

## Excerpts from *Vorträge in der Schweiz* Talks by Fr. Kentenich on Marian Everyday Sanctity, January 21-22, 1939

*This selection on Everyday Sanctity is from a weekend recollection held by Fr. Kentenich for the Schoenstatt Women's League in Switzerland, January 21-22, 1939<sup>1</sup>. It was held at "Mount Sion," a Sisters convent near Gommiswald. It was the first time there was such a large gathering of Schoenstatt women in Switzerland.*

*In these texts, Fr. Kentenich approaches everyday sanctity differently from his previous, more systematic approach as found in the book *Everyday Sanctity*. Rather than stress the attachments to God, work and fellow-man, he returned to everyday sanctity as a key part of the Schoenstatt experience from the very beginning. As a result, he focuses on the following definition:*

***Everyday sanctity means fulfilling my daily duties as perfectly as possible out of an outstanding love of God.***

*In the process, Fr. Kentenich appeals to the call to greatness which everyday sanctity implies, and provides solid motivation to reach out for such a high ideal.*

*Because of the year's motto in 1939, he also emphasized the Marian and liturgical connections to everyday sanctity, and in speaking to women pointed out how **Marian** everyday sanctity can be a blueprint for **feminine** everyday sanctity.*

*In the talks, Fr. Kentenich alludes to the desire of the Swiss Schoenstatt Family to have a place of grace connected to the Shrine in Original Schoenstatt, Germany. This was still in the years before building replica daughter shrines became customary (the first such shrine was dedicated in 1943), so the form was to have an MTA-picture in a dedicated place ("MTA chapel"). The good sisters of*

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<sup>1</sup> "Mariansiche Werktagsheiligkeit," Day of Recollection for the Schoenstatt Women's League in Switzerland, January 21-22, 1939, in: *Vorträge in der Schweiz* (Quarten, 1985), p. 38-50, 52, 53f, 60-62, 66-69, 71-96, 97-100, 105-107, 117-120, 122-125, 130f.

*Gommiswald had donated an MTA-picture and the women were now hoping to urge the MTA to "take up her abode" in Switzerland. Fr. Kentenich made use of this concrete, Mary-focused focus to make the striving for everyday sanctity something practical and anchored in the lives and longings of his listeners.*

{38} If you ask what you can do [to draw Mary down to this place], then my answer is: Don't forget the year's motto— a year of Marian liturgical everyday sanctity! (...) {39} What contributions should I make to the capital of grace? Heroically seek and strive for the ideal of Marian liturgical everyday sanctity. It gives our personal moral and religious striving on a high and concrete focus: to move Our Lady to take up her abode not only here in Switzerland, but specifically here in this place.

I can still remember quite clearly how the boys declared, now 25 years ago: If the Blessed Mother wants to do it without us, we say— We don't want that; we don't want you to take up your abode without our cooperation. In this spirit I would find it unfortunate if things went too quickly and without your own sacrifice and prayer. Think about what our cooperation should look like: Marian liturgical everyday sanctity. [[These are three important words:

Everyday sanctity,  
Marian,  
Liturgical.

We will not quickly exhaust the vast riches of these three words.

Let us start with the word *everyday sanctity*. It is a term we already know. Even if we did not know it for after all these years, its meaning should have become clear to us through last year's study<sup>2</sup> and our serious efforts {40} to live this ideal. But why do we repeat having a year of everyday sanctity? Didn't we work on it enough last year? ]] (...)

### Everyday Sanctity: Call to Heroic Living

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<sup>2</sup> Using the book *Everyday Sanctity*.

Even though we know the term “everyday sanctity,” it must win new ground in us this year. Consider what is in the new book which covers our earliest years<sup>3</sup>. You will then notice how much the ideal of everyday sanctity was a part of us from the beginning. I can still clearly remember how, within a few months of the founding of our sodality, I was able to proclaim the ideal—our family must produce a canonizable saint. We hope that at least our Joseph Engling will become one in the near future. (...)

Why, it was simply self-understood [to the founding generation]: the family must bring forth saints. You might remember reading in the life of Joseph Engling about how deeply he was touched after one of the talks about modern sanctity—I believe it was in January. He and his friend Karl were totally on fire and said, “We promise each other to stick with it until we have become modern saints, and we will remind each other of it every year.” They kept their promise. Both went through the great turmoil of the War, and they encouraged each other every year<sup>4</sup>. From this you can conclude how the instinct for living and striving for sanctity was part of the family from the beginning. Make this legacy your own!

Now you might say that these were mere youths, unfamiliar with the high seas of life. We are older and know the dangers. It was easy for them to be enkindled for ideals, but we know how hard life’s battle can be and have taken our lumps. Still, there it is, part of our family spirit. And when you later leaf through the book about our earliest beginnings, {42} you will see that this ideal was not so easy for them either.

### *Take Seriously What We Already Know: Away With Mediocrity!*

In a word: When we hear the term “everyday sanctity” again this

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<sup>3</sup> Meant is the book *Unter dem Schutze Mariens* (Under the Protection of Mary) compiled by Fr. Ferdinand Kastner. This collection of talks and chronicles from Schoenstatt’s founding years included the Pre-founding Document of October 1912 and the Founding Document of 1914. For a comparable book in English, see J. Niehaus, *New Vision and Life* (Waukesha, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> See Fr. Alexander Menningen, *Joseph Engling* (Waukesha, 1998), p. 46.

year, it means that we want to lay hold of it with greater warmth, tenderness and firmness of purpose. The young men at the beginning of our family were mightily touched by experiences that convinced them more and more of this: None of us must die without having left a real mark on the world. In effect: We declare war on mediocrity! Away with mediocrity in the spiritual life! Away with mediocrity in my professional life! Away with mediocrity in my moral life! None of us must “climb into the grave” without reaching the highest heights according to the talents and graces given him by God!

Think about it! Is this our spirit, too? Isn’t this what our spirit should be—sharing in the spirit of the founding generation!? This is what we must strive for if we want to beg and implore from Our Lady a new place of grace. In other words, do not be satisfied with praying, “Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt, make this place your home!” That is too easy. No, the spirit must be this: None of us must die without leaving a real mark in the world! May I ask you if you really want to accept this thought? I know how it goes with such ideas. It is like in the Gospel. {43} The sower went out and sowed the seeds. And how much fruit did it bear? In some places 40 and 60 and 80 and 100-fold. In other places it fell on rocky ground (cf Mk 4,3-20).

What effect does the term “everyday sanctity” have on us? To be honest: We have heard a lot of “big talk” in our life. But this time, might it not be spoken for *me*? How often I have already struggled with my own half-heartedness! How often have I not sadly heard it said, “You’re a total failure!” How often do I cave in to those around me and to the spirit of the world! And now I hear the appeal, the imperative, the order reecho in my soul: No! I must not climb into my grave, I must not die or abandon the world stage until I have reached the heights of what my natural and supernatural talents can accomplish!

To say something like, “Oh well, my life is decent; I am not the worst in my state in life; I can show my face in public,” is not an option! That is nothing but mediocrity. And mediocrity is what we want to overcome. This does not mean we begin with big exterior

changes. No, it is an inner attitude. We want to do invest a maximum in everyday sanctity. We want to become everyday saints—not Sunday saints or holyday saints, but everyday saints. Our first goal is not visible extraordinary deeds, but doing {44} everything in our everyday lives extraordinarily well, on the foundations of a deep, inner conviction.

We want to ask Our Lady to let these serious and important words find the right resonance in our souls. Even if only one person among us would take these words in earnest and make them her guiding star, I think it would mean abundant blessings for the work we began 25 years ago. (...)

{45} Just think of what it would mean if, through your personal life of prayer and sacrifice, you could really move Our Lady of Schoenstatt to come here once again and erect her throne. Then you would know: I live for a great task. I am truly convinced that Schoenstatt as a place of grace is the work of the “quiet ones in the land,” not the noisy ones. This is a general law. How did Christ redeem the world? Through his death, not through his sermons. It is not talking that redeems the world, but sacrifice. It will also be likewise with you. You can be completely sure of that. It is the quiet ones in the land who offer their lives in the background, who consume themselves without anyone noticing! What great things our pioneers have done for this great task!

[[Suppose I work in an office. I fulfill my duty as always, but in the background I am motivated by this great work. I want to give everything to Mary as a contribution to the capital of grace so that she will be moved through this small act of cooperation and really take up her abode in our midst. And what will be the source of the great, great blessing which will one day go forth? {46} I am this source, we are this source, our unseen life of sacrifice is this source of blessing.]] (...)

This is the first accent of this year of everyday sanctity: *Take more seriously what we already know.*

*Take Seriously What God Challenges Me With Today*

The second accent: *Take TODAY more seriously.* Do you understand my point? A few days ago I read part of the life story of Bl. Bartholomea Capitanio<sup>5</sup>. How vigorously she strived for holiness as a child! She had a teacher who took the ideals of living and striving for sanctity seriously and knew how to set the hearts of the children on fire for the same ideal. One day she was with the children and they discussed what it takes to become a saint. She suddenly suggested, “Let’s draw straws! Whoever draws the longest straw will soon become a great saint.” So far, this is nothing too extraordinary. We could do that too. Most of the children were really excited by this: “Me! Me! I want to be a great saint!” Among them was ten- or twelve-year-old Bartholomea. When she heard this it set {47} her soul on fire. Such a word can often completely change someone’s life, even if a hundred others hear the same thing to no effect. While the others crowded around and wanted to draw the longest straw, Bartholomea ran to the nearby church and prayed to Our Lady, “Mother, you must give me the longest straw!” She returned, her cheeks flushed with excitement, and drew the longest straw. From that moment on it was clear to her that this was her life’s idea, or, as we would say, her personal ideal: I want to be a great saint soon!

You may recall Max Brunner. His personal ideal is a reflection of the entire atmosphere of that time [Schoenstatt’s founding years]: I want to be a great saint! Little Bartholomea added a very important word which we want to take to heart in this jubilee year. I want to be a great saint *soon*! Or even better: *Today* and *now* are what really count. I could imagine that my words, (...) reminding you of the family’s past greatness, enkindle your hearts to say: I really want to be a great saint. Sanctity embraces everything noble and great. But we must be honest—it happens to you and it happens to me and to everyone: We are much too quick about putting off the serious work {48} required to become saints. Tomorrow is the easy excuse for

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<sup>5</sup> St. Bartholomea Capitanio (1807-1833), Italian religious and, in spite of her early death, foundress of the Sisters of Charity of Lovere. She was canonized in 1950.

many of us. Tomorrow is the death sentence for serious striving for sanctity. (...)

I am sure you have already heard the story of the gathering of the devils in hell. The Devil was discussing with his subordinates about what they could do to ensnare as many souls as possible. The Devil was in a fury and upbraided his helpers. They had accomplished much too little! One devil sheepishly spoke up: “But I told people: There is no God; the priests just make him up.” The devil’s response was: “You fool! It’s too clear that there is a God. That will only get us souls that are lazy and half-hearted.” Another growled, “I have told them that the Church is useless and eternity is a figment of the imagination. Live for the world, that’s what counts!” Lucifer shook his head, “That’s not enough. It won’t trip up the most noble and holy souls.” Now the whole gathering fell silent. No one had the courage to say more about *his* recipe. Finally a little devil spoke up: “This is how I do it. I go up to someone and say: Of course there is a God. He is the highest good and you must love him with all your heart..., yes, you must do that! Or I say: Of course Christ lived and founded the Church. And you must become as holy as you can. Eternity is real and all of time is nothing in comparison! But then I whisper in their ear: Today you can make yourself comfortable one last time. You must start tomorrow. Give yourself to God tomorrow. Wait one more day and enjoy life.” And now the Devil shouted loudly, “Yes, that’s it! With that we can ensnare good souls left and right! Go, now, especially to the monasteries, and say: You all want to become saints! Yes, that is your goal! But wait until tomorrow, for today you can still have a good time!”

{50} Do you see how important “today” can and must be? Can you see what must go into a down-to-earth striving for sanctity? All illusion must fall away. What does “today” mean? It means I must ask myself from early in the morning until late at night: How can I do (fill in the blank) in a holy way? And then? Then I must *do* whatever I do—eating, drinking, games, recreation—in a holy way, i.e., as perfectly as possible out of a great love.

You may have already heard this story about St. Aloysius. He

was once having a good time at a recreation. Someone asked him what he would do if God would take his life at that very moment. What answers might he have given? He could have said “make a general confession” or at least “go to the chapel and say an act of contrition.” But Aloysius said, “I would stay and continue the game.” In other words: What counts is what I’m doing today and what I’m doing now! (...)

{52} Remember how our simple covenant prayer also includes this “today” in a very prominent way: “My Queen, my Mother, I give myself entirely to you, and to show my devotion to you, I consecrate to you *this day* my eyes...” Tomorrow means a fresh start. But today I have work to do and want to do it aware of Mary’s protection. (...)

{53} That is probably enough for now. But if I am going to tell you something more concrete about everyday sanctity, I will have to answer the following three questions:

1. What do we mean by everyday sanctity?
2. Why should we strive for it? {54}
3. How should we strive for it? (...)

## 1. What is Everyday Sanctity?

{60} [Everyday sanctity] means fulfilling our duties as perfectly as possible in every situation in life out of as great a love for God as possible.

A few short thoughts:

a) A wonderful thing about our family is that *every one of us can become a saint in her own way*. Many spiritually-minded people in the world have the erroneous idea that one can only become a saint in a convent. This is a grave error, and one which can do a great deal of harm. This is an area where St. Francis de Sales broke much new ground. He freed striving for sanctity from the notion that one must become a religious and showed in his writings again and again that one can (and must!) be a saint in any walk of life. Because of this one must be somewhat careful, for ascetical books are mostly written by religious and therefore give the impression that we must live sanctity the way religious do. This is incorrect. If I am a nun, my sanctity must be that of a nun. If I am married, my sanctity must be that of someone who is married. What do my obligations look like then? My sanctity consists in this: 1) renunciation of everything incompatible with my state in life and 2) serving others out of love. If I do that I can become a canonizable saint. {61} Sanctity is compatible with every state in life. I must only try to fulfill my duties as perfectly as possible, and to do it out of a great and tender love for God.

b) The saints of youth like Stanislaus Kostka, John Berchmanns, and even today's saint, Brother Conrad, are saints who did nothing extraordinary. They *faithfully fulfilled their duties*.

i.) Applied to us personally, this not only means we should faithfully fulfill our duties at home and work—though this is the first meaning—but also use every opportunity to continue our self-education. I am not just satisfied with doing the bare minimum. I also strive for *the perfection of my profession*. For instance, a teacher should not say, “Let other teachers study while I use the time to

pray.” Because we strive for sanctity, we should strive to perfect ourselves in our profession.

Suppose you are one of two women with the same job. I strive for sanctity and the other does not. If we are both equally capable, my work should be better than hers, for I receive the help of grace. After all, grace is there to help me do my duties as faithfully as possible. How should you view the role of grace, prayer, and the sacraments [in your life]? Like a wagon driver trying to get the most out of his team. Hence, we must also demand things of ourselves; I must fulfill the things my work demands {62} as perfectly as possible. Many people treat grace like snips of paper to be thrown away. We must make use of the many helps afforded by grace to do our ordinary duties more faithfully, which in turn earns us further graces.

ii.) The same applies when I think of my ordinary *moral duties*, like those connected with the fifth commandment. I ought to be more approachable and ready to help than others who are not striving for sanctity. It should not be said of us: The holier they are, the less civilized and courteous! This is also something we must see as part of a life of sanctity. In every part of my life I want to and ought to fulfill my ordinary moral duties faithfully: to be kind in my dealings with others, good to the poor, etc. A good example of this is Joseph Engling...

This is the kind of sanctity which the world seeks. Many people say, “We are more Christian than the Catholics,” speaking scornfully of “pious ladies.” Who exactly do they mean? Those who constantly sip the waters of grace without any serious effort to live a morally<sup>6</sup> better life: “I go to confession so-and-so often, I earned such and such an indulgence, I pray.” We all make mistakes. But the striving must be there. The most dangerous people are those who want to live religious lives but make no effort to be of use to anybody. (...)

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<sup>6</sup> The German word *sittlich* does not only mean “morally” in the sense of keeping the commandments, but also in the sense of moral excellence, that is, one’s striving for high ideals and the self-education needed to accomplish it.

## Heroic Moral Strength

{66} a) Our striving, whether I am a housewife, a teacher, or a businesswoman, is the call we share as *a family*—the *call to holiness*. To strive for everyday sanctity is our calling. Recall the definition of everyday sanctity: doing all things in everyday life, including the smallest, as perfectly as possible and out of an outstanding love. We know that this demands engaging all the moral strength at our disposal. It demands *heroic moral strength*. Here we need to pause. Without this wrestling and striving for the summit of heroic moral strength, we cannot wrestle and strive for the ideal of genuine everyday sanctity. It must not remain some image of sanctity on a pedestal, but be something totally concrete and everyday. Anyone who has a grasp of what it means senses what enormous moral strength is needed to adhere to this goal and to reach it.

b) The height of this goal would nearly make us shudder if we did not know that *our nature has a deep capacity* for it. What do I mean? We would all do well to convince ourselves that our nature, especially our nature as women, has a strong innate drive for self-surrender, giving of self and sacrifice. How we love to follow those who ask great things of us! In Schoenstatt we know this and therefore do not play around. We {68} look into the heart of God and into our own hearts and have the courage to take up the very highest goals, saying: The doors are closed to anyone lacking the courage to strive for this goal.

Ask yourselves: Is it true that those who ask the most of us are the ones who awaken our heroism? Or are we really happiest when someone promises us security, pleasure, and the like? To be sure, there are moments in our lives when we have a need for pleasure. But we can't stand it too long. As soon as the noble side of us is stirred, we become dissatisfied with pleasure-seeking, become dissatisfied with self-centeredness and self-seeking. Then the incredible urge awakens in me to unconditionally give my all for a great work. I want to urge you to review your own experience in everyday life and ask if you have this tendency to sacrifice, surrender, self-renunciation and constant giving to others. You must know this for your-

self. So much depends on our own effort to know and guide ourselves.

Should I give you the second proof of this? It is really a very deep proof. Will you understand it at once? I think you will. What do I want to prove? That our tendency to heroic sacrifice is an innate part of who we are. I can give you the following reason for this: we are all images of God. God created us all in his image and likeness, and the nature of woman is to an extraordinary extent an image of the essence of God. Our essence is so strongly oriented on love, {69} and *God is love*. The nature of every human being is oriented to some degree on love. And your nature? I cannot go into a detailed proof here—you will have to do that on your own—but your nature is oriented to love to a singular degree. I am therefore a singular image of God's love. Now ask yourselves: What does love mean? It means giving of self! And I cannot give of self without a giving up of self. Every self-surrender demands some degree of self-renunciation. If my nature is so essentially oriented on love, then I must also be oriented on total surrender and giving up of self. (...)

## The Mass as Source of Heroic Moral Strength

{71} How does this come about? Through the One who comes to us in Holy Mass. It is the *Lord!* He passes through our times on the stage of the altar. And what does he do? Let me mention only two things:

a) He gives us *an example* through the absolutely unconditional surrender of his entire being and essence to the heavenly Father. This is how we must see Holy Mass. Each day Christ mysteriously offers himself anew to the heavenly Father. It is the most unconditional surrender: "See, Father, I come to do your will" (cf Heb 10,7), not my will. The only will we want to do is that of the Father. I come to do *your will!* And we know how unconditionally Christ did that. He tasted every station of his suffering until the complete emptying of self. *Et exinanivit* (and he emptied himself, Phil 2,7)! Why? Because the Father willed it. We must pause here a moment. In fact, you should meditate on Our Lord again and again, and not so much

from the standpoint of how his surrender makes {72} our life easy, but see him as the great hero who knows only one thing: a selfless emptying out and giving of self, because the Father wills it for the redemption of the world.

[The Mass awakens] moral heroism because day after day Our Lord places himself before our eyes as the perfect embodiment of what the family demands and what our soul desires. The rest is in your hands. If you need something to meditate on, examine the words and deeds of Christ to discover the great attitude: “I come to do you will!” It is indeed touching how Our Lord was able to say of himself at the end of his life: “I have completed the work you gave me” (Jn 17,4). Christ does not say: I had it easy because I did the Father’s will, but: I completed the work, namely: I gave myself. Yes, *this* is the work which he completed. *This* work and no other! He did not run from place to place, but was rather led, thinking only one thing: “Heavenly Father, what do you want of me?” Everyday sanctity is conformity with the will of God.

What marvels Christ could have accomplished with his divine power, his human knowledge, his eloquence! How he could have turned the world on its head through his words and deeds! Some of us who are very apostolic want to do the same. But remember: “Keep your hand to the plow!” {73} This is also what Our Lord wants to tell us when he says that he has only completed the work which his heavenly Father has given him. He did not go beyond the boundaries of his country; he did not make trips the way I do. He lived for 30 years with the Blessed Mother. And I? What a drive I sometimes have to get out and convert the world! Change here and conversion there! To be sure, this urge is fine if it comes from God. But think about whether it might not be a purely natural urge. Christ wanted nothing else than to do the will of the Father at all times. Whether it made him happy or sad, whether it was exciting or boring, whether the feelings carried him or not was secondary. He only knew one thing: I come to do your will. Holy Mass is therefore a watchfire of moral heroism. Why? Because of the great example of Christ who gives everything he is and has to the heavenly Father.

b) Examples give us strength, but cannot carry us through every difficulty. In Holy Mass we are *reunited with Christ*. He wants to be the strength in us which gives us heroic courage for the next 24 hours. He wants to come to life in us. After all, this is the great mystery of belonging to Christ. He comes to me with this attitude in a mysterious way when I participate in the sacred action, not least of all in Holy Communion. Through it he wants to give new life to my everyday sanctity. He accompanies me {74} in everyday life for another 24 hours. I go as an another Christ, teaching or doing the accounting. Through me Christ goes to my workplace for another 24 hours. In me he wants to live the ideal of everyday sanctity for 24 hours. Then I say, “Christ, I don’t want to let you down.” I let him down when I do not share my life with him. Christ once said to Philip, “Whoever sees me sees the Father” (Jn 14,9). In the same way we should be able to say: “Whoever sees me sees Christ. If you want to know what Christ looks like, how he would have lived in my circumstances: Whoever sees me sees Christ and also the living God.” Do you notice how Holy Mass can and must be a true watchfire of heroic moral strength?

This is all put very briefly. We want to ask Our Lady to help us understand these thoughts and allow the one or the other word to fall on truly fertile ground. This is what ultimately matters. Of what use is a great burst of enthusiasm if we do not accept the grace of the eternal God to give him the ultimate and best gift of ourselves.

Of course, as Schoenstatt children we can always say: Our Lord also comes to me in the form of our Blessed Mother. I go through my everyday life as another Christ, but also as another Mary—an *altera Maria*. Just as Our Lord worked the miracle of perfect surrender and self-renunciation in Mary, today he wants to go through the day with me: in part as another Christ and in part as another Mary. He stands before us as the endless {75} model for both sexes, but the feminine embodiment of Christ is Mary. I only need to look at her. What the epistles and Gospels say, Christ realized in exemplary fashion in Our Lady. Now he wants to make me another Mary. Just as she become another Christ, in her and through her I become another Christ. You

must give these ideas some thought.

We therefore want to encourage each other to place ourselves on the paten with the host. The host symbolizes me. I place myself on the paten. Just as the host is transformed I want to be transformed, and just as Our Lord gives himself heroically to the heavenly Father, I heroically give myself to him. If I do that every day, what will my response be when I experience some sorrow, some failure, during the day? If we are really honest, we have to admit that we are big liars. Just think: In the morning I place ourselves at the disposal of Our Lord and want to hang with him on the cross to fulfill the will of God, and then, when things are supposed to get serious, we jump down from the cross. Such childishness! This is not the way it should be!

The Apostle Paul once put it so well: “As often as you receive communion, you should proclaim the death of the Lord” (cf 1 Cor 11,26). This means that we should learn to die and proclaim the death of the Lord during the day. I, too, must bear the {76} wounds of the Lord in my body and soul for 24 hours. It is only fitting. It is the most self-understood thing in the world. I belong on the cross, I must be on the cross. I must climb the cross with Christ. Therefore: up on the cross! Then the deepest characteristic of who I am is fulfilled—the feature of total surrender. This is how we must look at Holy Mass and everything which we do during the year. It all depends on everyday sanctity!

[[To have the aim of “Marian everyday sanctity” and to think it demands that we go to Christ in Marian spirit may be fine, but this “going” must be in the very concrete way of true everyday sanctity. Otherwise it is too much in the air. If you just say that we go to Christ holding Mary’s hand, it sounds nice, it sounds warm and tender, but it that all? It must have a serious ring to it. This is the essence of sanctity and the purpose of our going to Christ: sanctity. Our Lord wants to go through the world in us by embodying in us day after day the ideal of everyday sanctity.

We therefore want to try to find ourselves once more here on the altar today, each of us in her own way, ready to give ourselves for the great task which God has chosen for us, but also ready to let Christ

work in us after the model of our dear Blessed Mother—for 24 hours. *Today* we receive the grace to strive heroically for sanctity, to hear these talks in simplicity and then meditate on them a little, while we use the day to pray our hearts full and give ourselves to God. If we do that every day, we will have a solid point of rest for our daily work.]]



(Third talk)

(...)

## 2. Why should we strive for Everyday Sanctity?

{77} Our family has gotten larger. What unites us is the striving for everyday sanctity and the effort to grow into a special love and devotion to the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt. May she bless and help us, so that today's talk and everything we discuss takes deep root in our souls.

Yesterday we discussed the meaning and purpose of our striving. It is everyday sanctity. We now know what it means. We even gave ourselves some homework. We now need to consider some of the motivations and make them our own, so that we have the push which helps us to not lose sight of our high ideal.

{78} *Why should we strive for everyday sanctity?* It is the answer to the deepest desires and longings of my heart,  
to the deepest desires and longings of the eternal God,  
to the deepest desires and longings of the Schoenstatt Family,  
to the deepest desires and longings of the world of today.

Now I don't know what you have been able to assimilate from the previous thoughts and whether it has been helpful. I will only say the one or the other thing about each point.

### a. An Answer to the Deepest Longings of My Heart

*Everyday Sanctity gives an answer to an extraordinarily deep longing of our heart.* I want to express it differently by saying: The word "everyday sanctity" connotes everything we know of as noble and lofty.

At this point you think of something you consider truly great. Perhaps it is a strong drive for goodness, for nobility of being. Ask yourselves: Does not genuine sanctity satisfy this drive? Are not everyday saints simply *the most blessed people there are*, embodying genuine goodness in an outstanding manner?

Or perhaps I my strong drive is to be a person of deep feeling. The struggle for existence has, I must admit, left me dried out and withered, but here and there I have met women who are truly noble.

There is something delightful about meeting {79} a girl or woman who is both totally anchored in God and gifted with a warm, human heart. Such emotional richness is the pinnacle of everyday sanctity. This too is something that "everyday sanctity" brings to mind.

Or your drive may be to be more totally spiritual. You feel the human side of life dragging you down, but when you kneel before the image of Mary, you find that her purity and untouchedness lift you up. Everyday sanctity gives an answer to this. The everyday saint is, to a degree, the personification of the totally spiritual being. This might seem like a contradiction, but everyday sanctity embraces both.

Or you may have an extremely great longing to give yourself to someone. You feel called to an abundant and fruitful life that touches many people. You do not want to spend your life alone, leading a comfortable life where you take care of yourself; you want to devote yourself to a great mission. When you part from this life, people must feel that something irreplaceable has been lost. Again, the answer is: the genuine everyday saint lives not only for others, seeks not only self, but gives beyond all measure when others are in need.

Or you may have the longing to be with God, to grasp with faith the unknown God who is constantly in us and around us, and to shape and mold {80} your whole life on the basis of this one thought. Do not forget that this is true everyday sanctity.

I could go on this way indefinitely. You could look into your heart and see and hear again and again: This and that is noble and great; it is my heart's desire. To be sure, we also find ignoble things from time to time: selfishness, greed, pleasure-seeking, but we want to fight that. I still remember well how, in the first two years (1912-14) when we were just getting to know the ideal of sanctity, we heard that [sanctity] is the essence of all greatness and nobility and an answer to the longing of our hearts. Only when the boys discovered in 1914 or 1915 that sanctity is not something alien but truly embodies all things noble and beautiful, did the ideal of everyday sanctity finally take root in the family, never to be lost. "What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!" I can take a similar path by asking myself in quiet moments, "What is your

true desire?” and say to myself: “Is it not all included in the ideal of everyday sanctity?”

### **b. An Answer to the Deepest Longings of the Family**

Second motivation: Everyday sanctity gives *an answer to the deepest expectations of our family*. Is it enough to remind you of how we believe in the mission we have received from the living God through the intercession of our dear Blessed Mother? It is to support the Church in {81} turbulent times and to help her sail through these times of great difficulty into a healthier, happier future. On the whole we ought to expand our horizons a little. But we ask ourselves: How can we fulfill this task? By giving many talks? No, no, only by embodying the spirit of Christianity as perfectly as possible. What is the spirit of Christianity? It is everyday sanctity. Anyone of us who stands in the middle of life, knowing the needs of the modern Church, will have but one answer to give in the face of turmoil and distress: my primary contribution to solving and relieving the tension is to work to grasp the spirit of Christianity as perfectly as possible and to become truly holy.

Let me present you with a second thought for your consideration: From very the beginning, Schoenstatt strived seriously to be a family of saints. Because of this, I mentioned to you yesterday how our state in life must urge us on. To be a member of Schoenstatt means to strive seriously for sanctity. If this striving is alive—I recall once more the great tasks which you probably have to fulfill—then we can expect that one day a truly great religious movement of renewal will go forth from us; then we can expect that we will one day be as numerous as the sand on the shore.

I think that these two short reminders ought to be enough for us. Everyday sanctity profoundly answers {82} the expectations and longings of the family.

### **c. An Answer to the Deepest Longings of the Church**

Third motivation: *the longing of the Church*. We all sense the danger the Church is in today all over the world—not only in the

countries around us<sup>7</sup> but in the whole world. This is so true that many people in many places, even here in Switzerland, are becoming restless. I have been told that some are beginning to ask how they will defend themselves when the calamity strikes; how to financially protect themselves. I do not think this should be our greatest concern. In his encyclical<sup>8</sup> the Holy Father clearly indicated that through the tempests God wishes to sanctify, renew and rejuvenate today’s times. You can therefore keep in mind that the storm against the Church in the whole world will not come to an end until God has more or less achieved his ends. The Holy Father does not tire of pointing out both privately and publicly that God wants countless children of the Church today to strive for true sanctity. It is almost touching the way he puts it in his encyclicals. For instance, in his encyclical against atheistic communism<sup>9</sup> he indicates that today many Catholics are striving for the pinnacle of sanctity; and then he wishes that as many Catholics as possible interpret the signs of the times this way and reach out for a similarly high ideal. In our language we would say that the Holy Father demands {83} in the name of the Church and therefore in the name of God, that we answer the storms of the times through a deep-seated wrestling for genuine sanctity. You must simply expect that the influence of the Church in public life will be diminished in the whole world. Just look in the countries around us. There the Church has no influence at all any more in the public sphere. How strongly all her external influence is reviled! Why? The Church must go into the catacombs in order to reclaim her deepest sources. She must become a holy Church again, a holy Bride of the holy Bridegroom.

There are only meant to be a few thoughts. Perhaps a time will come when this seed sprouts. This is why we do not fret about the future of the Church, but have only one concern: How can we

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<sup>7</sup> Namely in the overtly anti-religious regimes of Hitler in Germany and Mussolini in Italy.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Pius XI, encyclical to the German bishops, *Mit brennender Sorge*, March 14, 1937, No. 42.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Pius XI, encyclical *Divini Redemptoris*, March 19, 1937.

increase the number of everyday saints? We serve the Church the most by realizing in our family and in ourselves the intentions of God regarding our times. Is this not correct? Everyday sanctity gives a satisfying answer to the longings of the Church.

#### **d. An Answer to the Deepest Longings of the World**

Fourth motivation: When I think of the *longings of the world*, what does it want? It wants *whole persons*, persons who stand for something, who are cut from whole cloth. It wants to be redeemed, wants to form happy and fulfilled persons. The world and the times miss the mark, of course. They try ways which lead to unhappy and unfulfilled {84} persons. Behold everyday sanctity! It is the true way to happiness—to the extent that we can be truly happy here on earth. Anyone who belongs to God and sees the world correctly in God and because of God is as happy as anyone can be here on earth.

People today often seek false solutions because of acute earthly distress. An ideology comes along and promises: We will take care of everything. People follow them in droves. One even hears it said here [in Switzerland]: If only we would be annexed [by Nazi Germany], then unemployment would be taken care of, etc., then our earthly needs would be mostly taken care of. You see, at the root of this is the drive for happiness. However, the drive for happiness can ultimately be only satisfied on the deepest level through true and genuine everyday sanctity; for everyday sanctity reaches not only for the stars, but also down to earth. It does not only seek a home in God, but also forms ordinary everyday life. For God's sake it also strives for economic improvement and security and for healthy progress. It embraces all the greatness one can see and expect in the Church, the world, in one's own heart and in the family.

With this I have addressed in broad strokes the topic: "Why everyday sanctity?"

### **3. How Can we Become Everyday Saints?**

{85} How can we become everyday saints? I already gave one answer to this question this morning [at holy Mass].

A general answer: We must go the ways and use the means which Schoenstatt gives us. Which are they?

a) First come the more *interior means*. Then come the *exterior means*.

Interior means. They are found under the familiar titles of personal ideal (PI), particular examination (PE) and spiritual daily order (SDO).

Exterior means are: maintaining close bonds with one another, i.e. our unity as a family.

This gives us a quite broad range of possibilities. Why, the PI, PE, SDO, and close mutual bonds do so much to give us the strength to embody, spread and deepen our great family ideal! They stand for a whole world of ideas.

This morning I mentioned one point from the spiritual daily order: Holy Mass. Please do not forget that attending Mass as I described it is a means to genuine everyday sanctity. But you must always see to it that the Holy Mass has an effect in shaping your ordinary work-day, and that we are not dreamers who talk great religious ideas without putting anything into practice. We must be practical and down-to-earth. Just as the mountains of our homeland are both close to earth and close to heaven, our way of living the graces received in Holy Mass must be just as close to earth and heaven.

{86} At this point I could discuss many other points [which can be in an SDO]. We spoke yesterday about spiritual reading and meditation. Perhaps you have already found your own ways to translate these things into daily life.

b) But I may and must mention a means which will be the focus of our attention for the rest of the day. I think that you have a very special longing for this means. After all, you came here to see if Our Lady really wants to take up her abode here as the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt. This suggests the following means:

*simple, deep devotion to Mary.*

I can even say that deep Marian devotion is *the root of our spirituality*. Hence, whoever strives for and to some extent attains this deep attachment to Mary, this intimacy with our Blessed Mother, has made her own the root of *our* everyday sanctity. Think of a marvelous fruit-bearing tree. I desire the fruit. Of course, I can just pick and enjoy some. This gives me joy. But the fruit is soon gone. On the other hand, I can go and take a twig, or rather, a offshoot of the root and plant it in my garden. When I have the root, {87} then I have the trunk and with the trunk come branches and twigs and then the fruit. In just this way we could say that the true and genuine root of our everyday sanctity is a deep, tender relationship with Mary.

— I say *our* everyday sanctity. The word “our” can have two accents. It can mean our sanctity *as Schoenstatt children*. After all, this year’s motto incorporated it again: “Marian everyday sanctity.” Schoenstatt everyday sanctity is always Marian, must always have a Marian flavor. The root of our everyday sanctity as Schoenstatt children must have a Marian flavor.

—When I say “our” again, I do so thinking of you as women and of genuine feminine everyday sanctity. *As women* we must cultivate a different kind of sanctity than men because, after all, sanctity must correspond to our being. If God has given us women a different ontological<sup>10</sup> structure, our spirituality and everyday sanctity must be distinct. It must correspond to our nature as women. I therefore repeat: for us women Marian everyday sanctity means a decidedly feminine everyday sanctity.

Now I don’t know which thought I should especially discuss here—the general Schoenstatt and therefore Marian dimension or the specifically feminine and therefore Marian dimension. Both thoughts must resonate together. {88} But you understand how important it is for us to have a deep-seated love of Mary. If we could therefore love Our Lady more and do so more tenderly than ever, you would see what mighty impulses and safeguards we would take home with us

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<sup>10</sup> Ontological: of or pertaining to our being, who we are.

for our everyday sanctity.

### **Feminine Everyday Sanctity**

Perhaps I should especially stress the idea of *Marian everyday sanctity*. Our everyday sanctity must be decidedly feminine and therefore Marian. One of the root concepts of Christianity is Christ’s role as the ideal of all creatures, of each age in life, of both men and women (see Col 1,15-20). In this light Our Lady is considered the feminine embodiment of the image of Christ. To discover how I should imitate Christ, I need only look to the image of Mary. I can tell you that nowhere else has the greatness of woman been so extolled as in Catholic dogma—for it says nothing but the very greatest about the Mother of God. According to Catholic dogma, Mary is the ideal image of the redeemed person. There is no purely human individual—Christ, after all, was God—who represents such a high ideal as Mary, a woman like us. {89} We can be justifiably proud of this. It would be so important for us, especially in the confused times we live in, to have a truly pronounced sense of our dignity as women.

I say: know the dignity of your sex! This is not the same as sexual knowing. Awareness of the dignity of one’s sex means two things. It means I am different in nature but equal in value. We are different from men. I take a certain pride in being a woman. I am proud to be a woman. I do not want to be like the man. Awareness of the dignity of woman includes both the awareness of being different and, at the same time, the awareness of being of equal value. I must not look furtively over to man and say: How great he is and how small I am! To be sure, because the nature of man is different, it complements our nature. But how important it is for us to cultivate the awareness: We are of equal value. When we as women let ourselves be overcome by feelings of inferiority, tomorrow and the day after we will be like a matchstick on the street which anyone can play with. The awareness of our dignity as women includes the awareness of the pronounced differences of nature and the magnificent equality of value. We must foster this awareness in an enlightened manner

and always see ourselves mirrored in the image of the Blessed Mother.

We just said that Mary embodies the highest ideal of the human person in the state of grace and, consequently, what it means to be genuinely human. We can go even further and say: Over and beyond that Mary is the highest ideal of perfect womanhood. If we therefore want to know what genuine womanhood looks like, we need only be swept away by and fall in love with the image of the Blessed Mother. And if we want to know what feminine everyday sanctity looks like, we likewise need only look to the image of Mary.

That having been said, it is appropriate that we take a closer look at this image in the next talks. In part I will borrow paint and brush from Sacred Scripture, in part from history. I will begin to paint and sketch and draw. But I will always fall short, for if it is God who has drawn the image of Mary, no angel or saint, much less we, could ever do it justice.

### **1. The General Features of the Image of Mary**

I begin by drawing the image of Our Lady in broad general strokes before using the next talks to go into greater detail.

a) Let me begin with *a quote from the Book of Revelation*. It is here that Mary is called “the woman clothed with the sun” (Rev 12,1). The sun is normally interpreted as Christ Jesus. This is correct. But we can also interpret it another way: The Mother of God stands before you as the solar image of womanly dignity and beauty, as the image of the sun which preeminently embodies all things noble, dignified, feminine and womanly.

b) {91} Will you mind if I paint the image once more with a few halting strokes? If you want to understand me, if you want to see the Blessed Mother as an ideal image of feminine greatness, then you must probably begin by examining and observing the *dark background of the centuries*. On the one hand is Mary in her radiant dignity. On the other hand is woman in the course of the centuries—devalued and degraded. Simply put, the effect of the light is heightened when we consider the dark background. We all experience this. If I

suddenly come from a pitch black night into a room filled with light, how bright and radiant the light is!

The dark background ranges through the centuries and millennia. In fact, the history of degeneration already begins in paradise. If you want to know the history of the character and dignity of woman and the history of its degeneration and degradation, you must ascend to paradise. There man and woman stood next to one another in royal dignity. The woman was created from the side of the man. When she opened her eyes, the first thing she saw was the man. Hence, the woman was created to fulfill a great task in life in and with the man. This is true beyond any doubt; this is also why the drive to self-giving is so strong in the soul of woman. Adam and Eve entered history with equal royal dignity. Together they wanted to see God, {92} to love the eternal God and to serve him. And it was God’s intention that the act of conceiving children would likewise generate royal, noble children of God like Adam and Eve. The act of generation was therefore not only designed to bestow purely natural life, but also divine life. The mother of all the living! (Gen 3,20). This is how woman was meant to go through history at the side of man, hand in hand, arm in arm with him, in mutual complementation and perfection. This is how it was planned by God.

Eve abused her influence over man. She misused her God-willed influence by tempting and seducing him to sin. At that moment the hour of destiny struck for all women. To be sure, original sin formally went into effect when Adam sinned. But who was his companion, the one who led him into sin? You will say “the devil.” Yes, but through the woman, through Eve the hour of destiny struck for mankind. It was also the hour of destiny in the history of woman’s dignity and nobility. Now begins a tragic history which runs through the centuries. God presents himself to Adam and Eve as an avenging God. It is true, each of them must be punished according to his or her sin. Adam shall have it hard, having to earn his bread amidst thistles and thorns, by the sweat of his brow (Gen 3,17-19). And the woman shall now be the companion of his suffering and exile. She will be subject to him. “He will be your master” (Gen 3,16). What was

Eve's sin? She abused her {93} influence over man. How is she punished? In the future she will stand under the dominion of man and be his companion in suffering and struggle.

But now human concupiscence suddenly begins to rend the God-willed relationship. It is not long before woman is the servant of man in a less noble way, and then it is not much longer before she is man's slave. She sinned in self-giving, in self-giving she is now punished. History becomes a single cry echoing down through the ages: woman tormented by man's yoke of slavery. And how man has made woman his slave! Just look at how women were treated in pagan antiquity. And what is even worse: over the centuries woman became so accustomed to this slavery that she was happy with it. (....)

Do you know what it means if the woman becomes the object of man's unbridled animal {94} lusts? What is the effect on the man, on the child? What does a woman pass on to her child if she herself is driven by animal lusts? By necessity the same degradation. We know that humanity's moral soundness depends on its relationship to woman. If the woman is degraded, morality is also undermined.

This gives a sketch of the dark background in a few broad strokes. In this age women are deformed and degraded. Given the importance of woman for the morality of a people we can therefore understand that if Christ wanted to redeem the world, the ray of redemption, the grace of redemption must strike the woman in a preeminent way. Hence, the first person pre-redeemed and fully redeemed was a woman—the Mother of God. Thanks be to God! The context is clear: Original sin and the turmoil of nature caused by masculine aggression has degraded woman and dragged her into the abyss of sin and sinfulness. The God-man now wants to redeem the world, and to do this he must especially redeem woman. Our Lady is therefore placed at the beginning of Christian history as fully redeemed. God created her, I would almost say, in an ecstasy of love, an ecstasy of love and power. She is his work of art, the masterpiece of his grace. And it is in this way that the Blessed Mother goes through the millennia as the first fully redeemed person, with blessings radiating from her.

{95} The kinds of blessings become apparent when she visits Elizabeth (Lk 1,39-56). The child leaps in his mother's womb at the moment of the encounter with Our Lady, which means that the child is blessed in and through her. This prefigures things to come. In her light the child will no longer be a burdensome byproduct of concupiscence; in her light the child will no longer be an expression, a consequence of animal lusts. In her the child is blessed.

The man [Zechariah] also begins to be healed. He begins to speak. Elizabeth's husband can speak again. You notice that in the Mother of God the man is blessed, the child is blessed.

Finally, the woman begins to prophecy. This is the third stream of blessings; its object is womanhood. Consider it for yourselves: To what extent does Mary raise the entire female race again to its primordial nobility? Please listen carefully: Next to the one Man who especially ennobles the male nature, is placed the one Woman as the person fully redeemed and penetrated by grace. Here Christ stands in contrast to Adam, and Mary to Eve. In her light we can rediscover the full nobility of genuine womanhood.

## **2. Some Finer Details of the Image of Mary**

If you want to hear more details about the image of Mary, you must keep in mind:

### *a. Woman's Dignity in General*

*In the Mother of God woman is once more a queen.* Eve was a queen in the primordial order. She stood in radiant dignity next to the king of creation. By her sin she deprived herself and all women of this royal dignity {96} for millennia. In Mary woman is queen again—not only because Mary is of royal lineage, but because grace reigns in her so totally that she stands in total royal freedom over all concupiscence.

This royal, noble freedom also touches our lives. Because of it we all want to live in such a way that whoever sees us should find on our brow a glimmer, a mysterious radiance, a mysterious crown of Mary. Whoever does not find this mysterious crown on our brow

cannot view us as another Mary. In the Blessed Mother woman has again become a queen. She goes through life with royal freedom over the life of the drives. In time I must make something of this royal radiance my own. (....)

#### *b. In Virginity*

{97} *In the Mother of God we are given a new perspective of the radiance of virginity.* Paganism, including the new paganism of our times, is convinced that a woman who does not marry is only half a woman. We know {98} how the new pagans infect countless millions with the view that the woman is only there for the man; the only meaning for her existence is the man. Our Lady tells us something different. When saying “Behold the handmaid...” she does not say “...of the man” but “...of the Lord” (Lk 1,38) In Mary virginity is given a resplendent right to exist. She did not give herself to a man. She gave herself to the eternal, infinite God. As a result we can say that those of us who want to remain virginal need not feel inferior. No, we have chosen the Son of a King; to him belongs the entire power of our love. I know the Son of a King. Who? It is the God-man, the eternal God himself. What others give to a man in bridal, spousal love, we give as Mary did to the eternal, infinite God. It may be a sacrifice, but it is also the source of radiant greatness.

Do you sense how our womanhood is ennobled in the Blessed Mother? The meaning of our existence is not totally dependent on men. We are ultimately dependent on God. We can also be persons in our own right without the man, without marrying.

#### *c. In Marriage*

*In the Mother of God marriage, too, is placed once more in radiant light.* Marriage is not just a concession to concupiscence. What is marriage? What does it mean to be in relationship with the other sex? What limits does {99} Christ lay down in these matters? If I so much as lust after someone in my thoughts, I have committed adultery (cf Mt 5,28). Christ’s entire approach to the laws about marriage is a radiant glow, a sound protecting wall around the dignity

of woman. To even look at a woman lustfully is a sin.

But this is not enough. When a woman marries, how must the child be viewed? In Mary’s case the child and the birth of the child is not an expression of concupiscence, but the expression of a love which is extremely pure, motherly and in service of the other. As a result, the child born in Christian marriage is the fruit of a love blessed by God, of a profound, motherly, even divine love. Notice what a new dignity this bestows on the entire life of woman! This is so outstanding an ideal that one could almost ask: Isn’t it too good to be true?

#### *d. As Paragon of Morals*

*In the Mother of God the ideal of genuine womanhood is valued, and with it a people’s moral standards.* As the woman is esteemed, so too is the morality of a people. What a moral influence Our Lady exercises on woman, on the child, and on the man!

This gives you the general direction of the effect of the Blessed Mother on us. [She awakens and secures] the awareness of the dignity of our sex. We always want to remember this. {100} My value is equal to that of the man. Man’s transfigured model is the God-man, mine is the image of Our Lady. She is the womanly embodiment of the image of Christ. She is the Mirror of Justice; in the image of Mary I see my own radiant dignity. How the dignity of woman is dragged down today! How women are basely exploited for the most ignoble passions! These are reasons why we must fall in love with the image of the Mother of God.

It is said of an Austrian crown prince<sup>11</sup> that in his boyhood he loved to look in the mirror. His tutor saw this and thought he must intervene to prevent the boy from becoming vain. He therefore went up to the boy and demanded that he hand over the mirror. The boy did not want to, but finally did. And what did the tutor see? The glass of the mirror had been removed and replaced with an image of Mary! Of course the prince was allowed to keep such a mirror and

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<sup>11</sup> The later Emperor Ferdinand III (reigned 1637-1657).

look into it as much as he liked.

You see, this is our mirror too. We must look into this mirror more and more often and be grateful to the Eternal God that in her we have a being, a merely human being who embodies in a singular and perfect manner the entire unique dignity of woman. (...)

{105} A beautiful and far-ranging task would be to think [of ways to apply this image of woman]. For instance, if we are involved in the movement promoting the rights of women in the workplace, we must be aware of the danger that women who work outside the home today become too much like men. It is extremely important that we take care that women in the workplace are given legal protections and receive fair wages, but it is even more necessary that they be removed from the danger of having to be like men. They should not become men; they should remain women. They would be aware of how they are different. If women in the workplace become women again, they will save our culture. The world of women today has become too masculine, too devoid of heart and soul. I know that this will be very hard to change. Woman {106} must give life a soul. Life has become so terribly brutal today. Women in the workplace must do all they can to keep from being dragged down into the filth. In fact, we must remain faithful to the original dignity of woman, even when all else is against us. This is a masterpiece and the ideal is certainly not easy to attain, but we must strive for it.

We could now consider: What makes woman unique? This would be a beautiful topic in its own right. In contrast to man, her strengths are in several areas: in the intuitive grasp of the truth, in giving herself selflessly to the service of life in all its facets, in cultivating, helping and serving. Or, to put it differently: the unique character of woman is especially embodied in the inclination to purity, to things of the heart and soul, and to self-giving. But that is enough. I would rather portray the image of Mary in another way.

### 3. Childlikeness as a Way to the Image of Mary

If I examine the matter more exactly, the ideal of woman can be said to resemble a tree—with root, trunk and fruits. The root is

genuine childlikeness, the trunk is selfless service, the fruit is an intuitive grasp of the truth or an instinct for genuine truth. {107} We could discuss this at great length. Of value would be to know what this image looks like, how it is lived, and how Mary helps us attain it. The root of this tree is *childlikeness*.

*What do we mean by childlikeness?* To speak in more learned tones: it means childlike piety, childlike simplicity and childlike purity<sup>12</sup>. (...)

[[Fifth talk]

{117} It is of great value that we have found a home for ourselves here on Mount Sion. When we pray, we must not forget: we pray not only for ourselves, but also pray: Bless our country! Bless the whole world! Our Family wants to grow, want to become a worldwide movement. A certain spirit of conquest needs to gradually come over us.

Our day of recollection has focused on Marian everyday sanctity in the spirit of this year's motto. This was so that we can know how to continually draw down Our Lady through genuine everyday sanctity. (...)

What are we striving for? Marian everyday sanctity. This is the same as feminine everyday sanctity... We investigated its root, {118} trunk and fruits. We would do well to dwell a little more on the root—childlikeness—so that we have the strength to face life and be mature and motherly, simple and ready to serve.

We want to reflect together on what childlikeness means and what can urge us to reach out our hand for this true and genuine childlikeness.]]

*But how can we practice it?* The general answer is this: We practice it by looking again and again into the Marian “mirror,” and by trying to imitate her. Mary is our example for childlike piety,

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<sup>12</sup> The details of this part of the talk are omitted here. The reader is referred to Fr. Kentenich's main work on childlikeness, *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), especially p. 219-259.



childlike simplicity and childlike purity.

Childlike piety. Let me give you at least a few thoughts on this. Our Lady is our example of childlike faith, hope and love. Here are the answers you can find in the life of her soul; the clues are found in the *Magnificat* (Lk 1,46-55). She, the Blessed Mother, shows us the expression of her childlikeness through the way she constantly swims in God's ocean of mercies and in the awareness of her personal need for God's mercy<sup>13</sup>.

#### a. *Swimming in the ocean of God's mercy*

"The Almighty has done great things for me... He has upheld Israel, ever mindful of his mercy..." Do you know what this means? As {119} an individual, as the member of a nation and as the member of a family, she swims in the ocean of God's mercy. He will have mercy on his people!

God is almighty, all-merciful. He shows kindness and mercy. Just as simple as this is to say, is how deep this reality should cut into our lives. We, too, must *swim in the ocean of God's mercy*, the ocean which he has opened to us as individuals and as a family. "The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is his name." Our hearts have a deep longing to love and be loved. The story of our life is the story of our drive for love. When do we begin to love the most? When we believe we are loved, know we are loved, and feel loved. When does love catch fire in us? Whenever I meet someone who offers me his or her heart. This is why it is a telling feature of Our Lady that she does not deflect the attention away from her through some false humility. She really swims in the ocean of God's mercies. We, too, must be deeply convinced that God has done great things for us and has shown us his love. This is a matter which is keenly personal. It ought to be our favorite thought to think again and again:

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<sup>13</sup> Literally: "of her own personal misery" (*ihrer eigenen persönlichen Erbärmlichkeit*). *Erbärmlichkeit* (misery, wretchedness, smallness) is the quality of the one receiving *Erbarmen* (mercy). In other words: because she is small, she is in need of God's mercy.

He loves me! In general, the saints only began to become truly heroic when the conviction laid hold of them: *God loves me*.

If we want to become everyday saints, then we must be {120} deeply impressed by this conviction: He loves me! *Dilexit me!* (Gal 2,20). I therefore love him in return. Let me repeat my suggestion that we frequently try to retrace the mercies of God in our lives. How he has preserved me, my purity, my integrity! How he has helped me and loved me personally! As a consequence, I should often meditate, especially in quiet moments, by savoring the Divine mercies I have not yet been able to appreciate. I look back on every day: What great deeds has God done for us personally and for our family? Seemingly small events have been the start of great movements. Can this not also apply to our lives? In the future I will try to keep a permanent "Thanks be to God" on my lips. I am his favorite child, the apple of his eye. Are you convinced of this? The genuine and profound spirit of being a child means constantly swimming in God's ocean of mercy. (....)

#### b. *Swimming in the Ocean of Our Need for Mercy*

{122} Mary goes on to sing in the Magnificat, "He has looked on the lowliness of his maidservant." She sees herself as the handmaid of the Lord. This is not some exercise in arrogance: Look at me, how full of grace, how *I* was worthy to be the Mother of God!

It would be good for you to more precisely grasp the foundations of this lowliness! Then you, too, will be able to join in singing, "The Almighty has done great things for me!" In the eyes of the Almighty and all-holy God she was a created being. She was not God. If I am a mere creature and acknowledge it, I will be aware of my need for mercy, if for no other reason than because of the fathomless distance between the Father and his child.

How seldom do we feel small before God! This is because we know God too little and are ignorant of who we really are. We must immerse ourselves in God's holiness and our unholiness. Have I already experienced fully the ocean of God's mercy and *the ocean of my personal misery*? What a remarkable tension between my own

{123} misery and God's mercy! In her own need for mercy, the Blessed Mother tasted the towering mercies of God.

God loves me so much not only because I am small. God does not love me just because he is good, but because I am frail. My personal smallness is the reason for God's mercies. In fact, the Magnificat gives the general law for this: "He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and lifted up the lowly." This is also one of the great laws of childlikeness. The heavenly Father is unable to withstand the recognized and acknowledged weakness of his children. To acknowledge our weakness is the beginning of a powerful growth in love. The more we feel our smallness before the eternal God, the more he elevates us to his greatness. How immeasurably small must our Blessed Mother have felt in her experiences before God! "He exalts the lowly!" If her greatness was so great and if humility and smallness is the yardstick by which we measure greatness, then the experience of her smallness must have been very great indeed!

What happens when *we* sometimes feel helpless? We forget to stretch out our hand to the hand of God, and because we miss this opportunity every kind of discouragement can enter our souls. A child that has made a mistake knows it can go to father and mother. Father and mother {124} do not expect their child to go through life free from mistakes. Father and mother are happy when the child admits his or her miserableness. It is a great law of God: the weaker we are, the more mercies he pours into our hearts. (...)

### *c. Swimming in Childlike Joy*

There is still a third thing: *swim in a constant, God-anchored childlike joy*. Our Lady must have always been happy, the way a child is always happy. "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior!" What is the source of her joy? It is the constant thought of the will of God the Father, being constantly one with the will of God.

For this reason we have every reason to be *ever-joyful*. A child shares in the same joy Mary did. All the child wants is {125} to be constantly one with the will of the heavenly Father. My only concern is to rest in the will of the heavenly Father. And this resting in the

will of God is a profound joy. "My spirit rejoices in God my Savior" and in my salvation. If only God's will be done! That is easy to say when our life is moving forward in its ordinary, everyday routine. But when I am between the hammer and the anvil, being struck as a blacksmith strikes iron, it is difficult. How strong our dear Blessed Mother was in suffering!

Mary had much joy. You know the different mysteries of the rosary. There is only one set for sorrow and two others for joy and glory! What does that mean? If the rosary has successfully captured reality, it tells us that Our Lady had much joy in life. Now you must not think that this joy is only for feastsdays, no, we should really foster genuine weekday joy. What is Sunday joy? When there is an emotional high. Weekday or everyday joy means resting in the will of God. In all her suffering the Blessed Mother could say again and again: This is what the Father has chosen for me. (...)

### **Conclusion**

{130} The entire family is striving this year for the high ideal of Marian everyday sanctity. We are like the youngest children of the family. Our branch is not old, but perhaps all the stronger and more vigorous. We are working towards the high, captivating and profound ideal of Marian everyday sanctity, and we want to pray and ask Our Lady to take up her abode in order to accomplish from here a great task in a difficult time which will probably come over us, too<sup>14</sup>. In the midst of great ruins, Mount Sion must be the city from which salvation goes forth to broadest circles. It is our desire and therefore the object of our wholehearted effort, to strive for the high ideal of everyday sanctity.

When we belong to our dear Lady, we no longer belong to anyone else. It is said that the Caesar Titus loved to hunt, and was especially fond of one particular deer. Caesars and kings can have their passions, too! He was concerned for the life of this deer and feared that

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<sup>14</sup> An allusion to the threat of World War, which broke out later in the same year: September 1, 1939.

the hunters of his court might encounter it one day and not know it was his favorite. He therefore had a golden collar fashioned for the deer and placed around its neck. On it was the inscription: *Nolite me tangere, quia regis sum!* Don't touch me, I belong to the King!

When we have given ourselves to the Blessed Mother, { 131 } we wear in spirit a similar inscription saying: Away with the influence of Satan! I am a favorite child of the Queen! Royal bride, favorite child! In spirit I wear the inscription: *Quia Regis, Reginae sum!* For I belong to the King and Queen! This is what I call out to those who wish to do me harm. I belong to Our Lady! I belong to the Queen and to the King, to the Eternal God, their favorite child! Begone, spirit of the world! Begone, spirit of Satan! I belong unconditionally to our dear Lady and to the Eternal God!

*Nos cum prole pia—benedicat Virgo Maria!*

[Mother with your blessed Son, bless us each and everyone!]