

195.3 Third Point

All your care for the children entrusted to you would be useless if Jesus Christ did not give the quality, the power, and the efficacy needed to make your care useful. Because the branch of the vine cannot bear fruit of itself (our Lord says) unless it remains attached to the main stem, neither can you bear fruit if you do not remain in me. This will be the glory of my Father, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.⁶

What Jesus Christ says to his holy Apostles he also says to you, that you may understand that all the good you are able to do in your work for those entrusted to you will be true and effective only insofar as Jesus Christ gives it his blessing and you remain united with him. It is the same for you as it is for the branch of the vine, which can bear fruit only if it remains attached to the main stem and draws its sap and strength from the vine, which is also the source of all the goodness of the fruit.

Jesus Christ wants you to understand from this comparison that the more your work for the good of your disciples is given life by him and draws its power from him, the more it will produce good in them. This is why you must ask him earnestly that all your instructions be given life by his Spirit and draw all their power from him. Just as he is the one who enlightens everyone coming into the world,⁷ he is also the one who enlightens the minds of your students and leads them to love and practice the good that you teach them.

1. 2 Cor 5:18

4. 2 Cor 3:3

7. Jn 1:9

2. Col 1:24

5. 2 Cor 4:6

3. 2 Cor 5:20

6. Jn 15:4-8

Fourth Meditation

What must be done to be true cooperators with Jesus Christ for the salvation of children

196.1 First Point

Be convinced of what Saint Paul says, that you plant and water the seed, but it is God through Jesus Christ who makes it grow¹ and brings your work to fulfillment. So when it happens that you encounter some difficulty in the guidance of your disciples, when there are some who do not profit from your instructions and you observe a

certain spirit of immorality in them, turn to God with confidence. Very insistently ask Jesus Christ to make his Spirit come alive in you, for he has chosen you to do his work.²

Consider Jesus Christ as the Good Shepherd of the Gospel, who seeks the lost sheep, puts it on his shoulders, and carries it back³ to restore it to the fold. Because you are taking his place, consider that you are obliged to do the same thing. Ask him for the grace needed to procure the conversion of hearts.

You must, then, be very devoted to prayer to succeed in your ministry. You must constantly represent the needs of your disciples to Jesus Christ, explaining to him the difficulties that you have experienced in guiding them. Jesus Christ, seeing that you regard him as the one who can do everything in your work, whereas you are an instrument that must be moved only by him, will not fail to grant you what you ask of him.

196.2 Second Point

Jesus Christ, speaking to his Apostles, told them that he gave an example to them, so that they may do as he had done.⁴ He also wanted his disciples to accompany him at all the conversions he brought about, so that seeing how he acted, they could be guided and formed by his conduct in all they would have to do to win souls to God.

This is also what you must do, because Jesus Christ has chosen you among so many others to be his cooperators⁵ in the salvation of souls. In reading the Gospel, you must study the manner and the means that he used to lead his disciples to practice the truths of the Gospel.

Sometimes he proposed as *a happiness* everything that the world holds in horror, such as *poverty*, injuries, *insults*, *slander*, and every kind of *persecution for the sake of justice*, even telling his disciples that they ought to be glad and rejoice⁶ when such things happen to them.

At other times he inspired horror for the sins into which people ordinarily fall, or he proposed virtues to practice, such as *gentleness*, *humility*,⁷ and the like.

He also made them understand that unless their justice surpassed that of the scribes and the Pharisees (who bothered themselves about externals only), they would not enter the kingdom of heaven.⁸

Lastly, he wanted *the rich and those who have their pleasures in this world* to be regarded as unfortunate.⁹

It is according to these and all the other practices of Jesus Christ that you must teach the Christian youth entrusted to you.

196.3 Third Point

In carrying out your service to children, you will not fulfill your ministry adequately if you resemble Jesus Christ only in his guidance and conversion of souls. You must also enter into his purposes and goals. He came on earth, as he said, only that people might have life and have it to the full.¹⁰ This is why he said, in another place, that his words are spirit and life.¹¹ By this he meant that his words procure the true life, which is the life of the soul, for those who hear them and who, with gladness over what they have heard, act on them with love.

This must be your goal when you instruct your disciples, that they live a Christian life and that your words become spirit and life for them. Your words will accomplish this because 1) they will be produced by the Spirit of God living in you, and 2) they will procure the Christian spirit for your disciples.

In possessing this spirit, which is the Spirit of Jesus Christ, they will live that true life which is so valuable to us because it leads surely to eternal life.

Guard against any human attitude toward your disciples; do not take pride in what you are doing. These two things are capable of spoiling all the good there is in the performance of your duties. *What have you* in this regard that has not been given to you? If it has been given to you, why are you boasting as if you had it on your own?¹²

Keep, then, the goals of your work as completely pure as those of Jesus Christ; by this means you will draw his blessings and graces upon yourselves and all your labors.

1. 1 Cor 3:6

5. 1 Cor 3:9

9. Lk 5:24

2. 1 Cor 3:9

6. Mt 5:3, 10-12

10. Jn 10:10

3. Lk 15:4-5

7. Mt 11:29

11. Jn 6:64

4. Jn 13:15

8. Mt 5:20

12. 1 Cor 4:7