

CHATS WITH YOUNG MEN

THE LOVE OF ST. PHILIP NERI FOR THE YOUNG MEN OF HIS TIME

There is a glow of tender devotion in the biography of St. Philip Neri, written by one of his spiritual sons of the Oratory, Archbishop Capelatro. But in no part of the work does this spirit of love shine more clearly than in the author's charming account of the saint's relations with the young.

Many reasons led Philip to devote himself with special care to the training of the young, writes this biographer of the saint. He was genial and sympathetic as was his art instinctively drawn towards those who are just entering upon life with such eager anticipations and such exuberance of energy. But besides this, Philip thought that what good he could do them would yield more abundant fruit, and that the action of divine grace on the hearts of the young has a beauty all its own; and moreover, he thought that the true and lasting reformation of Christian life must begin with those who give its character to their time, and mould the generation which is to follow them.

And the young felt themselves drawn towards Philip by an irresistible force of attraction. His winning ways, the love that beamed in his eyes, the simple dignity of his bearing, all combined to impress them with a loving veneration. They felt they could go near him with confidence; and the charm of his words, the kindness of his manner, and his gentle charity won their hearts. Besides this, there was one feature in Philip's character which never fails to fascinate the young; he was always cheerful and humorous, even in tribulations and sorrows. His cheerfulness flowed from his good simple frank nature; and, like all the Florantines of his time, he was noted for a vein of pleasantry, at once delicate, courteous, and restrained. And Philip sanctified these gifts, as he sanctified all others, to the glory of God and the good of souls. We find him always sprightly, gay, and even veiling his miracles from observation with a gentle jest.

Let us picture to ourselves Philip with a troop of boys around him, ardent and restless in appearance, but in reality docile to the least sign from him. As he looked round on them he seemed himself to glow young again; he had a smile and a pleasant word for each, and he took keen interest in their amusements. He would often lead them with him into the fields, or to some beautiful villa in the neighborhood, and set them to play at quarts or tennis or some other game; and, although he was a priest and venerable with age, he would make himself a boy with them and join in their sport. When he saw that the game was well started he would withdraw to a little distance beneath the trees to pray and meditate on the passion, for which purpose he always had with him a little book containing the last chapters of the four gospels. If the boys called him to play with them he would leave his prayer and join them for a time, until he could slip away again and continue his prayer. He would put up with all their childish pranks in order that he might keep them near him; and he even allowed them to shout and make what noise they pleased at the very door of his room.

Philip's profound knowledge of the human heart led him to fear more for the young from melancholy and sadness than from merriment. He found no fault with their gaiety, however thoughtless, if only it were not carried to excess; and he always felt a greater liking for those who were bright and spirited. If he ever saw any one of them gloomy and sad he would comfort him, caress him, and even scold him affectionately saying: "Why do you look so sad? What is the matter with you? Come here to your father and tell him all about it." And then he would pat him on the cheek to rouse him up and encourage him. He would leave his meditation or anything else if his boys wanted to have him among them. During the carnival, that he might keep them from all sights and occasions of sin, he made them perform little plays; and, in a word, he spared neither time nor trouble to keep his hold of the young. When he was in company with them, his pleasantry and mirth contrasted almost strangely with his age and his dignity.

But the object of the saint in this great and startling condescension was evident, and his success marvellously great. The youths who crowded in such numbers around him not only lived good Christian lives, but they bore upon them the stamp and impress of their beloved father. They were full of life and mirth, but still they were orderly, devout, and pure, full of faith and the love of God. They felt no false shame in being pious and humble, gentle and obedient; they shrank with disgust from sin. Such was their loving trust in Philip that they obeyed him instantly and always, and would endure anything rather than give him a moment's uneasiness.

If he saw their playfulness degenerate into buffoonery, he would stop them with a fatherly admonition; if they allowed some little time to pass without confession, he would send for them and receive them with great affection; if any one of them had wandered from the right way, he knew no rest until he had brought him back; if he saw that any of them needed peculiar watchfulness and care, he would charge one of his penitents to look after them, and keep them away from evil company. We read in the lives of the saint many instances of the tender and unwearied affection with which he guided the young. A Roman gentleman a frequent visitor of his once expressed to him his amazement that he could live with such a noisy troop of boys about him, and Philip answered with sweet simplicity: "If only I can keep them from sin, they are welcome to chop wood on my back." With such self-sacrificing and exquisite charity Philip treated the young.—St. Paul's Bulletin.

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they knew how to swim, but the fact that this little girl was rescued from the water and a strong man who did not know how to swim were lost carries its own lesson. So little effort is required to keep one afloat in quiet water that great strength is not needed. Indeed, strong men can wear themselves out in futile efforts to keep afloat while comparatively weak men, women or children who have mastered the art of swimming find no difficulty.

Probably the greatest difference between one who knows how to swim and one who does not, lies in the fact that the swimmer has learned that he can rest while the person who while the one who can not swim makes frantic efforts to get himself above the surface. Unfortunately water is not heavy enough to support human beings directly on the surface, but if the body be submerged it is possible with little or no effort to maintain one's head above the surface. No experienced swimmer would attempt to lift himself out of the water by beating the surface into a foam. All that is wasted effort. It is also very tiresome and will soon exhaust anybody. The person who has learned to swim has simply learned that the buoyancy of water is great enough to keep him afloat and has learned how to take advantage of that buoyancy. He has learned to make the water a servant. Long experience, of course, it requires to make an expert swimmer, but even a novice would not attempt to rear himself above the waves in the impossible manner attempted by a person ignorant of the water. Only a short time is required for a swimmer to learn when it is safe to open his mouth, and that he must not breathe if his nostrils are full of water.

The swimmer has a chance for his life because his accomplishment enables him to keep his wits as well as his mind and strength. He knows better than anybody else that he can not swim to a far distant shore, but he knows also that he can get to a deck chair, or a plank, or a lifeboat, if it is within reasonable distance. The swimmer knows that he can help others to help him, and it is no little thing to be of help to a rescuer at a time when economy of time means saving others' lives as well as your own.

Now is just the time to make this lesson profitable to innumerable thousands. It is the outgoing season. Learning should not be delayed because the prospect of an ocean voyage is small. Lives may be lost or saved in a duck pond as well as the ocean. Those who go down to the sea in ships, or rowboats alike should learn both what to do and what not to do in the water. The element should be respected rather than feared. No liberties should be taken with it, but it should not be allowed to end your life before your time. Learn to swim, learn this season, and you will be glad as long as you live, even though your life never should be in danger on the water.—Intermountain.

GENTLENESS Gentleness is like the fragrance of a flower by which it reveals its identity and its character. Gentleness is part of the sweetness of Christianity when it blossoms in a human life under the sunshine of the Lord's presence. It reveals to others the sympathy in the heart, the tenderness in the mind's thought and even the subservience of the body itself to the unselfishness of the spirit. Gentleness in the tone of voice indicates a kindly affection; in the form of speech it reveals consideration of the affect upon the feeling of others; in the gesture of hand or in the friendly grasp; it implies a sweet humility and a sense of fellowship. Gentleness is always in keeping with strength, whether in repose or in action; and harshness and overbearing are characteristic of the weakness of selfishness.

POLITENESS There is a difference between politeness and etiquette. Etiquette can be defined, classified, formulated. You can tell young people to take their soup from the side of their spoons to eat with their forks; not to make a noise in eating, and all these and countless more such injunctions are important. But I would rather eat a hundred dinners with my knife than laugh one malicious laugh at someone else who did so.—Cardinal Manning.

It is better to receive criticism than flattery. Let us ask of Mary to obtain for us from the Holy Ghost the gift of divine love, for then all the crosses of this life will seem sweet to us.

FATHER VAUGHAN ON 'FIRE'

In addressing the Catholic Women's Conference of London recently, Rev. Father Bernard Vaughan said: "Mine is the privilege as well as the duty of congratulating ourselves upon the perfect restoration to health of his Grace the Archbishop. I notice that as I am getting older he is getting younger. Also on your behalf, I must express our delight in having his Eminence Cardinal Bourne in the chair. Under his patronage and auspices the League was started, and he has stuck to it ever since, watching its growth, directing, guiding and encouraging it.

"I have a sort of right to be here, as spiritual adviser of the League in Westminster, and I have been invited to come and try to help you and try, if possible, to inspire you with greater zeal than at present you possess. "I have come down as a sort of spiritual stoker with a shovel full of coal in one hand and a poker in the other. I know no fire can live unless it is fed and a good draught created. I am going to speak about the spirit of enthusiasm with which a Catholic must be inspired and inflamed. I can hardly understand how a Catholic believing what he does can lack enthusiasm.

"Enthusiasm is part of our belongings, and if we have not the monopoly of it we ought at least to have a distributing power created in ourselves to pass on to others; but I notice wherever I go, on land or by sea, the great driving force is always fire. If I stand upon an Atlantic liner and ask myself, What is driving this wondrous floating hotel across the waters? My answer is Fire. If I pass from my well-behaved ship and take my place in an express forcing its way across the country, and I pause to ask, What power is that which is sending me at breakneck speed across the land? The answer comes. Fire. And when I alight from my train and pass into the city and see darkness I ask. How are you going to keep this city in order; what are you going to do to light it up? they tell me. The power-house—Fire. If by day I look around the land and watch the wondrous beauty of God's earth, and see the whiteness of the lily and the redness of the rose, and pause to look at the bloom of the peach and nectar; if I see the gold of the corn waving in the sunlight, and ask myself, What has done all this?—it is Fire. When the sun's light is quenched the bloom of God's garden will fade away. Once this earth had too much fire to support life, and we are going on to a time when the fires will fade away and life will pass, and the race which for a moment has troubled the surface of this planet will die from want of fire. Fire is the transforming power, fire is the driving power, fire is the refining and spiritualizing force.

"What was it our Lord's apostles and disciples lacked that they should run away from Him in his trouble and deny Him and say that they knew nothing about Him? What they lacked was fire. On the day of the Pentecost, fire descended upon them, and I can almost shade my eyes now because of its intense light. They went forth charged like a battery to give the world its shock, under which it has reeled ever since. In all ages you will find that the heroes and heroines of Christianity who made themselves heard and understood and felt as a driving force, as refining furnaces and uplifting agents for God, have been men and women charged with fire. "About three hundred years ago our Blessed Lord appeared to a simple nun. He stood before her enveloped in flames of fire. His

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whole presence seemed to be like an open furnace, and the source of it all was His Heart. He told that sainted soul—humble, simple, strong as a child—that He charged her to go out and through her influence and prayers to communicate this fire to the world. He said what He felt most of all was the coldness and indifference and apathy of those who were most of all indebted to Him. Catholics lacking enthusiasm—that is the torture to which we put Him. He is not indifferent. He is a blaze of fire, and says there is only one thing He wants in return for His love—a little love given back. I feel that as a priest I must become one of His spiritual stokers. I think if you ask the Cardinal what he wants to see all over the land he would say, Kindle the torches of the faith—the beacon lights of God—that the whole world at length might become enthusiastic about Him who was so enthusiastic about us. The other day I was stopped in the streets of Dublin and asked, Are you not a little too enthusiastic? Why are you not a little more moderate? I said if our Lord had only been moderate in His love for us where should we be now? It is what costs us something that is worth while. I am here to tell you that our Lord is in our midst, and if you cannot see Him, His heart is just as full of desire for the return of enthusiastic love as on the day He appeared to Margaret Mary Alacoque. You are privileged in knowing Him. You are in possession of God's greatest gift out of heaven—the Faith.

"We in this country are perhaps the most signally favored people on God's earth. We belong to an Empire whose motto is justice and liberty. We live under a flag which, wherever it floats in the breeze, whosoever the people round about it there must be liberty, freedom and justice. We have every opportunity of practising our faith. In all the dependencies of England throughout the Empire I have noticed there has not been merely toleration about the Faith, but an encouragement from the authorities to see that their people have every liberty for practising it.

"What a magnificent setting you have as Leaguers. I do not know any people who ought to find such zeal and enthusiasm as Leaguers in this country. What we want taken out of us is the parochial spirit—the provincial spirit, the national spirit. Lift yourselves up to the Catholic spirit. Certainly charity must begin at home, and your first duty is to your parish, and next to your bishop. Be interested in everything in which he is interested, feeling that you are ready to make sacrifices for the good of your diocese. You must not stop there. Wherever Jesus Christ our Master, is interested, be interested, too. We must always try to do our best for God. Take a part. Realize yourself. Help according to your means, or at least encourage others who have that work in hand. One of His Eminence's predecessors, Cardinal Wiseman, when on his death-bed thanked God that he had never consciously checked any good work in his diocese. That seems a little thing to say, but it took a great man to say it. We are so full of prejudices, passions and ignorance. We are such a little self-centred microbes that we can hardly see beyond ourselves. The half-crown cannot touch a florin, and the shilling will have nothing to do with the sixpence, and the sixpence won't look at the three-penny bit—because they are kept for the Sunday collection. I want everybody to have such a personal interest in this League that they will encourage it wherever the seed has been sown. Do not let your criticism kill it, but let it blossom under your smile, then under the smile of God it will ripen into great fruit for the country.—Universer.

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