

65. *Black Mimoûna*

So your “young lions” spend their time quarreling! And you, their mother, grieve over it, and tell me things are getting worse all the time. (I must say, however, that I found your four boys very likable!)

Is it a matter of educational method? I am less sure of this than you. Far be it from me to counsel you against studying books concerned with education. I do fear, though, that you may lose a great deal of time pursuing miracle-pedagogy.

You remind me of the physician who unsuccessfully tries one cure after another, because he has misdiagnosed his patient’s condition. Before searching for means of improving the situation, shouldn’t you ask yourself what its true causes are?

Will you allow me to advance the hypothesis that at least one of these causes lies within yourself? A story taken from the golden legends of the Moslem saints will explain this to you more clearly than some long dissertation:

Abdalwâhid Ibn Zeid wanted to know who would be his neighbor in heaven, and the following answer was given him: “O Abdalwâhid, your neighbor will be Black Mimoûna.” “And where is this Black Mimoûna?” he asked, with more boldness than discretion. “She is with the Banou So-and-So family, at Koûfa.”

So Abdalwâhid went to Koûfa, and began to search for Mimoûna. He was told that she was a crazy woman who tended sheep over by the cemetery. He found her at prayer. The flock was grazing untended, and this was all the more extraordinary, because there were wolves intermingled with the sheep. The wolves did not eat the sheep, and the sheep were not afraid of the wolves. He was puzzled and asked, “How is it that these wolves get along so well with these sheep?”

”Mimoûna answered, “I have improved my relations with my Lord, and Lord has improved the relations between the sheep and the wolves.”

Every mother should ask herself, when she has trouble with her children, whether the real reason for it is that she is neglecting her relationship with God.

What is true at the level of the family is equally true at the level of society. Purely human means (such as a knowledge of psychology, teaching ability, authority and prestige) are powerless to bring about unity among men, in whom a virus of disunion has been imbedded since original sin. Above all, they are powerless to bring about the unity in charity which Christ demands so insistently.

The unity of the children of God is a work that only Christ can accomplish, and which he effectuates by sending the Holy Spirit. It was only after Pentecost that the disciples were said to be *"of one heart and one mind"* (Ac 4:32).

No one can be a worthy builder of unity unless he opens himself freely to the Spirit of God. How? By receiving the sacraments, but also through mental prayer. Without this prayer, the Holy Spirit who is given to us in the sacraments comes up against closed doors. Thanks to mental prayer, the Spirit's ascendancy becomes stronger and deeper with each passing day, and unity gradually becomes a reality. This unity is realized within us (for it is first of all within us that the uproar and division reign), but it is realized around us as well.

Then apostolic action proves its efficacy, not only in encouraging our brothers and sisters individually to serve the Lord, but also in achieving the unity of the children of God. It is this unity that Christ revealed as his deepest wish, during the great farewell prayer among his friends.

Make room for mental prayer in your life, and, I am sure, you will be able to write to me: "I have improved my relations with my Lord, and my Lord has improved the relations among my 'young lions,' whom I hope soon to call my 'my young lambs'!"