribed, speak little but insist that it be done;
- 14) Do not abuse authority by demanding too insistently or too severely what may be reasonably required as, for example, if, in the case of a student who is unwilling to learn what has been set for study, one were to double or triple the task to be done. Similarly, in the case where one increases a penalty in case of refusal: such an action would lead to despair or resentment, causing some to lose good sense and could even lead to revolt;
- 15) Make sure that the task be according to the capacity and character of each student;
- 16) When you have to deal with hard and stubborn characters, do not give in to them; do not in any way relax a just firmness, which is its own rebuke.