

November 3

FOR THE FEAST OF SAINT MARCELLINUS, BISHOP OF PARIS

186.1 First point

This saint's virtuous parents took great care of his education; consequently, since he was endowed with good dispositions, he soon acquired such piety that he was esteemed and honored by everyone. It was this, too, that won for him a high reputation.

What a great blessing it is to be brought up well, since in this way one acquires many virtues with great ease, because the tendencies of the young are easily guided, and they accept without great difficulty the impressions we seek to give them.

Consider, therefore, how important it is for you to apply yourselves as well as you will be able to educate well those who are under your guidance, and to procure piety for them. This is the principal object and the purpose of your work.

Be assured that you will succeed in this only if you make yourselves pleasing to God, and that he will pour out on you and your work his abundant blessing only insofar as you make their education your principal concern.

The trouble you take to do this will in the end make your students docile and solidly submissive to their parents, and to those to whom their parents confide them, self-controlled and well-behaved in public, pious in church, and in all that refers to God, to holy things, and to everything that relates to religion.

186.2 Second Point

This saint was so humble, reserved, and serious that the Bishop of Paris at the time admitted him into the ranks of the clergy on the sole consideration of the virtues which distinguished him. He was a source of edification and an example for all the other members of the clergy, even when he was just beginning his career as an ecclesiastic. As all considered him their model, his bishop resolved to ordain him a priest, even though Saint Marcellinus, for his part, expressed a reluctance because he considered himself unworthy of this honor and the dignity of this sacred office.

You are in a work that by its ministry resembles that of priests more than it does any other work. As it was the rare and extraordinary virtue of Saint Marcellinus which led to his being raised to that ministry, you on entering your state ought to bring and preserve in the exercise of your ministry a piety that is more than ordinary. It should distinguish you from other people, otherwise it will be difficult for you to carry out well your ministry. For, since your vocation has not been instituted except to procure the spirit of religion and of Christianity for those whom you instruct, it cannot achieve its purpose, and enable those who are in this work to achieve their purpose, unless beforehand they have worked seriously to sanctify themselves.

186.3 Third Point

When the Bishop of Paris died, the holy life of Saint Marcellinus caused him to be chosen to replace him. It was in this exalted responsibility, so difficult to carry out well, that he showed how great was his zeal for the salvation of souls. For besides using all the natural and supernatural talents God had given him to procure their sanctification, he did not cease to pray and keep watch to help the ones who needed conversion, and to draw on others the graces needed for them to be strong in the practice of good and to advance in virtue.

In some sense it can be said that each of you is a bishop, that is, the vigilant guardian of the flock God has entrusted to you,⁸⁷⁸ and consequently you are obliged to keep watch over all those who belong to it, because, as Saint Paul says, you have to give an account to God for their souls.⁸⁷⁹ Do you sometimes reflect before God how fearful this account is? The soul of each one of those you guide is infinitely dear to God and if any one of them is lost through your fault, God has said it and he will do it: he will require from you soul for soul.⁸⁸⁰

You have two sorts of children to instruct: some are disorderly and inclined to evil; the others are good, or at least inclined to good. Pray continually for both, following the example of Saint Marcellinus, especially for the conversion of those who have evil inclinations. And work to preserve and strengthen the good ones in the practice of good. Still, make your care and your most fervent prayers directed to win over to God the hearts of those who are prone to evil.

Marcellinus (5th century) was born in Paris and succeeded Prudentius as bishop of that city. His life was written by Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers, and is evidently the basis for De La Salle's description of him. The part of Paris where he is buried is still called Saint-Marceau.

878 Acts 20:28

879 Heb 13:17

880 Dt 19:21; Ez 22:14