

Talk for Schoenstatt Priests, House Marienau, Schoenstatt (II)
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PLE 9, 151-183

{157} There is simply a revolution, a spiritual revolution going on in the whole world. And I think that [the Council] is an incredibly daring act on the part of John XXIII. I could not imagine a more daring act. After the Church had been so determined for centuries – I don't want to say in a narrow-minded way, for it was certainly justified – to maintain closed ranks not only outwardly, but also inwardly, [he] suddenly opened all the doors! What we said yesterday: If we do not hold fast to the entire mentality of John XXIII – [that our] situation is like at the founding of the Church – [it will not work]. A totally different world is coming, totally different from what Christianity and Catholicism are used to. Before, this Catholic world had closed ranks, was an enclave in the world. And now everything is opened.

You know, unless we try again, as the early Church did, to salvage, to carry through [to the new shore] the full maturity of Catholic life – if you can follow what I am trying to say – through to an era of maturity for the whole Church – mature, maturing, matured – unless we do that, attain the heroism of Catholic life, {158} especially of the three divine virtues, then we must reckon, at least humanly speaking, that the Church will decline more and more.

(....)

How should we stand to our ideology and our terminology⁵⁵?

When it comes to our ideology, as far as I have heard, our ideas have been verified as essentially the same as what the Council wanted. Of course that would need to be examined in detail.

Regarding terminology, I have always said (....) that we must

⁵⁵ A burning question at that time in both Schoenstatt and the Church was the usefulness of classical terminology in the modern situation and how much it would need to be "updated." Examples: (in the Church) grace, original sin, justification; (in Schoenstatt) capital of grace, interwovenness of fates (as in the 20th of January, 1942), mechanistic thinking (as in the 31st of May, 1949).

always distinguish between internal terminology [and describing who we are to the outside]. After all, we cannot forget that if God's idea of us is so universal and we have been woven by him – how shall I put this? – into all his thoughts for all time as long as the Church exists, then what does this mean? Then we must have certain ways of saying things in our internal language which, like in the universal Church, do not change, but the full meaning of which must be explained in new ways again and again. The Church has expressed this perfectly when she says there are *termini dogmatici* [dogmatic terms] and *facta dogmatica* [dogmatic facts]. It is analogous [to what we have], at least in my opinion.

To be sure, we want to and should discuss all these questions. You do not believe how thankful I am that you are now opening up this whole complex of questions {159} to scientific scrutiny. It would not be of much use to us [to intellectually believe things and not have it touch our everyday lives.] After all, we have – I hear that you have spoken about how many masks we wear. You see, it is also a kind of mask to participate in all kinds of things intellectually, to repeat all kinds of things with our mouth, but leave the substance of our soul untouched. The masks from this masquerade must fall, also in the area of our knowledge⁵⁶. This is very important. It presupposes that we again become a community of deep unity which wishes to dig into the depths in every area of life.

(....) This does not mean that we are a finished product. After all, the Church is not finished either. If we are a pilgrim Church, then part of the essence of the pilgrim Church is that she is always inwardly open, outwardly open, always growing, dynamic again and again. But, historically speaking, that is part of the whole structure of our family, as we said yesterday – and we can repeat that again and again – we must remain "traditionalists," because traditionalists in our sense of the word are always open for what is new. Is that not how we started in the first place? You see, the distinction that was

⁵⁶ In other words, our knowledge must be in correspondence with our being and action; we must practice what we believe and what we preach.

always made at the Council – on the one hand progressives and on the other conservatives – should not really exist in our ranks. For if we are traditionalistic we will be both at the same time: on the one hand progressive – open for everything – on the other hand holding firm to the foundations God has given us.

(....)

{160} Today we are all in danger – you notice that this is not a systematic talk – of acquiring the feeling of the world, or rather, let me put it this way: the *worldly* feeling of the world. I am deliberately using the word *feeling*. On the one hand [this worldly feeling of the world.] And what must we offer as the alternative? We must counter the worldly feeling of the world with the *Christian feeling of the world!*

And what is it like? I think I can say that the feeling of the world and the feeling of life which we have, which has developed in the last years of our existence, is decidedly Christian and Catholic. Behind it is a Catholic feeling of life which we have not really grasped yet in all its depth.

I can even add: all the terrible confrontations and sufferings which we have been through since about 1940, first being nailed to the cross by the Nazis and then by the Church, so that, humanly speaking, it seemed absolutely impossible that we would ever be taken down from the cross again. But we have been taken down! What was the point of those years? We were supposed to live-in-advance for the Church the whole Catholic feeling of life as God has foreseen it for the newest shore of the times! Unless you see it that way, what we have become and what we have been through [will not add up]. (....)

You see, if you accept this premise even a little, then you will understand the past. It was always guided, ordered, animated by the living God[’s plan] for the future. We were supposed to live-in-advance, anticipate the ideal for the newest times on the newest shore of the times. The ideal – the personal ideal, community [ideal], if you wish, the ideal of the Church.

{161} Do you understand the great task that this implies? We ought to dig a lot more into the past, take the time to let the deepest

context of things show and be told to us, so that it be the firm ground on which we stand and from which we fulfill our mission!

Hence, I repeat: there are expressions which I think we ought not change in the future, analogous to the Church over the centuries. After all, we have been thought [by God] in analogy [to the Church]. Until the end of time we are called to play an essential role in the interior and exterior formation of the Church. And for such an institute which has been thought, as it were, [by God] for all eternity, it is an essential condition that we hold fast to the same essential expressions. Unless, of course, God tells us differently from another side⁵⁷. (....)

I therefore think that in our own ranks we should continue to use the old expressions if there is not some new insight, but explain them in a modern way until [new members] find their way into our circle and – this process ought to be inspired.

Please do not forget: do you think that the expressions being used today⁵⁸ will last very long? Just wait. You will see what a rapid babbling brook it is!

{162} Yesterday I briefly touched on the way things were in the days of the Marian movement⁵⁹. You know, if you participated in the forms [they had], you will say tomorrow or the day after: will the liturgical movement not follow the same path?

By the way, do you think that the liturgical movement, [at least] as it is presented and carried out today, will be able to do much for pastoral reform? I don’t believe it will. In my opinion the problems lie completely elsewhere. I will come to that later.

Already when you hear the term “liturgy” [you should recall our

⁵⁷ For instance, if the Church would definitively prohibit the use of a term.

⁵⁸ Especially the many new and experimental expressions used in the Church right after Vatican II.

⁵⁹ See *Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 9, p. 148: “I think often of the years 1950 and 1954. It seemed as if all of Catholicism were seeped in Marian devotion. But see how little depth it had. What is left of it today? Remove the masks! The life of the Church such as we have had in the past decades was largely one great, terrible masquerade.”

definition from the 1930s]. I reminded you of it yesterday. Let me briefly recap its main idea. We defined⁶⁰ it as the mysterious action of Christ and the co-action of the Church his Bride. What does this mean? You see, here I touch on what I personally think is the most important and most central problem: the relationship between Church and world or, to put it in more general terms: the relationship between Primary Cause and secondary causes. This is the main problem facing the world today!

To be sure, what the Church has decided at the Council is the foundation for all of these questions. But when it began to deal with the problem itself, the Council, or rather, the Council fathers declared: this problem is too new for us, we cannot yet address it.

You see, until now it has been our strength and mission [in Schoenstatt] to dare to tackle this great problem: the fundamental relationship between Primary and secondary causes – applied to us: between religion and life, modern life! If someone from our own ranks says as someone did at a retreat some days ago, someone totally immersed in the modern doctrines, “All else is a waste of time. In the Church of today liturgy and life are all that matters!” [then we must answer this way.] Taken literally, I don’t think it is correct. But if {163} you see behind it the problem of Primary and secondary causes – which also go with dealing with the Bible and the liturgy – [then it is correct].

Here I can return to my train of thought from yesterday. The second thought was: we have not only anticipated to a large degree the entire spirit and project of the Council, no, we go far, far beyond the Council’s undertaking, and have from the beginning.

In what way? What I now say is, of course, my personal opinion. As in all things it is your good right to examine and verify this for

⁶⁰ Fr. Kentenich’s definition of liturgy going back to his discussions of the liturgical movement in the 1930s. The complete definition is, for instance, found in the treatise he wrote in Dachau in 1944, *Marianische Werkzeugsfrömmigkeit* (Marian Instrument Piety): “The sacred, mysterious action of Christ as Head of his Church and the sacred, mysterious co-action of his Bride, the Church, in order to overcome sin and transfigure the world and to glorify the Father.”

yourselves. I have already given the salient point. In my opinion the central problem of the world, and therefore of the Church, is the definition and elaboration, both theoretically and practically, of the fundamental relationship – as the Church puts it – between Church and world, but the modern world!⁶¹ To my way of thinking it, that translates into the more universal expression – the relationship between Primary and secondary causes.

Please examine it for yourselves! Is this not the problem of the world of today? On the one hand God is simply eradicated. “God is dead; we have murdered him⁶².” But what that leaves us with is only the secondary causes. And if we think it through for ourselves, must we not say that the whole world and even we ourselves are largely in a constant flight from God? As we have said for years already in a play on words: this flight from God must arouse in us an “addiction for God⁶³.” Of course it is only a word play.

What does this say: Primary and secondary causes? You see, modern man has, in a certain sense, already become the new creator of the world in every area of life. Pay close attention: {164} [he is] the new creator! What has he created? He has transformed the world and is in the process of gaining even more total dominance. You will see and feel that tomorrow. But already today the question is often raised: Do we really need a personal God to explain world events? Why, this question already starts to shake the root of faith the very moment it is posed! You see, this is where the problem lies: “Can the world be explained without a personal God?” The “problem of God” has become so acute that many of us begin to doubt, deep inside, when we consider, “What a violent world, what an unjust world we constantly have before us and behind us! And a personal God is

⁶¹ Most notably in the concluding document of Vatican II, the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World *Gaudium et spes*.

⁶² Following the quote of Friedrich Nietzsche: “We have murdered him – you and I! We all are his murderers!” (*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, Nr. 125).

⁶³ *Gottesflucht muß zur Gottessucht werden*. That is, the modern eviction of God from any meaningful role in daily life must be transformed into such a deep experience of need for God that one cannot live without him.

supposed to be behind this?! Even a Father-God?! Not just a Father-God, but a Father-God of infinite merciful love?!” These are the problems! And these are the problems that interest the masses!

(....)

{172} I know that it was in 1926 or 1927 that I took note of the “father principle⁶⁴” – this was a time when authors were only interested in the mother principle. From then on I focused on this problem more and more, observing and giving it my attention – as much as one now hears it, when the topic is practically shouted from every rooftop. If we want to save the family, if we want to save religion, if we want to save to order of the world today, what must we do? We must see to it that people have pre-experiences in the natural order, pre-experiences of someone who is a real father, of someone who is a real mother, and where these pre-experiences [go in deep].

Now I could list off for you all the modern principles in this direction. We grasped it so simply, so quickly! That is why, when the pre-experiences are there [everything falls into place]. Just read what I said on the subject just before I left [for Milwaukee] in the educational conferences of 1951. So clear! So unequivocal!

You see, this is why saving the concept of God has nothing to do with ideology, but everything to do with life, with a healthy vitalism. Yes, we [in Schoenstatt] have a metaphysical approach, but it is a very great error [to think] that we adopted the term “ideal” from philosophical idealism. No, it was precisely because of our metaphysical approach. Of course, we integrate psychology and sociology, too. This is why we translated everything immediately into images and symbols, into the language of the irrational. Even when talking about knowing our personal {173} ideal, we studied human nature not only in its tangible faculties, but also in every other area in which irrational factors slumber in the subconscious life of the soul.

⁶⁴ The fundamental role of the father (fatherliness, human experiences of having a father) in the development of the human person. In a talk of July 26, 1966 (*Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 7, p. 287), Fr. Kentenich mentions that the first impulses go back to articles by R.A. Rösler in the 4 issues of the journal *Theologische-praktische Quartalschrift* from 1920.

This is a first draft⁶⁵. Last night I wanted to show you [the book] *Education in the Spirit of Schoenstatt*. Later you can read on your own what is written there about the ideal and the pedagogy of ideals. It is only a first attempt, of course. It focuses more on the historical development of our entire system, so it does not go into all modern problems.

It is of great importance. If we later want to have a [Schoenstatt] university, if we also wish to have a universal mission in the public forum today, we must naturally also gradually see the need to train professors and have at our disposal exact writers who carry all of this out into the world. It is necessary! After passing all the tests⁶⁶, it seems to me that God’s mission is this: that Schoenstatt set out on a march to victory all over the world! Not only here⁶⁷, but everywhere. Just look at how everything is in ferment. It was always our strength, or at least our audacity, to interpret the events of life – law of the open door! – and deduce the plans of God.

This is the great law by which God governs the world, seen from the psychological perspective and the law of organic transmission and transference.

You would need to do something now which goes beyond the scope of today’s topic, namely to apply this to everything we have been saying about Marian devotion. Just think of how up-to-date it would be to think through the significance of love of neighbor and love of Mary in the context of this law of organic transmission and organic transference. This sheds much new, bright light on the subject. I am personally convinced: The Protestants’ main objections to Marian devotion are not {174} primarily Biblical, but much more psychological in nature. If they claim that the only correct way is to go straight to God⁶⁸, then it is clear from the start that there is no

⁶⁵ At this point Fr. Kentenich showed a copy of the recently published book by Sr. Mirjam Bleyle, *Erziehung aus dem Geiste Schönstatts* (Münster, 1965).

⁶⁶ Of the last years, that is, of Dachau and the exile.

⁶⁷ In Germany.

⁶⁸ German: *Gottunmittelbarkeit*.

room for Mary. But, if I take it seriously, then there is no room for love for my natural mother, either. No room for my natural father. These things totally contradict the natural order.

We want to see all these things in a new light. Don't capitulate just because our fellow priests in the neighboring parishes no longer have anything to say about Our Lady.

You see, this is why I stressed so often the words of Pius X – remember how we quoted him again and again – Mary, Marian devotion gives us a *vitalis Christi cognitio*⁶⁹! After all, this is really what the struggle of my life has been. What do I mean? To overcome the ideology [of] philosophical idealism and to lead it to a healthy vitalism. This is behind everything.

Therefore, I repeat: a *vitalis*! Away from *intellectualis*! Yes, what good are intellectual insights if that has no effect on my life? And so many other things.

Or when [in the same encyclical Pius X says]: the easiest, surest and shortest way [to Christ is] through love of Mary, it will make much more sense if you see [it in the context of] the psychology of the individual laws – the laws of how God governs, orders and perfects the world.

Secondly (you notice that I can only mention the points briefly), the law of how God orders the world. I will only mention the underlying principles. How God orders the world: There are higher orders and lower orders. This is true both in the natural and in the super-natural order. We want to approach things from this vantage point. {175} What I now say applies to all ordered realities in creation, but let me stay with one point.

Examine this for yourselves. Is it really true? Does not the lower order [have a purpose] for the higher order? You notice that the final goal [of this approach] is always to bind God to the world, namely as today's world, today's thinking and today's problems need it. What is the purpose? The lower order is for the higher order:

⁶⁹ A living (not only a theoretical) knowledge of Christ. See Pius X, encyclical *Ad diem illum laetissimum*, February 2, 1904.

first – *expression*, an expression of the higher order;
second – *means*;
third – *safeguard*.

At this point I would have to explain things in great detail.

But apply it to Marian devotion! Love of Mary is, after all, a lower order, while love of God is a higher order. What is love of Mary? An *expression* of love of God. Just ask a simple mother kneeling before an image of Mary and not directly thinking of God. What kind of an answer will she give you? Why is she praying to Mary? Because God wants her to. Why? Because God has said that we should love the Blessed Mother. Now the great law of the lower order: [it is] an expression of the higher order, an expression of devotion to the living God. Think once more about the different kinds of attachment to created things: prophetic, priestly, divine. Everything flows toward God, from God, to God. This is the problem! Inbreak of the divine!

And today? Do you not notice how so many of our liturgists are moving away from God? Ideologically they hold fast to God, but are quick to demand [liturgical reform] but not to act [reform of life]; demanding [things for the liturgy] but forgetting everything else. We do not reach God by staying just the way we are. After all, we are both body *and* soul. Therefore it will not succeed without God becoming in some way corporal. Do you see what {176} I am driving at? Unless we tangibly experience God in the natural order, we will not be able to come to him experientially. Try to [unite] knowledge and experience.

Means. Is not devotion [to one's parents a way to learn how to love God]? If I have not learned to love my mother, my father, how shall I ever manage to love the God that I cannot see?

Love of created persons and things is not just a passing phase. It is not as if I were to say: "Well, I love my parents, but only for a while. When my ability to love has grown up, then I will embrace God and push away the whole world; I will reject everyone else." No! Everything still has a place! It is always a safeguard. Our fundamental relationship to creation will remain valid even in the

beatific vision⁷⁰. This law not only holds true for the pilgrim Church, but for the heavenly Church as well. We must not imagine that we will be in relationship with each other here on earth, but when we get to heaven each one will sit alone in his own caboose, with God sitting in each cabin. No, no, we will also be sitting and dwelling with one another!

These are such great laws! They help us resolve many, many problems, especially pedagogical ones.

Then the third point: not only a support, but a constant *safeguard*. Just try to live without earthly attachments. In the long run we cannot do that. Do we not sense how existing earthly attachments and relationships have a lasting irrational effect, even when we think a relationship has broken down? [Modern studies] are proving that all these old insights are true! Then you will find that everything which modern sociology and psychology have to say about the soul, about the deepest depths of the soul is already part of this system.

{177} Then, thirdly, *the law of how God perfects the world*. What does this mean – the law of perfection? The world is organized into levels [of perfection]. In a certain sense it is the same as the law of how God orders the world, although from a different perspective.

Just consider: where is the pinnacle of creation? Among all things purely human it is the Blessed Mother. Everything which can be said today about how God works in his creation and through creation has its most classical example in Mary. And from there light falls on the core truth about what God desires of *us*. How God treats the Blessed Mother as a certain pinnacle of creation is how he treats *us*.

Now, if these things are *not* clear for me, if instead I reject all these things, then it is clear that I will want to know right down to the minutiae what Scripture says about this or that topic. But I guarantee you: Whoever's natural thinking is like this, is as I have just sketched it out for you, will know how to twist the texts of Sacred Scripture to his own ends. *Quod volumus, credimus libenter* [What we want, we

like to believe]. It is always so: the heart makes the music. To a great degree the mind follows the heart. This is true for all of us, unless we are vigilant in every area of life.

⁷⁰ See such biblical openings for this theology as Rev 21,1 and Is 65,17-25.