



## 40. Everyday Sanctity

*Discovering God's will is actually only a necessary precondition. What is decisive is to do God's will. Such action points out the way to sanctity. However, this action not only includes a direct reference to God in prayer and keeping the commandments, it also reaches into the least detail of everyday events as a whole. To do everything under the watchful eye of God and to relate everything to him, is, in the wider meaning of the word, serving God and sanctifying everyday life. Whoever does this is living everyday sanctity.*

*Fr Kentenich conducted the annual retreat for 1932 taking everyday sanctity as his subject. A handbook published 1937 with the same title originated from this retreat course, as it was held for the Sisters of Mary. It was written by Sr M. Annette Nailis PhD, who received this commission from Fr Kentenich as a "penance". Even though the final text gives expression to the literary style of Sr Annette, "Everyday Sanctity" is in essentials the work of Fr Kentenich. He determined the structure of the book and accompanied its composition. He wrote the third section himself, because he had not dealt with it in any detail when he ran out of time during the retreat. The original manuscript shows how carefully Fr Kentenich corrected the text, so we can be sure that the content reflects the mens fundatoris – the mind of the founder.*

*Following its publication, he repeatedly referred to "Everyday Sanctity" and in this way demonstrated in practice that it is a handbook of our spirituality. The significance of this handbook for present-day spirituality is shown by the fact that Cardinal Eugenio Pacelli, later Pope Pius XII, wrote a brief appreciation that was included in the book.*

*So "Everyday Sanctity" is one of the fundamental publications of Schoenstatt's spirituality, for which this Reader is no substitute. You have to study it yourself. However, in order to give you a "taste", the introduction to "Everyday Sanctity" is given here. It is not difficult to discover in it the triple emphasis on which the sanctification of everyday life depends:*

*1. Everyday sanctity is practical action. It is the creative interplay of faith in Divine Providence and a lived covenant of love.*

2. *Everyday sanctity becomes a reality in the development of a threefold bonding with God, other human beings, and the rest of created reality.*
3. *This bonding has to take hold of the whole person and lead to harmonious interaction between mind, will and heart.*

### **[1. What is everyday sanctity? Definition]**

Everyday sanctity is not the sanctity of Sunday, the one day in the week when the bells ring and people wear their best clothes; no, it is the holiness of the other six days as well. Outwardly a festive mood is missing; our usual work has to be done. Everyday saints give everyday life a holy character; they live a holy life throughout the week and in this way set the stamp of holiness on all they do. Their joys and sorrows, their work and rest, their prayers, conversation and undertakings are all carried out extraordinarily well out of love, that is, in a saintly way.

They see, love and live nature and supernature as a whole, as a great, living organism. Nature is the foundation and substructure for supernature, so everyday saints allow themselves to be led upwards by all created things, which become a bridge and signpost to God. So if they somehow catch a glimpse of God's will, they immediately try to carry it out; and as soon as they experience something in life, they lift their eyes and ask God what he wants to say through that experience. Knowledge, love and life are always connected. Everyday saints are true connoisseurs of the art of living and masters of living, and hence rare gifts from God to the people of today. What Meister Eckhart said about his times: "One person who masters life is better than a thousand teachers of reading", probably applies even more to today than in the past. Everyday saints know this.

That is why they make use of the lesson a "jester" in the Middle Ages once gave to learned professors. These had spent a long time in fruitless discussion when a jester took heart and approached them with the request: Would they allow him to ask them a question? This was granted. So he asked, "Is it better to know that one doesn't know, or first to do what one knows?" The scholars immediately began to dispute again. In the end they agreed on an answer and replied, "It is better first to do what one knows, then it will be easier afterwards to learn what one does not know." The jester bowed low and said, "Gentlemen, now you know what you have to do!" And he disappeared.

Everyday saints try honestly to follow this advice. They know and love the statement in the Sacred Scriptures, "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light",<sup>197</sup> as well as the other saying, "Not those who say to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven,"<sup>198</sup> or, "I always do what pleases him".<sup>199</sup> That is why they ensure that their knowledge and abilities become fruitful in life, and that their mind is not developed one-sidedly at the cost of their heart, will and actions. A sound organism has to develop every part. In the same way the gardener is dissatisfied if a fruit tree develops a strong trunk and puts out branches and twigs, perhaps even blossoms, but does not bear fruit.

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<sup>197</sup> Jn 3,21.

<sup>198</sup> Mt 7,21.

<sup>199</sup> Jn 8,29.

So we can understand it when scholars describe everyday sanctity as the God-pleasing harmony between wholehearted attachment to God, work and people in every circumstance of our lives.

## **[2. Everyday sanctity against the background of our times]**

Every reasonable person will see clearly that such holiness has a right to exist in our present times. Indeed, the spiritual currents inside and outside the Church today demand it; they are calling out for someone to save them from the present time of crisis.

### *[2.1 A perspective from within the Church]*

In which direction is Catholic life tending at present?

Catholics today demand that Christianity is **lived**. The living witness of Christians is more important to them than the most precious “Bible”. That is why there is a growing understanding for well-written lives of the saints. They look for God not just in heaven or in the tabernacle, but mainly and above all in people.

We are told that some academics in Paris who heard about the life and work of the Curé of Ars, and saw so many people going on pilgrimage to him, mockingly agreed to send one of their number to take a look for himself, and then report back to them so that they could make fun of this phenomenon. So one of them travelled to Ars, but on his return he was very quiet and thoughtful. He rejected all the mockery and ridicule with the words, “Be quiet! I have seen God in a human being!”

That is the longing of people today. They want to see the divine embodied in the human; they want to see **living** holiness. Everyday sanctity offers a clear answer to this longing.

However, it also restores the correct relationship between God’s activity and our own activity. Experience has shown that this has been thoroughly shaken by the very profound cultural crisis of our times.

Tanquerey called holiness “a share in the divine life given us by the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, because of the merits of Jesus Christ; a life which we must protect against all destructive tendencies.”<sup>200</sup> God sanctifies us, but not without our co-operation. We may not overlook that it is God who does the main work.

God gives us his divine life through Christ. He merited the grace of redemption for us. Through it we come into intimate union with him, like the vine and its branches. He also exemplifies a life of true holiness in an attractive and captivating way. So God plays the leading role; we may not overlook this fact.

Although our activity only plays a secondary role, it still has a role to play. Without it there is no true holiness. For our part we have to protect and increase the divine life within us, and bring it to fruition.

Protection is necessary, because this divine life is threatened by many and powerful enemies. The enemies around us are the devil and worldliness; the enemies within us are the obsession to have

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<sup>200</sup> Adolphe Tanquerey, SS, DD, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, § 88, p. 44, Tan Books 2000.

possessions, power and pleasure. We can protect ourselves from all these enemies by making use of enlightened and effective mortification.

However, we also have to increase the divine life within us through good works and receiving the sacraments.

We render it fruitful if, by our apostolic deeds, we help others to be gripped and filled with the divine life. God is waiting for our co-operation. Indeed, it even makes him happy, just as a mother who is carrying a heavy basket is happy when her little child tries in his lovable weakness to help her to carry it.

True everyday sanctity knows how to distribute the main and supporting roles correctly. Depending upon need and circumstance everyday saints sometimes place greater emphasis on God's activity, and at other times on their own activity.

Everyday sanctity preserves the promising and popular liturgical spirituality from dilettantism. Basing itself upon the Liturgy, liturgical spirituality leads us through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father. Its main task is to create a fundamentally Christian attitude. Guardini expressed it in these words: "By it man is to be induced to determine correctly his essential relation to God, and to put himself right in regard to reverence for God, love and faith, atonement and the desire for sacrifice. As a result of this spiritual disposition, it follows that when action is required of him he will do what is right."<sup>201</sup>

Everyday sanctity sees to it that the mysterious connection with Christ finds expression in practice in both our attitude and life. For everyday saints their connection with Christ is a constant incentive to become like him in everyday life. Their incorporation into him not only means that they share in his transfigured state, but also in his suffering and death as our Redeemer. Each day at Holy Mass they unite themselves with Christ on the cross, and day by day strive with tenacious attention to detail to arrive at the ideal of becoming thoroughly divinised, moral and spiritualised people who put heart and soul into everything they do,

So Catholics today are receptive to everyday sanctity.

## *[2.2 The perspective outside the Church: Naturalism and collectivism]*

Yet what is the condition of the people who have been driven into the arms of naturalism or collectivism by the cultural crisis today?

Each of the cultural crises today can be traced back to this common denominator.

Naturalism is a philosophical school of thought which traces all that is and happens only to nature and natural principles while denying the supernatural reality. It replaces grace with nature. According to it, human beings are able to redeem themselves. This rejection of the divine always leads to the rejection of the human, because grace protects and heals nature. If there is no trace of the divine, the supernatural, in human beings, they are soon reduced to soulless machines. However, people cannot survive for long without God. That is why present-day philosophers say so trenchantly that the people today, who have liberated themselves from God, resemble wolves

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<sup>201</sup> Romano Guardini, *The Spirit of the Liturgy* (Milestones in Catholic Theology), Herder 1998, p. 86.

in the wild which howl out their hunger for God into the world, and which at the hour of midnight skulk around the grave of their murdered God.<sup>202</sup>

It is not unusual to discover naturalistic tendencies even in many lukewarm Christians. Although they do not deny the Triune God who has been revealed to us, or his supernatural activity in human beings, they no longer allow him to influence their lives fully. Their everyday lives are no longer sacred. They are cold and objective, because they have lost their living contact with God.

Everyday sanctity places God at the heart and centre of everyday life, and adores him wherever he is to be found, also in our brothers and sisters and the whole of creation.

Collectivism is an anthropological<sup>203</sup> heresy, that is, a false teaching directed against human beings. Like naturalism it not only separates human beings from supernature, from their bonding to the Triune God, it also destroys nature as such by relentlessly cutting all the bonds based on natural law to the family and one's native soil. In this way it creates the radicalised masses, which have been absolutely disconnected from all God-willed ties, people who are deprived of the divine, morality and their personalities.

Everyday saints can and will overcome collectivism inwardly by confronting this comprehensive disconnectedness, which is so contrary to nature, with people who are bonded to God, to their work and other people. These are not part of the masses because they are anchored in God; they are people who are thoroughly themselves (*verpersönlicht*), supernatural and integrated into society or the community.

So whoever has ears to hear and eyes to see cannot close themselves off to the conviction that our present times, and the crisis of everyday life, necessarily promotes everyday sanctity as the great and redemptive power that can liberate them from the chaos of our times.

### **[3. Everyday sanctity as a comprehensive and holistic phenomenon]**

Everyday sanctity has always to be seen and lived in practice as an organic whole. In order to describe it, however, it is necessary at times to separate what belongs together, so that the individual components can be seen all the more clearly and lived in a better way.

So we shall look at it from three points of view: bonding to God, to work and to people.

#### **ON OUR BONDING TO GOD**

Our present era is so busy and restless. Wherever we look we see ferment and battle, confusion and stress. It urges us even more than before to seek peace in God and to bond all the fibres of our hearts to him. However, this does not mean that we have to withdraw to an island in order to leave the world to itself, or the enemies of our holy religion. No, our times need people who are inwardly at peace, who have been tried and tested inwardly and outwardly, and lifted above all uncertainty and doubt. Through holy two-in-oneness with God they are given the strength to impress the features of Christ on the world despite fierce opposition. These are the great connois-

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<sup>202</sup> A reference to the works of Friedrich Nietzsche.

<sup>203</sup> When Fr Kentenich uses the concept "anthropological" he is not referring to the academic discipline of ethnic anthropology. He uses the word in line with its Latin root to mean everything that has to do with human beings. So an anthropological heresy is a false teaching about human nature.

seurs of the art of living whom we probably need more than ever today, and whom we call everyday saints. The more difficult the times and the task for the times, the more earnestly they strive to place their lives and all they do on a strong and durable foundation: profound bonding to God.

### **The qualities of our bonding to God**

Instead of bonding to God, people normally talk about love for God. It is easy to deduce the qualities it must have from the definition of everyday sanctity, which we have already come to know as the God-pleasing harmony between wholehearted bonding to God, work and people in every circumstance of our lives.

#### **[First quality: To a high degree]**

Accordingly our bonding to God must, first of all, be distinctively God-pleasing, or to a high degree. It is not enough to obey what is commanded under pain of sin. What pleases God most is what people do because they want to do it, not because they have to do it, that is to say, things that are in keeping with God's wishes and counsels. We all know the passage in the Scriptures in which the rich young man approaches our Lord and asks what he has to do to have eternal life. Our Lord quotes the commandments. However, the young man has known and obeyed them from his early youth. He wanted something more. We are told that Jesus looked at him lovingly and said, "One thing you lack. Go, sell everything you have and give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."<sup>204</sup> To start with, he revealed the commandments to the young man, then his wishes.

In the same way God often approaches us with his requests and wishes. It is as though he is saying: I would very much like you to do this or that. I don't demand it through the commandments, but if you do it, you will make me very happy, and I will reward you with a whole chain of graces. Didn't our Lord personally do all that would please God? The programme of his life was to do the Father's will. He could say of himself, "I always do what pleases him".<sup>205</sup>

So, to start with, what pleases God includes obedience to the Commandments, but it reaches beyond them to what is heroic. It is the outflow of the motivation of strong and fervent love. Love knows no limits. Thus in the spirit of everyday sanctity our bonding to God is God-pleasing if it reaches such a high degree that it motivates us to obey God's will as expressed in his counsels and wishes. The saints are a radiant example to us of this.

#### **[Second quality: harmonious]**

Besides this, our bonding to God has to be harmonious. Perhaps an example could explain this idea somewhat. If a triad is played on the piano, its harmony is pleasing to our ear. However, if just any three notes that don't harmonise are played at the same time, we experience this as disharmony and something disturbing. Or, let us look at a trio. Three different instruments play at the same time. Presupposing that all play correctly, complete harmony is only created when the force of each note is in harmony with the others. If one instrument is played too loudly in comparison with the others, there is no real harmony.

In the same way, harmony has to exist between our bonding to God, work and people. If it is present, our attachment to God will not only not be an obstacle to our attachment to our work

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<sup>204</sup> Mk 10, 21f.

<sup>205</sup> Jn 8,29.

and people, it will even promote it and motivate it constantly.

[...]

### **[Third quality: Embracing our will and heart]**

Our attachment to God must, in addition, be wholehearted, it may not remain an idea, it has to involve our will and heart even to the extent of our loving God fervently and being gripped by God.

[...]

If holiness meant merely clinging to God as an idea, the wisest and most learned people would be saints. However, this is by no means always the case. A saint is a person who clings to God with mind, will and heart, so that his or her whole nature is drawn into God. In this case nature is completely permeated by supernature, partly even to the subconscious. Since everything that comes into contact with God is divinised, all forms of obsession and force, which usually originate in our unconscious instincts and drives, have increasingly to cease.

On the way to this goal, we have to protect ourselves from two dangers. We may not want to force ourselves to feel warm emotions. We also have to be careful not to deceive ourselves by taking over the emotions of someone else in a mechanical fashion, because this easily leads us to a false assessment of ourselves. Such feelings have not grown, they are “stuck on”, and will fall away again at the first gust of wind.

Sound and strong self-surrender to God only comes into existence and grows to the degree that the soul tries to grasp God ever better and more deeply through prayer, and to detach itself from all that is inordinate. So it does not allow itself unenlightened, romanticised or sentimental love. Calm and profound meditation offers the soul light and nourishment, while serious, God-willed detachment proves that love is genuine.

### **[Fourth quality: Persevering]**

Our bonding to God must have a fourth quality. It has to be found “in every circumstance of our lives”, that is, it must be constant. That person is holy who is united with God as far as possible at all times, even while doing the most ordinary things. Such a person is “*Vinctus Christi*”, chained to Christ, and never gets away from him.