



65. On the Riches of Purity

The following text has been taken from a collection of aphorisms with the same title, “Reichtum des Reinseins” – On the Riches of Purity, published in 1939. The collection was made by Sr M. Bonifatia Warth. Since the aphorisms are drawn from Fr Kentenich’s talks or sermons, and since he himself often quoted from the booklet, we may take it that it, in much the same way as “Everyday Sanctity”, has been authorised by him.

The second edition of the booklet, published in 1968, added an appendix with a detailed breakdown of the material, which does not appear in the text. The individual quotations follow in sequence and are arranged differently. This is why some texts appear twice under different headings. Our text is taken from this edition – pages 87-102 – adopts the breakdown given in the appendix, and organises the quotations as given there.

After Text 03, this is another collection of aphorisms. In addition to Text 02, Kentenich Reader here offers another collection of aphorisms. The literary genre entails that the statements seem very apodictic, that is, necessarily true, and one or the other is so succinct that it could also challenge, or even annoy. Fr Kentenich’s usual style was to unfurl his thoughts and then substantiate his teaching, in order to convince and motivate his listeners as far as possible. However, in his praxis Fr Kentenich could also confront or provoke his listeners with a central statement, in order to challenge them to think for themselves, or take a stand to what he had said. So the literary genre of a collection of aphorisms is thoroughly in keeping with his character, and should perhaps also have the same effect on the readers.

The text on the five towers protecting purity concludes our selection on the spiritual life. It appears at this point in order to bring home to us how much Fr Kentenich saw the individual commandments – such as purity in this text – or challenges in the spiritual life, in their inner correlation with human processes as a whole. What mattered to him was to show the pedagogical way that enables us to live such a commandment with inner freedom and to our personal satisfaction.

The five towers protecting purity

Just as humankind's paradise is guarded by an angel with a flaming sword, so purity, in keeping with our state in life, has to be protected by five soaring and impregnable towers. The first tower is intense and fervent love of God; the second, profound humility; the third, enlightened and effective mortification; the fourth, creative diligence at work; and the fifth, relaxing and noble joy.

Education for purity can only be carried out effectively within the framework of holistic religious and moral education.

1. First tower: Love of God

The surest safeguard for every form of purity is enlightened, intense and fervent love of God.

1.1 The interplay between love of God and purity

In his Sermon on the Mount our Lord promised the pure a special growth in their love of God. "Blessed are the pure of heart, because they will see God." He could have reversed the sentence and said, "Blessed are they who see God, because they will be pure of heart!"

What serves the growth of our love of God, also serves chastity in keeping with our state in life.

The stronger our love of God, the more secure our purity.

Effective education for purity must always be enlightened education for love. A sound pedagogy of sexuality is always a profound pedagogy of love.

1.2 The relationship between love of God and earthly love

Every noble-minded love finds its source and crowning, protection and security in the love of God.

Earthly love that is not a form of love of God is always in danger of becoming unfaithful, and losing its way in the lowest regions of what is soulless.

A person whose love does not grow into the kingdom of God will sink with it, and through it, into the animal realm.

1.3 The love of God secures, protects and sanctifies

1.3.1 marital love.

Marital love that is rooted and culminates in the love of God, submits with unswerving loyalty to natural law.

Love-inspired faithfulness to natural law keeps marital love warm, deep and exhilarated; it intensifies the couple's moral strength and their endurance, both in body and soul, drawing down God's special blessing on parents, children and grandchildren, while giving the couple a fine intuition for begetting and educating children.

Just as marriages that are faithful to nature are a rich blessing, so those that are untrue to nature are a curse on the Church, the people and one's home country.

Those who love, and who sacrifice and throw away the core of their personality for the beloved, will lose their integrity and greatness, robbing the beloved of reverent shyness, and murdering and throttling love.

A lack of reverence is the grave of genuine love

People cannot and may not open up the mysterious depths of their soul, or lay bare the ultimate core of their personality, to other people as human beings.

Through the fine veil of the mystery with which she surrounds her chaste being, and through the fine aroma of her integrity of soul, which simultaneously awakens nearness and distance, it is the special mission of woman to educate her husband to be reverently and tenderly chivalrous.

Reverence and self-surrender generate reverence and self-surrender²¹⁷

The man who possesses noble chivalry will lower his sword before woman's dignity. This awakens and increases the seeds of creative reverence in both parties.

Love that is unable to do without something out of love can be compared with a fire that is choked by its own fumes.

For people who love, the lowest degree of renunciation is physical integrity in keeping with their state.

1.3.2 Love in general

Primitive love is self-seeking, enlightened love centres on the beloved and his or her interests.

Noble love always simultaneously includes awe and tender attraction, shy reverence and faithful self-surrender, warm self-giving and strong self-preservation.

²¹⁷ Today we would say that the balance between closeness and distance gives rise to reverence and self-surrender.

Reverence is awe before the greatness of another.

People who love, and who sacrifice the core of their personality to the beloved, throwing themselves away, lose their integrity and greatness, rob the beloved of reverent shyness, and murder and throttle love.

The human heart is far too great and related to God for it to be able to find perfect rest, satisfaction and completion with just any created being, even the most perfect. Sooner or later all that is created clearly points beyond itself, and calls out jubilantly to the person thirsting for love: climb higher, you will find yourself again in the heart of Eternal Love!

For the lover, the beloved is a clarion call and point from which love is transferred to Eternal Love.

Love must first be enkindled by people before it can flame up to God.

Whoever has received and given a great deal of God-grounded human love, will not find it difficult to believe in the Gospel message of God's infinite love for us.

If love is not to enslave people to other people, drawing them downwards, it often requires renunciation and prepares itself for severe disappointments.

Love that is unable to do without something out of love, can be compared with a fire that is choked by its own fumes.

For people who love, the lowest degree of renunciation is physical integrity in keeping with their state.

In the loving communication between people, disappointments are a loving gift from God, and his attempts to win our love.

Reverence approaches all the mysteries of life with profound respect, and shows in the unswerving application of the fundamental principle: Inner spontaneity and external integrity in keeping with one's state.

2. Second Tower: Humility

Besides love of God, and together with it, humility is the most necessary and important protection of purity.

2.1 *Concept of humility*

“Humility is truth.”²¹⁸

The two fundamental pillars of humility are truth and justice. Truth shows us the place that is due to us. Justice treats us as we deserve.

Humility creates the harmony between thinking little of ourselves, and thinking highly of ourselves.

Thinking little of ourselves is rooted in our knowledge of our human limitations and miseries; thinking highly of ourselves means joyfully acknowledging the gifts and graces we have received from God.

2.2 *The necessity of humility*

Just as the body needs light, air and water if it is to be healthy, so the soul needs humility and humiliations.

2.3 *Humility restores the God-willed order*

Proud people abandon God and make themselves the ultimate ground, measure and goal of their lives. They sinfully support the rebellion of the angel within us against the child of God and God himself. The punishment is often the rebellion of the flesh.

In his fatherly goodness, God knows how to direct everything to the best for his children. He allows the disordered stirrings of our turbulent instincts and drives, so that we experience our weakness, and find the way into his arms. As a result we increasingly overcome our lower appetites.

2.4 *Humility as the fruit of love*

If we really love God, we are given a profound insight into God’s kindness and greatness, but also into our own limitations and miseries.

2.5 *Humility as the source of all the virtues*

If love is the mother of all virtues, humility may be seen as the nurse. All without exception, including purity in keeping with our state in life, draw on and live from its nourishment.

The Sacred Scriptures call pride the start of all sin, so in this way humility influences all the virtues, not least the virtue of purity.

²¹⁸ This famous saying of St Teresa of Avila can be found in *The Interior Castle*, VI Dwelling Places, Ch. 10,7, “God is supreme Truth; and to be humble is to walk in truth, for it is a very deep truth that of ourselves we have nothing good but only misery and nothingness.” (*The Collected Works of St Teresa of Avila*, Volume Two, Translated by Kieran Kavanaugh, Otilio Rodriguez, p.420.)

2.6 *Humility and purity*

St Augustine reveals the inner connection between pride and impurity when he writes, “The whole misery of human beings consists in their disobedience to themselves. The people in Paradise did not want to do what they could, and now they want to do what they can’t. They want countless things they cannot do, because they don’t obey themselves, that is to say, because their will doesn’t want to obey their soul, and the flesh that is subordinate to it.”

2.7 *The vital foundations of humility*

Humility lives from mistrust in our own, and trust in divine powers.

2.7.1 Effects of sound mistrust

Sound mistrust awakens caution, reverence and willing obedience in the soul.

Caution is nourished by the fact that in the course of history it has often happened that the “pillars” have fallen farthest, and that the traitor is always skulking in the human heart. It finds expression in the avoidance of dangerous occasions of sin, and in battling against an imprudent spirit of adventure in the moral sphere, no matter whether we are associating with people of our own or the opposite sex, or dealing with our own bodies.

Enlightened caution is especially required towards all present-day means of communication and culture, at a time when a secular and worldly spirit penetrates victoriously through all doors and pores, and through all overt and covert channels.

The world and our times come to us through the radio and television, and we find the way into the world through the motorbike and car. The one as well as the other are God’s creation, so they have to be used to his greater honour and glory.

Reverence approaches all the mysteries of life with profound respect, and shows in carrying out the fundamental principle without wavering: Inner spontaneity and external integrity in keeping with one’s state.

Letters, including love letters that are borne by such reverence, could unhesitatingly be published in the newspapers.

People who are united by reverent love behave in such a way that they can always and everywhere be seen by noble-minded people, or unexpectedly photographed.

Childlike openness to God’s guidance is one of the most precious fruits of honest mistrust of ourselves. It best finds expression in openness in the confessional, and in obedience towards enlightened and proven advisors.

2.7.2 Trust as a balance

If mistrust is not to become weakness, excite us sexually and have a destructive effect, it has to espouse itself to unshakable trust in God's protection and power.

Humble people say with St Paul in all the onslaughts of the flesh, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?"²¹⁹ Together with the Apostle to the Gentiles they answer, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me!"²²⁰

2.7.3 Effects of sound trust

Humble people say with St Paul in all the onslaughts of the flesh, "Who will rescue me from this body of death?" Together with the Apostle to the Gentiles they answer, "I can do all things in him who strengthens me!"

If we want to re-conquer purity in keeping with our state, or to preserve it untainted, without trying to remain in constant connection with God through prayer and the reception of the sacraments, we can be compared with a bird that wants to fly with broken wings.

Looking up repeatedly in a childlike way to the pure Mother of our Lord not only shows us what is actually the harsh and inflexible law of purity embodied in a lively, graphic and attractive way, it is also an effect of and means to promote profound humility and strong trust.

If the Blessed Mother asks our Lord for us, "They have no more wine!" the only begotten Son of God will quickly and joyfully transform the water of our misery into the wine of divine aid.

Just as she laid down the condition at the marriage at Cana, "Do whatever he tells you!" so she calls out to all who expect her protection, "Do whatever he tells you!"²²¹

3. Third tower: Mortification

3.1 *Task of mortification*

It is the task of mortification to remove the reins from the hands of that part of us that is driven by our instincts, and place them in the hands of that part of us that is guided by the intellect and by God.

Mortification does not aim at the beauty and health of the body, or at breaking the noble forces of strong instincts, but at placing both at the service of the soul. So mortification must always be prudent and enlightened.

3.2 *Necessity of mortification*

²¹⁹ Ro 7,24.

²²⁰ Cf. 2 Cor. 12, 9-10.

²²¹ Cf. Jn 2,3-5.

Each enlightened act of mortification strengthens the total resistance of the soul, so, at least indirectly, it always exercises a benevolent influence on the stirrings of our unpurified cravings.

Ever since discord entered human nature through original sin, pitting our instincts against our intellect, and our intellect against our graced soul, our instincts have been battling constantly, and with every available means, against our intellect.

They no longer want to serve, but to dominate. Since then also the body has no longer been a calm and obedient subject, but a restless revolutionary. Since the Fall there has been no purity without constant and prudent mortification.

3.3 *Guidance towards mortification*

The form of mortification is usually determined by our vocation, circumstances and inspirations. In this difficult field the liturgy also offers expert guidance.

3.4 *The body as “Brother Donkey”*

Francis of Assisi liked to call his body “Brother Donkey”.

The donkey is stubborn, shrewd and stupid. Our body has the same qualities: It is stubborn; it stubbornly wants to go its own way without considering its sister, the soul. It is shrewd; it knows how to hide its dishonest plans very well, and to protect its exaggerated demands brilliantly by “incontravertible” pretexts. Nevertheless it remains stupid, because its wishes and demands often destroy not only its Sister Soul, but also itself.

4. **Fourth tower: Work**

4.1 *Concept of work*

Work is sharing in the creative and self-giving activity of God.

Since human beings are a natural and supernatural image and likeness of God, they may share in the power and love of Almighty God through their activity and power.

4.2 *Blessing of work*

If we cannot mean something to others, we feel worthless, and seem to ourselves to be inferior. We quickly and without restraint fall prey to our lowest drives and instincts.

The more we may serve and give ourselves to others creatively and in a noble way, the more a sound sense of our value will grow. This is the most effective way to assert ourselves against all that is base.

4.3 *Unemployment as God's scourge*

When unemployment allows the lower instincts and drives to break through like a hurricane, it becomes God's scourge for the people, similar to famine and epidemics.

4.4 *Endangering work*

If work is only "employment", people will not become creators, but only "makers or doers", and will have to reckon with it that instincts and drives will surge and erupt.

4.5 *Overcoming this danger*

Unsatisfying, mechanical and uncreative work can be liberated from its danger to morals and purity if it is placed within a higher framework.

Whoever offers up the sacrifice of culpable or innocent unemployment, or mechanical work, because of a deeply religious attitude, may, as a member of Christ, become creative on a higher plane, and through self-giving help to build up God's kingdom on earth. As a result they will experience a valuable calming and relaxation of their instincts and drives.

4.6 *A Christian attitude to work*

Those who bear the "cross of their work" because they can serve the community as a whole, will immediately become creative, inwardly free and strong. Christian work is first of all geared to service, and only in second place to income.

5. **Fifth tower: Joy**

5.1 *The relationship between purity and joy*

Without noble-minded joy, purity cannot flourish.

The Blessed Mother is not only the *Mater puritatis* but also the *Mater sanctae laetitiae*.²²²

5.2 *Reason for this relationship*

If people are not allowed any noble and permissible joy, they will look first for dangerous, then sinful compensatory satisfactions.

If there is no joy, joylessness and sadness reign. If sadness determines our rhythm of life constantly, the devil will unfold his influence. People are right in saying that "the devil fishes in

²²² Mother Most Chaste; Mother of Holy Joy – both invocations of the Litany of Loreto.

muddy waters”.

5.3 *Education for joy*

If there is no climate of joy, the climate of the swamp will dominate.

Education for joy is one of the most important concerns of education for purity. Unless people discover the source of joy in Christianity, in its teachings, its institutions and sacraments, unless they are allowed to drink at its bubbling wellsprings, they will neither educate deeply religious, nor morally valuable and pure people.