

18.07.2009

MESSAGE TO THE STUDENTS OF LOYOLA SCHOOL, SREEKARIYAM

I am asked to give you a message. I am told that it should be very brief. While trying to choose an appropriate message for you, what comes to mind is an advice given by Jesus Christ to his disciples.

Jesus Christ, as you know, was a popular teacher. Quite a number of people including different religions consider him as a great prophet. I think everyone in the world, irrespective of caste or creed respect and revere him as an extraordinary person, a model of goodness, one of the great men the world has ever seen. For us Christians He is our God, who became man for our sake.

This Jesus Christ was training a group of disciples with the intention of bringing peace and joy to the whole world through their teachings. He used to give also inspiring messages to the crowds who were gathering around him. One of the advices he once gave to his disciples was this: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves" (Mt. 10,16). This is indeed a very rich and beautiful message: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves." You are all students. You are in the process of learning many things which would help you tomorrow to make your lives happy and successful. As students your target is wisdom. Hence I think that this advice of Jesus Christ is very relevant to you: "Be wise as serpents and innocent as doves". It is not enough that we become wise as serpents. Wise people can become crooked and poisonous like serpents. That is why Jesus immediately added, while trying to become wise as serpents; we should be also innocent as doves. We should imitate the good qualities of even serpents. The good qualities of serpent are that it is aware of its circumstances, foresees the dangerous situations and is always vigilant either to escape from or to confront the attacks of others. A wise person is one who knows how to combine the prudence of the snake and the innocence of the dove in his life. Such a person will always be happy and successful in his life.

The children are innocent by nature. Just to show the innocence of the children, I would like to tell you a small story. One day the little girl Tina came to her mother and complained: "Mamma, I have got a stomach ache". "I know the reason", said the mother, "that's because you are not eating sufficiently. Your stomach is empty. You would feel better if you have something in it."

That evening the principal of her school came to visit her family. In the course of the conversation he remarked that he had been suffering all day with a severe headache. Immediately the little girl Tina said: "I know the reason. That is because your head is empty. You would feel much better if you had something in it." Though this is a funny conclusion, we all will admit that there is innocence in it. The child is definitely innocent as dove. It may take sometime for her to become prudent like the serpent. Only that in this process she should not lose her natural innocence.

My dear children,

I appreciate your quest, your longing for wisdom. That is why you are here; that is why you are in your respective schools, listening to your teachers, learning from your classes, reading your lessons, doing your home-works, getting ready for your exams. Why do you go through this process? Because you want to become wise.

I would like to remind you that wisdom is not merely acquiring knowledge; it is much more. We do have knowledge in abundance. Today our High School students know much more than what the famous scientists knew some fifty years ago. Yet instead of happiness and peace problems and anxieties are increasing in the world. It is not because we do not know the way to happiness and peace. The Sacred Scriptures of different religions and their prophets, many holy and wise people gone before us, especially Jesus Christ show us clearly the way to happiness and peace. Even though we know it, we are not ready to travel along this narrow path that leads us to true happiness. We are reluctant to get rid of our selfish interest.

We know the difference between what is good and what is evil. But this knowledge alone is not enough. We should be able to choose the good and put it into practice. That is wisdom. So the formula is this: Knowledge plus action is equal to wisdom. Unless you put into practice what you know, you can never become wise. That is why Jesus Christ said: "Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon the rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock (of wisdom)" Jesus continued, "And everyone who hears those words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house and it fell; and great was the fall of it" (cfr. Mat. 7, 24-27) because it was built only on the sand of mere knowledge devoid of practice.

So it is good to acquire as much knowledge as possible. Now together with that we should also live in accordance with the knowledge we have acquired. Then only that knowledge becomes useful for us and we become wise. In the Book of Proverbs it is said, "The fear of the Lord (God) is the beginning of wisdom; fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1, 7). So my wish and prayer for you today is this: "May the Lord (God) bless you and keep you. The Lord (the source of wisdom) make his face shine upon you.... and give you (wisdom, happiness and) peace" (cfr. Nm. 6, 24-46).

THANK YOU