



Adsum

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LETTER FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Friends and Benefactors,

As our traditional schools resume classes for a new academic year, my thoughts turn to the wisdom of our Holy Mother the Catholic Church. Ever guided by the Holy Ghost and with nearly 2000 years of experience, She has always been solicitous for the welfare of Her children.

In this matter of education, Pope Pius XI in his encyclical *Divini Illustri*, emphasized the importance of Catholic education of our youth:

“It is therefore as important to make no mistake in education, as it is to make no mistake in the pursuit of the last end, with which the whole work of education is intimately and necessarily connected. In fact, since education consists essentially in preparing man for what he must be and for what he must do here below, in order to attain the sublime end for which he was created, it is clear that there can be no true education which is not wholly directed to man’s last end, and that in the present order of Providence, since God has revealed Himself to us in the Person of His Only Begotten Son, Who alone is ‘the way, the truth and the life,’ there can be no ideally perfect education which is not Christian education... But nothing discloses to us the supernatural beauty and excellence of the work of Christian education better than the sublime expression of love of Our Blessed Lord, identifying Himself with children, ‘Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in My name receiveth Me.’”

Whether our youth attend a Catholic school or are homeschooled, their education must include not just academics but more importantly their spiritual formation and the building of their character.

As we all know, we live in difficult times and there may be circumstances in which some families cannot send their children to a Catholic school be-

cause one is not available and circumstances may render home-schooling an impossibility. Holy Mother the Church has been aware of this difficulty and has these words of wisdom from the Instruction of the Holy Office and the Code of Canon Law (Canon 1374). When Catholic schools are not available, parents are still bound to protect their children and see that in the attendance of non-Catholic schools the spiritual dangers to their souls are rendered remote:

“It will usually be a sufficient reason if there is either no Catholic school at all available or only one which is inadequate for the suitable education of the children according to their condition. In that case, in order that the public school may be attended with a safe conscience, the dangers of perversion which is always more or less connected with its very nature must, by appropriate remedies and safeguards, be rendered remote.”

Nor should Catholic parents think that this refers only to the grade and high school levels of education. This danger is especially prevalent in colleges and universities—both secular and so-called Catholic.

In secular universities, the professors who are “educating” your young adult children may be atheists, agnostics, socialists, or devoid of any sense of morality. In recent conversations with young traditional Catholics attending secular universities, they conveyed to me that it is worse than I had warned them.

And “Catholic” universities can be just as bad. A good example of this is here in Omaha at Creighton University, with Fr. Bert Thelen, SJ, who was associated for the last 14 years with Creighton University and served as pastor of St. John’s, the university campus parish.

At the age of 80 years, Fr. Thelen announced that he is leaving the priesthood and the Jesuits to be more connected with “the Cosmos” and the “Cosmic Christ.” He stated that it’s more important “saving the planet” than “saving souls” and that “biocide (killing the ecosystem) is even more devastating than genocide (kill-

ing a race of people).”

Another example (a few years ago) is the public announcement at Gonzaga University: “Gonzaga University welcomes our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered brothers and sisters. Whether you are ‘out’ or not, please consider participating in our GLBT support group.”

Most of our readers are very familiar with these and unfortunately so many other examples. How critical is the Catholic education of our youth in these times in order that our young people may be able to persevere in living their faith. As the Wise Man said in the Old Testament, “A young man according to his way

even when he is old, he will not depart from it.” And with good reason did St. John Chrysostom say, “What greater work is there than training the mind and forming the habits of the young.”

Please pray for the spiritual success of our traditional Catholic schools around the country! We have had many vocations to the priesthood and religious life come from Mater Dei Academy here in Omaha. That is one of the reasons why we invest a lot of time and work in Catholic education.

With our prayers and blessing,

Most Rev. Mark A. Pivarunas, CMRI

Fr. Damien, the Leper Priest

“Greater love than this hath no man, than he lay down his life for his friends.” (John 15:13) is the inscription on a large granite cross that can be found on the Hawaiian island of Molokai. It is a fitting tribute to a man who applied to a heroic degree the teaching of Jesus regarding the practice of charity.

Joseph De Veuster was born in 1840 in Belgium of resolute, fervent Catholic parents. Unknown to Joseph, God was silently preparing him, as he grew to manhood, for a unique mission. Both circumstances and qualities of his character were part of that preparation. His father being a farmer, Joseph gained skills in the many handicrafts a farmer needs to master to be self-sufficient. As a young man, he earned respect in the village on account of his extraordinary strength; as one witness put it, “He lifted, as though they were nothing, bags over two hundred pounds in weight.”

It was during a mission preached by the Redemptorist Fathers that God enlightened him as to the path in life He was calling him to follow. His vocation after the example of his older brother and sister, is reflective of how God blesses Catholic parents who are fervent in practicing their Faith and who set a good example. His older sister answered God’s

call to be a nun; now he chose to follow in the footsteps of his older brother, who was studying for the priesthood as a member of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus

and Mary. In a letter to his parents he expressed his deep convictions: “It is Providence that has inspired me... in refusing to answer the Divine Call, I shall be exposing myself to eternal ruin. You know that the choice of a state of life determines our eternal happiness.” So, at the age of eighteen he joined his brother, and on February 2, 1859, he took the religious habit, changing his Christian name to Damien.

Those who knew him in the novitiate testified to his manly fervor in God’s service. Because of his robust constitution his fervor was able to carry him beyond the ordinary spiritual practices and austerities of the monastery. On the other hand, Damien was gifted with a cheerful temperament, such that his fellow students called him “the good giant Damien,” and his brother even tried to get him to laugh less.

In 1863, God’s plan for Damien manifested itself even more clearly. Through a set of unforeseen circumstances, Damien, was sent, in place of his brother, to do missionary work in the Hawaiian islands. Within two months after his arrival there, he was raised to the priesthood by the local bishop, and set to work to learn the language of the Hawai-



ian people. In his first assignment he enthusiastically consumed himself in caring for the spiritual needs of 350 Catholics living in a vast district that took three days to cross.

In 1873, the last stage of God's plan for Damien unfolded. One day, the bishop was relating to his missionary priests that the Catholic lepers who were confined in a colony on the island of Molokai had made an urgent plea for a resident priest. As the bishop expressed his concern about the danger of contagion for any such priest, Damien leaped to his feet and exclaimed, "I want to go there! I know many of these unfortunate souls and I ask only to share their lot and their prison."

When Damien first arrived there by ship, many of the lepers ran to meet him, rosaries around their necks, tears of joy in their eyes. Thus began the sixteen years during which Damien, as their spiritual father, dedicated himself with generous love and zeal to the spiritual and temporal welfare of these forsaken people. Using his God-given strength, the skills he had learned on the farm, and his optimistic, jovial nature, he provided for the lepers more adequate food, clothing, housing, medicines, and diversions. For them he turned himself into a lawyer, a beggar, a banker, an errand boy, a nurse, a carpenter, a band leader, an undertaker, a policeman, a farmer.

But, above all, he was to them what God's plan intended him foremost to be—"Another Christ"—ministering like a tender father to their spiritual needs, placing their love of God and Eternal Salvation as his greatest concern. He wrote, "Almost all wish to die as Catholics... I do all I can to prepare everyone for a happy death; it is in that work that I find my chief consolation."

But, like all dedicated priests, he endured trials and repugnances. He was calumniated and opposed by those who were jealous of his zeal and success. He testified regarding his care of the lepers, "The stench of their sweat and their filth was at first insupportable to me. How many times I was forced to hold my nose, and even to run outside for a breath of fresh air." But he added, "You may think it is distressing to live in the midst of beings so repul-

sive; really, they spell happiness to me."

This happiness, from a supernatural view, was increased when Father Damien found out one day that he was one of them. With joyful resignation he stated, "God is going to give me another body on Resurrection Day." In a sermon to his fellow lepers he hopefully proclaimed, "We shall be beautiful in Heaven in proportion to our patience in bearing our trials here below."

After months of physical deterioration and increasing pain, during which time Father Damien persevered courageously in his round of duties, his once robust, manly frame

finally collapsed and he was confined to bed. As one aide commented, "He became the most repulsive leper there." He received the last Sacraments shortly before Easter, 1889, joyfully exclaiming, "The Lord is calling me to keep Easter with Himself." On Monday, April 15, God's plan in this life for this martyr of charity ended, as God's leper priest gently, with a smile, breathed his last breath, a few days before Easter.

While it is true that God's plan for most of us doesn't involve such heroic charity as that of Father Damien, nevertheless, God does often call us to sacrifice ourselves to a smaller degree, to put the needs and welfare of others before our own and, like Father Damien, for a supernatural motive, love of God. For one person this opportunity might come when one could say a kind and encouraging

word to someone who seems discouraged or to someone for whom we have a natural aversion; or when we might visit someone who is sick or elderly; or, perhaps, when we might overcome our feelings to forgive and pray for another who has hurt us; or simply when we can make an extra effort to be patient, kind, and understanding with those with whom we live and work. But in whatever shape or form these opportunities present themselves, let us strive to respond generously in the same spirit of the leper priest, so as to merit a like commendation and reward: "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor. 9:7); "Come, blessed of My Father, take possession of the kingdom prepared for you... as long as you did it for one of these, the least of My brethren, YOU DID IT FOR ME." (Matt. 25:34-40)



Father Connell Answers Moral Questions

by Very Rev. Francis J. Connell, C.S.S.R., S.T.D., LL.D., L.H.D.

CONDITIONAL ADMINISTRATION OF SACRAMENTS

Question: I have heard it stated that in conferring a sacrament conditionally, the priest should express the condition in the words: “Si capax es.” Will you please comment on this statement?

Answer: It is a commonly accepted principle of theologians that a sacrament should be conferred conditionally only when there is some doubt about the *validity*, not when there is doubt merely about the *fruitfulness* of the reception. In other words, the minister’s intention to confer the sacrament should not be qualified unless he fears that for some reason the sacrament cannot actually be received. If he is uncertain only as to whether or not the recipient will receive the *grace* of the sacrament, he should administer it without any condition. The reason is that, as long as a sacrament is validly given, even though it may be unfruitful at the time of the administration, there is a chance that it may confer its grace later by revival. On the other hand, if a sacrament is administered with a condition referring to something required merely for fruitfulness (for example, “If you are contrite,” in the conferring of Extreme Unction) the sacrament is not valid in the event that the condition is not verified, and thus there could be no subsequent revival of grace.

The expression “Si capax es” is quite suitable to cover any doubts regarding validity on the part of the recipient, when it is used to signify: “If you have all the requirements for the valid reception of this sacrament.” For example, when it is uncertain whether the subject is alive, whether (in the case of one who has attained the age of reason) he has the intention to receive the sacrament, whether (in the case of a sacrament that cannot be repeated validly) he has already received the sacrament validly, the condition “Si capax es” can be employed very appropriately. The Ritual does, indeed, prescribe more definite expressions for particular cases. For baptism two conditions are specified— “Si non es baptizatus (a),” when it is uncertain whether the recipient has received this sacrament previously, and “Si tu es homo,” when it is uncertain whether the creature being baptized is really a human being. For Extreme Unction the condition “Si vivis” is called for in the event that it is doubtful whether or not the subject is still living. But in other cases it is surely permissible to use “Si capax es,” although the minister, if he wishes, could be more definite—for example, “Si sufficientem intentionem habes.” It should be noted that to administer a sacrament conditionally a just cause must be present. Such a cause is always present when there is a prudent doubt as to whether one of the three sacraments that impress a character was validly conferred previously (Can. 732, § 2). It is well to remember, also, that (apart from the particular instances mentioned in the Ritual) an internal act of the will to administer the sacrament conditionally suffices, without any verbal expression of the condition (St. Alphonsus, *Theologia moralis*, Lib. VI, n. 29).

The expression “Si capax es” would not be appropriate when the doubt concerns the validity of the sacrament from the standpoint of the matter—for example, whether this liquid is really water such as is required for a valid baptism. In such a case (provided there is a sufficiently urgent reason for using doubtful matter) the condition should be “Si valeat haec materia.”

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