



SALESIAN SPIRIT

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PREVENTIVE SYSTEM: REASON

Reason is one of three pillars of the preventive system of education along with religion and loving kindness. Reason requires that the educators be reasonable in their demands from their pupils and adopt 'reasonable' means in the education of their pupils. The demands of the educators should be according to the developmental phase and the special needs of the young persons. It also means that excesses and extremes are avoided and a balance and equilibrium be maintained, in applying moral principles to one's actions.

REASON IN LOVING KINDNESS

The three pillars of the preventive system of education are related to each other and are corrected and supported by the other: Religion and loving kindness have to be reasonable. If it is reasonable then 'loving-kindness' will not degenerate into sentimentality, or cheap popularity. If it is reasonable, religion will not degenerate into rigorism or fanaticism. Don Bosco said, "The secret of my method of education is summed up in two words: religion and reason - religion, genuine and sincere, to control one's actions; reason, to apply moral principles to one's activities rightly."

Preventive system of education calls on the educator to treat every pupil equally in the classroom and out of it. The educator should not show partiality between pupils because of personal liking for some and dislike for others. The only special attention that an educator could give is to take special care of the weaker pupils! The educator should not claim power over the students out of the classroom; should not impose himself on the students in areas which are beyond the educators' competence. The educator should treat the pupils with respect and courtesy and avoid threatening them with punishments. Don Bosco never treated any of the boys with lack of courtesy or threaten any with punishment, not even the most thoughtless or unruly. So did his Salesians. This was the reason why the Oratory was swarming with boys and young men.

It is only reasonable that the educator does not

permit his/her personal problems to interfere with the education of the pupils! The educator should address one's own personal problems in oneself so as to prevent its interference in the ministry of education. And the educator should strive to become a virtuous person himself! Because education is nothing but a communication of or a transfer of what a person is! This is the reason why boys obeyed Don Bosco readily.

Often times, the educators expect the pupils to be perfect and inflict punishments if they do not measure up to their standard. Boys are boys! Hence, the educator should be aware of the characteristic feature of the pupils' age, their light-mindedness. It is because young people commit mistakes more out of their light-mindedness rather than ill-will! Once this is understood, the educator will be more patient with the pupils' light-mindedness.

REASON IN CORRECTION

Corrections and sometimes punishments may have to be meted out to bring the erring students to the right path. But how can they be used in the best way possible?

First of all, in educating young people we need to formulate rules which must be reasonable. These rules must be communicated clearly. And young people should be reminded of the rules often because they are forgetful. Don Bosco made sure to read a part of the rules to the boys every week.

And in case one needs to be punished for any infringement, the educator should refrain from resorting to unreasonable punishments, of course never corporal punishments. On this Don Bosco says: "Punish only as the last resort, use persuasion instead of punishment. ... correct in private ... wait until you are in control of yourself ... never punish at the moment of the fault ... give him time to come to his senses ... choose the opportune moment to correct the pupils ... choose the right words ... no cutting remarks ... make it clear to the lad that you are not suggesting anything more than what is reasonable and necessary ... mitigate the punishment which he is ready to accept ... reassure him that by his good conduct he can wipe out the bad name his misbehaviour has warranted."

The educator should be magnanimous as to overlook tiny faults! Reason demands that he/she should ascertain the veracity of the reported fault before taking action. In

1858, Don Bosco visited St. Michael's Hospice, Rome. Cardinal Tosti, its president, and one of its directors showed him around. Don Bosco noticed that everything was perfect except that the boys were ill at ease and visibly tense when their superiors showed up or when they had to report to them.

Boys were aloof from the superiors and actually feared them. As they were making rounds, they heard a boy whistling and singing. He came bouncing down the stairs. To his surprise he found the visitors and his director. He stopped abruptly, head down, tightly gripping his hat in hand. "Is



this the way to act? Go to your shop and await your punishment." the director told him sternly. And the boy left the place very sad. Don Bosco told the director that it was not a deliberate infraction and that it does not warrant a punishment and that he should go and cheer him up. The director agreed reluctantly.

CONCLUSION

Don Bosco was a perfect example of being reasonable in the education of his pupils. He was patient with their light-mindedness. He drew up rules adapted to them and constantly reminded them to follow them. He was impartial to the students. Everyone was equal in his sight. He did not show special favour to any but the weaker pupils. In giving corrections, he always remained calm and he always did it privately and never unjustly. May we learn these simple ways of endearing ourselves to the youth from the Father and Teacher of youth. ■