



44. The Spirituality of an Instrument Characteristics and Fruitfulness

Although the study on “The Spirituality of an Instrument” originated in principle in our covenant of love, it is also a special fruit of Fr Kentenich’s decision of 20 January 1942 and his experiences in the concentration camp at Dachau. It was composed there in April 1944 after he had already been imprisoned for two years.

We will only read the study fruitfully – and hence also the text given here, which gives the key statements on the character of an instrument – if we are aware of the background of life in the camp. In the constant threat of death and the experience of human powerlessness, the prisoners had very few possibilities of psychological survival, that is, of not breaking down completely, unless they had let go of their attachment to earthly realities and placed themselves completely in God’s hand, entrusting themselves to his guidance. If they could do so, they grew beyond themselves to human greatness and inner security. God himself became visible and fruitful in them. His life and grace could break through.

The first fruit of the development of the spirituality of an instrument immediately became visible in the concentration camp. One month after the study had been composed, that is, in May 1944, two groups of leaders formed among the priests who had in the meanwhile attached themselves to Schoenstatt. Both spontaneously chose instrumentality as their ideal, using the symbols of “the hand” and “the heart”.

Abbé Haumesser, a priest from Alsace, who had been trying to contact Fr Kentenich, once paused on the camp street and said, “Will we ever get out of here, Father?” Fr Kentenich replied spontaneously, “That is not the question. The question is whether we become holy.” Fr Kentenich’s fundamental attitude is reflected here, and has been developed reflexively in the study on the spirituality of an instrument.

The text is taken from the Dachau Study of 1944: Marianische Werkzeugsfrömmigkeit – the Spirituality of a Marian Instrument – Vallendar-Schoenstatt 1974, p. 3-8, 28- 31, and 34-39.

First a few thoughts on instrumentality, or the character of our spirituality of instrumentality, as a way of life. Seen in this light the spirituality of an instrument has six qualities. They include:

1. holistic detachment;
2. holistic bonding, or perfect dependence and self-surrender;
3. a high degree of readiness to be used, or an untiring urge to conquer;
4. a distinctive *parousia* or *apparitio* character;²³⁰
5. liberating security;
6. rich fruitfulness.

In order to understand these qualities correctly, let us recall that by its very nature an instrument presupposes that there is someone who will use it, that it is effective by virtue of this *causa principalis efficiens*,²³¹ and that it concentrates all its forces and abilities on the goal determined by the *causa principalis*, which the *causa instrumentalis*²³² – if it is endowed with a mind and free will – has wholly made its own. So we are justified in talking about an *instrumentum conjunctum*, that is, *conjunctum totaliter in quantum fieri potest cum causa principali*;²³³ that is to say, an instrument that is perfectly united as an instrument with the *causa principalis*.

[1. Holistic detachment]

From this it is easy to understand why a freely acting instrument – in this instance a human being as *animal rationale*²³⁴ – by virtue of its character as an instrument, must strive seriously for holistic detachment from self, especially any morbid wilfulness. If wilfulness is at work, the instrument ceases to be dependent on the *causa principalis*, in order to be willing to be directed and guided by the *causa principalis* for all the tasks and goals foreseen for it and for which it wants to use the instrument.

Ultimately the *causa principalis* is and remains God for us. In order to be perfectly at his disposal at all times, we strive with all the means at our disposal for holy indifference towards all that is created. However, we can only achieve this state through loving *agere contra*,²³⁵ or through a positive general predisposition towards what is difficult and most difficult, as it finds expression in the Inscriptio. In everyday life it finds expression not merely in patient, but also in joyful acceptance of and bearing the cross and suffering, or through love for being despised, or practical love of the cross.

So it is only since we have taken the Inscriptio very seriously that we have become sufficiently empty of self to be filled by God and used by him for his purposes. Everything that keeps us from living and practicing the Inscriptio detaches and separates us to the same degree from God, preventing his strength and grace from rushing into his instrument, and its full and unconditional acceptance of his goals.

²³⁰ “*Parousia*” is the technical term for the return of Christ at the end of time; “*apparitio*” is the Latin word for apparition, becoming visible. What is meant is that supernature shines through and becomes visible in the human instrument.

²³¹ (God as) the main efficient cause.

²³² (Human beings) as the instrumental cause.

²³³ (Human beings) who are completely and utterly instruments – to the fullest extent possible – united (with God), the primary cause.

²³⁴ A living being endowed with mind and soul.

²³⁵ Acting contrary to our spontaneous inclinations.

Since our self-will, the greatest obstacle preventing us expressing our character as an instrument, can only be broken by loving and perfect obedience, the importance and place of obedience in the framework of the spirituality of an instrument follows automatically. So we can understand why we set such great store by family-like obedience, and why, once we have become a child of the Family through accepting the obligation of perseverance, we have implemented and cultivated obedience as the only juridical obligation in the Family.

[2. Holistic bonding]

We free ourselves from all morbid wilfulness in the enslavement of the heart to self, in order to surrender ourselves completely to God and his wishes, which are made known to us through the wish and will of the Church and our superiors, and through the guidance of our holy Constitutions and customs. So we do not cling to an individual task as such, no matter whether this is adoration, education and teaching inside or outside the Family, parish work or cultivating family life, making vestments, writing or artistic employment, working in the diaspora or the missions. The inner law of our life is and remains the law of love that becomes effective at any moment, and proves how genuine it is through the perfect spirit of obedience and perfect acts of obedience.

The free instrument, just because it is an instrument, depends on the strength and grace of the living God, who wants to use the instrument for his purposes. So the instrument strives incessantly for permanent and profound espousal between its own weakness, and the strength and grace given by God. Once this espousal has reached a corresponding degree, the instrument will be able to say with St Paul, "I can do everything in him who strengthens me".²³⁶

This explains the tendency of the free instrument to pray and receive the sacraments. It is here that we find the reason for the unshakable certainty of the perfect instrument that it will be victorious. Augustine is right when he declares, "Whoever loves the face of the Almighty, will not fear to face the mighty ones of this world." There is profound worldly wisdom behind the saying, "Prayer has a long arm", or, "The person who is united with God is the strongest great power, the biggest party." We can also understand those words of our Lord from the perspective of instrumentality, "He who sent me does not leave me alone. He is always with me, because I always do what pleases him".²³⁷

The instrument who is sent by God and used by God combines trust and initiative, humility and generosity, in a wonderful way. Since the instrument is constantly and strongly united with God, it is a master and hero of trust, of daring and generosity. Since God has created it to be free and endowed it with its own abilities, it never tires of placing them at God's disposal. And since with every success it is aware that God is the *causa principalis*, and it is only the *causa instrumentalis*,²³⁸ it remains quietly satisfied and profoundly humble even with the greatest successes. It knows what it has to attribute to itself, and what to God. Faults and sins don't make it disheartened. They are all only "weeds out of its own garden". They urge the instrument once again to flee more deeply into God's arms, in order to espouse its own weakness with God's power and grace, and hence to imbue the idea of instrumentality with heart and soul.

²³⁶ Phil 4,13; cf. also 2 Cor 12,9; 13,4; Col 1,29; Is 40, 28-31.

²³⁷ Jn 8,29.

²³⁸ First cause and instrumental cause.

[3. A high degree of readiness to be used]

We have mentioned the third quality of the spirituality of an instrument: a high degree of readiness to be used, and an untiring urge to conquer. We have often spoken about this already. We will have to go into it in more detail here.

Theology teaches us that God wills that everyone should be saved, and our Lord died to make it possible. However, he who has created and redeemed us without our co-operation, will not sanctify us without our co-operation. It is in this sense that we use the common saying: Nothing without us! Christianity is a religion of redemption. Christ is the world's redeemer, but for our subjective redemption he requires the co-operation of each individual person. He needs instruments whom he can send out, as he was sent out by the Father, "As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you".²³⁹

So the instrument in God's hand has to be endowed, according to our Lord's example, with his readiness to be used for the kingdom of God in us and around us, that is, for profoundly loving union with God, both in the instrument itself, as well as in the people around, to the greater honour and glory of the Triune God. Precisely through this soul-conquering attitude, through this untiring struggle to glorify God, the spirituality of an instrument, as we have already shown, is given a distinctively theocentric character. According to God's original idea of our Family it is insufficient to bring the individual soul gradually into loving union with God; this love must at the same time awaken and drive this soul to become apostolically active and to recruit new apostles.

[4. Distinctive *parousia* and *apparitio* character]

Whoever lives and strives to be a perfect instrument in God's hand, that is, whoever tries seriously to become completely detached from self and to be wholly bound to God's will, God himself and his power, as well as to have a high degree of readiness to be used for his goals, will sooner or later automatically reveal the fourth quality of the spirituality of an instrument: its distinctive *parousia* or *apparitio* character. If a person lives, as far as this is possible to a graced creature, as a perfect instrument in God's world, and is united with God, God will (understood correctly) increasingly be formed in him. That person will be an apparition of God in this world, or, using terminology current with us, an "apparition of Mary". Our Lord was able to say of himself – of course, in the fullest sense – "Whoever sees me sees the Father".²⁴⁰ The perfect and completely human instrument can say the same, although in a very limited and figurative sense, "Whoever sees me should be able to recognize God, Christ, the Blessed Mother, in me".

Think of the Curé of Ars and the words of his former opponent, after they had met and got to know each other. It expresses what is meant here, "Be quiet! I have seen God in a human being."²⁴¹

May God grant that people can say the same of us with regard to the Blessed Mother. We have wanted from the beginning to be living apparitions of Mary, images of Mary. To the extent that this has become a reality in us, we may call ourselves living images of God and Christ.

²³⁹ Jn 20,21.

²⁴⁰ Jn 12,45; cf. also Jn 14,7-9.

²⁴¹ Cf. Text 42.

[5. Inner freedom and manifold security]

Ever since we made the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio consecrations, we have lived in a world of inner freedom and manifold security, which is essentially connected with the spirituality of a perfect instrument. Whatever could disturb our inner freedom has been removed, even to the finest regions of our subconscious, by the Inscriptio. It has freed us from ourselves so that we could become completely free for God and his work, at least according to our fundamental attitude and our serious striving and volition. The fact that our self-seeking heart is repeatedly caught and enslaved in itself, that God's light repeatedly opens new and uncanny layers of our soul, show it that the finer contortions of our heart and its entanglement with self are no proof that the Inscriptio isn't genuine. It only gives us the opportunity to decide once more with open eyes and serious intention in the spirit of the Inscriptio for the full character of an instrument in our entire personality. Each new decision means a corresponding growth in inner freedom. The external fetters of slavery may hurt painfully, but they are child's play compared with inner slavery. True, inner freedom is not merely possible when one is outwardly in bondage; with great souls who try to acquire the perfect character of an instrument, such situations often help them to grow in inner freedom and joyfulness to an unexpected degree.

Something similar can be said about enjoying perfect security in God. The perfect instrument is so completely bonded with God in the spirit of the Inscriptio that the disruption and loss of all secondary securities in life will all the more deepen and secure the "security of a pendulum", our security in our "original nest". A large number from our ranks could be quoted as classic examples of this fact. Even if nature temporarily trembles and shudders when once again a clod of earth is removed from beneath our feet, or an earthly, worldly security is cut off, in the spirit of the Inscriptio the perfect instrument quickly decides once more for God, and consciously flees into its original home, the heart of God. There it is sheltered and secure as nowhere else on earth. No one means it so well with us as God, and no one is as able and willing as he is to turn all that is unpleasant and wicked to our best. These are thoughts in which we are thoroughly at home, because we have experienced them day after day. It is sufficient here simply to indicate how it is connected with the idea of instrumentality.

[6. Rich fruitfulness]

The same applies to the rich fruitfulness of the spirituality of an instrument. The instrument in God's hand wants only one thing: To give God freedom and scope for his fruitfulness. That is why the instrument strives seriously to be completely free from self, because the only thing that can block God and his action is our individualism. We have personally experienced this on countless occasions. Ever since we, as individuals and as a Family, have made the Inscriptio – we in whom the awareness of being an instrument is a deeply rooted, varied and vital feeling for life – the greatest obstacle to God's fruitfulness amongst us has, at least as a fundamental attitude, been removed. That is why we expect with the certainty of faith that he will now use us in rich measure and without hindrance for his purposes. As instruments we only want what he wants, so we also only want the fruitfulness he has intended for us. So we look with great joy and confidence into a humanly insecure, dark and chaotic future. We are weighed down with only one worry – each day to tackle the task imposed on us as God's instruments by the Inscriptio, and to carry it out perfectly in the strength of the Holy Spirit. Everything else is and remains secondary to us. The darker the times become, and the more we are drawn into its chaos, the more trustingly we exercise our right to make the unlimited claims of love inherent in the Inscriptio.

[Conclusion]

From what has been said above it follows that all the great things that have developed in the Family and in the individual soul are connected with the ideal of instrumentality, it flows out of it and flows into it. So it isn't difficult to sing a jubilant hymn of praise to the spirituality of an instrument as a way of life.