

VIII. Gentleness¹

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,

5. French = *douceur*. One-third of the original French text is devoted to this virtue.

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

exclusively². 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

6. The original text here has a long footnote on authority. This important note has been transferred to the end of this treatment of Gentleness. [editor]

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 any more; 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 geegaws 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

“My son, do what you do with gentleness, and you will win not only the esteem but also the love of our fellow men.” (Eccl. 3:19)

“Learn of me that I am gentle and humble of heart.” (Matt. 11: 29)

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall possess the land.” (Matt. 5:4)

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.