

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.

“In your patience you will possess your souls.” (Luke 21:19).

“Patience has a perfect work.” (James 1:4).

“For patience is necessary for you, that doing the will of God you may receive the promise.” (Hebrews 10: 36).