



★ SALESIAN SPIRIT – ST. CAFASSO'S CONFERENCES – 11

Fr. Pathiaraj Rayappan SDB

ON PRIESTLY ZEAL

- PART II

The divine Redeemer came to destroy the reign of sin (Jn 12:31). He entrusted this to us priests. Dear priests, this is the aim and the objective of the priest on earth – to fight against sin. The priest must be involved in this fight with total zeal until his last breath.

3. CERTAINTY OF SUCCESS

The priest, with his zealous commitment to preventing offences against the Lord, plays a unique and vital role. His efforts are not in vain, for he can be certain that he will prevent more sins than he allows to occur.

People strive after something only with the hope of success. But they often fail. Hence, one lives in uncertainty. E.g. The merchant is uncertain about his business, the farmer is uncertain about his harvest, and the soldier is uncertain of victory. One aspires to get a job but does not know if he can get one! ... So, almost everyone and almost everything, what one lives and toils after is nothing more than hoping.

On the other hand, the priest is called to the sublime work to which he is called when he intends it, and he is confident of achieving it! How nice to work when one is sure of success! This is the priest's happiness: he is on the earth to prevent and spare offences to the Lord, and he can be sure of achieving it when he really sets out to do it.



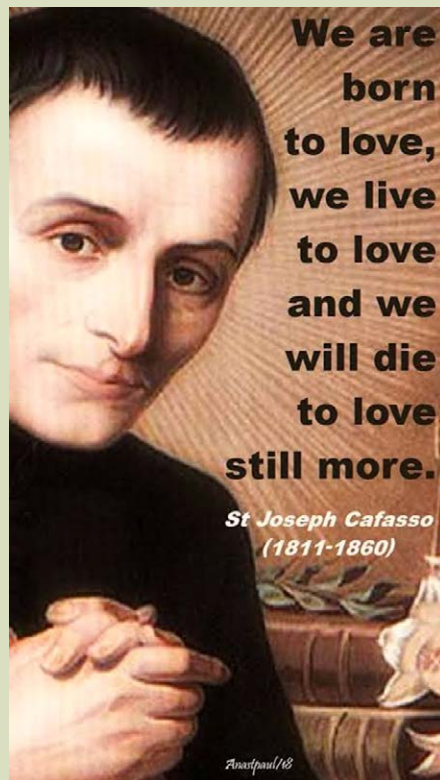
In a priest of this kind, naturally, everything is directed to this goal, and the least thing he does has a very great power to obtain it. I am not speaking only of preaching and administering the sacraments whereby many sins (in hundreds and thousands) are diminished. Still, with every word and every look, the mere presence of a priest serves to remove and prevent sin. A holy priest walks through the town or enters a house without speaking or preaching, and you sense the power of his presence. He who speaks badly falls silent as if in a blow. He who is immodest composes himself. He who argues calms down. ... The priest appears, and that is enough to prevent sins! Listen to this. A priest was regularly visiting a prison and, with the sort of people there, he could do nothing there. And he was discouraged. But a layman told him, "Father, please listen. Be brave enough to come, and do not fear doing nothing and wasting your time. The mere sight of a priest in these places will prevent some sins." Yes, dear friends, the very sight of a priest has magical power and speaks in a thousand different ways in the heart of whoever sees him, more so if he were in sin: "If I were a little like that guy there .. if I had done what he told me; ... if I did as he preached ..." the disturbance of conscience in similar encounters, more lively remorse, resolutions, repentance, and behold immediately fewer sins.

4. LAUDABLE EVEN TO PREVENT A SINGLE SIN

Preventing even a single sin is the most praiseworthy deed a priest can perform on earth. As St. Francis Xavier said, 'It is a great fortune to go to the ends of the earth, save a soul and then

die.' If a priest saves a soul, prevents a sin, and then dies, his life will be the most beautiful, and his death will be the sweetest in the world! This is the true measure of a priest's worth, and it surpasses all other acts of heroism.

The priest is not just a guide or a counsellor, but also the terror, the fright, the anger of Hell! But simultaneously, he is the joy, the delight, the envy of heaven! Yes, my brothers, if a soul in heaven could still have a longing, a desire, it would certainly be this: to be in our



place, to have a day or an hour or even a minute only, just to prevent an offence to His Lord, to have the comfort in heaven of having once again saved the honour and the glory of his God. This is the unique power and responsibility of a priest.

If all priests had this spirit and zeal, how many sins could be prevented, and how greatly God would be honoured! The same glory that the priest gives to God on earth will be given to him by God for eternity in heaven!

