

[Rev. Father Giuseppe Fiorini Morosini, Superior General of the Order of Minims writes of Blessed Nicolas Barre on his beatification...](#)

Glancing through the following pages the reader will get an insight into the apostolic commitment of this religious, the newness of his holiness, the deep human and Christian sensibility which enabled him to be aware of the urgent needs of the society of his day and his intuition in the field of education which made him the promoter, in France, of education for all.

I would like to develop briefly a few of these elements.

1. The centrality of the experience of God.

The experience of God was very strong in the life of Nicolas Barre. The contemplation of the Mystery of God, through the desire for a deeper and deeper imitation of Christ, was his strength, especially in the difficult moments of his life. Out of it sprang his spirituality of abandonment which has so much to say to us today, to us who are so often full of fears for a future painted in such sober colours by the prophets of doom. Hope in God which overflows from the experience of abandonment, enables us to approach the future full of confidence.

Our day is also God's Day, because Christ continues to be incarnated in it and this moment of grace lights up for us the history of humankind. This spirituality of abandonment as practised by Nicolas Barre is simply an aspect of his devotion to the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

2. Commitment to penance.

Schooled in the spirituality of St. Francis of Paola, Founder of the Order of Minims, Nicolas committed himself whole heartedly to a life of conversion based on the Gospel, without which no one can enter the Kingdom of God. True, this conversion demanded moral effort but it was sustained by that physical asceticism which assists each of us in our journey to interior renewal, and enables us to walk more readily towards an encounter with God.

It was by means of this commitment, cultivated within the context of a spirituality of perpetual Lent, typical of the Order to which he had wished to belong (even though he had studied with the Jesuits), that Nicolas Barre carried out his mission of confessor and director of souls.

3. Awareness of the signs of the time.

This is another aspect of the personality of Nicolas Barre which mirrored perfectly the personality of Francis of Paola. In the 15th century this great Calabrian hermit, without losing any of his contemplative spirit, was known as the saint of social concern, and charity,

promoting the cause of downtrodden people, demanding justice and freedom for them in the face of exploitation by the powerful of his day. Nicolas Barre himself also a contemplative and a penitent, grew in awareness of a call coming through the society of his time and especially the poor, to commitment to the young people of France who were abandoned to their own devices, deprived of any kind of education.

That is primarily how "the little schools" came to exist, in the poorer neighbourhoods of the towns, followed by the coming together of the Infant Jesus Sisters to run these schools. This was also something new in the Church, a break away from the traditional form of religious life for women, precisely so that they could be closer to the people.

4. His pedagogy.

The pedagogy was totally centred on love for each individual person; all being accepted in their uniqueness, while recognising their circumstances and their potential. The advice and guidelines he proposed then for the education of the young in no way reflected the practice of his time, and today. they are still capable of inspiring the work of educators everywhere.

Today, as the Holy Father holds up Nicolas Barre as a model of sanctity for the whole Church, we, his confreres, Religious Minims, and his spiritual daughters. the Infant Jesus Sisters who carry on his work, offer this pamphlet to all who take part in the joyful celebration of this event.

In offering this pamphlet as an alternative to a more extensive biography we hope to provide a brief overview and a synthesis of the person and the work of the newly beatified. This foretaste may encourage the reader to undertake at a later date a more thorough study of this great 17th century French pedagogue.