

Original transcript in German:  
*Priesterliche Werktagsheiligkeit* (A4 mimeographed, 64 pages)

**Fr. Joseph Kentenich**

## **Priestly Everyday Sanctity**

*Excerpts from the*

*Priesterliche Werktagsheiligkeit*

*Schoenstatt, August 1932*

translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2003, 2010

Preliminary and incomplete translation for the private use of the reader. Subject to later revision.

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## Introduction

The excerpts translated here are taken from the mimeographed transcript based on the notes of a participant and printed shortly after the course was held.

A transcript of this retreat has not yet been published in English or German. However, the more general theme was elaborated by Sr. M. Annette Nailis with the assistance of Fr. Kentenich in her book *Everyday Sanctity* (published 1937). The book is an adaptation of the same retreat as Fr. Kentenich gave it for the Sisters of Mary. One therefore finds many parallels between the retreat for priests and *Everyday Sanctity*.

According to the note in *Texte über die Armut* (Berg Sion, no year), the version of the retreat transcribed was given for Pallottines.

A copy of the mimeographed transcript used here is found in the Archives of the Schoenstatt Fathers in Waukesha (Fr. Boenki collection).

## *First Day, Second conference*

*(Talk 3 overall)*

### *Introductory remarks*

{11} Whoever wants to erect a building must first lay a good foundation. This is what we have tried to do so far [in the opening conference of our retreat]. It laid the groundwork. In essence it tried to motivate us to let our souls fall under the sway of the laws of growth. Hence, something like a uniting bond may have begun to form. Nor is this all. One more essential building block must be laid. It is important that we feel *how our souls urge us on to spiritual progress*. We know that we cannot totally achieve this goal while here on earth; it will only come in eternity. Nonetheless, we expect to attain some degree of proficiency in our spiritual life while here on earth.

If our retreat is to be a general exercise, then we must first seek the resting point around which the laws of growth of our spiritual life gravitate. The guiding thought of our retreat may be that point. For those of you who come here year after year and make the retreat's main theme the object of your sermons and personal striving for 12 months, finding such a guiding thought which optimizes each organic development of the soul may prove easy. While we are here together, we must admit that our life has been strongly formed in the last years by three factors:

First factor: our retreat courses, which have been building on and complementing one another.

Second factor: the spiritual currents of the larger Catholic milieu.

Third factor: the modern cultural crisis.

### *Priestly everyday sanctity*

If you examine these factors, you will find that they indicate the same aim for our spiritual life and for our pastoral activity. It is: priestly *everyday sanctity*. All three points urge us to one ultimate thought: priestly everyday sanctity.

In order to not speak so much into the blue, let me give you an answer that is easier to identify with. Priestly everyday sanctity is

familiar with the commandment, “Remember to keep the Lord’s day holy” (Ex 20,8). But it almost wants to stress even more the words: *Remember to sanctify your ordinary life*. For the everyday saint, daily prayer and practices are the leaven which penetrates all of life, especially everyday life...

*Sanctus est qui sancte vivit* – holy is the one who lives a holy life, not the one who dreams of holiness or has the great ideal of holiness<sup>1</sup>. What matters is taking the great ideal and using it to shape ordinary actions. The everyday saint is aware of the great chasm between ideal and reality. He is therefore not a preacher of the word but tries to overcome this divide in his own life.

### *The Purpose of this Retreat*

We want to use these days to wrestle with the ideal of priestly everyday sanctity. All our present development is taking us toward this goal. You must not expect any new dogmatic truths in this retreat. We will merely try to deepen the old thoughts of the last years and, especially, to put them to work in our lives, giving shape and lending form to all that we do.

A story from the Middle Ages goes like this: A well-known court jester heard how two professors were quarreling about a certain question. He asked, “Which is better: to know what one does not know, or to do what one knows?”<sup>2</sup> The application for us... We must take what we have already heard and put it into practice. “Lord, sanctify me and do not spare my weak nature. And when you demand penance of me, give me the strength to carry it out” (Fr. Doyle).

### *Three Factors that have been Shaping our Life*

With that I think I have essentially laid the groundwork for the task we want to undertake. I consider this task essential. We want to

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<sup>1</sup> Quote from St. Vincent Pallotti. See for instance J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt’s Everyday Spirituality* (Waukesha, 2003), p. 53 and J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt’s Instrument Spirituality* (Waukesha, 1995), p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> See parallel citation in *Schoenstatt’s Everyday Spirituality*, p. 24.

reflect on the three factors which have been forming and intervening in our life over the past years. We will always {12} find that they urge us to strive for priestly everyday sanctity.

### *First Factor: The Contours of our Religious Movement*

First factor: the religious movement<sup>1</sup> as it has come about and our series of retreats in particular. Up to now, we have placed them in the light of the following two accents:

- a. a strong emphasis on God’s activity,
- b. a strong emphasis on a spirituality of attitudes<sup>2</sup>.

#### *a. A Strong Emphasis on God’s Activity*

A strong emphasis on God’s activity. Just think about what this says. With this approach do we not embrace quite precisely that which is desirable in both the objective and subjective orders?

What do we actually mean by “sanctity” or “holiness”? Holiness is God’s life in us. Or: our sharing in the divine life given to us through Jesus by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us<sup>3</sup>. Our task is to defend it, foster it, make it useful. We therefore sense a division of labor at work in our sanctity. The main part, objectively speaking, is taken by God. We have consequently used our previous retreats to build on the foundations of our being children of God [the Father], members of Christ and filled by the Holy Spirit. It is divine activity which supports us. We are therefore aware of the Triune God as the

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<sup>1</sup> This could mean the general development of religious growth inspired by the recent years’ retreats and workshops. Or it could mean the Schoenstatt Movement in particular. Or both.

<sup>2</sup> And not merely of forms, see J. Niehaus, *200 Questions About Schoenstatt* (Waukesha, 2002), No. 120.

<sup>3</sup> Definition adapted from Fr. Aldolphe Tanquerey (1854-1932), *The Spiritual Life* (original: 1923, English translation: Tournai, Belgium, 1930/1951), No. 88. In his 1928 course, *General Principles of the Apostolic Movement*, Fr. Kentenich also looks at sanctity this way: “What is holiness? Holiness is attentiveness and obedience to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit.” See *Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt* (Vallendar- Schönstatt, 1999), p. 93.

principle cause of our spiritual life<sup>1</sup>, with Christ as the meritorious cause<sup>2</sup>.

But this does not mean that we should just put up our feet and let God do everything. Our part, while secondary, is still crucial. We are called to defend, foster and make fruitful this divine life. We defend it against the enemies of divine life through self-denial and the spirit of penance. We increase it through reception of the sacraments and virtuous works. We make it fruitful through apostolic activity and by passing on the gift of life. Let me repeat the definition one more time: Sanctity is our participation in the divine life bestowed on us by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit through [the merits of] Jesus Christ, and which we must defend, foster and make fruitful<sup>3</sup>. And so the strong emphasis on God's activity is in complete agreement with the objective order.

But it also corresponds to our subjective need. We moderns have become tired because we have viewed sanctity too much as a self-made thing. This is why the shift of accent in favor of God's action has been so liberating for us [in Schoenstatt].

#### *b. A Strong Emphasis on a Spirituality of Attitudes*

Let me now mention the second feature, a strong emphasis on a spirituality of attitudes, as opposed to a piety of prescribed practices as is commonly found in the retreat movement of recent decades.

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<sup>1</sup> See Tanquerey, No. 232: "God is the *first and principal* cause of our merits. (...) In fact, it is God who has created our faculties; who has perfected them, raised them to a supernatural state by the virtues and by the gifts of the Holy Ghost; God who by His actual grace calls us to perform good works and assists us in doing them."

<sup>2</sup> *Causa meritoria*. See Tanquerey, No. 238: "The source of our merit is Jesus Christ, the Author of our sanctification, the chief meritorious cause of all supernatural good, the Head of the mystical body whose members we are."

<sup>3</sup> See Tanquerey's definition of supernatural life in *The Spiritual Life*, No. 88: "We may define it thus: *a share in the divine life given us by the Holy Ghost who dwells in us, because of the merits of Jesus Christ; a life which we must protect against all destructive tendencies.*" See also *Schoenstatt's Everyday Spirituality*, p. 25.

Again, this corresponds to the objective order: individual acts flow from the attitude of the soul. "Child, give me your heart!" But [what are] our personal needs in this area? We could already sense that it was impossible to keep all the practices. And so we had a deep longing that a piety of attitudes would be given the place which it deserves. Do you not sense how great the longing must have become to see our own activity emphasized more again? Why? Listen to just this one word: *Organism*<sup>1</sup>. When one part has developed, then the other part must also develop. Since God's activity was given so much attention in the past years, now our own activity, our practices need to be stressed more again.

In summary: The ideal of priestly everyday sanctity succeeds in promoting these two currents to a singular degree. After all, it tries to shape ordinary everyday life. This is not possible without a higher degree of personal activity. Think for yourselves: Does not this source also urge us to take a closer look at priestly everyday sanctity?

#### *Second Factor: What is Alive in the Larger Catholic Milieu*

Second factor: the spiritual currents of the larger Catholic milieu, especially the liturgical movement. I will not attempt to portray the extremes, but rather focus on those who have been deeply formed by {13} the liturgical movement.

A great many of those formed by the liturgical movement have greatly stressed the ontological reality while giving little attention to the ethical<sup>2</sup>. Examine the currents which have begun among high school students, women, university students... But the ontological dimension alone is not enough. I am reminded of a young priest who put all his stock in this. He rejected all piety based on prescribed

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<sup>1</sup> In other words, do not just think of your spiritual life along the lines of a machine, where doing a certain work or prayer practice will be like pulling a certain lever and bring a certain effect. It is rather like an organism that is growing in different areas at all times and in need of cultivation according to the nature of the "plant" and its "stage of growth."

<sup>2</sup> The "ontological" (metaphysical) would refer to the doctrinal foundations or perennial truths, while the "ethical" refers to the application to practical everyday life.

practices. But he came to realize that once the ideas had been clarified, there was nothing more for the mind to conquer. His will became so paralyzed. “And now I have started to keep my written control again!” Do we not see something typical in this turn of events? The ontological needs to be complemented. If that is true, then I can say that the tendency of this current [in the Church] coincides with what we want to accomplish during these days through priestly everyday sanctity. *Operatio sequitur esse* [actions must follow being]. The ontological must awaken the ethical. And so the second source also points expressly to priestly everyday sanctity.

### *Third Factor: The Cultural Crisis of our Times*

Third factor: the power of the modern cultural crisis to shape our lives. Have we ourselves been formed by it? Have we seen it enough at work in our surroundings? If we are not aware of the modern cultural crisis, then we are overlooking the context in which we work. We will talk ourselves hoarse unless we sufficiently grasp this world. We must be carried by a drive to grasp this cultural crisis in all its implications, [following the example of Our Lord]: *misereor super turbam* (He had pity for the crowd, Mk 8,2).

In 1879 Pope Leo XIII already bitterly lamented that the modern crisis had crystalized around a modern naturalism and humanism determined to put reason in the place of God and nature in the place of grace, hence denying Christ his influence in shaping the world<sup>1</sup>. We use other terms today: secularization, desacralization and de-divinization of life. They all come from the same line of thought. One speaks of the cosmic cold<sup>2</sup> afflicting life today. It needs to be

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<sup>1</sup> See parallel passage in *Schoenstatt's Everyday Spirituality*, p. 52: “Leo XIII used the expression *naturalism*. In an allocution to cardinals on December 8, 1879 he declared: ‘The main error of our time, the one enveloping all others is the cold naturalism which has infiltrated every expression of public life, the naturalism which sets human reason in the place of divine authority, nature in place of grace, banishing Christ from all places and frustrating the fruits of redemption.’”

<sup>2</sup> German: *kosmische Kälte*. The systematic evacuation of any personal role for God in our world view – our “cosmos” or universe – be it in our in-

counteracted with a cosmic warmth. Man has removed God, banishing him to some distant planet. As a result, the world shivers in cosmic cold. The accent that needs to be set is everyday *sanctity*. The working day needs to be made holy again, sacred, ordered to God in all its relationships.

In order to find ways to heal, psychotherapy investigates [one’s personal] history and the overall picture of the illness. We, too, want to investigate the history and overall picture of the modern crisis.

### *a. Historical Background*

1. The starting point is found in the collapse of the spiritual substance of the Middle Ages. Mediaeval life was totally organized around God. Its source of unity was the hierarchical sacramental order. All things were ordered around God, the universal center.

Then came the advent of the natural sciences. The theologians of that era failed to integrate science [into their teaching about God]. The natural sciences drew man’s attention to creation and nature. This produced a humanism which, at first, had a Catholic imprint, seeking God everywhere but with man as the starting point. Nature and man were placed more and more {14} at the center. Signs of this are the catechism’s opening question: “Why are we on earth?” When Augustine instructed his catechumens he began with God. And we? “Why are we on earth?” This is a Christian naturalism. But it became infected, especially by Rousseau<sup>1</sup> and his “natural goodness of human nature”<sup>2</sup>. Science went on from there to break down more and more of the theological foundations.

In addition came the development of a new scientific order. [This includes advances in] technology and all related fields. The sciences pertaining to man (such as medicine) also made great advances. Due to the progress made in these fields, mankind has reached one billion persons. But human society became separated from God. This con-

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dividual lives or the life of society as a whole. The effect is the creation of a reality in which the human heart grows cold, empty and lost.

<sup>1</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778), French philosopher.

<sup>2</sup> And hence in danger of rejecting original sin.

fronts us with the question today: Who will restore the connection? Christianity? But it is divided into so many different denominations. In a time when so many things are decided by the masses, Catholicism has been put on the defensive. We must be very reserved. Meanwhile, man has looked for substitutes: the League of Nations, dictatorship, emergency economic assistance<sup>1</sup>.

Let's stop and think about that for a moment. We must understand the implications of emergency economic assistance. Before the war, the economy was a very finely tuned instrument<sup>2</sup>. Then came the war and the post-war era. But today we still rely on the mass distribution of goods the way we have become accustomed to it since the advent of automation. And so we have the bare struggle for existence.

Take a closer look: Transportation. All over Germany the trains leave their preordained stations exactly on the minute. That is the product of industrialization and automation. Take a look around yourselves in the area of mind and spirit. See how "pre-packaged" we have become! In the end it is no longer important to the world that I am a unique individual, but that I conform to the masses. Because of the restrictive effect that this has on our drive for freedom, we see the search for substitute freedoms, like the freedom to pursue pleasure and the freedom to determine one's own world view. This ultimately creates a vast new organism: the mass. It is not just the sum of the will of its members, but their multiplication. Who dictates its direction? The trends, fads and currents which lay hold of it. Even the leaders are subject to the same forces. They, too, cannot turn back. What is the final end that the masses seek? The securing of bare survival; this is why they so gladly follow anyone who makes promises in this direction.

The Russian Revolution has made this an even more dangerous reality. The masses are the product of capitalism, and socialism takes

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<sup>1</sup> German: *wirtschaftliche Notgemeinschaft*.

<sup>2</sup> World War I.

that "product" into its hands. Bolshevism<sup>1</sup> is radically earnest about its goals. It says: "Once upon a time there was an era in which technology conquered the world. That time is now. Freedom is the death of modern man. More than any other institution, religion champions freedom. This makes it our greatest enemy, because it allows man to be a [freely acting] subject. What unites the world is the economic order." Do we really realize how dangerous this wrestling and battle is for the guiding principles [of society and men's hearts]? Human history up until the present has known two men: Adam and Christ. Now comes a third: the mass man. Listen to what the Book of Revelation has to say about the mass man. There it says that one will come who places his seal on all men. Does that not resonate [with our times]? We must not overlook the fact that the mentality of Bolshevism is essentially different from the one we are used to. Everything has been "automated."

In such a world there is clearly no room { 15 } for God and God's fatherly care. A Bolshevistic mayor once asked a child, "Child, what are you doing?" "Praying!" "Did it help you? Did you receive any bread?" "No." "Come, I will give you bread." Put that in the big picture and you will understand our people more. Then add to it how technology has changed our lives and you will see that our thinking has also become automated. Now add the collectivistic tendency to deny any moral norms and repress all feelings of guilt. The result is a personality which can truly cause us to fear for the future. With this we have a sketch of the final consequences of the modern cultural crisis.

#### *b. Current Status of the Crisis*

2. And the current status of the illness? I have already sketched its features. I wish to paint it in still more vivid colors. It is characterized by:

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<sup>1</sup> Although the context here clearly indicates Fr. Kentenich is referring to the Russian Marxists of the Revolution known as the "Bolsheviks," his use of the term is often rightly translated as "collectivism," since he points out that the basic features of Bolshevism are found in all forms of the mass man today.

1. a strong alienation from God and therefore
2. the cosmic cold which has laid hold of our culture today.

*c. The Need for Faith to Shape Daily Life*

3. Even a cosmic cold penetrating our own [Catholic] circles.

But is not Christ the Light? To what extent do we give this Light a chance? Look at the world of those who call themselves Catholic. If we let this Light shine in our brief moments of prayer and devotion during the day, we will have already accomplished a great deal.

Is it not a tragedy that the spirit of faith no longer shapes our everyday life? This is why even religious life is often infected. There are so many people who cannot overcome the cosmic cold. How little we use the spirit of faith to come to grips with the things that happen in our lives! This is one of the tasks of everyday sanctity. It places even the most minute aspects of our life under the Eternal Light. We must become children of the light again.

*The Resting Point of this Retreat: Priestly Everyday Sanctity*

You will probably agree with me when I say that everyday sanctity may and should be the purpose and resting point which will occupy us in the coming days.

May I now give you a definition of everyday sanctity? That will bring our thoughts to a certain resting point. What is priestly everyday sanctity? Priestly everyday sanctity is the God-pleasing harmony between the attachment to God, the attachment to work, and the attachment to fellow-man in every circumstance of our priestly life. You can tell that the definition is not just pulled from my sleeve.

Just one more thing so that our souls come totally to rest. We will need to investigate three things:

- our attachment to God,
- our attachment to fellow-man in the spirit of everyday sanctity
- our attachment to work.

***First Day, Third Conference***

*(Talk 4 overall)*

{16} During these days we want to come to grips with the ideal of priestly everyday sanctity. That is, with a God-pleasing harmony between a wholehearted attachment to God, attachment to work, and attachment to fellow-man in every circumstance of our priestly life. We are aware of the threefold task implied by this definition.

*I. Attachment to God*

In the first part we must come to grips with the attachment to God. We want to begin with this task at once. I don't know what I should still say to bring us more into the right atmosphere.

*The Need to Overcome the Cosmic Cold*

If we understood each other in the last talk, you will have grasped that the attachment to God must be especially tender and strong because the everyday saint feels so strongly infected by the cosmic cold of modern life.

Everything in him seeks to overcome this cosmic cold with cosmic warmth. In this may be a motivation of particular importance. Modern man has banished God, killed him, at least in his will. As a result, the more the everyday saint is familiar with real life, the stronger is his longing to make atonement to the Only-Begotten Son of God and to God.

We also have an inkling now that he especially seeks to join with God in the areas in which he has neglected him. This means in the works of everyday life and in those persons with whom the everyday saint is especially in contact. After all, God has not only been removed from the machines, but also from the people.

*Characteristics Examined More Closely*

If we have somewhat understood the definition, then we also have an inkling of the essential characteristics of the everyday saint. You will find everything which we will discuss and pray over during these days in the definition.

### 1. *God-Pleasing*

The first characteristic: The everyday saint finds and strives for as high a degree of attachment to God as possible. Where is that found in the definition? The word **God-pleasing** wants to be understood this way. The opposite: ordered by God. This is not enough. That we as priests must strive for this heroic attachment to God is something we already said yesterday. We also know how we can describe the attachment to God. It is a higher degree of loving union with God in Christ. Negative element: Put aside all voluntary venial sin. Positive element: at the very least conformity with the Divine Will.

### 2. *Harmony*

The second characteristic: God-pleasing **harmony**. This means the attachment to God must be united harmoniously with our attachment to work and our attachment to fellow-man. However, I do not want to discuss this at this point. We will come back to it in the second and third parts.

### 3. *Wholehearted*

The third characteristic: The attachment to God must be **wholehearted**<sup>1</sup>. On this point, too, I think we are brushing up against the essence of the everyday saint's attachment to God. (...) If man is not tenderly attached to God with every fiber, knowledge may become a burden for the soul. Unless the life of the drives and the emotions are attached to God, there will still be zones in the human person which are not in God's embrace. I always want to repeat: Here we have a question that will impact the fate of our priestly life. It applies to {17} all of us. We are often so tired. Where does that come from? That may come from the lack of understanding of the inner connections. But it may also come from the lack of this wholehearted in-

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<sup>1</sup> One could also say integrated or holistic, in the sense that our love of God must not only be a function of the intellect, but also one of the emotions and the drives (instinctive). That is to say, the whole person is engaged by God.

timacy with God. (...) We are too oriented to ideas. Think of the school of prayer of the Psalms and of St. Paul. We can learn there. In this way our attachment to God can become wholehearted.

### 4. *In All Circumstances*

The fourth characteristic: in **all** circumstances of our priestly life. The attachment to God should be an ongoing one. We place such importance on precisely *everyday* life, not only the hours of consecration but the hours of daily life. Our attachment to God must be ongoing: Breviary, eating, drinking, confessional, etc. (...)

#### *A. The Source of Attachment to God*

We want to know the source of our attachment to God. But we also want to work to make this source flow richly. I only want to show you the big picture, because we want to continue to work on this thought throughout the year. I can trace back all the sources to a final source: **God's attachment to man**. Here you have a play on words, but it is intended as more than a mere word play. The source of our attachment to God is God's attachment to man. Listen instead to the ancient formula, "I have loved you with an everlasting love!" (Jer 31,3). (...)

If we want to now clearly analyze it, we must say that God's attachment to man is twofold: a natural and a supernatural.

#### *God's Natural Attachment to Man*

God's *natural* attachment to man is otherwise called his creative, sustaining, and governing activity. The creative activity of God: God has {18} bound himself to his creatures out of love. Including me. If he had not met me, I would not exist. (...) "In him we live and move and have our being!" (Acts 17,28). Here you have the foundation; God is close to us. In him we move, we exist, even the people who don't want to have anything to do with him, even the machines, etc. God is much closer to his creatures than, say, the air is to the birds and water is to the fish. God is everywhere. When we more deeply think through this thought, then we must say that we especially find God in the deepest part of the soul. (...)



We are talking about God's natural attachment to man. St. Augustine calls out: "You ask me, where shall I seek God? In the depths of my soul!"<sup>1</sup> If the soul knew how to direct itself to this God, it would be attached to God. Here we have a bit of man's attachment to God on the natural level, rooted in God's natural attachment. Man today does not want to have the God of books, but the God of life. The God of life must captivate modern man. We, too, must see to it that we deeply grasp him in our own lives. This is why we want to lay such deep foundations. (....)

### *God's Supernatural Attachment to Man*

Even more significant are the truths about God's *supernatural* attachment to man. Here we need to spend more time. (....) Now we know that God dwells in a distinctive way in the souls of the just. When we speak now of the indwelling of God, then we mean it in the supernatural way. We are drawn into the trinitarian process of the Triune God. How does he dwell in my soul?

1. As my Father.
2. As my Friend.
3. As my Co-worker.
4. As my Sanctifier.
5. As my Bridegroom.

1. As my *Father*. This is an opportunity to take in more deeply the great dogmatic truths. We are children of God. {19} This is the essential basis of our religious life. "You have not received the spirit of slavery, but the spirit of sonship, in which you cry out, *Abba...*" (Rom 8,15). And the Holy Spirit is the one who enables us to give witness that we are children of God. The religious life is not tied to a system, it is a childlike, affective giving of self to the Father. This does not mean that we reject a systematic approach, but the most important thing is the simple, childlike relationship with our Father in heaven. He has accepted us as his children in a different way than

an adoptive father who can only bestow his name but not his life. We gain something of God's life. We become his children through rebirth. "Unless you are reborn of water..." (Jn 3,3). God is therefore a Father. (....)

2. He dwells in me as a *friend*. Friendship is only possible between like and like. This therefore either presupposes or creates a likeness. God does this by elevating us to participate in his being. "The Spirit of God will instruct you in all that I have told you" (Jn 16,13). "I no longer call you servants, but friends, for a servant does not know what his Master is about. I call you friends" (Jn 15,15). This friendship is meant to be so strong, the communication [of grace] so tender: "See, I stand before the door and knock... and want to sup with you" (Rev 3,20). This is how tender the mutual communication is. Wholehearted intimacy.

3. As our *co-worker*. Here, too, what an honor! How does he work with us? Through actual grace he wants to be our light and the power of our life.

4. As our *Sanctifier*. He dwells in us and transforms us, transforms our souls into a Shrine of the Triune God.

5. Finally also as the *Bridegroom* of our souls. We are a church of the Blessed Trinity. A church dedicated to the Triune God and in which he dwells. Every soul in the state of grace wishes to be seen this way. Hence it is an eternal light that shines out to us from each pair of eyes. With what affection must we offer our love to the Triune God! To give ourselves to him!

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo. See *Confessions*, "Seek for yourself, O man; search for your true self. He who seeks shall find himself in God."

*Third Day, First Conference*  
(Talk 10 overall)

*The Means to Attachment to God for the Priestly Everyday Saint*

{34} Today is already the beginning of our third day and we are still on the first fundamental pillar: the attachment to God in priestly everyday sanctity. From this you can deduce how important it is. The reason is simple. Because the anthropological cold is so great, we must make a concerted effort to acquire anthropological warmth through our attachment to God. As a result we feel constrained to continue our discussion on the attachment to God on this third day.

*C. The Importance of Prayer and Mortification*

We must still discuss a third complex of questions. After investigating the source and the characteristics of our attachment to God, we must now dig a little deeper, namely to seek the means which the priestly everyday saint needs in order to maintain and deepen his attachment to God.

These means are well-known to us in name. But do we still value and hold them in esteem? *Prayer and mortification* are the means of priestly everyday sanctity.

These two means are often called the wings of the spiritual life. In the spirit of everyday sanctity this means: if the wings are paralyzed, everyday sanctity is paralyzed. If the wings are strong, so too is everyday sanctity. If the wings are broken, then everyday sanctity will also be broken. The inner connection is easy to see. Prayer secures the necessary graces and when we speak of mortification we mean all the ways in which the everyday saint cooperates.

The importance becomes all the clearer when we take a look at the objectives spelled out by Pope Pius XI (see new encyclical)<sup>1</sup>. Here the Holy Father recommends prayer and mortification<sup>2</sup>. If we want to better understand the papal pronouncement, then we must try

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius XI, encyclical *Caritate Christi Compulso* (On the Sacred Heart), May 3, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, No. 14-35.

to grasp its inner context. [His words] stand before us like a great road sign. You may recall his first proclamation *Ubi Arcano*<sup>1</sup>. The purpose and mission of the Kingdom of God on earth is Catholic Action. All of his other encyclicals follow the same line of thought. The crisis today is a crisis of life. What is therefore needed is a reform of life – see his encyclicals on education, marriage, the social order<sup>2</sup>. And now the newest encyclical. After previously proposing mainly the natural means, the Pope now calls loudly and clearly to the whole world: In the world of today the mystery of iniquity has become so great that it is impossible to overcome with natural means<sup>3</sup>. The immanent vital forces of Christianity must be mobilized again: prayer and penance – to which we have said “mortification” instead.

The Pope is very aware of how far secularism has spread, so that wide circles [of society] no longer have any sense for these [supernatural] means. It is therefore the task of our pastoral work to model these essential means again.

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius XI, encyclical *Ubi Arcano Dei Consilio* (On the Peace of Christ in the Kingdom of Christ), December 23, 1922.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Pius XI, encyclicals *Divini Illius Magistri* (1929, on Christian education), *Casti Connubii* (1930, on Christian marriage), and *Quadragesimo Anno* (1931, on social justice).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Pius XI, *Caritate Christi Compulso*, No. 14: “However, in the face of this satanic hatred of religion, which reminds Us of the ‘mystery of iniquity’ (2 Thess 2,7) referred to by St. Paul, mere human means and expedients are not enough, and We should consider ourselves wanting in Our apostolic ministry if We did not point out to mankind those wonderful mysteries of light, that alone contain the hidden strength to subjugate the unchained powers of darkness. When Our Lord, coming down from the splendors of Thabor, had healed the boy tormented by the devil, whom the disciples had not been able to cure, to their humble question: ‘Why could not we cast him out?’ He made reply in the memorable words: ‘This kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting’ (Matt 17,18. 20). It appears to Us, Venerable Brethren, that these divine words find a peculiar application in the evils of our times, which can be averted only by means of prayer and penance.”

### 1. *The Everyday Saint Loves Prayer*

{36} The priestly everyday saint *loves* prayer. Because he strives for sanctity, he must have a receptivity for prayer. After all, prayer and a prayerful spirit are the gold standard of the spiritual life. He who knows how to pray well, knows how to live well.

Why does he love prayer? Let me be clear:

- a. Because he considers prayer to be necessary,
- b. Because he considers prayer to be beneficial.

#### a. *The Necessity of Prayer*

It is necessary because actual grace is necessary. Actual grace is an absolute necessity. This is a dogmatic truth. Without grace we cannot attain divine life, much less perfect maturity. It is necessary to be justified and to grow in faith. At the same time, dogmatic theology teaches us that the initial gift of actual grace is given independent of any action on our part. But other graces are ordinarily attained via the normal and generally applicable way of prayer.

Those of us who made the four-week retreat have a better grasp of the importance of this statement. Please recall the words of Our Lord: “Ask and you will receive” (Mt 7,7). Some serious Bible scholars even interpret this to mean: If one does not ask, one will not receive. If one does not seek, one will not find. Or take another word of Christ, “Watch and pray” (cf Mt 26,26-41). St. Thomas notes that if I expect graces without prayer then I commit the sin of presumption. God is not obliged to give his actual graces if we do not pray, but only when we ask him. To be sure, he can also give them without prayer. But he does not, wishing to increase our spirit of reliance.

Tradition beautifully confirms Scripture about the necessity of grace and prayer. St. Augustine says: “Do what you can; then pray from God what you cannot<sup>1</sup>.” The Roman Catechism and the Council of Trent made this quote their own. We must become masters of prayer. Those of us who have become tired and numb notice how our

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<sup>1</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), “God does not command impossibilities, but by commanding admonishes you do what you can and to pray for what you cannot, and aids you that you may be able.”

nature can become balky and rebellious even in the prime of life. Do you know why we have not been able to master our rebellious nature? In the long run the drives cannot be mastered unless we become masters of prayer. It is the only way our tired nature can be re-kindled. (...) If we do not take this quote seriously, “Do what you can; then pray from God what you cannot,” we will not prevail. Why do I not pray for attachment to God and that he deeply penetrate my will and heart in these times when I am so dried out? It solves one of the riddles of the world.

We younger ones, the ones who still frolic [tackling things with the spontaneous vigor of youth], are as yet not fully aware of how indispensable prayer is. The quote from above can also be applied to the fruitfulness of our apostolic activity. Faith should not be forced on people. If I am not a master of prayer, I will accomplish very little. I want to do everything that I can. But there are limits. If I am still far from my goal, it is because I cultivate too little the spirit of prayer and of flying into the heart of God.

{37} With that I think I can conclude this point. Is it not correct to say that the priestly everyday saint loves prayer because it is a necessity?

#### b. *The Benefits of Prayer*

He also loves it because it is *beneficial*. If the first point was more focused on the supernatural side of the equation, this point looks more at the more natural side. The power of prayer liberates us from the things of this world. (...) It lifts up and liberates self and what it means to be a creature. We ought to take this more seriously. Up until now our prayer was more the prayer of the lips. The soul that tries to stretch its wings will better know God and self. God woos us with his love. This increases our *liberation from earthly things*. This is one of the benefits.

Is prayer not also beneficial for our attachment to God? *It unites us with God*. It unites all my faculties with God: imagination, heart, etc. If you consider it in the spirit of everyday sanctity, then you know that prayer especially instills the theological virtues [of faith, hope and love]. It is only then that the union with God is reached in

the total sense of the word. The Triune God then unites with us more intimately on the very ground of the soul. The soul is *transformed into God*. Tell me who you spend time with and I will tell you who you are. What is true on the natural level is all the more true on the supernatural level.

This places prayer before our mind's eye with all its vigor and depth. What importance has prayer had in my life thus far? If my attachment to God is weak, if my care for souls has lost its energy, what is the reason? The answer is always the same: Because we have neglected becoming masters of prayer. Whoever prays can never be lost. Do you also know the opposite? The saints tell us: Whoever does not pray is already condemned. Does that not confirm what we already said about the necessity of prayer?

This concludes our discussion of the first thought: the priestly everyday saint loves prayer.

## 2. *The Everyday Saint Practices Prayer*

The priestly everyday saint *practices* prayer. When I say that he practices prayer, I mean both the forms of prayer and the spirit of prayer. You can tell that I want to focus especially on the *forms* of prayer. Here we can consider how the everyday saint

- a. esteems the forms of prayer and
- b. safeguards their quantity and quality.

## *Third Day, Second Conference*

(Talk 11 overall)

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### *a. Esteem for the Forms of Prayer*

{37} Prayer involves forms and spirit. The aim of every form of prayer is to cultivate an attitude of prayer, i.e. the *permanent attachment of the soul to God*.

### *Prayer and the Challenge of Modern Life*

Let us take a moment to place this thought in its broader context. To do so we remind ourselves of the great tragedy of priestly life today<sup>1</sup>. Life no longer means “We live,” but “We are *being lived*.” We become victims, unwitting victims of our surroundings. This is why we have such a hard time asserting the originality of even our wants and thinking. There is a tendency to begin to drift and be lured in [by modern wants and thinking], or – to put it more succinctly – to unexpectedly find ourselves on the slippery slope.

*I can only master life if I can chain my entire being to God again.* Then I will approach life from the supernatural world. This is the only way to really succeed in mastering life – individually and in relationship with others. Please! Do not think I am just saying pious things! Look at what life is really like today!

This gives our striving for a permanent attitude of prayer a whole new sound. This attitude is the purpose of all prayer formation and forms of prayer. We make too many concessions in everyday life: “I have too much work!” “I need to rest!” “Oh, I totally forgot...” It allows {38} deep-seated disorder to gradually seep into our lives. How much better if I would say: “I cannot possibly meet the needs of everyone here, so I will make sure at least one relationship is secure: I will not give up my connection to God!” This would give us a way

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<sup>1</sup> Literally: “in the big city,” which was where the inbreak of the “tragic” features of modern life (i.e., the mass man) could best be seen in the 1930s.

to set our priorities. Our profession would not take us away from God but lead us closer to him. *Work should not drive us away from God but bind us to him.* In theory we all agree: this, too, is an unspoken longing in my heart! May this retreat give you momentum in the right direction...

### *Concrete Times of Prayer During the Day*

In order to master the attitude of prayer, we must come to grips with the forms of prayer in everyday life. The everyday saint is practical enough to say: A permanent attitude of prayer is impossible without prayer breaks. By this I mean: *times of concentrated self-surrender to God.* (...) It can be verbal or mental prayer. The form of prayer I choose should establish a time of concentrated self-surrender to God. Perhaps this already answers some of your questions.

How can we organize these forms of prayer? They fall into three main categories: morning, day, night.

#### *i. Forms of Prayer in the Morning*

Forms of prayer in the morning: morning meditation, morning prayer, Mass<sup>1</sup>. By the way, I should mention that those of you with other personal forms of prayer can renew your personal ideal and particular examination, too. They are part of the morning routine. I do not want to go into that in detail. But I think I should remind you of how important it can be to translate the results [of the retreat] into the language of your personal ideal. You sense how this can secure the fruits of the retreat for the whole year.

Let us consider the most common elements:

*Morning meditation.* We meditate on our life's ideal. Regardless of the method, our meditation should be a deep, heartfelt, deliberate, on-going look at our priestly ideal. Even if all we do is unite ourselves and all our thoughts with the God-Man, leading everything back to him, then we have made good use of the meditation as a moment of recommitment to our ideal. Forgetting the ideal means we

tend to fall into idolatry of some kind, and the usual result is insecurity. This is why it is so extremely important for us as modern priests, whose lives are so alone, including spiritually, to meditate on our ideal.

*Holy Mass.* How does the morning meditation connect to Holy Mass? First, the Mass extends the horizons of our ideal. The Liturgy of the Word and the Liturgy of the Eucharist place before us once more our ideal [as priests]. But even more than a movement of ideas, it must awaken a movement of life for the next 24 hours. The Liturgy of the Eucharist should transform our life into what we perceived in the day's meditation and the Liturgy of the Word.

{39} Morning forms of prayer are a concentrated self-surrender to God.

#### *ii. Forms of Prayer during the Day*

Our aim is to not be without prayer for more than a few hours at a time. After all, we are striving for a constant attachment to God. The everyday saint is not someone whose head is in the clouds. He realizes the need for "prayer breaks" throughout the day and distributes such things as his visit to the Blessed Sacrament, praying the Breviary and spiritual reading at different times during the day. But he desires to go still further. Wanting to use all available means to attain a full attachment to God, he also educates himself to preface every action with a reminder that he is a member of Christ. This is what we call the *good intention* – here in its broader context. Indeed, the everyday saint knows how erratic his intentions can be. He therefore unites his attitude with that of the God-Man for the glorification of God. He learns to pause intermittently during long-term tasks for short moments of prayer.

These are forms of prayer used during the day. I deliberately mention the visitation of the Blessed Sacrament because I want to emphasize things within our reach. We should not overlook such traditions; they have become the standard fare of everyday saints over the course of centuries. "Remember, make holy the *workday!*"

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<sup>1</sup> These forms of prayer were required of all the priests at that time.

### *iii. Forms of Prayer at Night*

I do not need to talk much about night prayer. It is only proper that we priests also pray our night prayer<sup>1</sup>. When we are dog-tired at the end of the day, we are often just happy to race through the Breviary to get to bed. When I speak of forms of prayer at night, I especially refer to the examination of conscience in the form of a spiritual confession. The everyday saint knows how quickly one's passions can be aroused in everyday life. There is the danger of outbursts of rage, of impure motives. He knows the importance [of self-honesty] for everyone striving for sanctity. "Teach me to know You and myself." He knows that self-knowledge is ultimately connected with the knowledge of God. The more we know about ourselves, the more we can reach out to God.

#### *The Importance of Esteem for the Forms of Prayer*

With this I have told you, in essence, what times of self-surrender to God we must secure. I also want to show to what extent the priestly everyday saint esteems the forms of prayer. The priestly everyday saint is convinced that not having set times of prayer can cost him the grace of perseverance and sanctity. There are times [in history] when this would not be so urgent; it might even be true that a person in a structured religious life can do without [his own times of prayer]. But we see how we must live in the world. May I remind you that our work plunges us into any number of temptations and problems. Think of the difficulties life sends our way. The general atmosphere can be very suggestive. And we must take part in this life. We will not be able to hold our own against these temptations and avoid serious sin, nor be able to keep the grace of perseverance if we do not consciously educate ourselves to faithfully keep our times of concentrated self-surrender.

The everyday saint knows this. This is why, in the midst of all his work, he still finds time for God. How many imitate the saints in their exterior works! But if we do not imitate them in their unshak-

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<sup>1</sup> And not just liturgical Night Prayer or Compline.

able faithfulness to God our striving for sanctity is suspect. Even our fruitfulness will then be in doubt. The day of temptation will come and then we will teeter at the brink of disaster. What must we modern priests do to keep from falling? Our mind must be constantly illumined by God's light, our will must constantly be in touch with God. You will say: the Mass and Breviary take care of everything. Do you really believe {40} that the Mass and the Breviary alone will give you so much support? I think I am right in saying that for the Mass and Breviary to be fruitful, we must have additional times of prayer. Ideas are not enough. The will must be activated. I cannot do this if I do not reserve times of concentrated self-surrender to God.

What this means for us as secular priests is that either we constantly work on our attachment to God or we live in perpetual danger of eternal damnation. All the more if I have responsibilities which are not directly priestly in character. Do you think the fall happens from one day to the next? I urge you to review your life from this point of view. It is not my place to prescribe how much [to pray]; this you must determine for yourself. (...)

Perhaps I can summarize these thoughts this way: The priestly everyday saint esteems the forms of prayer. We do not want to become enslaved to the form; the main thing is the attitude of prayer. But we must see to it that the attitude is secured through definite forms. We all have a tendency to overvalue the attitude as opposed to the form. The spirit creates a form for itself, animates the form and overcomes it. If only we were all fully mature, we would certainly make the right choices.

#### *b. Safeguarding the Quality and Quantity of Prayer*

The priestly everyday saint safeguards the *quality* of the forms of prayer. He makes a serious effort to practice the individual forms of prayer as perfectly as possible. I think that those of you who take the content of this retreat as the content for your spiritual work in the coming year could ask: When is my meditation perfect, when is my Mass perfect? We must make a new effort to make sure that the forms mean something to us qualitatively. Every work of the priestly everyday saint must bear the seal of perfection.

Perhaps I can mention one more thing – the meditation. Why is it that we are often unable to meditate simply? One reason might be the unfamiliarity with true prayer. Many think that true prayer means mental exertion. This is not true. The most important thing is the self-surrender of the will and heart to God. Another reason is the lack of magnanimity. We are too intent on seeking the consolation of God and not the God of consolation. And then we think that if we do not experience consolation it was a waste of time. Another reason can be failing to use a remote preparation<sup>1</sup>. This is how our life should be: In prayer we pre-live our lives; in practical life we realize our prayer.

I must see to it that I make myself free [for prayer] during the day, that my senses are composed, and that I maintain a humble attitude before God. If I do not, then it would be a miracle if I meditate well. When our hearts come to rest they digest the impressions taken in. This is why we can barely stand being alone with God; we are overstimulated in unhealthy ways. Once again: the priestly everyday saint protects the quality of the forms of prayer.

He also safeguards their *quantity*. He secures definite times of prayer and is faithful to them. He secures them through his spiritual daily order. There are many who still examine themselves on this point, even in writing. I must be faithful to such a schedule. A certain big-heartedness is important, of course.

Such things need to be seen if we do not want to just live in the clouds. Those who keep a spiritual schedule, sin less. This already comes about by virtue of the discipline that I have to practice to keep it. It straightens out our inclinations more and more. Those who keep such a schedule, work more. In spite of our work load, how much leisure is part of our day! When I keep an order, I work more. {41} Discipline also increases my stamina. When I keep a certain daily order, I know that I have secured the time for my attachment to God. What an incredible vitality this gives! Please take a look at the men of the Middle Ages. What books they wrote! Their lives were

ordered! We do not want to be slaves of certain forms, of course. If there is a reasonable cause, then I can calmly excuse myself from a certain prayer. But as St. Francis de Sales says: If I can, I will return to my schedule tomorrow. We do not want to give laxity the reins.

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<sup>1</sup> The typical remote preparation is like this: for a morning meditation, I take a few moments the night before to determine the time, place and main theme (central word, central image) of the meditation.

*Fourth Day, Third conference*  
(Talk 15 overall)

{45} What is attachment to work? Everything which is not attachment to God or others. What is not attachment to God or others in our daily activity? Work, suffering, use of created goods. These are the three parts of attachment to work.

*2. Attachment to Things*

{52} If we look back once more on what we have discussed, we will gradually and steadily see the originality of priestly everyday sanctity. Here you have a totally modern attempt, to translate concretely into real life a harmonious and organic connection of nature and grace. God must once again become the Alpha and the Omega of our lives. The principle is probably clear to us from what we heard in the last two talks. We will probably be telling ourselves that this must become a great program of life. It wants to stand for us as a great lighthouse for our entire lives. It wants to find embodiment in the months after our retreat. The same is true of the other points that we are now praying through. After all, attachment to work is also attachment to suffering. And attachment to things.

Allow me to first speak about the attachment to things. For here is where the originality of our harmonious connection of nature and grace is most clearly seen. May I remind you once more of what we mean by attachment to things? Everything which is not attachment to God, to the times, to persons, or to work. What is it? It is the use of created things. Earthly goods, pleasure goods, honor, reputation, etc. How does the priestly everyday saint stand to these things? He remains faithful to his great ideas. We first explore the *ordo essendi*, the objective order of being. He discovers how connected the things are to God. Now comes his second task: It must become a wholehearted attachment to things. We presuppose that it is clear that these things are created by God, to his honor and glory. Here is where the masterpiece begins. What does the wholehearted attachment to things look like? Which are its characteristics?

*a. Prophetic Attachment to Things*

The attachment to things of the priestly everyday saint is {53} prophetic. Prophets are people sent by God to bring a message to the world. All things are messengers of God. Through their being, which is an embodiment of a divine idea, they have a message to give



us. We must see in all things not only their existence, but also a certain symbolism. The everyday saint does not stop with the bare existence. He tries to grasp the way these things are interrelated, and behind them seeks God himself. He tries to welcome to God's message.

Here we have the heart of it. We want to see the things and in the things see God. We don't need to first turn them around in order to see them. Seek the God of life, not the God of books!

To be sure, we must also keep the times of concentrated self-giving<sup>1</sup>. We cannot make the excuse that I have God everywhere. Our organ to see him must first be formed.

With that I have told you the most essential things. Example: I hear a bird singing. God is sending me his greeting through the bird. This is the full *ordo essendi*. Then I do not just have the bird as bare existence, but also as messenger of God. (...)

#### *b. High-priestly Attachment to Things*

Our attachment to things is high-priestly. We recall that all creation was called into existence to glorify God. Even inanimate creation wants to glorify and praise God. It achieves its purpose when it urges us to glorify God. Creation waits for the priest, for the high priest, who sings the priestly Magnificat. Read the Canticle of the Sun of St. Francis or the Benedicite after Holy Mass.

How is my attachment to things? A priestly, high-priestly? [He reads the Canticle of the Sun.] I {54} think that if I were Francis, I would expand the Canticle of the Sun and include technology. What does industry have to say to God? The second point.

#### *c. Divine Attachment to Things<sup>2</sup>*

Our attachment to things must be divine. I think that I say it more precisely when I concretely say it is *detachment* from things. Or do we not see the God-Man in his life as someone with an imposing

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<sup>1</sup> That is, the times of focused prayer.

<sup>2</sup> In the later elaboration for the published version in *Everyday Sanctity*, the term was changed to *heroic* attachment to things.

detachment from things? Must not Christ's Church as the mystical Christ continue to live his detachment from things? Herein lies the great task of today's Church, a task of which she is not entirely aware. She employs in her members too much the natural means. The more the influence of the Church comes into the public, the greater the danger that she loses sight of her most distinctive strength. Our attachment to things must be divine, that is, a divine detachment from things. How easily do we otherwise deceive ourselves.

This is how it was in the time of Christ. How was it possible that the priests of his time had a totally false image of the Messiah? The priests had distorted the image of the Messiah. The image of the Messiah in the Old Testament has two features. He is the liberator from the slavery of sin, but is also the one who restores the honor of the people. The priests misunderstood this. They expected a political and economic redeemer. We must take care that we do not paint a false image for our people, especially through our lives. Here we find [Christ's guiding] principle: For me the least in earthly goods, in material pleasures, in earthly honor. Because of this He must be poor and helpless.

Do you catch the core idea in this? It was exactly in this way that he wanted to prove his divinity! It is a divine detachment from things. We have penetrated so deeply into these thoughts that we cannot think it any other way. The more helpless he stands before us, the more divine he stands before us. To put it differently, using the dogmatic law: God creates from nothing! It was true in the first creation, and it is now true in the second one. Hence, a stable. A poor Mother, poor apostles. God wanted to choose the lowly in order to put the mighty to shame. We admit that. But do we live it?

Hence detachment from things. What did God want? In the redemption he was casting for our love. He wanted to have our hearts. He tried everything to steal our hearts. He reveals his love to us through an infinite detachment from things. Can you hear in this how earnestly he tries to woo us? If we want to be the continuation of Christ's life, then we must give him the chance to continue his life. This, too, is priestly everyday sanctity.