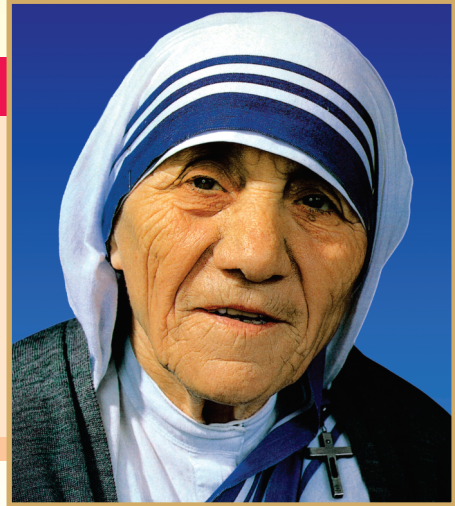


Chapter 4

Grooming the Christian Personality



In a survey to select the most respected persons in the whole world St. Mother Teresa came first in the list. How could she be considered the most distinguished person in the world? She was a simple religious woman engaged in serving the poor, the destitute and orphans on the streets of Kolkata. Surely, it was not her external beauty but her inner quality that attracted the attention of the world. It is postulated that there is an inseparable relationship between one's inner qualities and personality.

What do you mean by the Word Personality?

Psychologists have from time to time attempted to formulate theories to define personality. Personality is the specific and dynamic traits within the individual that determine one's character, behaviour, thoughts, emotions culture etc. It is the sum total of thoughts, feelings, behaviour, beliefs, culture etc. which influences and draws attention of another. So the term personality signals the totality of human person, his physical, social and spiritual make-up. To Gordon Allport, personality is what a man really is. The changeable nature of personality is to give shape to a particular style creating a salient impression of one on the other. This makes each individual unique and this uniqueness is expressed as his or her personality.

Attention must be paid to the proper development of one's personality which is realized through the different stages of life. So, it is important to know about the duties and functions associated with each stage in life. Earnest and diligent effort must be taken to fulfill such duties. Certain levels of personality development can be measured easily. Your personality has several features that require occasional brushing-up and attention. You have to identify such areas of personality that require more perfection.

Dimensions of Personality

There are three major dimensions of personality - physical, skill-based and spiritual. Physical dimension deals with the bodily aspects like skin colour, height, complexion etc. (inherited from parents). Every individual is endowed with some talents which are inborn. They are to be identified and developed with constant practice. Spiritual and mental deals with value system and are called spiritual aspect of personality. Values like active love, justice, responsibility, truthfulness etc. are personal and religious. Punctuality, cleanliness etc. are strictly personal and loving one's enemies, sense of sacrifice and holiness etc are strictly religious.

Modern science views man as a complex structure of physiological, psychological and spiritual forces held together by a central chord called personality. The vision of man is incomplete without the dimension of the soul which expresses itself in conscience, reason, will, emotion and such qualities. The three dimensions mentioned above seldom function in isolation, they interplay. A model personality would be a person who is led by the ultimate goal, based on spiritual values. A God-ward movement is in-built in man. It brings spiritual liberation to the individual and integral well-being to society. Love, commitment, sense of service etc., are very desirable values when we achieve harmony of body, mind and Spirit. In the personality of Jesus we have a model whose appeal and relevance will never be dimmed by time. A balanced blend of physical, mental and spiritual dimensions go to the right formation and transformation of one's personality.

Our sense of purpose and determination are dominant factors in the efficient execution of these values in day to day lives. Aiming high and working hard are the best ways to nurture one's personality. Hence, personality is inclusive of these elements. So, personality should be a harmonious integration of an individual's bodily structure, behaviour, attitudes and interests. The mosaic of one's personality is fashioned by the integration of the experiences in the biological, psychological and spiritual make up. One's personality traits cannot be kept under the bushel from the observation of the people. People can watch you and know what sort of person you are.

You can groom your personality only in salubrious surroundings and you must care to select opportunities and areas of activity that suit your tastes and fit your career.

Grooming Christian Personality

Personality is developed through our continuous efforts. To forge a winsome personality, we need to pay attention to certain aspects of our life.

1. Self-awareness

Awareness is an eye-opener and a wake-up call. Self awareness is the knowledge of oneself. To be unaware of oneself is a great tragedy.

Self awareness is the key to personality development. It demands knowledge of one's purpose in life and the means to realize the same. Christian self awareness is the consciousness of oneself in the light of the teachings of Jesus. This can be achieved through the power of the word of God and the teachings of the Church. Just as nobody can make his life fruitful without self-

awareness, nobody can grow up as a true and mature Christian without the knowledge of what it means to be a Christian and without being aware of the very purpose of life and the means to realize the same. 'God is not attained by a process of addition to anything in the soul but by a process of subtraction' (M. Eckhart).

2. Jesus, Our Role Model

Sometimes you would have asked yourself the question, "Whom should I consider as a role model?" Of course, one should not go after a role-model blindly, such as a politician or film star. When you discover your true identity you will work for the improvement of your personality and no force on earth can stop you from achieving your set goals in life.

Jesus has been the perfect model and inspiration for people because he is "true God from God". Jesus grew up into mature personality, became strong and the "Filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him" (Lk. 2:40). Jesus said to Philip, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn. 14:9). Jesus is also a perfect man. He was like anyone of us in all things, except sin. So Jesus is the right inspiration and model for us to be followed, without any second thought.

3. Follow the Example of the Saints

Saints are people who lived their lives heroically, practicing virtues and dedicating their lives fully to the cause of Christ. We see an array of holy men and women, who were raised to the honour of Altar. We have the life of the Apostles, Martyrs, Fathers of the Church and Doctors as examples. They enrich the church and inspire the faithful. So, it is desirable to have an overview of these saints and holy people. Familiarity with hagiography will serve as a source of inspiration and further motivation in our search for identity and awareness.

These saints present before us a world with a difference. They followed a difficult and challenging life, unwavering even when they had to risk their lives. They remained faithful to their calling with total dedication. To follow Jesus is to be like him in his love and compassion. We shall follow Jesus by adopting his values - his moral courage, humility, forgiveness, meekness, simplicity, etc. When we live the ideals and values of Jesus we too will become Christ-like. It can be called Christian identity itself. Saints are our aids to lead an authentic Christian identity.

Here we present a list of saints for our spiritual enrichment: St. Joseph, the patron of laborers; St. John Chrysostom, Patron of preachers; John Berchman's, patron of altar servers; Dominic Savio, the patron of children; St. John Bosco, the patron of the youth; St. Thomas More, patron of politicians; St. Francis of Assisi, patron of environment; St. Charles Borromeo, patron of Catechists; St. Isidore, the patron of farmers; St. Cicily, the patroness of singers; St. John Maria Vianney, the patron of clergy; St. Therese of Lisieux, patron of missionaries; St. Christopher, patron of travelers; St. Vincent de Paul, the patron of charitable works etc. How great in the inspiration and sense of aim that they transmit to us. These saints differed one from the other but all had the same purpose - to follow Jesus! Let it be as well, our motto and aim in life.

Alter Christus

A true follower of Christ can be called another Christ. The presence and association with good people matter much in character formation. One who has developed a Christian psyche will be a blessing and an asset to the society. He promotes common good of the same society and stands high as a beacon for others. The words of St. Paul are worth keeping in mind. He said, "It is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me." (Gl. 2:20).

As true Christians, we are obliged to extend our co-operation in the formation of a new society. Let Jesus be our perfect model and inspiration in this. His vision of life must be followed for a life of integrity and transparency in our word's and deeds. The ideal model is powerfully presented by Jesus himself in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Here Jesus himself is the Good Samaritan, and he reminds us that it is our duty to take care of our needy brothers and sisters (Lk 10:25-30).

I. Let us Discuss

1. Christian identity is Christo-Centric.
2. Youth and the formation of Christian identity.

II. Let us find out the Answers

1. What do you understand by the word, personality?
2. Growth or maturity in Christian personality is possible when a person assimilates the vision, out-look and life-style of Christ. Explain.
3. Growth in self-knowledge is the pre-requisite to the enlightened identity. Why?
4. The good examples of saints help us to grow in Christian personality. How?
5. Why do you say that a genuine Christian is another Christ?

III. Activity

Prepare a piece of write-up explaining what all measures could be taken to the development of Christian personality.

IV. Let us Read and Reflect

Colossians 3:12-17.