

The preventive method



The ministry of the Pious Schools is "most meritorious, for establishing and putting into practice, with the fullness of charity in the Church, an effective remedy, preventive and curative of evil, inducing and enlightening for good, destined for all boys of whatever condition - and therefore for all men, who first pass through that age - through letters and the spirit, good habits and manners, the light of God and the world..." (Memorial to Cardinal Tonti n° 9)

György Sántha. San José de Calasanz. Obra pedagógica. Pp. 471-475. BAC 1984

Evidently, the first steps and the first movements of this education were directed towards rescue, or at best, of preservation of abandoned youth. Wherever the Pious Schools have opened their doors, it has been their first aim and their first care: to know how to remove the children from the corrupting power of leisure, from the corrupting environment of misery, sin, and evil companions. The Pious Schools wanted to begin, in close union with these orientations, the education of young children to prevent, as far as possible, any harmful influence that sin could have caused in their innocent souls. Before becoming ordinary pupils, all the students of the Institute made their general confession so that they might make a complete break from the past and begin a new life under the protection of Christ and his grace.

The Institute applied the preventive method on the occasion of the first contact with the pupil and in the whole moral education system. To this end, the continuous vigilant control, the attractive exemplarity of the educator, and the meticulous prescriptions of the regulations, which extended to every particular student's life and sought to eliminate every easy occasion for sin, served this purpose.

Once the child had been removed from the corrupt environment and protected from evil influences, the first positive step was taken toward his moral and religious education. First, the aim was to make him give up the bad habits of the past and give birth to good habits, with a continuous insistence on "good upbringing," on the first elements and the fundamental requirements of a good human and civil education.

The pupil had to give up idleness, dangerous games in the streets and squares, blasphemies, imprecations, offenses, insults, fights, and lies and gradually accustom himself to assiduous daily work, to control his passions, to modesty, to gentle words, to respect for his superiors and himself.

The example of the teachers, the polite and disciplined conduct of the classes, and the assiduous reading of books on civility and good manners served this purpose.

Simultaneously with the first steps in the pupil's moral education, the pupil's more overtly religious education began. The initial aim was to inculcate in the tender souls of the children the first elementary notions of existence of the greatness of God, his goodness, and his paternal authority. At the same time, the aim was to arouse in them a holy fear of God, that is to say, a kind of filial posture, of loving vigilance, that they should be afraid of offending him, of doing anything contrary to his holy will.

This fear of God, the principle and foundation of all wise and prudent Christian life, which was continually transformed into reverent love, and filial piety for his divine Majesty, for God the Father, has remained the principal basis of the religious education of the Pious Schools.