

**April 21**

**ON SAINT ANSELM**

**115.1 First Point**

When he was fifteen, Saint Anselm resolved to devote himself to God and asked to be given the religious habit. However, the abbot of the monastery to which he applied, fearing that the youth's father might object, refused his request. This discouraged the young man so much that he took on the spirit of the world and abandoned himself to dissolute living. Ah! how little it takes to change the good will of children and young people!

This example should teach those who are young that, when they wish to consecrate themselves to God in the way of virtue they should not be discouraged by any obstacles and difficulties they encounter. After they have committed themselves, and made it known to those who are responsible for them, then those in charge must act so wisely in their regard that nothing in themselves or in their conduct is able to give these youths any dislike for the service of God, or cause them to deviate even slightly from their duties.

Is this one of your main concerns in your work? On this kind of care the progress that your disciples can make in piety depends very much, as well as the benefit you yourselves can derive from instructing them.

**115.2 Second Point**

When this saint grew older, he gave up his dissolute manner of living and followed a powerful inspiration from God to become a religious. In three years' time he made such progress in the practice of virtue and in the mortification of his passions that he was chosen prior and then abbot of his monastery.

Let us understand from this that God does not altogether abandon those who have a good heart; from time to time he takes care to favor them with his graces. However, it is important for them to correspond faithfully to these graces and to follow inspirations when God sends them. Still, they should do this only after consulting with their superiors, as Saint Anselm did, and follow their advice. For on this fidelity the salvation of many persons often depends.

Are you especially faithful to the inspirations God gives you? Do you consult your superiors before putting them into execution, so that they may see if they come from God, and then help you to take all the measures necessary to render them useful to you?

**115.3 Third Point**

Becoming a superior, this saint endeavored to guide his religious with so much gentleness and charity that he won all their hearts. He took such tender care of a young religious who was ill, who had found it difficult to submit to his guidance and to recognize him as his superior, that he moved the young man by his charity and won him over to return to his duties. Observing a certain abbot treating some young gentlemen rigorously, he told him that when you guide young people with so much rigor, you do not have any success at all instructing them.

By reason of your state you are responsible for the instruction of children. Profit by the words and wise conduct of this saint, since all your care should be to procure for them the spirit of Christianity. You must consider the obligation you have to win their hearts as one of the principal means to lead them to live in a Christian manner. Often reflect that if you fail to use this means, you will drive them away from God instead of drawing them to him.

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Anselm (1033-1109) was born at Aosta in Piedmont. After a period of adolescent neglect of religion, he entered the Benedictine Order at the monastery of Bec in Normandy, the center of the monastic revival in that part of France. In time he was chosen abbot and became famous as a teacher. William of Normandy conquered England in 1066, and under his successor, William Rufus, Anselm reluctantly became the Archbishop of Canterbury. His career as archbishop was contentious, partly because of his own lack of diplomacy, but also because of the king's intransigence and at times irreligious spirit. Nonetheless, Anselm is a Doctor of the Church because of his writings in philosophy, theology and a spirituality which focused on the sufferings of Christ. No doubt this orientation, which affected subsequent Cistercian spirituality, was reflected in the gentle and compassionate nature of Anselm which De La Salle mentions in this meditation.