

PART ONE

Teachers and their Relationship with Students

In order to succeed in the very difficult task of effectively educating young people, a teacher truly must possess certain qualities.

Prudence Prudence is the virtue that helps us decide the best way of reaching our goals and that helps us work against obstacles standing in the way of reaching them. To understand the necessity of prudence, we only have to reflect on our purpose as Christian educators. We cannot compromise our mission or hinder its progress by acting imprudently in directing our schools.

Society does not permit us the luxury of mistakes in this area. Often it takes just a minor imprudent act to ruin the reputation of a solidly established school. Teachers and administrators must take extra care to employ prudence so that they don't prejudice the people in the area around the school.

It would be helpful to new teachers if they had a greater experience of people and events in the area before they come to teaching, but only a limited experience is possible. Teachers in a school are of necessity in contact with three different groups of people: the students, the parents, and the society in which the school exists. These groups place different demands upon the school and the teachers that must be satisfied in order

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for the school to exist in reasonable peace with each group. No matter what skilled teachers do, it is likely that some opposition will arise against them from time to time, especially among those who already look upon a particular school with an unfavorable bias. Teachers should expect to be criticized regularly in their careers: some people will complain about their way of teaching, others will complain about their discipline; some will say that their students don't make any progress, others will say that they are unjust in giving awards.

Teachers who always act with prudence will know how to make light of all this complaining insofar as it is false and unjust, and they will be able to take care of those areas in which they should make some improvement. The best way to avoid such accusations is to use the following principles: study and distinguish the makeup of students in order to treat each one according to his or her specific needs, and prepare classes well. By reviewing the materials that make up the subject matter of lessons there will be no confusion of ideas and there will be clarity of expression on the part of the teacher. These two principles will assist teachers who believe that their mission is important. It is impossible to a teacher to educate well without fully preparing for the task daily. Cleverness can never substitute adequately for preliminary work and preparation, and most of the time teachers who rely on their own cleverness fall into the use of old materials, repetitions, and digressions. Often some teachers have the illusion that the lesson or material is so simple, so easy, and so elementary that they require no preparation.

