

Fifth Meditation: That those chosen by Providence for the education of children must fulfill the functions of Guardian Angels for them

First Point

It can be said that children at birth are like a mass of flesh. Their minds do not emerge from the matter in them except with time, and become refined only little by little. As an unavoidable consequence, those who are ordinarily instructed in the schools are not yet able by themselves to understand easily the Christian truths and maxims. They need good guides and visible angels to help them learn these things.

Angels have this advantage over us, that they are not bound to a body and to all the functions of the senses, without which ordinarily our minds rarely operate. Angels, therefore, have intelligence far superior to ours, and can contribute much to our understanding, no matter how very unsullied the level of our minds might be. The angels who guide us share with us the understanding and the knowledge they have of the true good. By this sharing of the enlightenment of the Guardian Angels we can have a more penetrating knowledge of God, of his perfections, of all that is related to God, and the means of going to him.

If that is true of all of us, it is incomparably more true of children, whose minds are more dull because they are less free of their senses and of matter. They need someone to develop the Christian truths for them in a more concrete fashion and harmonious with the limitations of their minds, for these truths are hidden from the human mind. If this help is not given, they often remain all their lives insensitive and opposed to thoughts of God and incapable of knowing and appreciating them.

For this purpose the goodness of God has provided children with teachers who will instruct them in all these things. Admire this goodness of God, providing for all the needs of his creatures, taking the means to procure for us the knowledge of the true good, that is, the salvation of our souls. Offer yourselves to him for this purpose, to assist the children entrusted to you as far as he will require of you.

Second Point

To be saved it does not suffice to be instructed in the Christian truths that are purely doctrinal. As we have said already, faith without works is dead; it is like a body without a soul; consequently it is not sufficient to help us achieve our salvation.

It is, then, not enough to procure for children the Christian spirit and teach them the mysteries and doctrines of our religion. You must also teach them the practical maxims that are found throughout the holy Gospel. But since their minds are not yet sufficiently able to understand and practice these maxims by themselves, you must serve as visible angels for them in two things.

1. You must help them understand the maxims as they are set forth in the holy Gospel.
2. You must guide their steps along the way that leads them to put these maxims into practice.

For this they need visible angels who by their instructions and by their good example will encourage them to appreciate and practice these maxims. By these two means, then, these holy maxims will make a strong impression on their minds and hearts.

Such is the function you ought to perform for your disciples. It is your duty to act toward them as your Guardian Angels act toward you. You must win them to practice the maxims of the holy Gospel and to this end you must give them means which are easy and accommodated to their age. Gradually accustomed to this practice in their childhood, they will be able when older to have acquired them as a kind of habit and practice them without great difficulty.

Third Point

You encounter so many obstacles to salvation in this life that it is impossible to avoid them if you are left to yourselves and your own guidance. This is why God has given you Guardian Angels to watch over you, as the prophet says, to prevent you from falling by tripping against some stone, that is, some obstacle to your salvation. Your angels inspire you and help to keep you away from the

path where you might encounter any obstacle.

How much easier it is for children to fall over some precipice, because they are weak in mind as well as body, and have little understanding of what is for their own good. Therefore they need the light of watchful guides to lead them on the path of salvation, guides who have an adequate understanding of things concerning piety, and knowledge of the ordinary faults of young people. Thus they will be able to help them to be aware of pitfalls and keep away from them.

This is what God has provided in giving children teachers whom he has charged with this care, and to whom he has given the concern and the vigilance not only to prevent anything whatsoever harmful to their salvation from capturing their hearts, but also to guide the children through all the dangers they meet in the world, so that under the guidance of these attentive leaders, and under the protection of God, the devil does not even dare approach them.

Ask God today for the grace of watching so well over the children confided to you, that you will take every possible precaution to shield them from serious faults.

Ask him to be such good guides for them through the light which you will procure for yourselves by recourse to God, and by the fidelity with which you do your work, that you will see well every obstacle to the good of their souls, and keep away from the path of their salvation everything that could harm them.

This is the principal care you must have for the children entrusted to you, it is the main reason why God has entrusted you with so holy a ministry, and it is on this that he will call you to give a very exact account on the day of judgment.