

CHAPTER VI

PRUDENCE

Now I move on to give my deposition as best I can with regard to the cardinal virtues and those annexed to them as exercised by the Servant of God. First, I shall speak of the virtue of prudence which is that moral virtue by which one realizes what to do in any work: a situation to be met or avoided, or not do it at all. Because of the years of my acquaintance with the Servant of God, as I knew him in my conversations and in my dealings with him, I am able to say that I knew him to be one who loved and was most concerned about the exercise of the virtue of prudence. The virtue of prudence is necessary not only to control oneself but also to govern others. One can speak of a personal prudence and a governing prudence along with a prudence referred to as economical (right now, I can think of no other type of prudence except one which could be referred to as political prudence, intended to be used in governing people through public office, but this does not apply to the Servant of God).

Personal prudence

From what I know, I am able to say that the Servant of God always regulated himself with personal prudence by acting correctly in accordance with God's purposes that are both generally and commonly applicable to every man, but particular and individual and something proper to the Servant of God. I knew the Servant of God to be one who always used the means that are conducive to man's exercise of prudence as it pertained to himself. Those means are the following: to seek good counsel; to make good judgments and to command well.

I know that the Servant of God, inasmuch as it pertained to himself in the aforementioned prudence, regularly handled himself as a good and prudent director. He attained a notable reputation in Rome in the matter of counseling and the guidance of souls along the path to perfection. This was so with the very reverend Canon as well as with Monsignor Albertini, bishop of Terracina, Sezze and Piperno. At this point, I am able to say that, having been acquainted with the saintly bishop and having dealt with him during those earlier years when I came to know the Servant of God, he was a director endowed with gifts and graces which one might say were given to one chosen by God as a guide for the Servant of God, leading him not only to evangelical perfection but also to become one who was more deeply animated and encouraged to respond to his divine vocation. He proved himself to be one chosen as the propagator of the glories of the most Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, promoting it among the peoples and as one elected to be the founder of the Congregation of Missionaries with the title of the most Precious Blood. I know that the Servant of God not only conserved a great, veritable and persevering trust in the counseling of the wonderful Monsignor Albertini, but also an esteem and religious respect which he showed to him, making it clearly evident that he held

him in such a position as to look upon him as a true interpreter of the will of God in his regard, his conduct and all the evangelical activities that he promoted, exercised and propagated. Furthermore, I know that when this saintly bishop Albertini passed on to the other life, the Servant of God did not remain deprived of a director since, as I learned, he took advantage of the spiritual direction of one of his own Missionaries, highly regarded in the Institute for his prudence, learning, experience and his truly virtuous life. I have also learned that the Servant of God himself highly esteemed that director. Likewise, from what I have gathered from the almost common persuasion of all those who were closely allied to him, that the Servant of God was very sensitive and deeply concerned about always, in any pursuit, seeking the advice of more knowledgeable people, people who were prudent and God-fearing.

Then, too, I must form a firm opinion that the Servant of God, by regulating himself through counsel, made good judgments and commanded well since what pertains to the exercise of personal prudence, and from what I myself observed in him, is seen in the way he conducted his life which I can say was totally occupied in the exercise of virtue proportionate to his state in life and the diverse requirements of his vocation. I must say that in order to use well the advice he received he made good judgments with regard to what had to be done but likewise stood clear of what was not to be done. In order to do what was called for by virtue and by the will of God, wayfaring man must be thoughtful, be watchful of his speech and act in such a way that the lower nature which lies within man be kept in check by reason which will control it. That is why I have stated, from what I have learned~on my own, that the conduct of the Servant of God with reference to the exercise of the virtue of personal prudence involved the seeking of consultation so as to make good judgments and command himself well.

In the exercise of personal prudence, through which man seeks assurance for his own personal salvation to which it is to be directed, it would not be of any use at all to exercise any other form of prudence. From information given to me by one of his spiritual confidants, Father Serafino Cappuccino from Monte San Giovanni, the Servant of God's fear of losing perfection was such that he would have been ready even to set aside the work taken up by his Institute if ever the continuation of it would be contrary to the command of his superior. That Father told me that when the Servant of God went to visit the supreme pontiff Leo XII and found him to be badly informed about his Institute, the Servant of God, in all candor and with a deep concern for assuring the very best things for all people by adhering closely to the basic Christian rules of prudence, gave this reply to the Pope: "I will submit the rules of our Institute to your Beatitude; your Holiness can then read them and all that need be given is a single word from your Beatitude and I will close all of our Houses". The Holy Father accepted those regulations and kept them in his possession. Later he returned them to the Servant of God and showed his profound esteem of the Servant of God. Whenever the Servant of God spoke about this incident to Father Serafino, he would say with abundant spiritedness: "My bed of flowers is the will of God".

Prudence in governing

In the exercise of prudence needed in reference to governing, I know and have formed a solid judgment that the Servant of God, in the governance of his Institute, was endowed with the gifts for governing, for being a founder and for the spread of the Institute. Those gifts were in proportion to the needs of the time, to the nature of the Institute, to his personal circumstances and in regard to community or individual needs. Likewise, from my knowledge I must form the judgment that, in order to make full use of those gifts and exercise prudence in the most perfect way, he would have to take particular, consistent, universal and continuous care, in perpetual motion, so to speak. His efforts to dispose, command and bring individuals and situations into harmony, one might say, were very, very perfect.

Economical prudence

In the exercise of economical prudence, I believe that I can say, it was just what it should be in a founder of a holy Institute which promotes activities leading to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. For the first and fundamental part of economy in the works of God, that is, economical prudence in those works, he established trust in God. As I knew him, he was very concerned, in a Christian and religious way, about temporal means. These he would seek, as far as I know, to be just sufficient for a simple and frugal form of life which should be characteristic of apostolic men. So in the administration of temporal means, he was, as I knew him, most exact in all the matters that I dealt with him. Hence, I have the firm opinion that he was equally so in regulating his Institute.

Here I must point out that if in the early years of the Institute someone might have said that the Servant of God was not sufficiently prudent in admitting members to the Institute, from my knowledge of the Servant of God's manner of thinking and of dealing with matters pertaining to the glory of God and the rules that he had set up in the listing of requirements of those seeking admission to the boarding schools of the Institute, whether clerics or already ordained priests, I noted that in that summary the requirements are definite and assure the Institute of the individual's fitness. Prudence requires that if anyone, after being admitted, should be found wanting of the necessary qualities called for by the Institute, those individuals must be rejected. I know that he adhered to this as is seen from what I now mention. Being deeply concerned about this, the Servant of God, for the sake of the progress and growth of the Institute, asked Fr. Serafino, among others, to pray and have others pray for him. That priest sought the prayers of a certain nun, now deceased, for whom he had served as spiritual director. The nun, highly favored by God with particular inspirations, said, either in writing or spoken aloud to her spiritual director that he should tell Canon Del Bufalo that in regard to the work of the Institute he should be on his guard against false brethren. When the Servant of God got this message, making use of it, he eventually dismissed ten or twelve individuals. This has all come to my knowledge as related to me by the good Fr. Serafino.

A Prudence free of faults

As I knew the Servant of God, the exercise of the virtue of prudence was a virtue which was a distinct characteristic accompanying him throughout his life. As I knew him, I can say that he exercised it without any faults, neither by defect nor excess in reference to those things that are contrary to this virtue. I must say that I never observed in the Servant of God any manner of acting which might be said to be prejudicial or that sort of action which might be described as precipitous.

I must likewise point out that I never observed in him the fault which is referred to as inconsideration. Furthermore, I observed in him a manner of acting which showed consideration. His speech, and he was endowed with a rich talent, was always measured when dealing with his neighbor and when engaged in the work of the ministry. Never did I notice a word or suggestion that could be characterized as inconsiderate or which might cast a shadow on his charity or stymie the progress of the Lord's work.

Another fault which stands opposed to prudence is the one referred to as inconstancy. This was something that was so far removed from the Servant of God that I can say that the continuation and universality of deeds performed in the life of the Servant of God, as I knew him, always presented to me a man who was dedicated to live a Christlike, priestly life devoted to doing the Lord's work. He was a vigorous proponent of the Gospel and, as a founder, he maintained that character consistently and substantially, showing a decisive firmness up to the time of his death.

The fault of negligence, considered likewise as something contrary to Christian prudence, not only did I not detect this in the Servant of God, even in the slightest degree, but I observed him always to be exact, attentive and vigilant. I saw resplendent in him the virtue of evangelical, Christian diligence to such an exalted degree that he was able to be a most edifying example, not only to the individual Christian, but also to the clergy, displaying that ever-needed virtue of Christian diligence.

Also, I noted that far-removed from the Servant of God were those faults which are contrary to the virtue of prudence, now so often mentioned. As I now recall the life of the Servant of God, taking everything into consideration that I noted or learned about him, even just to think of trying to find the least fault, such as a lack of prudence of the flesh, I get a sensation within me of such repugnance that I can scarcely think it except for the fact that right now I am obliged, for the sake of truth, to give my deposition. So, in order to say something at all, I think that I can assert that the Servant of God was so far-removed from any fault that I am not able even to imagine such a thing. I always saw resplendent in him, quite luminously, the prudence which speaks only of one who is a true follower of the Redeemer.

Another fault contrary to prudence is that of slyness. I was never able to detect this in the Servant of God. Indeed, I saw rather the opposite virtue. I can make this assertion from my dealings with the Servant of God as I knew him. I think that I can say that he was so filled with

the virtue which opposes the fault of sloth that he was incapable of that fault.

Another fault which stands contrary to true prudence is the one that is called anxiety about temporal things. Once again, I never detected in any way this sort of anxiety in the Servant of God even though he was thoroughly involved in promoting the works giving glory to God and the salvation of souls by distributing booklets, Printed devotional things, sacred reproductions and other objects used for keeping devotion alive in the people. Also, he Provided the churches with objects necessary and useful for the People's public exercise of devotion. He initiated many Missions and Retreats for the people, covering every level of Persons. The expenses were many and, since the Servant of God himself was not provided with an abundance of temporal means, he had to have recourse to other approaches, as I knew him to act. He was fully aware of the needs and, according to circumstances, would frequently repeat the saying of the Servant of God, Monsignor Vincenzo Maria Strambi, bishop of Macerata and Tolentino: "In order to do good work, we need the grace of God and some money". I saw him to be concerned in a Christian way for obtaining the means that would make possible the promotion of programs for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. Hence, I can say that he was never one attached to the vice of anxiety about temporalities.

In the exercise of the virtue of Christian prudence, in as far as it accompanies wayfaring people on this earth, I observed that the Servant of God was free from another of the faults that oppose Christian prudence, namely, worry about future matters. Being, as he was, filled with trust in God, he placed his hopes in that trust while at the same time using diligence in the various obligations and duties which were incumbent upon him because of his Position.

The more the Servant of God was called upon to exercise this virtue of Christian prudence in keeping up with the multiplicity of his undertakings, the more did he exercise it without falling into any of the opposite faults and the more resplendent was it in the Servant of God.

Virtues annexed to prudence

Now I move on to speak of the virtues annexed to Christian prudence. They are: foresight, promptness, docility, circumspection and caution. It is necessary to Point out that, in Proportion to the multiple, exalted and difficult undertakings which the Servant of God encountered in his vocation, he was endowed with a great intelligence, an adequate memory and a very exact, penetrating and solid manner of reasoning, so that in acknowledging his obligation to make proper use of the gifts given to him by the divine author, God the creator, he proceeded to make use of them in accordance with the purposes laid down by his beneficent donor as well as to the very nature of his calling

Foresight

From the Servant of God's conduct, I saw that he was adorned with the virtue of foresight insofar as he was always intent on making whatever preparations and provisions were needed, whether in himself or in external works. He would seek the assistance of others, be that for spiritual or temporal means. He did whatever was called for to be more profitably successful in those undertakings leading to the glory of God and the salvation of souls. As I knew the Servant of God, if I were to be asked which dealings in his life were embellished with this foresight, I would have to answer: take all of them, examine them one by one and you will find that all of them were adorned with this virtue since his life was such that one can say that it was always adorned with that Christian foresight, just as people on this earth are capable of imitating God's foresight.

Promptness

I witnessed the Servant of God exercise the virtue of Promptness with such perfection, fullness and totality that he exercised it not only in great, public, evangelical undertakings, but also in smaller things. Thus, the virtue of promptness was a distinctive characteristic in the life of the Servant of God. I must also say that in order to exercise it, as I saw him do, he must have had to use profusely the particular gifts of God. It appears that I might say, without fear of error, that a man with only a general concourse of gifts would not be able to exercise it as I witnessed in the Servant of God. Hence I have come to the judgment that the Servant of God acquired great merit as he made use of those gifts exercised so fruitfully; he can be regarded as a most edifying example of this virtue of Christian promptness.

Docility

Also resplendent in the Servant of God was what I witnessed in him as the virtue of Christian docility, a virtue annexed to prudence. I noticed that even though he was totally eager to promote the works giving glory to God and the salvation of souls in the most luminous way, still he moderated that zeal whenever the virtue of prudence called for it, in order that the good work would be done in the best possible way and that there would be nothing that would impede the full accomplishment of the good work. Hence, with docility he would seek to have the good work done in the best possible way.

Circumspection

The virtue of Christian circumspection, which I witnessed exercised to perfection in the Servant of God, is the virtue which leads man to keep impediments far away, readies the means for overcoming difficulties that stand in the way of the good work and levels off the way to the best possible way of accomplishing that good work which God expects of each one of us in

keeping with both interior and exterior circumstances.

I knew the Servant of God, he was an attentive, caring, vigilant person, interested in doing every bit of good work that he could. Thus, without fear of being in error, I can say that, taking into consideration all of his holy endeavors, all of his priestly activities in the evangelical ministry, they were all adorned with the virtue of Christian circumspection or were fruits of that very same virtue.

Caution

Finally, the virtue of Christian caution, regarded as a virtue annexed to Christian prudence, was exercised by the Servant of God. I knew Canon Del Bufalo to possess a firm, virtuous and pious character. He would not act without using the forethought and special attention required so as not to fail because of a lack of that virtue of Christian caution which would prevent any progress in the doing of good work. He would carefully look things over, using the knowledge he had gained from past experiences and using good reason. I can say that he used this virtue as he felt the need and as his experiences increased, so too did his practice of this virtue.

Thus, I feel that I can come to the conclusion that, considering the life of the Servant of God from every possible point of view as well as his personal circumstances at that time, his relationship with his companions, the many evangelical undertakings and any other aspect that is worthy of consideration, the Servant of God tried to and did exercise the virtue of Christian prudence and the virtues annexed to it in a perfect, continuous, real, universal way. To the benefit of souls, one can look upon him as a true example of the exercise of this virtue and those annexed to it. One can derive even greater benefit from his example if one realizes that the Servant of God had to exercise them while burdened with much suffering. Since his life was beset with many tribulations, contradictions and persecutions. he withstood all of them in a Christian way through the exercise of the virtue of prudence and those connected with it.