



27. Our Three-Dimensional Spirituality

The concept “our three-dimensional spirituality” addresses a fundamental category of our spirituality. It is so fundamental that a handbook has appeared dealing with each dimension.

The first, on “Everyday Sanctity”, was written in the 1930s by Sr M.A. Nailis PhD building on a retreat course by Fr Kentenich, who completed the third part of the book, because this could no longer be dealt with in the retreat (Everyday Sanctity, Johannesburg, Waukesha).

The second dealt with “The Spirituality of a Marian Instrument” (Marianische Werkzeugsfrömmigkeit) and was written by Fr Kentenich in the concentration camp at Dachau (cf. Schoenstatt’s Instrument Spirituality – Texts by Fr Joseph Kentenich, ed. Fr Jonathan Niehaus, Waukesha).

The third “handbook” was never designed as such. In the meantime, however, it has been generally accepted as such by the Schoenstatt Family. It is the second part of the so-called “Josef’s Letter”, a study written by Fr Kentenich on the covenant of love, which has to be seen and used as such (cf. Schoenstatt’s Covenant Spirituality – Texts by Fr Joseph Kentenich, ed. Fr Jonathan Niehaus, Waukesha).

The text printed here is drawn from two different sources and is not intended as a comprehensive discussion of the three dimensions of our spirituality. More than with other texts, the reader is referred to the source texts – the three handbooks mentioned above.

The first text quoted here reproduces a very pithy statement made by Fr Kentenich and shows the inner connection, as well as the reciprocal complementation, of the three dimensions of our spirituality. It can be compared with a definition. It has been taken from a letter to Fr Turowski SAC, (8 December 1952), the Pallottine Superior General at that time, and can be found in: Hug, Nüchterne Frömmigkeit (Down-to-earth Spirituality), p. 100 and 130.

The second text is taken from the Fourth Conference of the Christmas Congress of 1967 in: Prophetia locutus est, XII, 98-181. A longer digression on Fr Kentenich’s understanding of his mission in comparison with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas has been omitted. This text can be found in Item 70 of the Reader. It is significant, however, that Fr Kentenich enlarged on his fundamental understanding of his mission in the context of our three-dimensional spirituality.

The text quoted here gives hardly any idea of the spiritual content of our three-dimensional spirituality. What comes out clearly is the way Fr Kentenich emphasised the triad of Everyday Sanctity, the Instrument's Spirituality, and Covenant Spirituality.

However, the text is interesting because it shows how the founder describes classic elements of his spirituality in connection with newer spiritual currents and teachings – a new moral principle, the teaching of the Council – and hence its permanent validity. This is a task that remains ours to carry out also in our present times and the times to come.

The specific character of our spirituality is marked by three concepts: Everyday, instrument and covenant spirituality.

Both the expressions and their content are the result of a slow and sound development. They form the heart and centre of the Founding Document, to which they made an essential contribution. All three forms – or we would do better to say, each of the three aspects is part of a single form of spirituality – despite their supernatural warmth, are so austere and down-to-earth that from the first they exclude as far as possible the danger of dependence on extraordinary phenomena.

How can we describe the inner context of our three-dimensional spirituality?

Whoever knows the historical development of the three aspects of our asceticism will quickly and easily understand their inner connection.

If *Everyday Sanctity* emphasises the orientation to everyday life more strongly, the *Instrument's Spirituality* more consciously establishes a relationship with God, which is more clearly given the character of a distinctive relationship of love between two loving partners by *Covenant Spirituality*.

Schoenstatt – A holy history

I think I would have to interpret [what has been said] in this way: Schoenstatt is simultaneously the history of a theory of holiness and a history of holiness.

In the First Founding Document we read, “Just as a little chapel in Florence for St Aloysius, so our shrine must become the cradle of our sanctity.” How can we describe this holiness and its position in relation to all the ideals of holiness that have developed in the course of the millennia within the Church?

What ideal of holiness do we stand for?

To start with, we know that the Family leads us to holiness and has to lead us to holiness. If it doesn't do so, it will not have served its purpose or attained its goal.

Here we again have a proof of how solidly and extensively we have anticipated the Council's way of thinking and doing things, as well as its decisions. The Council solemnly stated that every one of the baptised has the right and duty to be holy – let us put it more precisely – to strive for canonisable holiness. So it is an anticipation of the Council's way of thinking.

So how can we describe our forms of holiness? We could list them in our sleep. But do we know their significance? **Everyday sanctity, covenant spirituality and the instrument's spirituality.**

What does all that amount to?

Firstly, everyday sanctity

Please study the book¹⁵ again. With what are we dealing here?

*Sanctus est, qui sancte vivit.*¹⁶ The person who raves about holiness is not holy, but the person who lives, prays, works and mortifies himself or herself in a holy way is holy.

Or, let us take another saying: *Deum quaerere, deum invenire, deum diligere in omnibus, cum rebus, cum personis.*¹⁷

To seek God! It is very important to me that you hear these things in a new way. It is my intention to place them later into the light of the most modern problems. In the process I think I can notice all the time that we have no idea what we have. We all too often talk around the subject. We can also say and sketch one or the other aspect in a fragmentary way. However, the full force of all the great gifts we have received from God – we can almost say that they were given to us in our sleep – is something we cannot understand. So once again: Don't enter into the modern hustle and bustle before we feel at home in our history!

So, look for God! Where should we look for God? It doesn't say here that we have to look for God in ourselves, that is presupposed. What is particularly emphasised here is that we have to see God in context: the First Cause in connection with his creatures, with secondary causes. That is the problem of our present times! To seek God, to find God, to love God – in everything! So let us remain with creation; we don't want to climb up directly to God, but do so indirectly. We are dealing here all the time with a mediated relationship to God. This does not mean that we don't seek immediate contact with God. The definition of everyday sanctity gives us the answer in this regard.

Again, if you see God in isolation, you will understand that tomorrow or the next day God will mean nothing to you. Either we rise up from created things to God, or we lose God. The problem of our present times is the problem of God! The problem of our times is the relationship between the First Cause and secondary causes.

Perhaps you will allow me to list a few sketchy thoughts. We have to love God in all things, in all people. So we shouldn't only rise up to God directly and then admit to nothing else: "My God and my all!" Such a statement has to be interpreted in an organically one-sided way. "My God and my all" in organic connection with creation, in organic connection with things, in organic connection with all the people I encounter.

So when you are told the definition of its essence, you will know that *Everyday Sanctity* depicts holiness as heartfelt harmony, that is, "the harmony between whole-hearted attachment to God, to work and to people".¹⁸ When you examine what is described in detail, and in what its originality consists, you will find a clear answer to the most essential modern questions.

¹⁵ M.A. Nailis, *Everyday Sanctity* – a contribution to the religious formation of everyday life, Johannesburg, Waukesha.

¹⁶ "*Sanctus est, qui sancte vivit.* It is not the person who raves or phantasises about holiness, but the person who really lives in a holy way, who is holy, that is, the person who tries to stamp everything he or she does with the stamp of inner and outer perfection." (cf. *Everyday Sanctity*, part 2.) (This is my translation. MC).

¹⁷ To seek God, to find God, to love God in everything, things as well as people (Ignatius of Loyola).

¹⁸ "*Everyday Sanctity*" defines everyday sanctity as "a divinely willed harmony between a whole-hearted attachment to God, to work, and to our fellowmen in every circumstance of life".

Secondly, covenant spirituality

Do you know a comprehensive theory of covenant spirituality? We, as priests, have to have it at our fingertips at all times in order to be able to justify ourselves from the treasures of our knowledge and experience.

I would only like to say something now about its importance for us all at this present moment – everything we have has to be integrated into the image of modern life. Let me emphasise at least one point: Our concern here is the fact that people today are looking for a new moral principle. When we were all younger – at least we older ones – we only acknowledged one principle: Sin or no sin, serious or venial sin. Today people are looking for principles derived from a holistic vision. You have probably not even noticed how the academics are reaching out for what we call covenant spirituality. Covenant spirituality is not based only on an ascetical principle. The ascetical principle here becomes a moral principle: Faithfulness to the covenant of love. “I always do what pleases the Father”.¹⁹

Of course, there is again the danger, because that is how modern thinking does it, that everything is torn apart and people say: So there is no longer any sin. That is why nothing else is possible than to say: We have entered into a covenant with you and we want to remain faithful to that covenant. We have to hold onto both and integrate them. The principle of sin continues to exist – both venial and serious sin! But from the point-of-view of the covenant of love, it is possible to combine both very meaningfully. We simply do not please God the Father if we turn our backs on him constantly, or partially.

And finally, the instrument’s spirituality

Yes, our spirituality is distinctively the spirituality of an instrument. The Council takes up the cudgels for the spirituality of an instrument when it speaks about a new form of apostolate.²⁰ What is the aim of this apostolate? To make God present through ourselves. Behind this is the whole theory of the spirituality of an instrument: The connection between the instrument and the master craftsman, and the classic and graphic representation of the power, being and essence of the master craftsman through our practical lives.

A third interpretation of “Schoenstatt – a holy history” would also be important. A holy history as the practical history of the life and striving for holiness in our own ranks. Perhaps I will be able to sketch this briefly in some way tomorrow.

¹⁹ Cf. Jn 8,29.

²⁰ The apostolate has two dimensions: active, purposeful action through preaching and *Caritas* (the active apostolate), and the witness of life (the apostolate of being). The latter is always possible and is particularly convincing in a pluralistic society. Cf. Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People, *Apostolicam actuositatem*, 18 November 1965, esp. §29 in A. Flannery (ed), *Vatican Council II, The Conciliar & Post Conciliar Documents*, Vol 1, Liturgical Press, 1984.