

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

Original transcript in German: *Priesternot 1939*

Excerpts from

Facing the Challenges of Priesthood

Priesternot (1939)

translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2005

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

English translation copyright © 2005 by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, W284 N746 Cherry Lane, Waukesha, WI 53188 USA.

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
FIRST CONFERENCE	6
1. Is the Church afraid?	7
2. Is the Schoenstatt Family afraid?	13
SECOND CONFERENCE	16
3. Are we as Priests and Schoenstatt Priests afraid?	16
The Ideal of Priestly Sanctity	21
(1) Practical (put into life)	22
THIRD CONFERENCE	25
<i>(continued)</i>	
FOURTH CONFERENCE	28
(2) Befitting our Times	28
FIFTH CONFERENCE	30
(3) Befitting our State in Life	30
SIXTH CONFERENCE	32
Theme of our Retreat: Modern Priestly Everyday Sanctity	34
PART 1: THE TENSION BETWEEN THE IMMUTABLE AND MUTABLE IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST	35
I. The immutability of the priesthood	35
Ia. ORDO ESSENDI	
A. To understand my priesthood, I must understand the priesthood of the God-man	36
SEVENTH CONFERENCE	39
B. My priesthood is a perfect, mysterious participation in the high priesthood of the God-Man	39
1. The first essential definition	39
2. The second essential definition	46
EIGHTH CONFERENCE	49
Ib. ORDO AGENDI	
A. Live your communion of being with Christ!	52

B. Live your communion of action with Christ!	57
C. Live your communion of life with Christ!	61
NINTH CONFERENCE	62
1. What obligates us to strive for a personal life of sanctity (as priests)?	62
2. The original features of our personal life of sanctity	65
TENTH CONFERENCE	70
3. What fullness of blessings can we expect from our personal life of sanctity?	70
II. Priestly immutability as a source of tensions	75
A. The threefold communion as source of tensions (1)	75
ELEVENTH CONFERENCE	77
B. The threefold communion as source of tensions (2)	77
1. The communion of being as a source of tensions (mortification)	77
2. The communion of action as a source of tensions (tensions regarding love, hope, faith)	79
3. The communion of grace as a source of tensions	81
C. Four Forms, or, the development of the immutable in priestly life as a source of practical tensions	81
1. First tension: divine power vs. human insignificance ..	81
TWELFTH CONFERENCE	87
2. Second tension: self-giving vs. self-preservation	87
THIRTEENTH CONFERENCE	98
3. Third tension: divine two-in-oneness vs. human two-in-oneness	100
4. Fourth tension: office vs. charism	108
5. Fifth tension (<i>not elaborated</i>)	110
PART 2: THE TENSION BETWEEN NATURE AND GRACE IN THE LIFE OF A PRIEST (<i>not elaborated</i>)	110
Appendix: I Owe My Priesthood to the Blessed Mother	111

Introduction

In the 1920s and 1930s, Fr. Joseph Kentenich (1885-1968) was one of the leading retreat masters in Germany. His retreats, held at different points in the year for over 100 priests at a time, were a guided course in seeing the hand of Providence behind the signs and pointed the way to a timely priestly sanctity. The retreats were held in Schoenstatt, Germany at the large *Bundesheim* retreat center¹.

In 1939-40, the retreat was entitled *Priesternot*. The German title could be translated “Our Distress of Priests” or “Priestly Troubles.” But a connotation of “woe is us” would be out-of-place. The retreat is a call to see God’s hand behind the events of the day and to respond with an even greater priestly sanctity. I therefore propose as English title: “Facing the Challenges of Priesthood.” It conveys the spirit of Fr. Kentenich’s call to look each difficulty square in the eye, and to follow the path of heroic trust in God to the fullness of priesthood.

This stenograph is from the retreat as it was held July 23-29, 1939. This is early in the annual retreat cycle and still before the outbreak of World War II. No other transcript is known to exist. The shorthand notes were taken by Schoenstatt diocesan priest Fr. Albert Proeller. Many years later (in the 1970s) Fr. Proeller used his shorthand notes to dictate the text of this precious retreat into a tape recording so that the retreat could be transcribed. The text is often choppy and “telegraph” in style, showing that the shorthand did not capture every word. The page numbering in parentheses is from the typewritten transcript.

In the excerpts translated here, one will notice a first part which is more narrative, and a second part in which Fr. Kentenich proceeds following set outline points. The second part does not flow as well as the first part, but paints a picture in a different way – with a certain set of perspectives which he describes and then elaborates with sub-points (and sub-sub-points) until the retreatants have been given enough insight to carry on with their own personal reflection.

Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, November 2005

¹ The large retreat house built in 1928 that overlooks the Original Shrine.

First Conference

{3} An old priest was walking along the edge of a forest, praying his breviary. A little boy was watching him from a distance. He was interested in every movement of the priest. The priest fascinated him and he was trying to muster the courage to approach him. Finally, he overcame his shyness, went up the priest and asked:

“How old are you?”

“85 years old,” answered the priest with a booming voice. He apparently found the situation amusing and so he answered with a good strong voice, so that it echoed through the forest.

The little boy asked, “Aren’t you afraid?”

The priest’s booming voice replied to the boy’s soprano: “Why should I be afraid?”

“Soon you must certainly die.”

The priest became more serious, as did the little boy.

“No, child, {4} I am not afraid.”

“Why not?”

“Because I have chosen Our Lady to be my mother.”

Both stood there quietly, without saying a word.

Now it was the priest’s turn to do the questioning.

“Listen, son, how old are you?”

“Five years old.”

“Aren’t you afraid?”

“Why?”

“You are still small. Don’t you know all the things that can happen to you in life? Haven’t you seen some of the bad things that can happen around you?”

“I am not afraid.”

“Why not?”

“Because I have a heavenly Mother.”

And that was the end of the conversation.

Why am I telling you this story? First reason: if we correctly assign roles and interpretation, I think we will see that this story is repeating itself again and again in our world today. How should the roles be assigned? The old priest is the Roman Catholic Church and

the Schoenstatt Family. For those of you in a religious order it can be your order. The boy is ourselves, the children of the Church and the children of our family. How often have we, in effect, asked the Church, “Aren’t you afraid?” And for us Schoenstatt children, do not the events here [in original Schoenstatt] make us ask, “Schoenstatt, aren’t you afraid?”

The second reason for telling you this story is because I think that our whole retreat should be like this dialogue. The retreat must be strongly dynamic. Tonight we begin with an interrogation. We ask hard questions and answer hard questions. We are the interrogator and the one interrogated. Tonight’s interrogation turns to Holy Mother Church and the Schoenstatt family. Tomorrow we will be the ones interrogated.

1. Is the Church afraid?

Who shall we turn to first? The Church. We ask hard questions of the Church. First question to the Church: Aren’t you afraid? First reason: the Church’s age; second reason: the Church’s enemies.

First reason: the Church’s age

First reason: the Church’s age. We are the interrogators. We tell the Church why she *should* be afraid: You are old – old as the hills! – and {5} decrepit with age. Is your death not immanent? Isn’t one foot already in the grave? Why, you are two thousand years old! What kingdoms and forms of government have you known! So far you have survived them all, but the time of your death has come. How many kingdoms! The Romans, that of Charlemagne, etc. How many forms of government! Monarchy, democracy, etc. The Church no longer changes. The death bell is tolling.

Second reason: the Church’s enemies

Second reason: the Church’s enemies. Her foes are beyond count, youthful and strong, with allies who have outward and inward power, with access to power above and below the earth; skillful enemies, confident and crowned with victory; enemies of the Church. If your

interior illness and the ebbing of your strength does not kill you, then do not forget how many enemies want to take your life. Countless youthful, powerful, skillful, confident enemies – every word is like a hammer blow meant to shake the Church.

Her enemies are countless

Countless enemies: How many millions inhabit the earth, but how few are loyal to the Church! How few are Christian and Catholic! The civilized nations have abandoned and forgotten you. They unite to forge a powerful anti-Christian front. Think of Germany and Russia. Is not an alliance, at least a cultural alliance, being forged behind the scenes? If they stay united in the area of culture you are lost, at least in old Europe. Even official circles who do not overtly speak ill of you are infected with an anti-Christian spirit. The countless culture treaties are fetters meant to hem you in. The culture treaties are supposed to suffocate you and let the anti-Christian spirit flow freely into other countries, especially those with fascist governments and their dependants. And those who are still loyal to you – how little solidarity they show you. Beware! Your days are numbered!

Her enemies are youthful and powerful

Youthful and strong {6} enemies. See the turmoil of the nations. Turmoil in the press, in conferences, on the radio – how youthful it all sounds! To be sure, its youthfulness is immature, but it has the vitality and forcefulness of youth. An incredible dynamic² is alive in the newly awakened nations. Everything is in motion, and it almost seems as if this dynamic is meant to be made permanent. One speaks

² Fr. Kentenich is using the word “dynamic” to describe a phenomenon he could see emerging in post-World-War-I Europe. It was a feeling that for life to be attractive and valuable it must be in constant motion, even agitation. The old static way of life before the war was no longer acceptable. One could only stay ahead of the seeming infinite restlessness of modern times by taking the initiative and shaping one’s own agenda of motion and agitation. Those pursuing such a “dynamic” world-view generally had little understanding for the Church as a defender of tradition and the constants of dogma and morality.

of a “thousand year Reich.” It seems to be a matter of principle that war must be declared on anything old and unchanging. The resulting laws are left open-ended and new enemies are sought out everywhere. What matters is dynamic, vigor, action. The dynamic must keep going until a new world revolution is ignited. The basic current of the new times is a constant revolutionary dynamic.

In this way our times have made permanent one legacy of the war³. The experience of the World War is the source from which this life current vigorously flows. If we read descriptions of what is in the air today and we will see how enthusiastically the authors speak of the experiences of the war. They speak of how the war gave birth to a new world-view that crushes life with the callousness of a machine. Man has become the mass-man. This restless dynamic has infected the masses. War psychosis and “dynamic” are probably the same. Millions who experienced the thrill of dynamic during the war are unable to let it go. Today everything is drawn into this dynamic’s tow. Nothing permanent is allowed to exist, everything must be dynamic. So primordial, so general is the cry for dynamic that we must say that this dynamic has truly become a religion with a strong mystical and a strong eschatological bent.

A mystical bent: Because everything is dynamic, reason (intellect) is downplayed [in favor of instinct]. No one can say where all this motion is ultimately supposed to lead. No one knows the final goal! This is why {7} the masses of people who are gripped by this spirit have a deep respect as if for a mystical, unknown darkness.

This mystical “religious” experience results in an eschatological approach to relishing the conditions of life – *new* man, *new* world, everything *new*. No one knows where it is going, but the thrill makes them happy; all that matters is the motion. Whoever creates the most motion is the happiest. Do we understand how right we are to say that our times are youthfully, powerfully in motion, and in motion in a way that goes to the core of being.

³ World War I.

(....)

{8} It has become its own “religion.” The old, tired Church is confronted with youthful motion. Strong and powerful enemies have formed alliances with outward and inward power, with powers above and below the earth.

Outward power: Political power, military power, the power of outward achievement, of outward success.

Inward power: The power of hatred. Who can withstand it?

Powers below the earth: apparently in league with the devil. This manifold power increasingly crushes whatever gets in its way. Crucifixes are removed from schools; we lack the power to defend ourselves. Confessional schools are next in line. They want to hem us in, more and more. Our associations and every form of community life are slated for elimination. This is the power of mass organization. How do we stack up against these powers?

Her enemies are skillful

They are skillful enemies. How adept they are at using the fears of our times and of the soul!

The fears of our times: hunger and economic uncertainty.

The fears of the soul: today’s uprootedness and the incredible drive for dynamic. Just look at how radio stirs people into motion, again and again. The masses are in constant motion! Why, children scarcely see the light of day before being engulfed by this constant motion. Why? Observe the way pantheism is being aroused to the utmost.

Her enemies are confident of the victory

As we see them, enemies are confident of and even certain of victory. Such is at least their total conviction. The development of history tells them to simply count on victory. After all, the era of the Church is over, it is clear that she will soon be vanquished. Their current successes are sufficient evidence of this fact. They say: how our times flee from God on all fronts – it is visible everywhere! {9}

To them victory is inevitable.

The great modern flight from God... An example: A little story was circulated by the press at Christmastime. Somewhere a child had written a simple, childlike letter to the Christ Child in heaven. Without much effort, the post office discovered who had written the letter and returned it with the note "addressee unknown." Our times don't know God any more. And so they are certain of victory. "We will triumph and it is inevitable!"

Even Christians are going through a great crisis of faith in God. In Munich a military chaplain gave a talk. The commanding officer turned to the chaplain: Whatever you do, don't paint hell too deep or certain. Then he added: "I will never leave my Jesus!" How many parents no longer want to have children, not because they are lazy, but because they are afraid of what will become of them. Look at our fellow priests, where we can characterize the distress with two words:

First: lack of vitality.

Second: lack of usefulness.

Lack of vitality: Everywhere we look we outwardly see the lack of initiative. Inwardly we see: tiredness, pessimism, helplessness, negativity. Our opponents know this and take it as an omen of triumph.

Lack of usefulness: A French author wrote: "The clergy is a cesspool of impurity." Our opponents cite the morality trials, where it is claimed: "Your clergy belongs to antiquity and is no longer understood by the people."

Conclusion

Aren't you afraid? The Church's first answer is, "I am not afraid." The Church's second answer is, "But I am greatly concerned."

Why isn't the old priest afraid? Because he trusts in the power of the supernatural to defend him. [And me?] My old age does not make me afraid because I trust in God and Christ has promised me that the Church will endure forever: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it!" (Mt 16,18). I am not afraid because Christ has

entrusted me to his Mother and because I have solemnly taken Mary as my patroness, and chosen her to be the protectress of the whole Church. Because of God's power I am not afraid.

I do not fear the countless enemies. God spoke to Gideon, "You have too many soldiers. A small force will defeat the insurmountable foe" (cf Jgs 7,2). Through my helplessness God will show his omnipotence and glorify himself. What are a whole sea of enemies against the Almighty God? God so often saves the day in miraculous fashion when the danger is most acute. It happened this way in 955 at Lechfeld against the Hungarians. Emperor Otto won the victory by God's almighty power. In 1241: the Mongolians slew 40,000 holy knights in Silesia. Two days later they slew 80,000 more. The Mongolians were at Hermann's city and poised to capture all of Germany. Suddenly the regent of the Mongolians, the commander of the entire army, was called home, and Christianity in Germany was saved. In 1683 the situation was similar. A numberless army was suddenly defeated⁴. In 1919-21: how grave was the danger at that time that Germany and Italy would fall to Bolshevism. Suddenly the danger was averted. How often God shows his power in the face of enemies beyond all human strength. Even if the enemies can no longer be counted, I will have no fear. The strongest side is always the one with God on its side.

We are told that those who fight us are youthful and vigorous. To this we reply: *the Church is eternally young*. This is apparently what is at stake behind these battles: the renewal of the Church. A battle unleashes youthful vigor. Why, the battle has already unleashed new vigor. How many youthful, determined men and women have we seen in Mexico, Spain, Russia... and how many spiritual movements have begun to restore genuine youthful vigor to today's Church? How do we become youthful and vigorous? In God and through God.

I am not afraid of the enemies arrayed in great fronts against us. {11} The opposition forges a power which is both inward and outward. But if God is for us, who can be against us? (Rom 8,31).

⁴ In the Battle of Kahlenberg, near Vienna.

Let me point out the power of divine love which is being reborn and which will win great victories. For example: somewhere in South America a priest is called to the deathbed of a free mason. The free mason has already made sure he has his revolver and it is laying next to his pillow. The priest is not allowed to come in. “I come in the name of the King of Love.” In the face of the power of love the free mason repents and dies a good death.

I am not afraid of skillful enemies. The enemies have shown how resourceful they are, but we are also becoming more skilled. We can see through the situation and a generation of leaders is gradually growing which is every bit the equal of our modern enemies.

I am not afraid of our enemies who are confident of victory. Our enemies take victory for granted, are used to winning; indeed, they have many victories under their belt. They boast of their successes and our decline. But even as we recall the great tendency of our times to flee from God, we also remember that the human soul is *anima naturaliter christiana* – Christian by its very nature. Modern man’s flight from God is ultimately really nothing other than the cry of the soul trying to find its way to God. The death-song will – and must – become a Resurrection song. Flight from God will turn into hunger for God. There can be no doubt that today’s flight from God is meant [by Divine Providence] to increase the longing for God tomorrow and the day after.

(....)

2. *Is the Schoenstatt Family afraid?*

{12} Our interrogation now turns to the Schoenstatt family. The first interrogation is complete. The Church has passed the test. We now turn to our family.

{13} We ask the family the same questions: “Are you afraid?” and “Why?” The time of cheap talk is over. Schoenstatt has been able to talk a good talk so far, but what are needed now are deeds. Do our words come with action? Where are the men of great deeds! Are we as great in our actions as we have been in our words? Are you

afraid?

Those who talk big about God are rarely real apostles. They can speak clever words, but their deeds are minimal. This critique has often been leveled against us. Catholic organizations of all kinds are falling to the enemy, and I will soon be the last one standing, alone and exposed. I will draw the attention of my opponents to myself. [They say:] Schoenstatt is an underground stronghold and must be completely destroyed. The police⁵ have been saying this about us for [what seem to be] decades. Are not even the bishops uneasy about Schoenstatt? Have not our foes [the Nazis] already moved into closest proximity? Their banners have been placed in the seminary and cover the image of the Mother of God⁶. And so the battle of opposing spirits is being fought right here! The point of convergence of the two hills with their symbolic representatives is the Shrine, and when the day comes that Schoenstatt is placed in the public eye [of a persecution], who will have the strength to hold their ground?

The first answer: We are not afraid! Why not? Because our trust and confidence is unshakeable: we are a God-willed work, and, a divine power stands behind us and is active in our midst. *In te, Domine, speravi; non confundar in aeternum*. In you, O Lord, I have set my hope; I shall not be lost forever! (Ps 71,1).

The divine component of our family is becoming more and more evident to all circles. I am reminded of the countless contributions to the capital of grace. I am reminded of how many people in the thick of battle – year after year and day after day – have discerned a re-

⁵ The Gestapo or secret police of the Nazis.

⁶ In the spring of 1939, the Nazis confiscated the Schoenstatt seminary on the hill immediately south of the Original Shrine and covered over the stone image of the MTA on the facade with swastika flags (see Jonathan Niehaus, *A Movement in Chains* [Milwaukee, 1984], p. 1-3). Since the retreat was being held in the *Bundesheim*, it was located on the hill north of the Original Shrine that directly faced the hill now occupied by the Nazis. As of July 1939, the date of this retreat, the Schoenstatt members assumed that the Nazis intended to confiscate both the *Bundesheim* and the Original Shrine in their effort to destroy Schoenstatt, hostile acts which fortunately never took place.

newed inner prompting to not only consecrate themselves to Our Lady of Schoenstatt, but to even offer their whole life. Because of this divine dimension, we are not afraid. The more the {14} cannons thunder all around us, the more unshakeable our trust in Schoenstatt. From the beginning, Schoenstatt has been a child of war, and now we are getting the right ground under our feet. Even if the Shrine would be taken from us we will not be afraid. Even if we ourselves would be taken away, we will not be afraid, for we know how to hold still when Mary joins the family on the way of the cross, just as she accompanied her Son on the way of the Cross.

The blood of the founders – our blood. If from time to time we make unbloody sacrifices, [we know that] the organization cannot be destroyed, for it is so deeply rooted in our hearts. If the Shrine would be taken, it would be a test of faith, and God would use it to awaken new initiative. Rome has often lost the Pope, but the Church still remained attached to Rome. We think of the *Kulturkampf*⁷ and how it sent Catholics off in many different directions, but the Church did not collapse.

The second answer: But we are greatly concerned. If something happens on the human level, it is our own fault. We have spoken enthusiastically about sanctity, but done too little to attain it. We have demolished the very things we built up. Do we have enough discipline [to continue] even if each one must stand alone? How is it with the spirit of the vows?

This concludes the interrogation. We have been the ones asking the questions, but tomorrow the questions will be directed at us.

Our family has been in existence for 25 years, not 85 years. The family needs to be renewed over and over again. We are called by the eternal God to begin a new founding era and to pilot the work through difficult times into the future. “...So that the world through you made new, pay to your Son his homage due!”

⁷ The broad and heavy-handed anti-Catholic policies of Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of Germany in the second half of the 1800s.

Second Conference

{15} My dear confreres!

Now we are on the interrogation chair. Who asks the questions? In part the Church, in part the family. From this double perspective we want to consider ourselves and see if we make the grade.

3. *Are we as Priests and Schoenstatt Priests afraid?*

{16} We are priests and at the same time Schoenstatt priests. Aren't you afraid? The Church and the Schoenstatt family ask me this question. What reasons are there for me personally – as a priest and a Schoenstatt priest – to be afraid ?

a. *As Priests*

Which reasons for fear do I have as a priest? I face such grave dangers as the erosion of public esteem, profound isolation, hunger, persecution, arrest, and perhaps even a violent death.

The danger of eroding public esteem. Our childhood and ordination took place in times when the priesthood was still held in high esteem. We take for granted the faith-inspired respect of the people. Tomorrow and the day after this will end, for we are living in a time when the outlook on life is becoming totally secularized. I can no longer count on being held in high public esteem⁸.

The danger of strong isolation. This includes the isolation of celibacy, but I am thinking still more of the isolation of not finding like-minded colleagues. This danger is already acute today. I think of my confreres, of the priests in my district. Will I be able to survive this interior isolation?

The danger of hunger, the danger of less and less to eat. This danger is tangibly near to us. Will I suffer this fate? What will happen to me if I can no longer count on a life of simple comfort?

The danger of persecution. Our enemies are ready to start in

⁸ Fr. Kentenich talked in other contexts about the “devaluation” of the priesthood in our times. See footnote at the end of the Seventh Conference below.

earnest. Public opinion has been largely poisoned against us. We can truly understand how someone in this situation would say: I am afraid! Imprisonment, violent death – such things are not beyond the realm of possibility.

All of these outside circumstances can increase our fear. And then there are those inside of ourselves – the danger that we might betray ourselves. As priests we have real reason to be afraid. So when [the persecution] really starts it is clear that we will be the first to go, that the fury will be first directed against us as priests.

b. As Schoenstatt Priests

{17} Secondly, as Schoenstatt priests we have three reasons to be afraid.

First, must we not fear that precisely those who have offered their lives to the Blessed Mother will especially feel the brunt of the devil's hatred? Because the devil can no longer harm Our Lady with his poison, he will direct it against us. When a diabolical spirit rejoices in great triumphs, it especially in those at the cost of those who fight on the side of the Blessed Mother.

Second, we as Schoenstatt priests have good reason to be afraid because of our lofty goals. How strong and great is the goal that we, carried by grace, have set for ourselves – the highest possible sanctity in a close-knit community.

The third danger comes from being an order of priests living in the world. [This ideal –] an order of priests living in the world – gradually finds a resonance in the family. We all face the danger of secularization and being leveled in.

i. First Answer: I am not afraid

Which answer do we give? The answer is not difficult. No, I am not afraid. But I am greatly concerned.

I am not afraid. Is it really true that I am not afraid? Are we convinced of this deep inside? What is the underlying reason for this? The divine dimension of our life as priests and Schoenstatt priests. The divine dimension includes a divine mission, divine

strength, and divine protection.

[I am not afraid] because of my divine mission. I have a divine mission. I did not choose myself [but was chosen by the MTA]; I did not push myself into the ranks of the family. Behind this divine mission is Our Lady, for she has implored it for us through her intercession.

[I am not afraid] because of divine strength. It is the strength of grace. The strength of administering the sacraments and the Word of God. How many inner promptings have we not already received from the Holy Spirit?

[I am not afraid] because of divine protection. We have confident strength rooted in the image of Mary. I am not afraid because I can call on a divine mission, divine strength, and divine protection.

The divine protection [we receive] {18} deserves a moment's reflection. In my mind's eye I see two images: the Good Shepherd and the Mother Thrice Admirable. Both vouch for our divine protection.

First, the Good Shepherd. In every age, especially in times of persecution, this image inspires persecuted Christians. The Good Shepherd was a favorite idea of the first Christians, of the early Church in the catacombs. Early Christianity took heart in this image. The same is true for my life. We only need to see the image of the Good Shepherd in the light of faith in Divine Providence...

Second, the image of Our Lady. When we unfailingly entrust ourselves to her in every difficulty, what [words] resonate in our hearts? *Mater habebit curam!* [Mother takes care!] *Deus providebit!* [God will provide!] The two images come together in one reality.

Is it really true? Have God and the Blessed Mother constantly been good shepherds in our life? [To find the answer we only need to recall] the three tasks of the Good Shepherd – he knows me, he leads me, he nourishes me [– and how we have experienced them in our lives].

(...)

{20} And so we really have no need to fear. [The Good Shepherd says:] “I have protected you thus far, and I will continue to do so. I am your protector, your firmament; I will carry you like the eagle up-

ward on my shoulders.” In a similar way the Blessed Mother calls out and reminds us of how she has shown her power in my life as Mother Thrice Admirable.

No, I am truly not afraid.

ii. Second Answer: I am greatly concerned

But I am greatly concerned. Why am I concerned? Although the Good Shepherd and the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt have reassured me, “You have no need to fear; I will carry your worries for you,” she also calls out to me, “But you must do your part. You must become like the Good Shepherd. You must become, as it were, a Mother Thrice Admirable.”

You must become the Good Shepherd. This is my task as a Schoenstatt priest. And I must become a Mother Thrice Admirable. This includes two tasks. I must become a Good Shepherd for myself and a Good Shepherd for my followers. I am the Good Shepherd.

(1) A Good Shepherd for Myself

I should become a Good Shepherd for myself. I should lead myself to good pastures. I should exercise the threefold task of the Good Shepherd by knowing, leading, and nourishing myself.

I should know myself. Myself as a priest, my task, the ideal of my state in life, my family ideal and my personal ideal. I must lead myself to good pastures. In other words, I should deepen my knowledge, I should know and get to know my inclinations and passions. What is noble I should lift up. What is less noble should gradually be eliminated. I should know and get to know what God has in mind through the blows of fate in my life. Such a task is great and serious in times which are so superficial and confused.

I should lead myself. You should lead yourself to good pastures. Knowing the goal is not enough; we must also work to achieve it. Not only self-knowledge is imperative, but self-mastery. Goal in sight – apply your might – get started right (now)⁹!

⁹ German: *Ziel erkannt, Kraft gespannt, darauf los gebrannt!* (Tirpitz)

I should nourish myself with the Word of Life and the Bread of Life.

– With the Word of Life. Keep up with your spiritual reading and meditation. The Word of God should be my favorite food, including the Word of God as it comes to me in the events of our times. {21} I hear the eternal, living God in the cacophony of voices of our times.

– With the Bread of Life. The Bread of Life is divine life, whether it is given to me through the holy sacraments or through blows of fate, or through the great tasks which we must do. You must become the Good Shepherd.

You must also become a Mother Thrice Admirable for yourself. St. Augustine says, “*Audemos nos dicere matres Christi*”¹⁰. “We have the courage to call ourselves mothers of Christ.” I must nourish Christ living in me and help him grow in my life to maturity.

(2) A Good Shepherd for Others

Secondly, I should become shepherd and mother for my followers. This means those entrusted to my care

– as a priest and

– as a Schoenstatt priest.

I should know my followers. Do I know them individually, or do I only give big talks and organize things? Do I *know* my parishioners? They are hard to get to know, in part because they do not open up to us, they run away, are helpless, find it difficult [to relate to us]. Here I must do everything I can to really get to know my parish.

I should lead my followers. I cannot let them be led astray, or let the wolf lead them. Where do the wolf and hyena want to lead them? I am the leader, the co-leader. How have I fulfilled this task thus far? How can I do it in the future?

I should nourish my followers, nourish them with the bread of the Word of God and with the power of life in the sacraments and in the blows of fate. “I am the Good Shepherd;” we know what that means.

¹⁰ St. Augustine of Hippo, *Sermo 25*, cap. 8.

iii. *The Ultimate Answer: Priestly Sanctity*

We are not afraid, but we are greatly concerned. The greater the task, the more acutely we feel the difficulties. Great tasks make us feel weak and helpless. We are not afraid, because God is with us, especially his protection. But we are greatly concerned because as God's cooperators we are so limited.

The concern which torments us, the focus of our concern, is true and genuine priestly sanctity – the ideal of priestly sanctity. The concern that torments us is: Am I {22} really striving for the ideal of priestly sanctity?

We want to pick up this thread. If we came on retreat with this as a concern, we have come with the right disposition.

We want to shake off any fear which might still be weighing down our souls. We want to go deeper in fulfilling our God-willed responsibility for souls. These two tasks can be bound together in one great theme: We want to be led more deeply into priestly sanctity.

We are reminded of the image of the five-year-old boy and the 85-year-old priest. It will accompany us from time to time during these days.

The Ideal of Priestly Sanctity

Priestly sanctity is an ideal with three characteristics. We have not yet concluded the preparatory phase of our retreat. In order to go deeper, in order to be urged to make a clear decision for the ideal, we need to pause and recall the features of our priestly sanctity. It should make us more alert, more ready to decide, more ready to do God's work and to stand up for the ideal on which our vocation is built. During these days we want to become more familiar with the typical traits of a priest in our family.

I will begin with only a few broad strokes. I begin with the three characteristics of priestly sanctity. Priestly sanctity must be:

- 1) practical (put into life),
- 2) befitting our times,
- 3) befitting our state in life.

(1) *Practical (put into life)*

Priestly sanctity must be practical. For the most part I am only going to give you a bare outline. There are three points:

- a) the meaning and content of practical priestly sanctity,
- b) its value,
- c) its practical consequences.

(a) *Meaning and Content*

What is the meaning and content? Priestly sanctity must be *practiced*. Piety cannot just be dead knowledge. Sanctity must {23} come to life in two ways: life in God and life following God, life in Christ and life following Christ. Our priestly sanctity is practical when it takes root in who we are (*ontisch*) and how we act (*ethisch*). In who we are – in God. In how we act – following God. In other words, we must shape our ordinary everyday life in and from God, in and from Christ. The *alter Christus*¹¹ must be tangible. Our sanctity is practical when it shapes our everyday life. The whole retreat has no other aim than to portray the ideal of priestly everyday sanctity.

(b) *Value*

What value do we give to practical priestly sanctity? Let me underline four things. Practical, life-overcoming, life-transforming sanctity preserves us, makes us fruitful, replaces all things, and is a kind of advertising.

(i) *It Preserves us*

It preserves us:

- first, from self-deception,
- second, from the influence of the devil,
- third, from unhealthy flight from the world.

First, practical priestly sanctity preserves us from self-deception. How great is this danger for people with much religious knowledge! We Schoenstatters are in great danger of becoming life-impooverished.

¹¹ The ideal of the priest to be another Christ.

Whoever talks big is often life-impoverished. We must be on guard against the danger of talking big about God, but translating little into life. How little we really turn to God! Knowledge must become love, otherwise I will confuse strong emotion with real life.

Second, it preserves us from the influence of the devil. In a conversation Pope Pius X reportedly said that the devil has exerted great influence in every age. While in earlier times he may have laid hold of swine, today he especially exerts his influence through mysticism and pseudo-mysticism. He {24} tries to create a mania for extraordinary phenomena.

If I have formed my ordinary everyday life around God, I need not fear the influence of the devil. The spirit of everyday sanctity can be heard in almost all the decisions of the Popes of the past decades. The teaching of St. Thérèse, the Little Flower, is exactly in line with what Pius X said: “This is practical everyday sanctity: to do all things out of love.” [Or again:] “Do the ordinary things extraordinarily well.” The alternative has too many dangers. Seeking extraordinary [signs] is a great danger for Catholicism today. To be sure, there are extraordinary [gifts and graces], but if our family is Marian, such extraordinary things will seldom occur, that is, things that stand out strongly in the public awareness. When such things happen, cover them with the mantle of silence. The Blessed Mother is the everyday saint. Her extraordinary gifts and graces did not stand out in the public awareness. We do not need extraordinary oracles. The only extraordinary oracle [we need] is the simple spirit of faith.

Third, practical priestly sanctity preserves us from unhealthy flight from the world. This takes place in three ways. It preserves us from the danger of becoming monastic, from the danger of compartmentalization, and from the danger of atomization¹². Unhealthy flight from the world, as we see it, can result in a life which is improperly monastic. This is not our view of sanctity. The social drive and social [need for] community demand that practical sanctity not only form myself, but also form the whole life in me, in the family, and

wherever I am active. We do not leave the world to the devil, but lead the world to God. We see unhealthy flight from the world from the standpoint of atomization. Two books discuss this: by Thieme (“Am Ende der Zeiten”) and Marit. They see the situation as we do. Marit characterizes it as a general {25} secularization of mind and soul and says that the individual must be re-Christianized. Thieme is farther along in that he does not see the solution in the Christianization of the individual, but in the Christianization of the community. (...) He specifically mentions us Schoenstatters in this book and elsewhere. Are we a force to be dealt with in the Church? We are the only modern lifestream that he specifically mentions, but as symbolic of movements of renewal which remain individualistic. This is incorrect. We form the masses for the sake of the individual and the individual for the sake of the masses.

¹² Exaggerated individualism.

Third Conference

{26} My dear confreres!

To have a practical sanctity means, first of all, that it deeply shapes on our everyday life. Our life must not become compartmentalized or superficial. Because it forms our life, practical sanctity preserves, proves the merit of our teaching, replaces all things, and is an outstanding form of advertising.

(...)

(ii) *It Proves the Merit of our Teaching*

{27} Practical sanctity proves the merit of our teaching. A story: There was once a hermit who settled in the desert, and he taught how one should live life to the full. Many were fascinated by his teaching. They tried to do what he taught, but found that they could not. A few of them now said to him: “Please show us how it is done. Live in our situation and carry out your teaching.” The hermit pointed to his withered body and explained that he could not move very well. He could only teach, but not practice. At this, the people left him and no longer listened to what he taught. Practical life is needed to prove the merit of what is taught.

Remember the movements of renewal at the beginning of the last century. For instance, Don Bosco. All of these movements proved their worth through practical life. Bishop Sailer – how much did he suffer! The process for his beatification has been opened and he is gradually being better understood. It would be wonderful if a whole list of diocesan priests would be canonized. Sailer said, “Live first and become totally what you think others should become.” So much of what we owe to Joseph Engling is in this direction.

(...)

(iii) *It Replaces All Things*

Practical sanctity replaces all things. When all else fails, we can always strive for sanctity. If a priest can no longer be active in the

apostolate, he can always strive for sanctity. This striving for sanctity is {29} an outstanding replacement for active apostolate. It is typical of our family that our striving for sanctity is always apostolic. But we don't want to wait for our apostolate to begin. My apostolate must always flow – already now – from a serious striving for sanctity.

(iv) *It Provides Outstanding Advertising*

Practical sanctity is an outstanding form of advertising. It is said that the only Bible which people read today is the example of Christians. (...)

(c) *Practical Consequences*

Third: practical consequences. It is almost superfluous to draw practical consequences. I will distinguish between consequences which are theoretical and more practical.

A more theoretical consequence. What is the importance of a movement of everyday sanctity? It gives a place for everything that is healthy.

The first consequence: in Christianity, persecution and following Christ go together. Why is Christianity so little persecuted? Because there is too much doctrine and not enough following Christ. As long as Christianity is only about doctrine, there is no reason to hunt it down. One will be grateful that it creates a new sector in the economy, that it feeds its own people. But if Christianity also begins to live what it {30} preaches, then persecution will follow immediately. If we as Schoenstatt priests vigorously practice what we preach, then (on the one hand) we will be like a brilliant light to many people. If we, the priests of the federation, stand firm, many will follow our lead, including fellow priests. If we embody even a fraction of our chosen ideals, we will find that many will follow us. But (on the other hand) we will also be persecuted. If others take notice of your activity and sense that it resists them, then we must be eliminated.

A second consequence: The strong emphasis on *today*. The connection between our task in life and our daily work. The purpose of true sanctity is: I want to be heroic. The motto is: *Today heroic!*

Heroic in attitude and in action. Everything that I do will be motivated by love, and everything must have qualitative value – but today, not tomorrow! This practically describes everyday sanctity.

More practical consequences: A few examples. It is said that an ancient Greek politician, Archias, in danger of a conspiracy to take his life. A friend sent a messenger, who arrived bathed in sweat. He reached Archias just in time. The messenger said that it was urgent; he must read the letter at once. Archias was preparing to go to a party. He said, “Why worry, serious matters can wait until tomorrow.” This is the tragedy of our life. Again and again we put off until tomorrow and don’t do it today. Our philosophy ought to be: *His Rhodus, hic salta!* This is Rhodes – now jump!¹³ That very night assassins murdered Archias. (...)

{32} Every night I should be able to say that I have finished the work entrusted to me, and that I finished it *today*. How important is the evening examination of conscience, the evening consecration, in this context.

The clever barber. Most people do things like the clever barber. He had very few customers, but wanted to earn some money. So he hung out a sign that said, “Tomorrow’s shaves are free.” Many came and asked to be shaved, but they had to pay. The barber said to all: “Please read the sign. The free shaves are tomorrow.” And so he made his money.

It is not the hearing that gets it done. Everyone knows the truths. Important is the attitude. In these days we want to learn how to more deeply love what we later want to live. I ask myself, “What is my weakness? What is my task? What do I need to do each day?” We put the finger on it and then we do it.

¹³ A famous saying in Schoenstatt’s founding generation. It goes back to a story about a traveler who bragged that he could jump the river at Rhodes. But a man came forward to say, *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!* “This is Rhodes – so jump!” By extension, whatever you say you will do tomorrow – remember that *today* you have already reached “Rhodes”!

Fourth Conference

(2) *Befitting our Times*

{33} My dear confreres!

The second characteristic of priestly sanctity: befitting our times.

Let me consider two things:

1) how it corresponds to our times,

2) how it overcomes our times.

I preface my remarks by saying that the measure must be taken of each new era. Every age has two dimensions: a positive spirit of the times (*Geist der Zeit*) and a negative spirit of the times (*Zeitgeist*). We could also say: the ideals and idols of a given time. The positive spirit of the times is everything which is noble and great. The negative spirit is that which is less good. I must strive to embody the ideals present in my time and overcome the idols.

Two main trains of thought. Those trying to discern the times will ask two questions. The first is the relationship between the times and our striving for sanctity, that is, the way our times influence our striving to live as saints. {34} The second is the demands which each era places on our striving for sanctity.

Regarding the first train of thought (the influence of the times on the striving for sanctity): The times strongly influence all activity that shapes life. (...)

Now, man is a *product* of his times, meaning I take my orientation in part from the *ideals* of the times and in part from the *idols* of the times¹⁴. Many of us stood by helplessly when the revolution broke out¹⁵. How can we enthuse the masses for an ideal, such as for the ideal of home and country? Note the suggestive power of such a thought on the people. Now there is doubtlessly something noble behind it, something valuable and healthy. You see, if a time has an ideal, it will have a suggestive effect on the masses. Think of the ideals of martyrdom, monasticism, virginity, and even flagellation [in different eras of Church history]. (...)

¹⁴ Elsewhere, Fr. Kentenich uses the phrase “We are a child of our times.”

¹⁵ That is, when the Nazis came to power.

Man is also a product of the idols of the times. For instance, when our current generation of seminarians begins their ministry, be attentive to the ideals and idols of the times. If a [seminary rector] does not do that {35} while these young men are still behind closed walls, he will lose touch. If I don't address the current feeling of life, I will be helpless as an educator. I must simply expect that the feeling of life of the coming generation will be different from mine in many regards. (....)

But man is also the *creator* of his times. As mature adults we cannot just throw ourselves uninhibitedly into our times. We must become creators, that is, we must co-creatively shape the ideals and idols of the times. The latter [shaping idols] is not by intent, but indirect since we carry the times inside of us.

Two consequences:

The first consequence can be put this way: *Embody both – product and creator*. I will be fruitful as an educator to the extent that I embody both, if on the one hand I am a product of my times and on the other hand a creator of my times. Anyone who does not embody the feeling of life of his times, will be unable to understand the youth. This is so true that if an educator must say that he has no connection to the healthy feeling of life [of the coming generation] it would be best if he quit his post as soon as possible. (....)

{36} St. Thérèse was a creator and product of her times. She has a remarkable mission. At first blush, the way of spiritual childhood sounds rather feminine, but it is the ideal of sanctity of our times. It is equivalent to our everyday sanctity. What she taught and lived has been authentically recognized by the most recent Popes. They lived and taught St. Thérèse's way of spiritual childhood. Why has she touched so many millions? No saint besides our Blessed Mother has such a following. He has a great mission for our times because she is both: product and creator of her times. (....)

{37} Second consequence: At the same time *be a product of today's times and a bearer of the times to come*. Those who want to play a leading role in the times to come must plainly be a product of the current times and at the same time carry inside themselves the great ideals of the times to come. (....)

Fifth Conference

(3) *Befitting our State in Life*

{45} The third characteristic of priestly sanctity: befitting our state in life. We now gradually reach the specific message of our retreat, that is, we measure priestly sanctity not only according to the ideal of sanctity in general, but according to the ideal of our state in life. What does it look like? Let me give the outline. The ideal of our state in life is

- a) a totally unique ideal of leadership,
- b) a totally unique ideal of sanctity,
- c) a totally unique ideal of heroism.

(a) *A Totally Unique Ideal of Leadership*

The ideal of our state in life is a totally unique ideal of *leadership*. We place the accent on *unique*. Let us deepen this thought. In doing this I want to accomplish three things. First, give a clearer idea of what God wants of us. Second, in Germany, sooner or later, we will probably be forced to turn our rectories into seminaries. We will need to secure vocations. Hence it is of extremely important that we clearly understand the uniqueness of the priesthood. And third, [to foster] the growing interest in the priesthood among our own people. We must rekindle our inner fervor for the priestly ideal so that we can rekindle the fervor of our people. We must let the people cling to us, otherwise they will cling to other leaders.

This ideal of leadership is unique (i) in its origin, (ii) in its cultivation, (iii) in its content and task, and (iv) in its position.

(i) *Unique in its Origin*

First, it is unique {46} in its origin. The priesthood can be traced back in every aspect to a positive act of the Divine will. Why is this important? There are other kinds of leadership in every area of life. (....) Because the priest is a leader of the people by a positive act of the Divine will, God will see to it that the priesthood will never lose its position of leadership. There will be ups and downs, of course, but the substance of the priesthood al-

ways rests on a permanent positive act of the Divine will.

(....)

{57} The ideal of our state in life is unique in its origin. “*A Deo vocatus sum!*” I am called by God! That has to become part of my flesh and blood. I must be filled with the awareness of my high calling. An essential trait of a real priest is mission consciousness.

(ii) *Unique in its Cultivation*

Second, the priestly ideal is a unique ideal of leadership because of our education and formation. The ideal of our state in life is a) the favorite occupation¹⁶ of Our Lord and the Triune God, and b) the favorite occupation of the Church.

As priests we are the favorite occupation of Our Lord and the Triune God. If I look to Christ, I will find that he is the great pastor of his priests. {58} How lovingly he educated his [apostles, the first] priests! How much attention he lavished on the priests while he was here on earth, and how much attention he lavishes on us today from heaven! He knows me as his favorite occupation and favorite object of attention. Christ, the pastor of priests, personally chose and formed me. (....)

As priests and leaders of the people we are also the Triune God's favorite occupation. How has the Triune God cared for me and the family thus far? He has given me [Mary as my] Mother; he gave St. John [Mary as his] Mother. He has entrusted us, the priests of the federation, to her to a very special way.

As priests we are also the Church's favorite occupation. The Church learned this special concern from Christ. (....) We see how the Church is especially solicitous of the sanctity of her priests. Our family shares this concern of the Church. What all have we not done for one another over the years so that we truly embody holy priesthood. Perhaps this increases our sense of mission. I have been sent and formed – how rich I am! *Deo gratias!* Thanks be to God! I want to prove worthy of this great gift.

¹⁶ *Lieblingsbeschäftigung*, in the sense of the favorite focus of attention, the object of his most special love, etc.

Sixth Conference

{61} My dear confreres!

We have considered how the priesthood is especially cared for and protected by Christ, the Triune God, and the Church. The unique [attention we receive] stirs in us a deep sense of responsibility. Our own care for priests must be like {62} that of Christ and the Triune God. Unless we let this fountain flow richly in our self-education and the education of others, we may know every other kind of sanctity, but will not know *priestly* sanctity.

(iii) *Unique in its content and task*

Third, our priestly sanctity is a unique ideal of leadership *in its content and task*. We want to give Christ the opportunity to fulfill in us his three tasks as leader – as priest, shepherd, and teacher. “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me” (Jn 14,5). I can take all such words which are true of Christ and apply them to myself. We give Christ the chance to realize his task as leader in a perfect manner. We must become more deeply aware of the high degree to which we are instruments [of the Eternal High Priest]. A high goal! Priestly instrument consciousness!

(iv) *Unique in its Position*

Fourth, our priestly sanctity is a unique ideal of leadership when it comes to its position. (1) We form a completely separate state in life, totally different from the other states in life¹⁷. What is the great difference between the laity and the clergy? We are (2) a persecuted state. (....) We are also (3) a state that bears the responsibility and burden [of the Church]. *Qualis rex, talis grex* – as the shepherd, so the flock. If we want to give Our Lord a chance to continue his leadership in a perfect manner, then it all depends on us. “*Omne malum a clero*” – all evil comes from the clergy, be it impurity, schism, etc. But also: *Omne bonum a clero*” – all good comes from the clergy. This is because of the leadership position of the

¹⁷ That is, from the married state and that of single men and single women. There is also the religious state, to which priests can also belong.

priesthood [in the Church]. (....)

(b) A Totally Unique Ideal of Sanctity

{63} When we say that our priestly ideal of sanctity is totally unique, what do we mean? First, it is unique in its loftiness, and second, in its character.

First, in its loftiness. Thomas proves with clear reasoning that the priest is obligated to a greater sanctity than even a religious as religious. Because he is also a priest, he has two claims and obligations to sanctity. We cannot be happy with minimal standards. From 1912 to 1914 here in Schoenstatt we put these principles into practical action. We did not play around, but were terribly serious about it. Have we taken the time to study it?¹⁸ Don't run about from one consolation to other, but run to God – that is the summit of sanctity. Who is still trying to make reality fit the ideal? We have the courage to start over again and again.

Second, in its character. We must be decidedly *apostolic* saints. This is the specific grace of the priesthood. Thomas says, "I do not become a priest in order to sanctify my own life; that is only our secondary task. I primarily become a priest to sanctify the world." Every priest must be decidedly apostolic.

(....)

(c) A Totally Unique Ideal of Heroism

{65} Third, a unique ideal of heroism. To be a leader and a saint means the same as to be a hero. To the same extent that we embody the pronounced ideals of leadership and sanctity, we will also embody the ideal of a unique hero. To be one with Christ means to consume and evoke every power within us, to consume ourselves heroically for Christ and his kingdom. (....)

¹⁸ Namely, the striving for sanctity of the founding generation. At this time one of the newly published books was Fr. Ferdinand Kastner's compilation of Fr. Kentenich's talks in 1912-1919, *Unter dem Schutze Mariens*. For the best source in English see J. Niehaus, *New Vision and Life: The Founding of Schoenstatt* (Waukesha, 2004).

**THEME OF THE RETREAT:
MODERN PRIESTLY EVERYDAY SANCTITY**

{65} [The theme of our retreat] is modern, priestly everyday sanctity. In previous years I explained that priestly everyday sanctity is practical (put into life), befitting our times, befitting our state in life.

So what is different this time? We have already spoken much about everyday sanctity. We have devoted at least three retreats to it: one on childlikeness, one on everyday sanctity, and one on liturgical everyday sanctity¹⁹. What is the difference?

Two things: First, the previous courses focused more on principles; they were devoted, above all, to elaborating general principles. Second, they were more static. The present course wants to have two accents. First it wants to deal directly with the originality of the priesthood. Secondly, it will place less emphasis on the static and more on the dynamic side. I could call this a course on "priestly existence," while previous courses were about "priestly essence." We want to examine the {66} practical difficulties of priestly life.

We want to become familiar with and learn how to resolve the tensions of priestly life. Tension and relief is how I originally intended to call it. But we will not have time to discuss the principles of relief this time.

There are primarily two tensions: First, the tension between the immutable and mutable²⁰ in the life of a priest. Second, the tension between nature and grace in the life of a priest²¹. What matters to me is that we find the bedrock underlying all the issues.

¹⁹ See Fr. Kentenich's retreats in 1929 (4-week retreat on childlikeness), 1932-33 (priestly everyday sanctity), and 1938-39 (liturgical everyday sanctity). For English translations containing much of the same material, though for other audiences, see J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness before God* (Waukesha, 2001) and J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt's Everyday Spirituality* (Waukesha, 2003).

²⁰ The unchanging and changing realities of the priesthood.

²¹ Fr. Kentenich did not get around to discussing the second point at this retreat.

Part 1: The tension between the immutable and mutable in the life of a priest

In the life of the priesthood there is much that changes and much that does not change. It is not for nothing that we suspect that the reason [for its immutability] lies in the permanent positive act of the Divine will upon which the priesthood is built. After all, priestly life and activity ultimately flow from the priesthood's essence. By observing Church history and the life of great priests we can see that the substance of the priesthood does not change, only its outward non-essentials.

I. The immutability of the priesthood

In this first part we see the immutability of the priesthood from two perspectives. First, in its content (66). Second, as a source of tensions (109). After all, whatever is immutable can be a source of tensions. (...)

[We consider the content of the priesthood in two parts:

1. viewed from the order of being (66), and
2. viewed from the order of action (83).]

Ia. ORDO ESSENDI

First, the *ordo essendi* – the order of being of the immutable content of priestly life. We must remind ourselves what the essence of the Catholic priesthood is. What is its essence? I start with a preliminary answer: *It is a perfect mysterious participation – on the level of being and on the level of action – in the high priesthood of the God-man*²². This is a preliminary answer. The core of the definition directs our attention to a level which is even more fundamental, the high priesthood of the God-man. I cannot understand my own priesthood unless I understand the priesthood {67} of the God-man.

²² Fr. Kentenich uses the same definition in 1963: *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen* (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1970), p. 29f: “You must not overlook the ultimate source of the *greatness of the priesthood*. Let me sum it up in a compact scholarly definition. It is the *mysterious and profound participation, in being and action, in the high priesthood of the God-man*. Ontologically speaking, it is a uniquely profound participation, indeed a perfect profound participation in the person and action of the Eternal High Priest.”

A. To understand my priesthood, I must understand the priesthood of the God-man

We therefore face the question: What is the essence or nature of the priesthood of the God-man? One must say that, in being and action, the present order of salvation knows only one priest, and that priest is Christ. Allow me to explain my thesis: a) only one priest, b) in being and action.

1. Only one priest

I begin by dwelling on the statement: “There is only one priest, and it is the God-man.” Is this a statement of degree? No, it is more! It is not just that he is a singularly effective priest. To be “one-of-a-kind” in this sense would cause us no problems. But my claim is more: he is the *only* priest, a statement of number²³. All priesthood originates in and is sustained by Christ. More precisely: genuine, God-willed priesthood is not about being a copy or a subsidiary officer of the God-man. Valid human priesthood cannot exist apart from the priesthood of the God-man. No, all priestly activity – blessing, absolution, etc. – is the activity of *Christ*, at firsthand and in closest proximity, albeit in a miraculous, mysterious two-in-oneness of the God-man's priesthood with the human priest, that is, with me and my activity.

This fact sheds light on three aspects of the priesthood: First, its singularity, second, its exclusivity, third its eternal permanence.

a. Its singularity

It is as singular as the entire person of Christ is singular²⁴.

²³ As Fr. Kentenich puts it in *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*: “Catholicism knows only one priest” (p. 40) and “Christianity knows only one priest, one mediator” (p. 53), namely Jesus Christ.

²⁴ German: *einzigartig*, meaning something like “There is no redeemer like our Redeemer.” Of many possible illustrations of this, consider this one verse written by Fr. Kentenich in Dachau (*Hirtenspiegel*, No. 1354): “He is there for us [in the tabernacle] as our physician, friend, and confidant, taking our heart and giving it to the Father. He gladly introduces us to his Bride and Mother; he gladly

b. Its exclusivity

Next comes the exclusivity of his priesthood. How does this work? There is no other priesthood except in Jesus Christ²⁵. Every other priesthood is pretend.

Let's digress a moment and consider the Old Testament [priesthood] and the priesthood of the pagans. Their purpose was to anticipate the priesthood of Christ. The priesthood of the Old Testament was {68} established by a positive act of the Divine will. The pagan priesthood grew from the healthy natural inclination [of man to seek God]. But once Christ became man and priest, especially since Christ saw fit to consummate the perfect act of his priesthood and offered himself on the cross, the priesthood of the Old Testament was ended. Caiphas, the high priest, rent his garments because our Savior proclaimed he was God. Since he saw fit to accept the cross, the Old Testament priesthood was also rent asunder.

c. Its eternal permanence

Third, the eternal permanence of his priesthood. These are three great characteristics of his priesthood. Just as Christ endures forever and promised that his Church will do so, so also his priesthood. "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Mt 16,18). Nor will they prevail against the extension of Christ. A country can expel its priests. But if a country has no more priests, Christ can no longer be active in the fullness of his office, for Christ does not fulfill his task except through his image, the human priest, the human Christ-priest.

listens to our every wish."

²⁵ In *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen* (p. 89), Fr. Kentenich elaborates: "[Christ] is the one priest. Every other sacrifice, every other priest of the Old Testament is displaced. There is now only one Sacrifice. Which sacrifice? It is the sacrificial offering which is the God-man Jesus Christ himself. Now there is only one priest. And all those called 'priest' in the New Testament are nothing more than someone drawn into participation in the [priesthood of the] one, the only eternal High Priest."

2. In being and action

Christ is the only priest. How? In being and action. In the order of being he is the only priest because he is neither only on the side of God nor only on our side. He is God *and* man. Ontologically he stands in the middle.

His priestly ordination is the hypostatic union. The moment of his incarnation is the moment he is ordained priest. Our greatness as priests is that we are drawn perfectly into the hypostatic union of the God-man. We stand in trembling and awe before the {69} greatness of our priesthood.

In the order of action, Christ is also the only priest. He is the Mediator. The quintessential description of the priest is: mediator, he stands in the middle²⁶. Christ brings to us the goods of God. Which goods? From God he brings us light, life, grace. What does he bring from us [to God]? Through the union of his divine person with his human nature, he offers infinite honor and glory to the Eternal God.

The human priesthood originates in and is sustained by Christ. Christ is the only priest. My activity as priest is Christ's action, at firsthand. It is a two-in-oneness: the human Christ-Priest and the God-man Christ-Priest.

²⁶ See Fr. Kentenich's elaboration of the priest as *pontifex*, that is, bridge-builder between God and man, in *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*, p. 51ff, and as translated in *What is a Priest?* (Waukesha, 1994), p. 9-11. For instance: "[In Heb 5,1] Paul does not use the normal word 'priest,' but the more uncommon *pontifex*. What does he mean by *pontifex*? It is already a first clue to the nature of the priestly mission. A *pontifex* is a *bridgebuilder*. What task does a priest have? To build bridges. And which two shores need to be joined by these bridges? Man and the living God. It is the task of the priest to bring God and man together in an indissoluble and intimate, a loving and lasting relationship with one another" (9).

Seventh Conference

B. My priesthood is a perfect, mysterious participation in the high priesthood of the God-man

{70} What bestows on us the priesthood, our participation in Christ's priesthood? It is the *character indelibilis*, the indelible mark which the Holy Spirit imprints on us at priestly ordination. Priestly ordination has two kinds of effects on us. Primary effects: ordination bestows on us the Holy Spirit and the indelible mark. *De fide* – it is a defined article of faith²⁷. Secondary effects: the obligation to pray the breviary and celibacy.

The *character indelibilis* – the indelible mark of priesthood. It is an article of faith that this mark is impressed on us. What is the essence of this {71} indelible mark? First a more descriptive, tentative definition. The indelible mark is often called

a real image of Christ as priest,
a real Christ-Priest sign or
the character-imprint of Christ as priest.

What is imprinted is Christ as priest. It is not just a general sign that mainly and primarily reminds us of our dignity, but rather it draws us mysteriously and irrevocably into the priesthood of Christ.

1. The First Essential Definition

What might it be? Let me give two essential definitions. The first definition uses the analogy of sanctifying grace, the foundation of our life in God. What is sanctifying grace, the foundation of life in God? It is participation in God's nature and participation in the life of Christ.

By analogy, the first essential definition says: the indelible mark, the *character indelibilis*, is a
mysterious,

²⁷ The teaching of the *character indelibilis* was formalized and declared binding by the Council of Trent. Three sacraments impart such an indelible mark: baptism, confirmation and priestly ordination.

perfect,
irrevocable

participation in the Christ-Priest sign of the God-man, or in the priestly character-imprint of the God-man Jesus Christ. Let us consider the different parts of this definition. [As you listen, ask yourself:] Which of the points captivate my heart and mind?

a. The character-imprint of Christ as priest

First, the priestly character-imprint of Christ. How did Christ become priest? Through the hypostatic union, through the incarnation, that is, through the joining of his two natures in himself as one divine person. In Christ there is only one person, the divine person. It is not as if at the incarnation the Second Divine Person united with a man, with a human being. No, he united with a human nature. The one and same divine person therefore possesses a divine and human nature. Christ is not God and man with one person each; there are not two persons in Christ. Nestorius, Patriarch of Constantinople, held the false doctrine that there are two persons in Christ, a divine and a human person, and that between these two {72} there is only a moral unity. According to this, Christ cannot be called God in the actual sense of the word, nor can Mary be called Mother of God. In 431 the Council of Ephesus condemned this false doctrine.

What is the indelible mark for me [as a priest]? For me it is an extension of, and a mysteriously participation in the hypostatic union. If this is true, then I can rightly say that my human person is for the human nature of the God-man what the human nature of the God-man is for the Second Divine Person. One cannot say anything more beautiful or profound about our priesthood.

From this we can draw two conclusions:

First, one can only understand the priesthood from a profound faith in the hypostatic union. This is already an incredible mystery. How much faith it takes to accept it! And how much faith it takes to accept that I [as a priest] am drawn into this hypostatic union! I must stress that our times today no longer

have the organ it takes to understand the priesthood. Today it is done backwards. People try to make the priesthood understandable from the human standpoint, but this is false²⁸. The priest can only be understood from the standpoint of the hypostatic union.

Second, If I want to be enthused for my priesthood and if I want to educate the young generation in this, then I must educate myself for Christ and be enthused for Christ. Otherwise people will not be able to understand the dignity of the priesthood.

b. The effects of the indelible mark

The *character sacerdotalis indelibilis* has a two-fold effect on me. First, I become an *instrumentum conjunctum Christi personale*, that is, a personal, conjoined instrument of Christ. Second, an amazing analogy and union [is established] between Christ and me.

i. Personal conjoined instrument of Christ

For the Second Divine Person, Christ's human nature is an impersonal, conjoined instrument. The {73} sacraments are *instrumenta separata Christi*, that is, instruments sepa-

²⁸ As part of a series of talks held in Schoenstatt, Germany in early 1970, Msgr. Joseph Schmitz, a long-time collaborator of Fr. Kentenich, summarized the *Priesternot* retreat. He inserted a few comments on controversial questions of the day (post-Vatican II). At one point in the retreat summary, he commented on the modern reduction of the priesthood as a "job," and on the idea of "temporary ordination" (*Priester auf Zeit*): "We are not dealing with a pragmatic question, a question of life, nor an experiment. No, we are dealing with a principle. The aforementioned ['temporary ordination'] is, in the light of Christian faith, not possible. There is a decision in the life of a man which is final. Through a decision in time, one determines one's eternity. One must see marriage in this light, which the Lord clearly constituted as indissoluble, as well as the decision for the priesthood as permanent office based on an interior transformation through [the action of] the Church. 'Temporary ordination' is no more possible than 'trial marriage'." *Zum Priesterbild, eine Vortragsreihe*, talks given in Schoenstatt, Germany in early 1970 [transcript, 1970], p. 95f.

rate from Christ, not personally conjoined with him. In what way is the priest conjoined with Christ? Through a mysterious participation, through a mysterious unity with Christ. I will discuss that in more detail later.

For me it is simply a given that the Divine Word, through priestly ordination, constantly creates until the end of time new obedient and living instruments, as it were, through whom he himself can work the mysterious signs to which so incredibly many graces are connected. In dogmatic language this means: What would the instruments separate from Christ (the sacraments) be without the personal, conjoined instruments, without me as a priest!

And so, what does priestly ordination mean to me? First, a removal and a taking possession of, second, a handing over to the service of his people.

(1) First, a removal and a taking possession of. A removal: I am taken out of the world and removed from all merely earthly relationships. This is the reason for celibacy. A taking possession of: Who takes possession? The *Verbum Divinum* – the Divine Word with his power and dignity. What is a priest? A *homo Dei*, a man of God, a servant of God. I have been placed ontologically at the side of Christ; I am ontologically conjoined, amazingly and incomprehensibly, with the Divine Word. I am a *minister Christi*, a servant of Christ, *dispensator mysteriorum Christi*, the one who dispenses the mysteries²⁹ of Christ, because the Eternal God, because Christ has taken possession of me. According to St. Paul, we are servants of Christ: "We sent you Timothy, our brother and *servant of God* in preaching the Gospel of Christ" (1 Thes 3,2). "Paul, servant of Christ Jesus" (Rom 1,1). "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1,1). "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ" (Titus 1,1).

²⁹ That is, the sacraments.

(2) What does priestly ordination mean to me? It means, secondly, I am handed over to the service of others. Because Christ {74} has taken possession of me (...) it goes without saying that the God-man Jesus Christ, whose servant I am, hands me over to others. This comes from the nature of the hypostatic union. This is the deepest reason is for our apostolic activity. It may also dawn on us how St. John Chrysostom could say of the priest: *Post Deum terrenus deus* – after God a god on earth³⁰. Cardinal Mercier, who was always a strong advocate of the priesthood, said to his seminarians: “My first concern is for you... not God, but you, because you are an extension of Christ.” Pope Leo the Great said, “Recognize, O Christian, your dignity!” We say, “Recognize, O priest, your dignity!”³¹ When we hear such words of praise from the

³⁰ According to St. Alphonsus, *Dignity and Duties of the Priest*, p. 36, this quote comes from St. Clement (Apostolic constitution, book 2, chapter 26).

³¹ In a sermon on September 27, 1964 (*Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*, p. 83f) for the First Mass of a new priest, Fr. Kentenich elaborated on this dignity with examples that can help us grasp how seriously he took the inner connection between Christ and each priest: “[W]e have not lost sight of the priest as a transparency of God, as his messenger, and as his representative. I think I ought to put it this way: The light of faith, in at least the oldest among us, is so deep that in spite of the many bitter experiences of our past, we have not been robbed of this most precious conviction.

“I think that I can say that we still think of the priesthood even as the Curé of Ars did when he said: Whoever sees the priest in the light of faith (now listen well!) will see in him, in spite of all his shortcomings, the loving God. He then gives examples, such as seeing sunlight through glass, or a noble vintage of wine, but mixed with water. The water is the [priest’s] {84} humanness, the noble wine is the living God – Christ alive and active in this priest.

“Nor do I think it is too difficult for us to act as St. Francis did, who had more than his share of difficulties with priests. He used to say: I have become accustomed to see in the priest not so much his failings (I cannot ignore them, but I can keep from pushing them into the foreground) but rather how he represents God.

“This is the attitude which we grew up with when it came to seeing and appreciating priests and the priesthood.

“And another saint, Catherine of Siena, goes even a bit farther. She places herself so firmly on the foundations of faith that she has the courage to say: Even

holy Fathers of the Church, it is in this context that we understand it.

ii. “Analogy” – similarity³² and union with Christ

(1) Similarity

The *character sacerdotalis indelibilis* also has a second effect on me, a remarkable “analogy,” that is, an astounding similarity comes about between me and Christ. It is a remarkable analogy of essence³³, activity, and vocation, an astounding analogy of life and holiness.

There is a remarkable analogy of essence between me and Christ. The *analogy of essence* means that my priesthood is constituted in an analogous way, that I have in me a human element (that is, my human person) and a divine element (that is, pronounced divine power and dignity). I am a perfect image of the power and dignity of the God-man.

Second comes the analogy of activity and vocation. They derive from the analogy of essence. My activity must be analogous to that of Christ.

Third, an astounding analogy of life and holiness. My holiness must be analogous, similar to that of Christ.

(2) Union

[There is] a remarkable union between me and Christ. The word *alter* {75} *Christus* (another Christ) takes on new and deeper meaning.

(a) First, this union is ontological-mystical. There is not only an analogy between me and Christ, that is, a simi-

if a priest were possessed by the devil – and one can scarcely imagine anything worse than that! – I would consider it out of place to deny him my reverence and respect; otherwise we would expect God to punish us. In every priest we should see, first of all, the office [to which he is joined].”

³² One could also say: configuration.

³³ German: *Wesensanalogie*.

larity, but also a union, a Christ-Priest unity. Our life as priests is united with Christ as Priest. I am united in a mysterious way with Christ as the *high priest*. This astounding unity can help us to understand certain great truths, such as how I as priest can say, “This is my body.” I don’t say, “This is Christ’s body,” but, “This is *my* body,” because I am an *alter Christus*, a second Christ. It implies a unity of being with Christ, namely with Christ as the High Priest.

(b) Second, this union is also tied to my office and vocation. It means that I share a unity of vocation with Christ.

(c) Third, it is personal-ethical. My communion of life with Christ demands that I put my decisions and striving in the categories of the life of Christ.

The eulogy was being held for a worthy priest. The epitaph on the stone read, “He was a priest.” In other words, he realized the fullness of priesthood. Have I realized the fullness of priesthood? We all have too little appreciation for our dignity because we have too little faith. We fail to see our lives strongly enough in the light of our unity with Christ.

Mary, Queen of Scots wrote, “If you cut out my heart after I die, you will find written there: Scotland.” When I die, others ought to find engraved on my heart: “Priest.” The world sees from the standpoint of man, and even we experience things too much from the human side. This is why we find so little common ground to help us grow closer together [as priests]. Our state in life has a high dignity!

In order to appreciate our unique priestly dignity, we must begin with *Christ*. Perhaps we should follow the path traced for us by the great ascetical masters, who knew how to ascend gradually with rhetorical skill to help us grasp at least something of the high dignity of the priesthood.

The core of our priestly {76} dignity is the mysterious communion of being which we share with Christ, the mysterious Christ-priest-unity.

My dignity is greater than that of the religious (those who are not priests). What is the source of dignity of the religious? It is their vows. What do the vows give them? An ethical dignity. What does ordination give me? First, an incomprehensible Christ-priest-unity. Ontologically I am therefore higher than a religious. (But the ontological reality must still be translated into life!)

Find me a creature with equal dignity! Cardinal Mercier once commented, “Through holy baptism we receive baptismal grace and make baptismal promises. Religious profession is the perfection of the baptismal promises, ordination is the perfection of the baptismal graces.”

Some comparisons: the martyrs, the kings, the angels, the Mother of God.³⁴ (....)

2. The Second Essential Definition

{79} Let me give you a second essential definition of the *character sacerdotalis indelibilis*. The priestly indelible mark is a

real,
creature-bound,
united-with-God

portrayal of the inner-divine life of the Trinity.

That is, it is a perfect, real, creature-bound likeness of the Christ-Priest sign, of the character-imprint of the God-man Jesus Christ as priest, bestowed through the influence of the Holy Spirit, giving a mortal man the power and authority – with Christ and in the place of Christ – to be a supernatural mediator between God and man.

This [definition] puts into a nutshell everything the Fathers of the Church tell us about the dignity of the priesthood. The light of faith is given to us to the extent that we pray. May the Blessed Mother give us still more graces in this direction, so that a new world will arise in us. What do our opponents claim? That we are filled with “power hunger” and the like. We must, in the light of faith, be all the more convinced of our dignity. But in practice we do not believe in the full plenitude

³⁴ See St. Alphonsus de Ligouri, *Dignity and Duties of the Priest*, p. 29-33.

of our priestly dignity, but are infected by [the thinking of] our time³⁵.

³⁵ On this subject, see Fr. Kentenich's reflection from October 1963 in *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*, p. 17, 25-27: "A few weeks ago, G. went off to Argentina as a lay man, his heart filled with great longings and great expectations. Today he returns to us, no longer a lay man but a priest, a new priest. If we take a moment to observe him, we see no noticeable outward change. But if we look more deeply, if we look with the light of faith into the depths of this soul, his heart, his inmost being, then I think our astonishment will know no bounds because of the transformation that has taken place inside of him. Viewed in the light of faith, it is an indescribable *elevation of being and state in life*. He has been elevated in his very being; he has been elevated in his state in life – an elevation so vast, so profound, so effective, so powerful that, seen in the light of faith, it practically has no equal in the current order of salvation. (...)

"Just as one finds common houses, even if they be great palaces, next to churches [as the structures of greatest importance], the priest is elevated, lifted up by virtue of his whole being, his ontological structure, lifted up to the Eternal God above all earthly things, above all worldly things, above all things of the laity. In just this way the priest shall be elevated. This is how I should see him. This is how I should see myself as a priest – lifted up! (...)

"Cast off every feeling, every thought, every tendency which devalues the priesthood. There are many such tendencies today. Devaluation of the priesthood.

"Where do they come from, which are the roots of this devaluing tendency? First, from disturbances of equilibrium. What do I mean by disturbances of equilibrium? The equilibrium between the laity and the priests. (...)

"The second root is the egalitarian trend which has infected not only the West, but even the whole world since the French Revolution. Liberty, equality, fraternity. Equality – all differences leveled in.

"To be sure, we are all equal from certain points of view. But we must not forget: If we correctly view the priest in the light of faith, he always remains elevated – and not just by head and shoulders! – above everything else which is valued as great. In the current order of salvation no greatness surpasses that of the priesthood. (...)

"We no longer remember this. Who reminds us? Who of us experiences it? Not even we priests remember it, much less those in formation! All differences leveled in! Certainly it is all right to know that I am the equal of every other man. But this must not cause me to hide – much less bury in the ground – my pride in being a priest and my priestly ethos.

"Once more: where is the root for this strong drive to devalue the priesthood? I almost want to say an inclination to [foment] tensions. No, this is not quite right – it is a tendency to go from one extreme to another.

"What do I mean? Just look at what is being written right now in religious circles. There you will find that in many instances the discussion in the context of the Council turns its nose at the priesthood, preaching, First Masses, etc. Why does it turn its nose? [They say:] the priesthood was put on such a high pedestal in the past that it created the impression that the priests were no longer human. But no! The two opposites can be put together – the high dignity of the priesthood on the one hand and our human weakness on the other."

Eighth Conference

Recapitulation

“Today heroic!” is the motto of the priestly everyday saint. The dignity of a priest is greater than our capacity to imagine. We are drawn into the hypostatic union. My person is for the human nature of the God-man what his human nature is for the *Verbum Divinum*³⁶. We have used the expression: as priests we are a personal, conjoined instrument of Christ. Experience your radiant, unspeakable dignity and greatness!

O God, how bold you were to make me a part of Christ’s priesthood! It was already astonishingly bold of you to unite [your Son] with the matter and spirit of man, and even bolder of you to elevate man into the realm of the divine by making us children of God. But as a priest I am the pinnacle of your bold Creator will. Of others one can say, “When you see your brother, you see Christ.” But of me as a priest one can say, “When you see a priest, you see Christ the High Priest.” The priest shares in the full authority of Christ the High Priest. (80f)

What does this mean for me? This consciousness of my greatness, my incredibly vast, ontological union with Christ and belonging to Christ should fill everything I do – how I live, eat, celebrate the Eucharist, etc. Everything should flow from this awareness – I am an *alter Christus*³⁷, another Christ, an image of Christ the High Priest. (81)

Today heroic! If I could only experience it, I would be compelled to strive for the heroism of the three divine virtues. I want to grasp my dignity. We will never be able to totally grasp the hypostatic union, not even in heaven. In like fashion, we will never be able to totally grasp our priestly dignity. If I have worked on my everyday sanctity from the standpoint of being a

³⁶ The Divine Word.

³⁷ Elsewhere, Fr. Kentenich points out that while the dignity of being “another Christ” is also part of the common priesthood of all the faithful, it is raised to its highest form in the ministerial priesthood. As he says in *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*, p. 41: “*Sacerdos alter Christus* [a priest is another Christ]. I can also say this of every Christian: *Christianus alter Christus* [a Christian is another Christ]. But for priests it is just on a different level. What does it mean to be an *alter Christus*? To represent, to portray the person of Christ as perfectly as possible in being, action, attitude, and life.”

child of God and a member of Christ, then I will understand what we spoke about yesterday: we bow in reverence before the lofty dignity, before the bright-dark³⁸ of our dignity. (81)

Three consequences

Three consequences flow from this: If I have caught fire for my dignity, then it will be easier for me, first, to be a transparency of Christ, second, to enthuse the people for the priesthood, third, to better understand the following line of thought. (81)

a. I will more easily be a transparency of Christ

If I have caught fire for my dignity, it will be easier for me to be a transparency of Christ. Every Christian – and this includes me as a priest – must be an outstanding transparency of Christ. (81)

b. I will more easily enthuse the faithful for the priesthood

It will be easier for me to enthuse the faithful for the priesthood and I will want to do so for two reasons: to awaken priestly vocations and to win over cooperators for the priesthood.

(i) To awaken priestly vocations. I want to help Christ form new priests. Our opponents understand all too well how to enthuse others for the highest ideals. With what fervor do they know how to speak about them – and we? How little do we know about speaking enthusiastically to others about our ideals, or singing the praises of the diocesan priests in my diocese who embody these ideals and have accomplished great things. When we have experienced great examples of the priestly ideal, who will enthusiastically pass this on to the next generation? I should excite young people for the priestly ideal. One of our greatest tasks is to offer the grace of the priesthood to as many as we possibly can. We should not just wait and pray, for instance, pray the exorcism

³⁸ German: *Hell-Dunkel*, a typical word used by Fr. Kentenich to indicate a mystery which can only partially be penetrated by our human understanding.

prayer³⁹, no, we must also work. We want to put focus on our great tasks, discuss them together, and ask ourselves: Who has become a priest because of me? If I am not on fire, I cannot set others on fire!

(ii) Secondly, to win over cooperators for the priesthood. As a priest I also need cooperators. Everything should find its heart in the priesthood. Why? Because I am a transparency of God, an image of Christ the Eternal High Priest. (81f)

If our priests are holy, we will have a holy people. We ought to use everything to set our people on fire for the priesthood. Days of penitence, Saturdays of prayer for vocations, ordinations, First Masses. Have I ever let the light of the priestly ideal shine out [as a topic for my sermon]? (82)

c. I will more easily understand this line of thought

Once I have warmed up to the dignity of my priesthood, it will be easier for me to understand the following line of thought. We will then be in the best frame of mind to better grasp the following insights. (82f)

Ib. ORDO AGENDI

83

The source of the immutable [side of the priesthood] is the indelible priestly mark. From this source flows the unique analogy and unity of being, action and life, the communion between us and Christ. We have considered the *ordo essendi*, the order of being of this immutable side. Now we must discuss the *ordo agendi*, the order of action, the unfolding of the immutable. What must be our focus? Developing our communion of being, action, and life with Christ. Now I must *live* as an *alter Christus* (another Christ)! (83)

Note: the three dimensions:

1. Ontological-mystical: the personal character of the priest is to be a conjoined instrument of Christ.

³⁹ The little exorcism prayer that any of the faithful can pray in the spirit of Psalm 68: “Arise, O Lord, that your enemies may be scattered and those who hate you may flee before you...” See *Heavenwards*, p. 176.

2. Office and vocation.

3. Personal-ethical: it is about priestly sanctity. (83)

A. Live your communion of *being* with Christ!

83

1. Ontologically-mystically.

Live your communion of being with Christ – become an *alter Christus* in the ontological-mystical sense. This communion of being involves two things: a) a mysterious, mutual interpenetration, b) a mysterious, mutual dependence. (83)

a. Live the mysterious, mutual interpenetration with Christ

This mysterious interpenetration must first be present. It is a mysterious participation in the Christ-priest-image. In dogmatic theology this interpenetration is called an *unio quasi-physica* [quasi-physical union] or *unio mystica* [mystical union]. It is not just being united to Christ, but *perfectly* united to Christ. Ontological interpenetration. The old dogmatic theology put it this way: “Christ is the *causa efficiens principalis* [the principle effecting cause], we are the *causa efficiens instrumentalis* [the instrumental effecting cause]. Where does this interpenetration show the most? At Holy Mass, in the administration of the sacraments, [and] as we serve the Word of God. (83f)

i. At Holy Mass

The *unio quasi-physica* goes so incredibly far that we as priests dare to say, “*Hoc est enim corpus meum* – This is my body.” I see my person under a threefold aspect – as a physical person, as a moral person, and I as representative of the Church, especially of my parish. I in my sacramental being, I in this amazing mutual interpenetration of Christ and self... in other words, if the sheath of my body would fall away, if we would grasp what happens here in the reality of the light of faith, then we would have to say: Here the man as physical person recedes totally into the background, here the whole unmistakable priest-character

imprint of the God-man comes so radically to the forefront that we must say: Truly it is Christ who stands here, Christ living in and through the priest.

Can I imagine a greater dignity? The pinnacle of my dignity is found at the consecration [of the Mass]. Mere man can never climb this summit. It is the reenactment of the sacrifice on the cross. The world has but one Victim and one Priest. One could never amass so many ideas that one would be elevated [in this way] beyond ourselves, beyond the world. How great is my greatness at the altar – the only High Priest uses me to offer the only sacrifice. Then it becomes clear to me that the Holy Mass is the summit, the culmination of my day's work. (84)

ii. Administering the sacraments

We want to be completely conscious of what this means. Who administers the sacraments? Recall the old axiom: [Christ is the] *causa efficiens principalis* and [the priest is the] *causa efficiens instrumentalis*. Christ is the principle effecting cause. Christ is the one who baptizes and gives absolution. In the absolution formula we say (...) "I absolve you..." (84f)

iii. Serving the Word of God/Sacramentals

It is similar with the sacramentals. For instance, in proclaiming the Word of God everything flows from this mysterious Christ-penetration. (85)

Practical consequences: a) In the future I should be more conscious of the inner connection. When I pray the Breviary, who is praying? Christ in me. When I absolve, who is absolving? Christ in me. I live much too little in this new reality. b) We should be grateful that we can be used in this way as instruments, small though we are! Have I said 'thank you' for this? c) We should also do atonement for forgetting this reality so much. (85)

b. Live the mysterious, mutual dependence on Christ

I depend on Christ. This is the meaning of what we have discussed so far. He is the only priest, I am drawn into [a union with] Christ, I am totally dependant on him. Still more important for my practical life is this: He is dependant on me, too. I live in two-in-oneness with Christ. This is so true that he has made his salvific work here on earth totally dependent on the work of his priests. For instance, the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass would no longer be offered if there were no more priests. He has made himself dependent on me. *Deus operatur per causas secundas*. God acts through secondary causes. Nothing without you – nothing without me! Nothing without the eternal High Priest, but by the same token nothing without me. For instance, absolution. If I do not give the absolution, there is no absolution. It is the same with the other sacraments⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ See Fr. Kentenich in *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*, p. 31-35: "[When the priest says] *Hoc est enim corpus meum* ['This is my Body'], what does this mean? Think of what a power this means, what omnipotence! What can I do as a priest? I can make Christ sacramentally present! Really and truly! Whether I am a noble priest or a bad priest. (...)

"[I]f I want to measure the greatness of a man, or anything else, then I must find something to compare it with. One compares first with the great ones here on earth ... [and then] climbs to the heavens and asks: What persons or creatures in heaven can compare with the dignity or being and action of the priest? (...)

"The great ones here on earth – who could that be? One can have power, or vast knowledge, or influence over people. These things make it possible to do many, many things. Even certain men on earth have the power to bind. A judge can bind, a judge can loose. Anyone who has been in prison knows that this is real power. But what is this in comparison to the priest's power to bind and loose? Now don't say, this just puts the priest on a pedestal. No, no! It is Christ whose honor is elevated! Christ, [the] God[-man], the one Priest who in his poverty makes use of me to share his omnipotence. Sin – I can forgive sins! Who else can do that? I can make God present on the altar, even if I am a scoundrel! But ontologically I have the power. Think that through for yourselves, so that in the future we see our priests with different eyes. Certainly we see their shortcomings, but we must also see them with the eyes of faith. (...)

"The priest is the representative of Christ. What does Our Lord say of himself? 'I am the way, the truth, and the life' (Jn 14,6). I am that! The priest can

Almighty God has made himself helpless from two view points. (1) The first is *ratione subjecti*, that is, with respect to me [the acting subject]. He cannot renew the world without my personal cooperation. He lies before me as a helpless child. He relies on me, a small priest and yet so great. Just as Mary nurtured the Son of God, so do I. (2) Almighty God has made himself helpless *ratione objecti*, that is, with regard to the object [of my actions]. In those I serve he is like a helpless child. Through me every Christian should mature to the full stature of Christ (cf Eph 4,13). With what tender love are we allowed to say: As a priest I am also another Mary, for I must nurture the helpless God-man as Mary did. Practical consequence: In general, make sure the eternal God does not regret his boldness. The eternal God was incredibly bold to make himself so dependent on me. I must make sure that he never regrets it, that I don't embarrass the eternal God. What can I do in particular? First, thanksgiving and atonement. Second, give the blank check; do God's will. Third, endure the will of God. (85f)

i. Thanksgiving and atonement

We want to give thanks that the eternal God became so helpless toward us small, and yet so great, human beings. We give thanks that he wants to arouse all my masculine strength. But I also want to offer atonement. St. Augustine said, "*Audemus nos dicere matres Christi*," that is, "We have the boldness, the courage, to call ourselves mothers of Christ." The transfigured Christ cries for his mother. Who can be his mother? I am allowed to be his mother. In the same way the mystical Christ, in his mem-

say the same thing of himself, although he must always add: *Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum* [through Our Lord Jesus Christ]. Through Christ, in Christ. Yes, Christ in me (cf Gal 2,20), but in *me*, I am part of it. I am the way – yes, as priest I share in Christ's office as Shepherd. I am the truth – I share in Christ's vocation to teach, in the magisterium. I am the way, the truth, and the life – I participate in Christ's priestly office."

bers, cries for his mother. I must also make atonement that I have rendered the eternal God so little maternal service. I enthuse myself and others for the Blessed Mother, but how helpless I often am. (86)

ii. Blank check⁴¹

Second, I give a blank check and do the will of God. I want to be totally dependent on the eternal God and Our Lady. "Do whatever he tells you" (Jn 2,5). I want to be totally reliant on the eternal God. How does Mary say it? "Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1,38). Today I renew my priestly ordination, that is, I give the eternal God and the Blessed Mother a blank check – to do with me whatever they want. No sooner did Mary give her blank check when she hears that Elizabeth is in need. She does not stay put. She want to fulfill God's will in all things. She is totally immersed in God, but still travels to Elizabeth and serves. Why? What is crying for her? Who wants something of her? Christ wants to be carried to new places. She is the Christ-bearer. I want to give the eternal God and the Blessed Mother a blank check. In the business world a blank check is a blank form which I sign, declaring that I am ready to [pay whatever is written down. For us it means I declare myself ready to] do everything which God writes on the check of my life. God and the Blessed Mother can write down whatever they like. How was it at the wedding in Cana? If you go through the whole life of Our Lady you will find that she wants to do nothing else than serve Christ. We, too, have

⁴¹ Earlier in the same year (1939), some circles of the Schoenstatt Movement began to speak about offering Mary a "blank check" in response to the increasingly desperate situation inside the Nazi regime. On April 30, 1939, the Nazis even confiscated the school directly overlooking the Original Shrine in Schoenstatt. Only total trust in divine power could hope to turn back the hostile forces which wished to destroy Schoenstatt. The "blank check" was formally offered to Mary on October 18, 1939 (Schoenstatt's 25th anniversary). See J. Niehaus, *200 Questions about Schoenstatt*, No. 76.

the task to serve the helpless Christ as the Blessed Mother did. (86f)

iii. Endure the will of God

Thirdly: endure the will of God. Mary not only did the will of God, she suffered it⁴².

How am I allowed to serve the helpless God-man? First, I serve the Eucharistic God-man. Second, the sacramental God-man; administer the sacraments which great warmth. Third, I serve the mystical Christ. (87)

2. In your office and vocation (not elaborated)

3. Personally-ethically (not elaborated)

B. Live your communion of *action (vocation)* with Christ! 87

Live the communion of action or vocation with Christ! First, this communion of action or vocation really exists. Secondly, this communion

⁴² See for instance, Fr. Kentenich's comments in a retreat for priests, July 19-24, 1928 (seventeenth conference, unpublished transcript): "When we take into one hand our own chalice of suffering and into the other hand the Blessed Mother's chalice of suffering, or, when we try to carry the chalice of suffering of others, we find that no chalice of suffering endured by any human being is as heavy as that of our dear Blessed Mother, except that of Christ. Mary had the heaviest chalice of suffering. (...)

"My spiritual suffering: my limitations, temptations, my suffering. How can this be? God loved our dear Blessed Mother the most, and vice versa, but in spite of this – no, precisely because of this! – she bore the greatest suffering. It is simply a great fundamental law of Christian life: 'Those the Lord loves, he disciplines' (Hebr 12,6).

"How should I take my suffering? As a sign of divine love and divine election. We should really cherish our suffering more, relish it, drink it to the dregs. But not as 'strong men.' We should not despise all suffering, for God only gives his grace to the humble. Unless I make use of it, I will falter" (41).

of action or vocation is multifaceted. (87)

1. The communion of action is real

We are already convinced of this because we know that the order of being is the norm for the order of action. If this communion of being already exists because of the *character sacerdotalis indelibilis*, then this communion of being must effect a communion of action. Let us take as a parallel case the example of sanctifying grace. Sanctifying grace, sharing in divine life, is [both] an ontological principle and a principle of action. We do not have divine life the same way we have a bank note, but rather as a principle of action. The way we share in the being of the High Priest must become a sharing in the actions of the High Priest. "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22,19). "What you declare bound on earth shall be bound in heaven" (Mt 16,19). "Go into the whole world and teach all nations, baptizing them..." (Mk 16,15). Here we would need to add a chapter on how Christ instituted the sacraments. (87f)

2. The communion of action is multifaceted

Secondly, this communion of action or vocation is multifaceted. It participates in the aims of [Christ's] mission, the tasks of his mission, and the grace of his mission. (88)

a. Sharing in the aims of his mission

What are the aims of the God-man's mission? The *gloria Dei* [glory of God] and *salus hominum* [salvation of men], that is, the infinite glorification of the Father and bringing man into a deep communion of love with the eternal God. Why did God create the world? In order to have spiritual beings with whom he could enter into a communion of love. The aim of Jesus Christ's mission is therefore the glory of God and the salvation of man. And so we pray in the creed: "For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven and became man."

What is the aim of my mission? The transformation of the world into Christ. What does this mean? It is my aim that all people become members of Christ and, in Christ, attain the

communion of love with God. According to St. Thomas I should be a *perfector animarum*, a perfecter of souls. St. Paul says, “The great goal is the complete Christ, Christ come to full maturity.”

To call it a Marian transformation of the world into Christ (as we do) is not a difficulty. We serve the God-man like Mary and with Mary. Like Mary: as Mary does, as another Mary. *Simile simili gaudet*⁴³. [We rejoice that] we can be Marian priests; she is Schoenstatt’s treasure and pearl of great price. We ask that she be given to us anew⁴⁴. This is our timeless aim; this aim of our mission is acutely needed today and becomes especially relevant in our present times.

What is my life’s task as a priest? To see to it that human nature’s fundamental relationship to the eternal God is alive in the present [not just in the past]. I must help people form a relationship with God, because millions don’t want it and sever this bond. The eternal God is helpless because I do too little. I have so much time, but waste it on trivialities when I ought to be helping people find God. “Every high priest is taken from the people and appointed for the people, to offer to God on their behalf gifts and sin offerings” “*Omnis namque Pontifex ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur in iis, quae sunt ad Deum, ut offerat dona, et sacrificia pro peccatis*” (Heb 5,1). (88f)

⁴³ Latin saying: Those of like mind (heart, purpose, soul), like to be with each other.

⁴⁴ In his retreat for priests in July 1928 (eighteenth conference, unpublished transcript), Fr. Kentenich spoke about the special relationship between Mary and the priest, for instance: “The *culmination on the cross*. Here we first meet Mary completely as *virgo sacerdos*. The High Priest is standing with his deacon at the altar, at the holy sacrifice. Here Mary renewed her *fiat*, offering herself. The spiritual agony that she suffered was very deep. (...) And we priests? We are called to continue the work of her Son. Can we not expect Mary to help us even as she helped her Son? Yes! She takes care of us so that we properly carry out, in keeping with his mission, all the activity of her Son” (43).

b. Sharing in the tasks of his mission

St. Thomas makes it exceedingly clear when he says, “The priest has two tasks: *consecrare* and *praeparare*” [to consecrate (at Mass) and to prepare (for the consecration)]. The priest’s main task is to consecrate, because Christ’s main task in the world was to consecrate his life. Prepare: everything a priest does is none other than a preparation of the world and the faithful for the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Because we share his priestly office, Christ also lets us share his teaching office and office as shepherd. He gives it to us so that we, his priests, can totally embody our share in his priesthood. But the primary task is to consecrate. (89)

Live the communion of tasks with Christ at *Holy Mass*, when administering the *sacraments*, the *sacramentals*! Give your pastoral work a sacramental thrust!

Live the communion of tasks with Christ at Holy Mass. With what consequences? *Like* to celebrate Mass; do so in a *dignified* manner. *We like* to celebrate Mass because when we celebrate we are standing at the apex of our superhuman dignity. The Mass is the source of all the sacraments. St. Augustine says, “We dare to call ourselves mothers of Christ,” and we should be a mother to Christ. When we celebrate Mass we help him the most in his work of glorifying God and transfiguring the world. We celebrate in a *dignified* manner, that is, free from serious sin, free from venial sin, free from all inordinate attachment to venial sin.

Live the communion of tasks with Christ when giving the sacraments! *Like* to administer the sacraments. We read what the Holy Father has said about administering the sacraments. Christ is simply helpless; he wants to accompany people through life but can’t do it without us. I want to fulfill this deep-seated wish of Christ, and so I like to administer the sacraments. In order to lift people to a higher plane, I like to administer the sacraments, even when I am tired, for there is nothing better that I can give to man. We do not say: it won’t make any difference anyway. No, we celebrate the sacraments in a dignified manner, dignified in our bearing. After all, I am an *alter Christus*.

The same applies to the sacramentals and to my service to the Word of God. (90)

c. Sharing in the grace of his mission (not elaborated)

C. Live your communion of *life or grace* with Christ 93

Is there really a communion of grace with Christ?⁴⁵ We return to the ultimate foundation, the hypostatic union. For the human nature of the God-man this is the source of the *gratia capitis*, the grace of being head. What the hypostatic union is for Christ, the indelible priestly mark is for the priest. Through this priestly mark I also share in the *gratia capitis*, in Christ's place as head and leader. (93)

(....)

⁴⁵ In his retreat for priests in July 1928 (thirteenth conference, unpublished transcript), Fr. Kentenich spoke at length on the unity of life between Christ and his priests. To illustrate this communion, Fr. Kentenich referred to four images from the New Testament: 1) the grafting into the olive tree (Rom 11, 17-24), 2) the cornerstone (1 Pt 2, 4-8), 3) the mystical body (Rom 12, 3-8; 1 Cor 12, 12-31), 4) the vine and the branches (Jn 15,1-8).

Ninth Conference

The third imperative for developing the immutable reality of priestly life is: Live the communion of life with Christ in the personal-ethical sense. In other words: live *priestly sanctity*, live a life of personal priestly sanctity. We are navigating into three great worlds. They are three great lines of thought:

- 1) What obligates us to strive for a personal life of sanctity?
- 2) What are the original features of our personal life of sanctity?
- 3) What fullness of blessings can we expect from our personal life of sanctity? (95)

1. What obligates us to strive for a personal life of sanctity?

What obligates us to strive for a personal life of sanctity? Where does this obligation come from? From the *character sacerdotalis indelibilis*. Why do I stress this? If our obligation has its root in the sacrament [of Holy Orders], then we realize that every obligation gives us the right to the corresponding graces⁴⁶. Where do we see something similar? In his encyclical on education, the Holy Father derives the ideal of [Christian] education from the grace of baptism⁴⁷. And I could remind you of the religious life, religious profession. Religious are obligated by their vows to strive for sanctity. St. Thomas describes the religious state as *status perfectionis acquirendus*, that is, the state of those acquiring perfection. Through their vows, religious obligate themselves to strive for sanctity. If I am a confessor for religious, I am a mediator between God and man. Of every hundred called to sanctity, 99 do not reach

⁴⁶ In *USA-Terziat* (tertianship for Pallottines in Milwaukee, 1952, Vol. 1, p. 60), Fr. Kentenich noted: "If God is faithful, he must also remain faithful to me as a priest. And if I am called to and have a duty to seek heroic sanctity, he must consequently lead me on the normal ways of sanctity. And what are they? They are the ways of second conversion" (as translated in *Schoenstatt's Instrument Spirituality*, p. 118). For the accompanying exposition on second conversion and its importance for priests, see *Schoenstatt's Instrument Spirituality*, p. 109-166.

⁴⁷ Pope Pius XI, encyclical *Divini illius Magistri* (On Christian education), December 31, 1929, No. 94.

the goal for want of spiritual direction. My sense of responsibility ought to make me see my task – and do it! (95f)

We are speaking of the obligations of the priest. The obligation that binds us to strive for sanctity is much more obligating than that of the religious! If I would say: let the religious strive for sanctity, we priests will just do our “damned duty”, how wrong I would be! We ought to say: As a priest I must strive for a high degree of sanctity, for a unique sanctity. As Schoenstatt priests it is our duty to strive seriously for the greatest possible perfection. After all, every priest ought to be striving for that! As Schoenstatt priests we strive for this as a community. (96)

Let us study the ordination rite, from the minor orders to the major orders. On the whole, the ordination rite does not speak of that which is most essential, the *character sacerdotalis*, and it even speaks very little of sanctifying grace. The rite’s central thought is self-sanctification and building up the body of Christ. Ancient Christianity understood the language of symbols much better than we do. What do the individual ordination rites say? Let us read the main prayers and study if the imperatives in the foreground are self-formation and building up the body of Christ. For instance, the office of exorcist. What an important task! I suppose the world revolution will have to come before we really learn to take seriously the power of Satan in the world. Whoever receives this ordination should renew his ordination! Even now [as a priest] I have this task as exorcist, as lector, etc. What obligates me to a life of personal sanctity? The communion of being with Christ, the communion of tasks with Christ, and the communion of grace with Christ. (96)

(a) The first thing that obligates us to a life of personal sanctity is our communion of being with Christ. *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. I enter into an incredibly deep communion of being with Christ, hence, in keeping with the *ordo agendi*, I must also let this communion of being have an effect on my life. (96f)

(b) The second thing that obligates us to a life of personal sanctity is our communion of tasks with Christ. I am reminded of the structure of St. Thomas. This thought runs through all

his works. He is convinced that the greatness of one’s task in the kingdom of God determines the greatness of the gifts of grace and the greatness of personal sanctity. Thomas applies it to Mariology. Which task did Mary have? I compare her task with my task. The greatness of my life’s task will also determine the measure of the gifts of grace I receive and the measure of my personal sanctity. In more detail (we remain with St. Thomas): He sees the Eucharist, the celebration of the Mass as the most essential task of the priest. Thomas’ classical sentence is: Since the Eucharist belongs to the most excellent of mysteries, the sanctity of the priest is higher than the sanctity of religious. Before Thomas wrote this, there had been a great argument between the religious and secular people of that time. Thomas was always generous and took the stand that a greater sanctity is expected of the priest than is expected of the religious by virtue of their profession. Why? Because the task is greater. Imitate what you celebrate! What do we do in the Eucharist? What are we at one and the same time? Both priest and victim! And I must also be this in the *ordo agendi*, I must be the victim. I must integrate myself into the great sacrifice of Christ. I must declare myself to be a complete sacrifice. My priesthood is a constant imperative that obligates me to the highest sanctity. I likewise have a right to the corresponding grace, which I receive at Holy Mass. We distinguish between the state of perfection and the condition of perfection. Thomas said, “The priest does not belong, juridically speaking, to the state of perfection, but we must clearly be in the condition of perfection.” Mercier, who thought must as we do and did so much for his secular clergy, liked to say, “We secular priests are the first [religious] order *ratione temporis* (in history), for through ordination we are joined to Christ in the order of being. But we are also the first order *ratione excellentiae* (by reason of excellence) because the others such as the religious, have an outward title, while we are bound by the priestly mark. (97f)

(c) The third thing that obligates us to a life of personal sanctity is our communion of grace with Christ. Thomas teaches: the grace of vocation, the grace of the state of the

priesthood is pronouncedly apostolic, with the sanctification of the world as its aim. This is why Thomas says: the priest is *perfector animarum*, the perfecter of souls. (98)

2. The original features of our personal life of sanctity

Two thoughts. First, the original features of our striving for sanctity, and second, their value. (98)

(a) The original features of our striving for personal sanctity have their essential root in the *character sacerdotalis*. From it flow the communion of being, action, and grace with Christ which determine my unique sanctity. Let me mention the parts and then give it a general name. (98)

(i) The parts of my unique priestly sanctity. My piety must be:

first: Christo-mystical,

second: Trinocentric

third: liturgical,

fourth: apostolic,

fifth: Marian,

sixth: humanistic,

seventh: social.

(1) My priestly piety must, first of all, by *Christo-mystical*. Through the communion of being with Christ I am drawn into Christ in a mysterious way. This is the basis of my Christo-mystical piety. A few observations for practical life: What can I do to deepen this Christo-mysticism? First, I must get to know Christ better and like to read Sacred Scripture. If I am a part of him, then this goes without saying. Secondly, I must love Christ more. When should this love burn most brightly? At Holy Mass and in the presence of the Eucharist. Before, during, and after celebrating Mass, hold private conversation with him. After Mass we want to hear him say, “Simon, do you love me?” Our sense of reality should not be limited to the idea [of union with Jesus]. We also want to have a personal love for Our Lord. It will urge me to visit him in the

tabernacle during the day. Just as the apostles went to Jesus with every little concern, we do the same. We want to love him with all our heart. Our deep veneration for Jesus’ humanity urges us to the tabernacle because we know that we, through ordination, have been so profoundly bound together with the God-man’s humanity. (98f)

(2) My priestly piety must, secondly, be *Trinocentric*. I live in a communion of actions and aims with Christ. The aim of his activity was the glorification of the Triune God. We will not let ourselves be thrown from the saddle; my sanctity must be Trinocentric, and everything we have done in the past years has been a way to the most blessed Trinity. (99)

(3) My priestly piety must, thirdly, be *liturgical*. The communion of tasks with Christ requires a liturgical pastoral approach. We must have a liturgical attitude. A true priest can do it no other way – but not liturgistic. We want to deepen our liturgical attitude. Think of little things. Right away when I get up in the morning, make a sign of the cross as a renewal of my awareness: I am baptized. Greatness often shows in little things. (99)

(4) My priestly piety must, fourthly, be *apostolic*. We are in a communion of grace with Christ. The grace of the priesthood is an apostolic grace; the grace of the priesthood is an apostolic grace for others and for my own salvation. (99)

(5) My priestly piety must, fifthly, be *Marian*. As St. Augustine said, we are *matres Christi*, “mothers of Christ.” “We dare to call ourselves mothers of Christ.” With Mary we have the same being and thus the same task, the same grace. What is the source of our Marian priestly attitude? All the titles we have been discussing. I now only speak dogmatically. The person of the priest is Marian because of his communion of being, action, and grace with Christ.

He is Marian because of his *communion of being* with Christ. The communion of being with Christ directly de-

rives from the *character sacerdotalis*. What does it give me? I become for the humanity of the God-man what the humanity of the God-man is for the *Verbum Divinum*. I am drawn into Christ's humanity. Mary is the Mother of the God-man's human nature. She is therefore also my Mother because of my communion of being with Christ. While she is the Mother of all people, she is so especially for all priests. Who, other than the priest, is more deeply drawn [into Christ]? After all, he has received [Christ] in fullness. Hence, the Mother of God must be the Mother of the priest in a most singular way. I should therefore love the Blessed Mother; I should tenderly love her as her child. I am not afraid to admit that I am Marian.

[The priest is] Marian because of the *communio of action* with Christ. In his encyclical on the priesthood Pius XI says, "Every priest must tenderly love Our Lady as her child!"⁴⁸ How does he demonstrate this? His reasoning fits [what we are saying] here: It is "because of the similarity of tasks." *Simile simili gaudet*. The communion of action with Christ means a communion of aims, tasks, and grace. Communion of aims with Christ: Christ was so helpless while here on earth! What does Mary do? She is the handmaid of the Lord. Communion of tasks:

⁴⁸ Cf. Pope Pius XI, encyclical *Ad Catholici sacerdotii* (On the Catholic priesthood), December 20, 1935. See No. 39: "It is plain, then, that all Christian virtues should flourish in the soul of the priest. Yet there are some virtues which in a very particular manner attach themselves to the priest as most befitting and necessary to him. Of these the first is piety (...). But remark, Venerable Brethren, the piety of which We speak is not that shallow and superficial piety which attracts but does not nourish, is busy but does not sanctify. We mean that solid piety which is not dependent upon changing mood or feeling. It is based upon principles of sound doctrine; it is ruled by staunch convictions; and so it resists the assaults and the illusions of temptation. This piety should primarily be directed towards God our Father in Heaven; yet it should be extended also to the Mother of God. *The priest even more than the faithful should have devotion to Our Lady, for the relation of the priest to Christ is more deeply and truly like that which Mary bears to her Divine Son*" (emphasis added). Also cited by Fr. Kentenich in his 1941 retreat for priests, *Der marianische Priester*, p. 7.

her task is like that of the heavenly Father – and like my task, too. Mary gave birth to the human life of the only-begotten God-man. His birth in time, of the Virgin Mary, is a counterpart to his eternal birth from the heavenly Father. And I? The Savior is born of me, too. God gave him his divine being; Mary gave him his human being; I am permitted to give him his sacramental being. From the communion of being and action flow Marian attachment and Marian attitude. Her attitude to Christ: she was allowed to serve him. I am allowed to provide the same service to the sacramental Christ. Mary serves Jesus during the Flight into Egypt, in Nazareth, in Bethlehem. In like manner I must serve the sacramental and mystical Christ. The mystical Christ is his mystical body. (...) [Mary] is the singular instrument of the Holy Spirit. This applies to me, too: I am the normal, necessary instrument by which the Holy Spirit dispenses his graces.

[The priest is] Marian because of his *communio of grace* with Christ. What does this mean? The grace I receive in priestly ordination is grace for others, is a sharing in the *gratia capitis*, the grace of headship, the grace of leadership. Did Our Lady also receive a share in this grace? [Yes!] She is the Mediatrix of all graces. She is not only the Dispensatrix of all graces, but also helped merit these graces. She helped merit the graces and dispenses them. This includes the grace of my priesthood. (99-101)

[Note:] The degree of our Marian piety. To what degree should a priest be Marian? It cannot just be an ordinary degree, but must be truly great, as we can surmise from all the reasons given above. Specific to us as Schoenstatt federation priests: Two sources nourish our Marian attitude. First: our consecration to Our Lady of Schoenstatt. This explains the moderate local attachment which our Marian devotion has [to the Shrine]. Second: Schoenstatt is a work and instrument of the Blessed Mother. It can be shown that Mary is, to an extraordinary degree, the foundress of the entire family. As a result, we want to strive for the ideal of a love of Mary that ascends from

being great to being extraordinarily great⁴⁹. (101)

(6) My priestly piety must, sixthly, be *humanistic*. Why? Because our priestly piety is Marian. [Indeed,] because it is apostolic, it is humanistic. *Ex hominibus assumptus, pro hominibus constituitur* – “from the people and for the people...” (Heb 5,1). We priests have been established for the people. I must have compassion for the people, must deal with them in a human way, I must realize the ideal of Christian humanism. (101)

(7) My priestly piety must, seventhly, be *social*. Why? We priests form a state in life⁵⁰. In order to do justice to our state in life we are obligated to stay in touch with our fellow priests. We need a consciousness of and pride in our state in life. As priests we belong to a mixed lifestyle [of active and contemplative]. It is part of our unique character. (101f)

⁴⁹ In the 1941 retreat course *Der marianische Priester* (p. 7), Fr. Kentenich explains that the extraordinary degree of Marian piety which sets a Schoenstatt priest apart is on par with the true devotion to Mary of St. Louis de Montfort: “We Schoenstatters have a pronounced Marian devotion! At least that is how it should be. But even more ought to be said of us. Since we made the Blank Check with the MTA [starting in 1939], at the very least we are reaching out our hand for the ideal of a singular Marian devotion. The Blank Check, correctly understood, includes DeMontfort’s true devotion to Mary. And this is an extraordinarily high degree of Marian devotion. Moreover, making the Blank Check demands of us an extraordinarily high degree of moral excellence. Toward this end we must mobilize all the energy of our drives.”

⁵⁰ One of Fr. Kentenich’s concerns was that each state in life foster a healthy pride in its dignity and divine mission. Such a pride should not be at the expense of others, but neither should it fall prey to modern incredulity or inferiority complexes. In his retreat for priests in 1946 (*Kampf um die wahre Freiheit*, p. 204), Fr. Kentenich said: “As priests we belong to a higher state. (...) The awareness that the priest is higher is why we were persecuted [by the Nazis]. Our task: to be humble and generous. Should we abandon our prerogatives as an admired part of society? Should we fall into the background and just gratify the body? No, not even our people wants that. But we should not become arrogant; instead we should come close to the people, be respectful, give alms, live simply, be charitable.”

Tenth Conference

We are looking for a general name that describes our lifestyle. It is a Marian-apostolic lifestyle. Does this capture everything I have discussed so far?

A style. Why do I emphasize the Marian dimension? First for dogmatic reasons. (...) The Marian dimension of our life is a wellspring for the Christo-mystical dimension, as well as the Trinitarian, and liturgical. Just as the human nature of the God-man has Mary as its source, just as the God-man is the fruit of the tree called Mary, we become part of the tree who is the God-man. In this way the Christo-mystical, Trinitarian, and liturgical sides of our priestly life are safeguarded to an outstanding degree. (102)

(Longer discussion of the apostolic lifestyle – p. 103-107)

3. What fullness of blessings can we expect from our personal life of sanctity?

Thirdly, [we consider] the fullness of blessings that come from our priestly life of sanctity and striving for sanctity.

First: for the priest himself.

Second: for all who share his state in life.

Third: for the whole Church. (107)

a. For the priest himself

First, the fullness of blessings for the priest himself. It preserves us from dangers to our salvation, it protects us from crises in our priesthood, it makes all our activity fruitful. (107)

(i) *Preserves from dangers to our salvation*. What dangers do we face as priests on the way to salvation? Compulsion and routine, exaggerations to the left and right, exaggerations up and down, pride and self-giving. What blessings emanate from the priesthood, and yet how many dangers to our salvation!

What are the dangers to salvation? (107)

(1) The great danger of compulsion (...). As priests we pledged our lives to celibacy, and did so in a time when we did not yet know all that life would bring. We were so young that we did not yet know the full extent of our humanity. One is later tempted to cast aside celibacy; one begins to experience it as a compulsion⁵¹. Striving for priestly sanctity preserves us from this danger. First, in the communion of being with Christ we are united with Christ, choosing to follow the God-man in his purity as a complete sacrifice. Through celibacy I am [a complete sacrifice] to an outstanding degree. Secondly, through the communion of aims with Christ my entire strength is given to a great goal. Thirdly, through the communion of tasks with Christ we make available to Jesus all our fatherliness, and in this way help him in his helplessness. (107f)

(2) The great danger of routine. As lofty as our vocation is, the danger is great that it becomes routine. *Quotidiana vilescunt* – familiarity breeds contempt⁵².

⁵¹ In his retreat for priests in 1934 (*Vollkommene Lebensfreude*, p. 316), he describes the danger this way: “I am committed to celibacy. For many this commitment will have become a great source of blessing. But can this commitment not also become a compulsion, a great danger? After all, I was still young when I made this commitment. Now I am old. New ideals, new problems have been aroused in me. Now begins the violent battle between ideal and reality. In earlier years I did not know the intrinsic value (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) of [women, marriage, sexuality, etc. or] sensual pleasure; I could just ignore it. But now I notice that these things have an intrinsic value, have a pleasure all their own. How everything inside of me pushes to change my ideal! I can not; I may not. Do you understand how many dangers can be connected with this? Can I say to myself, “No, these dangers have not brought me down”? Have I mastered them? If I have, what a blessing!”

⁵² In the 1934 retreat (*Vollkommene Lebensfreude*, p. 317), he elaborates: “Everything which we call a source of blessing can become a source of danger, even regular contact with the Eucharist. It must not become a danger! We say, ‘Daily things become routine;’ they drag us down, fail to make an impression any

(108)

(3) Other dangers for our salvation: Exaggeration to the left and right, up and down. “Down” refers to naturalism, “up” means unhealthy supranaturalism. We experience our own limitations over and over⁵³. (108)

(4) Other dangers for our salvation: Pride and self-giving. The consciousness of our state can lead to pride. The tendency to self-giving is especially present when we hear confessions. The confessional has been the death of the purity of many priests. (108)

(ii) *Protects from crises in the priesthood*. Which crises should I mention? I will only mention sexual crises⁵⁴. First crisis: five to six years after ordination. Why is there a crisis at this point? Normally our priests must go through a strong sexual crisis at that point. Second crisis: sooner or later. This is when we as priests experience the distinct value of women. But this does not mean the priest must fall victim to the danger. Third crisis: naturalism, approximately in the forties. Fourth crisis: in old age⁵⁵.

more. One loses reverence [for the mystery] and if we have lost that, then we will quickly slide downward. By and large, I have mastered these dangers. How? By living in an atmosphere of purity. Because of this, I could let an atmosphere of the supernatural carry me. I could not do this without an immense spirit of sacrifice. Because I succeeded, I say “Thanks be to God!” It is a great gift of God that these dangers did not cause me to fall.”

⁵³ Exaggeration “to the left and right” probably refers to excessive comparing oneself with others, and related items (putting others down to build myself up, feelings of inferiority, etc.). Exaggeration “upward” is the danger of the supernatural becoming an unhealthy compensation for things I lack on the natural plane. Exaggeration “downward” is the danger of being so little immersed in the supernatural that I only measure self, success, and service by natural standards, losing sight of the motives that come from a genuine attachment to God.

⁵⁴ Elsewhere, Fr. Kentenich speaks of other crises affecting the priesthood: unhealthy humility (*Vollkommene Lebensfreude*, p. 319) and compulsions of faith (*USA-Terziat 1952*, Vol. II, p. 61).

⁵⁵ For another reflection by Fr. Kentenich on the stages and crises of maturing adulthood, see his talk to couples in Milwaukee, July 18, 1960.

This is the crisis of getting soft. One easily becomes sentimental. Healthy striving for sanctity preserves us from this⁵⁶. (108f)

(iii) *Makes all our activity fruitful.* First of all, the priest who is interiorly united with God is inestimably more fruitful than another who does an enormous amount of work but neglects his striving for sanctity. Why? Because the soil from which our activity grows is human-divine. If someone who is holy writes a book, this book will have to be fruitful. The same applies to preaching, etc. This is a favorite thought of Pope Pius X and of St. Theresa. The essential structure of your striving for sanctity preserves you from empty busyness, from robot work. Empty busyness will kill a life of holiness and true fruitfulness. We may find that we are damned on the Day of Judgment because we did giant amounts of work but strove too little for sanctity⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ In the 1934 retreat (*Vollkommene Lebensfreude*, p. 319f), Fr. Kentenich speaks of two crises: “From our earlier retreats we know that we must distinguish between two crises in the priesthood. First, five to six years after ordination. This is the *Muluszeit* [the soul feels adrift after the first rush of priestly adrenalin has faded], eruption of sexual difficulties. But this is normal. Did I overcome them without wounds? Or if wounds were left behind, did they leave a legacy of scars? Secondly, in the 40s or 50s comes extreme naturalism. Have I overcome this? How many priests have let naturalism overrun their souls, leaving them idealless! They have abandoned their supernatural disposition and just let themselves be pushed about by the prevailing winds.”

⁵⁷ In *USA-Terziat 1952* (Vol. 2, p. 143), Fr. Kentenich comments: “If we really are what we should be – apostles, interiorly enkindled and burning and on fire for the salvation of souls, then it is self-understood that we will generally have work without rest. And if this is frequently not true, then something is missing. After all, all of us are called to be apostles above all else. Our spirit of apostolate should take root in many, many ways – work without rest for the salvation of immortal souls! Now we know, both in theory and from experience, how great the danger is to always give and give and give, but never be replenished. Times of holy recollection ought to be times of replenishment. Or if I may use another image: *contemptata aliis tradere*. I need another [time of] contemplation so that I can again give to others from the fullness of my heart.”

Secondly, if I am holy, everything I do will be an impetus for my striving for sanctity. This is another favorite thought of Pope Pius X. Whether I am going for a walk, am hearing confessions, etc. my activity will provide an impetus for my striving for holiness. (109)

b. For all who share his state in life

Secondly, the fullness of blessings for all those who are also priests. There is a saying, “*Omne malum a clero*” – all evil comes from the clergy. Think of the ridicule our enemies cast at us. Much of it is true. We must do penance for the sins of our fellow priests. But the saying can also be, *Omne bonum a clero*” – all good comes from the clergy. The good that we do will also benefit all my fellow priests⁵⁸. (109)

c. For the whole Church

Thirdly, the fullness of blessings for the whole Church. See what Archbishop Schreiber wrote in an unpublished article... (109)

⁵⁸ In 1929 Fr. Kentenich said, “The importance of the priesthood for the healing and sanctification of the world! You may have already heard the saying which has turned out to be true again and again in its centuries-old history. The saying is: *Omne malum a clero* – all evil comes from the clergy!

“Is this true? Study the history of the centuries and the millennia. Study the great era of the Reformation. *Omne malum a clero!* When things are not good in God’s Church, we can pretty much assume that things are not good with the clergy” (as cited by Msgr. Joseph Schmitz, *Zum Priesterbild, eine Vortragsreihe*, talks given in Schoenstatt, Germany in early 1970 [transcript, 1970], p. 3).

We have talked about the immutability of the priesthood in its content. We now come to the second part of our retreat – the immutability of the priesthood as a source of tensions (109).

That which is of God (“the divine”) in our priestly life is immutable. The divine [as such] causes no tensions. But since the divine has been wedded with the human [in the priest, there are tensions]. Now in the hypostatic union at Christ’s incarnation, the divine Person is wedded to a human nature. When the divine is wedded with the human this way, there are no tensions because the human is completely subsumed by the divine. But in our life the divine is wedded with our nature only *accidentaliter*, that is, the participation is only one feature of my human nature. The substance of my nature is human and remains so. The divine is merely *qualitas*, a quality or feature of my humanity.

The immutable can become a source of tensions because of this singular weddedness with the human. I will discuss two elements. The first is the principle of how our communion of being, action, and grace with Christ is a source of tensions. Then, in a more practical light, I will discuss five forms. (109f)

A. The Threefold Communion as Source of Tensions, first pass

First, in terms of principles (...) I think again of how the divine in my priestly life takes the form of the threefold communion: my communion of being, action, and grace with Christ. This is the divine in my priestly life. How can this threefold divine [communion] cause tensions in my nature?

First, the communion of being with Christ as a source of tensions. Now, what we say about tensions in our lives as priests is also partially true of the life of every Christian. It is particularly relevant to us priests because the divine is embodied in the priest in such a singular way. The more [our existence is drawn into the] divine, the more tensions [we can expect], and so priestly life can be affected by more crises than the life of other Christians. To this we must add the tensions specific to the priesthood. A Christian exists in a communion of being with Christ. But do not forget the existence of the communion of being with Adam. For a priest, the communion of being with Christ is singular. This is why the ten-

sions we experience will of necessity be greater than those of other Christians. (...) I am a “boundary being”⁵⁹, that is, my being reaches into three levels of being and life: the divine, the spiritual⁶⁰, the physical. I am a child of God, an “angel,” and an “animal.” These three levels of being are not united in harmonious concord, causing many, many tensions. Each level wishes to dominate the others: the life of God, of the spirit, of the animal. Because the divine is so strong in us priests, we feel our boundaries especially acutely. (110f)

Second, the communion of action with Christ as a source of tensions. The communion of action can be seen as a communion of aims and of tasks.

The communion of *aims* with Christ as a source of tensions: As priests, the child of God in us wants to fulfill its purpose, but so do the “angel” and the “animal” in us. What do these tensions look like in practical life? First, tensions between love of God and love of self; second, tensions between faith and knowledge and sensuality. The child of God with its three faculties – faith, hope, and love – comes into tension with the knowledge and sensuality of the angel and animal. A third tension is between supernatural trust and natural trust. What do these tensions look like in my life? What must I do to resolve these tensions? I must try to: establish pure love of God as the predominant motive, foster in myself supernatural hope, and let the light of faith outshine the other lights.

The communion of *tasks* with Christ as a source of tensions. The communion of tasks with Christ can lead to tensions with the communion of tasks with the world, with the devil, and with my sick self.

Thirdly, the communion of grace with Christ can be lead to tensions with the “communion of ungrace,” that is, my communion with sin, failings, my sick passions, the devil, and the spirit of the world. (111f)

⁵⁹ See J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 48.

⁶⁰ Here “spiritual” refers to what we share with the beings of pure spirit – namely intellect and free will. Hence Fr. Kentenich’s usage of “angel” not in the sense of “angelic” but in the sense of what we have in common with the angels.

Eleventh Conference

B. The Threefold Communion as Source of Tensions, second pass

1. The Communion of Being as a Source of Tensions

My dear confreres!

We form a communion of *being* with Christ and with Adam. How many tensions this causes! How can we find relief and resolution? (113)

a. First source of relief and resolution: mortification⁶¹.

The first approach is mortification. Our goal is enlightened and effective mortification. It must be enlightened:

first, from the essence of our humanity,
second, from the essence of our Christianity,
third, from the essence of our priesthood. (114)

(Longer section on *enlightened* mortification, p. 114-116)

Our mortification must be effective, and so it must be
first, organic,
second, humble,
third, vigorous. (116)

(Longer section on Schoenstatt's attitude to drastic mortifications such as self-flagellation, p. 116-118)

Thirdly, our mortification must be vigorous. We reject bloody mortifications, but not out of weakness, (...) We want to practice the ordinary mortifications, that is, those associated with our state in life, massively and energetically. (...) Enduring heat and cold, the wear-and-tear of daily life, physical discomforts, head aches, stomach aches, and so on – these I bear

⁶¹ Fr. Kentenich goes into this subject in greater depth here than elsewhere. The same main points are found in *Childlikeness Before God* (retreat for priests in 1937), p. 80f, but are discussed in this retreat (1939) at greater length.

without complaining. If we want to create a certain unity of tensions, then we must practice serious mortification. Our vocation is apostolic. How many sacrifices are connected with hearing confessions! How meaningless they can seem, how tired they can make us, how careful one must be. There are many mortifications connected with hearing confessions. (118)

b. Second source of relief and resolution: a profound attitude of humility, heroic trust, and strong love

The second source is a profound attitude of humility, heroic trust, and strong love.

The cultivation of a profound *attitude of humility*. When my tensions make me feel small before the eternal God, if I admit and accept my helplessness before God's omnipotence [I can discover] God's helplessness before my smallness⁶². I will delight in telling God about my nature's brokenness and bringing my complaints to him. I ought to rejoice in my smallness! I wait at the bottom of the stairs so that the eternal God can carry me to the top⁶³.

Heroism of trust and love. What I cannot do, the eternal God must do. Why has he made me so small? So that he can stoop down to me and prove to me how much he loves me⁶⁴.

⁶² See J. Kentenich, *Everyday Sanctity*, in J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt's Everyday Spirituality* (Waukesha, 2003), p. 36: "God the Father has a singular 'weakness.' He finds his children impossible to resist when they admit and accept their helplessness. Childlikeness means the 'powerlessness' of omnipotent God and the 'omnipotence' of powerless man. This is the deepest reason for the fruitfulness of humility in the Kingdom of God."

⁶³ Allusion to an image used by St. Therese of Lisieux.

⁶⁴ A common theme in Fr. Kentenich's ministry. See for instance: *Aus dem Glauben leben* (sermons in Milwaukee), Vol. 14, p. 112f, where he says: "Throw all your cares to the wind! But not randomly to the wind: throw all your cares on the shoulders, on the heart of God the eternal Father. (...) What is the greatest 'investment plan' we can make? Heroic childlike trust! I really mean that in the financial sense of the word! This does not mean that I do nothing. I must do my part."

On the one hand we need vigorous mortification, but on the other hand we have even more need of humility, trust, and love. When we apply these methods, we will be on the way to finding relief from the tensions. (118f)

2. The Communion of Action as a Source of Tensions

We form a communion of *action* with Christ. This communion of action, which is a communion of aims and a communion of tasks, is a source of tensions. Can I be in tension with my own nature? Which tensions are possible? (119)

a. The Communion of Aims as a Source of Tensions

[We form a communion of *aims* with Christ. This leads to serious tensions:] First, tensions in the area of love – between supernatural love on the one hand and rational-natural love on the other⁶⁵... The three divine virtues can cause such tensions, so there are three [basic] tensions. (119)

i. Tensions in the area of love

First: divine love. What must we do in this area? First, make a concerted effort to foster the different kinds of love in a healthy way – natural love, rational love, supernatural love. Second, see to it that natural and rational love are always baptized by supernatural love. Third, cultivate supernatural love by constantly dwelling in the

But Our Lord has told us: If you trust, all things are possible (cf Mk 9, 22). We place our trust – this is childlike trust! – in the *divine* bank. Or again, what is the best ‘health plan’ I can purchase? Again, we must do our part. But do not forget: the best cure for all ailments is heroic trust, childlike trust. After all, Our Lord has thought of everything in advance: he even lets me get sick or frail – physically, psychologically, or any other way – why? (...) So that I cast myself into his arms and don’t make my plans without him. Have trust – heroic trust!”

⁶⁵ The terminology corresponds to the three levels of the human person: child of God (supernatural love, life of grace), “angel” (rational love, involving our mind and will), and “animal” (natural love, involving our appetites, emotions, and passions). See *Schoenstatt’s Everyday Spirituality*, p. 76-85.

constant wondrous world of the love lavished by God on us Christians. (119)

ii. Tensions in the area of faith

Second: divine faith, the life of faith. If I wish to reduce the tension in the communion of aims with Christ, I must – to put it concretely – become a skilled master of the good intention⁶⁶. If it is used organically, the good intention will provide much relief from the tensions. How much potential for tension there is between the supernatural life of faith, rational knowledge, and sentient recognition! What should we do? First, foster all three kinds of knowing in a healthy way. Second, all of the kinds of knowing must remain subservient to the supernatural knowledge of faith. We must devote more effort and time to fostering this supernatural knowing. We want to strengthen our faith by seeing the eternal God at work in all things. We must be priests with a high degree of faith in Divine Providence. Then we will have no need to fear that anything will cause us great harm. (119f)

iii. Tensions in the area of hope

Third: divine hope, trust. Let us consider trust in the three levels of life and being. Animals have a natural trust, animals have their native instincts. What should we do? First, foster all three kinds [of trust]. Second, especially foster supernatural trust, standing in divine confidence. When all human supports for natural and rational trust break down, when only God is left for us, then nothing more can be lacking. (120)

b. The Communion of Tasks as a Source of Tensions

We form a communion of action with Christ. This includes a

⁶⁶ That is, the practice of uniting all that I am and have and do with God and God’s love, either in advance or after the fact.

communion of *tasks*. It causes tensions [because] the world, the devil, and our sick self also [lock us into] a communion of tasks. We can greatly reduce this tension, first by fostering the spiritual life and by working for Christ. The deeper our communion of tasks with Christ, the less likely it is [that we will fall] to the power of the world and the devil. Foster your interior life. Remain faithful to your spiritual exercises. Work for Christ. Second, foster a deep and noble communion with fellow priests who share the same great ideals. Separate yourself from the world, strive for the heights! Third, consciously protect and preserve yourself from the spirit of the world and of the devil. See the spirit of the world and the spirit of the devil as great adversaries. How earnestly did Pius X try to encourage the clergy to form communities. The bishops today, including the Pope himself, are even more intent on promoting such communities, because the world has become even more worldly, and because we face the world alone. (120f)

3. The Communion of Grace as a Source of Tensions

We form a communion of *grace* with Christ. How is it a source of tensions? Building on the previous two communions – of being and action – we can see that my communion of grace can lead to tensions [between my higher self] and my communion with nature: with creation, with the communion of sin, with the devil. What should we do to reduce this tension? You all know the answer to that. (121)

C. Five Forms, or, The Development of the Immutable in Priestly Life as a Source of Practical Tensions

Now that we have discussed the tensions in principle, we want to discuss them on a more practical level. (121)

1. First tension: divine plenitude of import and power vs. human insignificance and powerlessness

The first tension is between divine plenitude of import and power vs. human insignificance and powerlessness. We have already

talked a great deal about this. (121)

a. The main features

(i) I think of my omnipotence. We can serve the God-man, take away sins, etc. We also know how this fullness of power is bestowed – by the indelible priestly *character*. To be conscious of my priestly *character* involves (1) mission consciousness and (2) instrument consciousness. I am united with the eternal High Priest as his instrument, as an *instrumentum conjunctum personale*. Then (3) consciousness of my state in life. We are the kings of creation, the kings of heaven. Because the priest claims this plenitude of divine power, the Church has had to fight many battles through the ages to preserve the state⁶⁷ of the priesthood. Against laicism, and charismaticism⁶⁸. The Church has had to fight these battles because she insists on the consecrated character and exalted state of her priesthood. It is a state in its own right; the priest is at the pinnacle of mankind. Because the Church has fought this battle earnestly through the ages, the priesthood has survived as part of contemporary awareness. A priest may have fallen away, but there will be quiet hours when, again and again, the awareness of being consecrated will reignite, when he will feel a secret longing for the Eucharist. This is simply the core of our personality which has been seized by the power of God. Because we participate in the hypostatic union, our consecrated character is eternal for us, it remains forever.

(ii) On the other hand: human insignificance and human powerlessness. When we see ourselves separate from the Christ-Priest unity, what is left? We are insignificant, powerless. We think of two things – our infinite limitations and our sinfulness, our concupiscence. Yes, this is who we are – poor creatures. On the one hand supreme, on the other hand utter insignificance. (121f)

⁶⁷ In this context “state” refers to a distinct state in life (i.e., vocation) which cannot be reduced to a mere function or viewed as an equal to any lay state in life.

⁶⁸ That is, against stressing the laity at the expense of the ministerial priesthood or stressing individual or community charisms at the expense of the official and objective standing of the priesthood.

b. How it shows

How does this tension show, and how do we resolve it?

(i) How does it show? First in the tension between a healthy priestly and priestly arrogance. A justified pride in our state in life goes with the personal experience of our priestly character. This is too weakly formed in all of us. As the Curé of Ars once said, “If the priest knew his complete dignity, he could not stand it; we would all drop dead.” What a miraculous work by Christ – the creation of the priest! We take healthy pride in this. The Curé of Ars continued, “The priest is such a miraculous work of Divine Love that whoever would truly see this miracle would, by necessity, drop dead.” But on the other hand priestly arrogance. We lay claim to the divine as if we were its origin. The hybris in this is that we confuse ourselves with God. But on the other hand priestly inferiority. Why? Because this state is no longer held in high esteem by public opinion. But there is no higher state than mine! (122f)

(ii) Second, the tension between pride and humility in every aspect of life. St. Bernard said, “It is extremely difficult to be a priest and not become a primp!⁶⁹” At what point does one become a primp? (123)

(iii) Third, the tension between pushiness and humility in every area of life. How can these tensions be diminished? Two presuppositions: either I have given in too much to this singular bi-polarity, in which case my pride, my domineering is sinful or a stumbling block [to others]. It becomes an imperfection that influences my entire being. First, what to do if it is sinful. If we have sinned, if this tension has seduced us to sin then we should try to pray often the priestly *Miserere*⁷⁰. We pray the *Miserere* together. First, we pray the *Miserere* with David, second, with Adam, third, with Christ, fourth, with the entire clergy of the world, fifth, with the entire family of

⁶⁹ German: *Pfaffe*, that is, a caricature of a priest, one who only cares about his comfort, outward appearances, and power.

⁷⁰ Psalm 51, King David’s prayer of repentance after his sin with Bathsheba: “Have mercy on me, O God, in your kindness...”

the federation, sixth, in my own name. (123)

This *Miserere* was prayed by a royal sinner. David, a man at the height of his exterior power, is brought down by a woman. A man, from whose blood and lineage shall come the One who crushes the serpent, himself falls victim to the serpent. He has committed a grave sin. The prophet Nathan points this out to him. What courage! David turns inward; he does not cover up his error or blame it on others. He did not act as King Herod did when he beheaded the preacher who troubled him (cf Mt 14,1-11). A threefold elevation is necessary to overcome sin. One must arise to clear knowledge, one must arise to justification⁷¹ and, once justified, one must arise to a new life. (123f)

First, one must arise to knowledge. This involves both God-knowledge and self-knowledge.

[of God] The prophet Nathan reprimands King David for his grave sin by using a parable about the rich man receiving a guest. In order to give his guest something to eat, he takes away the poor man’s only sheep (cf 2 Sam 12, 1-6). David protests indignantly, “Who is this rich man? He must die!” To which Nathan replied, “*You* are this rich man; the sin is yours.” David prayed, “Have mercy on me! Who can free me from this sin?” Self-redemption is impossible. We join David in saying: I am powerful, I possess the treasures of the throne, but I cannot forgive my own sins. Self-knowledge and confession of sins are not a weakness.

[of self] Second, one must arise to self-knowledge. “For I acknowledge my offense and my sin is before me always” (Ps 51,5). I am guilty.

[of my own sin] Third, one must arise to acknowledge one’s personal sin. Knowledge of personal sin – “Against you only have I sinned” (Ps 51,6). David had sinned gravely against his foot-soldier Uriah. But now David says that I have sinned before you. God is eternal purity;

⁷¹ Acquittal, or, forgiveness from the one offended.

whoever offends God's law sins against the Lord himself. In the end, all of my sins are sins against God. (124)

[of original sin] Fourth, one must arise to acknowledge original sin. "In guilt I was born and in sin my mother conceived me" (Ps 51,7). Hence, there are four steps on the level of knowledge. (124f)

But we said that a threefold elevation is necessary. First, one must arise to clear knowledge, and then to justification. Two things are interjected into the *Miserere* that exegesis cannot easily explain. First: the mercies and fidelity of God, second: prayer. Faith in God's fidelity and the spirit of prayer are pre-conditions to being justified. "You are pleased with sincerity of heart, and in my inmost being to teach me wisdom" (Ps 51, 8). And so the Psalmist continues, "Cleanse me with hyssop that I be made pure, wash me and I will be white as snow. Let me hear the sounds of joy and gladness; the bones you have crushed shall rejoice" (Ps 51,9f). To be justified, one must first be purified and then sanctified. "Blot out all my guilt. Create a clean heart in me, and a righteous spirit renew within me" (Ps 51,11f). (125)

Third, after justification one must arise to a new life. With the Psalmist we want to try to lead a new life. What does this new life consist of? What is necessary? First, childlike trust in God's guidance – through what he ordains and permits and through blows of fate. Second, apostolic spirit. Third, joy in prayer and divine worship.

First, childlike trust in God's guidance. ["Give me back the joy of your salvation, and a willing spirit sustain in me" (Ps 51,14).] Give back to me, O God, joy in your guidance, grant me a lofty spirit, and give me a simple, childlike attitude toward the blows of fate you send.

Second, apostolic spirit. "I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall return to you. Free me from blood guilt, O God, my saving God, and my tongue shall revel in your justice" (Ps 51,15f). (125)

Third, joy in prayer and divine worship. "Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall proclaim your praise. For you are not pleased with sacrifices; should I offer a holocaust,

you would not accept it. My sacrifice, O God, is a contrite spirit; a heart contrite and humbled, O God, you will not spurn" (Ps 51,17-19). This is the sacrifice that I shall bring in the future: the sacrifice of a humble, broken heart. A later prophet added these thoughts: "Be bountiful, O Lord, to Sion in your kindness by rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem; then shall you be pleased with due sacrifices, burnt offerings and holocausts; then shall they offer up bullocks on your altar" (Ps 51,20f). These verses were added to apply [the *Miserere*] to social suffering; the people has sinned and therefore deserves God's wrath. Now the masses shall find God's mercy again. The prophet does not want the people to despise the other sacrifices, and so he adds these verses. In the future I, too, will seek to be more fervent in matters of prayer and sacrifice. St. Benedict says, "*Operi Dei nihil praeponatur*"⁷². Let nothing be preferred to the work of God – that is, divine worship, especially the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Second, how we deal with our imperfections. When we are dealing with our imperfections, on the one hand we try to meditate again and again on the eternal truths. I am fragile. To stop the charade of my own greatness, I admit my misery and insignificance in the light of the eternal truths: death, eternity, purgatory, judgment. On the other hand I will not hide from my personal misery; I will accept it. The more I love my miseries, the more I will be freed from being blind to my personal insignificance. On the other hand I want to meditate on my total dependence on God. What I am and have is an unmerited gift of God. When dealing with our imperfections, we want try to warm our hearts for great ideals, but also for [the truth of] our human limitations and misery. (126f)

⁷² Rule of St. Benedict 43,3.

Twelfth Conference

2. Second tension: lavish self-giving vs. healthy self-preservation

My dear confreres!

A second great tension rooted in the nature of the priesthood is the one between lavish self-giving and healthy self-preservation.

Self-giving as a source of tension.

Self-maintenance as a source of tension. (128)

(a) *Lavish self-giving* is part of the nature of the priesthood. The priest is absorbed by Christ's person and task. It goes so far that we can say that part of the ideal image of the priest is to be Christ's slave⁷³, in being and action. My interests vanish completely behind those of God. Christ accepts us with our whole life, so that we even become slaves to those around us in his sense of the word. This helps explain why we renounce marriage. We want to belong totally to Christ and in Christ belong totally to immortal souls. How far should this go? Totally, so that we can say with Paul, "All things to all men" (1 Cor 9,22). (128)

What, therefore, belongs to Christ and to souls? Everything! First, *my economic goods*. We suddenly see a new rationale for poverty. I can see poverty as an outflow of my surrender to Christ, but I can also see it as an outflow of my service to souls. Poverty has an apostolic character. God gave me my possessions so that I can be generous in sharing them as an expression of genuine love [of souls]. Poverty and belonging to God go together. Their purpose is to keep me from being a slave to self, becoming instead a slave of souls and of God. Second, *my physical strength*. I am called to expend all my strength for the salvation of souls. There is no more beautiful

⁷³ German: *Höriger*. See Rom 6,22 where St. Paul says, "But now that you are freed from sin and have become slaves of God, your benefit is sanctification as you tend toward eternal life."

compliment for a priest. It shows true greatness when a soldier expends his strength for his country, or a captain goes down with his ship. Third, *my spiritual strength*. All my spiritual strength – mind, heart, and will – also belongs to God and immortal souls. I study, even if I don't feel like it. I take interest in the needs of others even when I am tired. To whom should I give everything? All things for all men! This is another reason why I renounce marriage. Otherwise my ability to love would be in great danger of becoming too narrow, enslaved. True virginity consists in this. I don't have time for other secondary activities. All my concern and love are directed to the healthy, the sick, the lonely, etc. I strive for a lavish self-giving and lavish service of others. Some priests even make a vow of perfect service to others. (128f)

(b) *Self-preservation*. I must also take care of myself⁷⁴. What must I take care of? My health. Otherwise I cannot serve souls. I must protect my sanctity. I must set aside time for God, such as time for meditation. I must also preserve my priestly purity; if I am constantly giving of self, the danger is great that I will lose myself, that so much closeness to souls will cause me to forget to be close to God. (129f)

Tension. This double polarity produces a tension. Self-giving generates a first tension-field; self-preservation generates a second tension-field. (130)

(a') *The first tension-field is generated by self-giving*. Self-giving generates these tensions because 1) my self-giving can be abused, 2) my self-giving can be rejected. (130)

(i) *Abuse*. My economic self-giving can be abused. I give alms. I want to be totally poor. How easily can this be abused! How easy it is for people to come who do not

⁷⁴ See for instance the comment of St. Charles Borromeo to the priests of Milan (1599) as cited for his feast in the Liturgy of the Hours: "Are you in charge of a parish? If so, do not neglect the parish of your own soul, do not give yourself to others so completely that you have nothing left for yourself. You have to be mindful of your people without becoming forgetful of yourself."

need my money. How do I resolve this tension? First: what I give to the poor, I give to Christ. See *Everyday Sanctity*, p. 288⁷⁵. Second: while it is certainly true that I must exercise a certain prudence, it diminishes but does not resolve the tension. My personal self-giving can also be abused. I give my heart, my concern, my personal devotion. Abuse happens when others try to win me over to themselves personally, to make me attach myself [only] to them. What is necessary? To moderate this effect we should, first of all, immerse ourselves in the universality of our apostolate, in the essence of our priesthood. Second, keep in mind the great law of untouchedness⁷⁶; for us as priests this means interior unaffectedness, total exterior untouchedness. Third, open ourselves to the atmosphere of our family, and expand it. If the whole family has a certain lifestyle, it helps us grow. Whoever knows how to give of self to others and keep moderate boundaries helps to gradually create this kind of atmosphere in the whole family. We must live in tensions, otherwise we will stop growing. (130)

(ii) *Rejection*. Self-giving generates tensions because of rejection. A general fact. First [point], today's times have their own standards. Second [point], they measure with contradictory standards.

(A) First, which are the standards of our times? Our times are enslaved to the things of this world. Our bond is totally to the things of heaven. Today's times lay hold of reality with their hands, as priests we constantly lay hold of reality with heart and will and

⁷⁵ M.A. Nailis, *Werktagsheiligkeit* (Limburg, 1937), p. 288; English translation: *Everyday Sanctity* (Waukesha, 1998), p. 240: "Whether the everyday saint performs spiritual or physical works of mercy – and even if he is exploited by trickery – he serves the Savior with pleasure in the poor and needy."

⁷⁶ The *regula tactus* (rule of touch) which defines the proper context of personal touching for persons committed to celibacy to be 1) public settings, and 2) protected by cultural convention (such as the handshake).

mind. The contrasts are so strong that one can say that if the priesthood were not a divine institution, if priests were not so totally incorporated into the God-man, the priesthood would become extinct.

(B) Second, our times measure with standards that contradict and oppose our standards. The standards of our times not only contradict ours, but also make war with our standards. From the outset we must expect to be misunderstood and rejected in every area of life. (130f)

(iii) *The equation of the tensions*. What does the equation of the tensions look like? It has two sides: first, we as a product of our times; second, we as creators of our times.

(A) First, we are a product of our times. The Philistine, i.e., the diocesan priest who just wants a comfortable life, does not sense this. Neither does the self-righteous priest behind cloister walls. We are a product of our times. I live in the world. I am constantly in touch with the world. I must cross swords with the world and the spirit of the world. But before I notice, the standards of the world, that is, the enslavement of the things of this world, may enslave me, too. This is the tension I have to deal with. How pathetic if I did not live this struggle, if I no longer felt what is going around in today's world! If we are old and entrenched, at least do not obstruct the younger confreres. (131)

(B) Secondly, we are also creators of our times. As a "creator of our times" I must look for ways to reach the people's soul even when we are rejected – in the spirit of Jesus' words: "I am the Good Shepherd, I know my sheep... I give up my life for them" (Jn 10,14f). They must become one flock and one shepherd. We see the people in the three levels of being and living: the "animal," the "angel," the "child of God." We notice their distress.

Excourse: The distress of the animal, angel, and child of God

(1) The “animal.” We are familiar with the vitalistic values: they are economic (or financial) values and hedonistic values (joy, pleasure, the desire to drink life to the full). People today place a high value on these things. Some have them in abundance, others suffer their want. As a priest, I want to reach high-powered salesmen, industrial leaders, athletes, etc.

(a) This can cause tensions of a theoretical kind: Can I really address them without at least a modest understanding of their profession and how it interacts with the spiritual life, of how such people are formed by the things with which they work and live? There are many things we do first just to try them out. But we often get stuck along the way. How many of our diocesan priests are currently drawn into fiscal decision-making, whether in monasteries, hospital administration, or in Catholic organizations? How many have done time in jail because of some mistake? This should help us appreciate the difficulties faced in these professions.

(b) [This can also cause tensions of a practical kind.] It is not true that one must first live in filth in order to understand filth. Whoever seriously works at self-education will know the perils of giving economic and hedonistic values too broad a berth. I must have nothing to do with sexual pleasure (...). Nor do I need to be a daredevil or the like. I don't need to constantly chase about in a race car to know it is dangerous. Second, it is extremely important that we try to do what God places right in front of our nose. Tensions are simply a part of life. We cannot just eliminate them; the most we can do is diminish them. (132f)

(2) The “angel.” The modern soul is
first: weighed down,
second: uprooted,
third: in constant motion.

(a) The modern soul is *weighed down* with troubles. How well we know this! There are three main troubles: stress, sickness, guilt.

(i) Modern man is burdened by *stress*. We know this well. The soul is exposed to great stress, such as the experience of

some who must suppress their deepest convictions. Some in the civil service hardly dare to go to church⁷⁷; or we think of the many difficulties parents have with their children. Modern man is extraordinarily alert to the sufferings of the world, and to its darkness and distress. The motto of the Roman Empire was *panem et circenses* – “bread and games.” It is not much different today. Without bread and games people could scarcely stand the pressure. Or think of other areas of stress: sexual or marital – modern souls endure so much suffering!

What tensions does this cause me personally? First, there are more than a few priests who only see the one side or the other – either just external want or just spiritual distress. This shows a certain narrow-heartedness. My people will not understand me correctly and I won't be able to reach them. If my orientation is too supernatural, then I must become more natural. If my orientation is too external, then I must ask myself: “Am I attuned enough to the spiritual?” and become more supernatural. Which lack of my people do I have the most sympathy for? Religious priests living behind cloister walls have little contact with the needs of the people. They are in danger of becoming unmerciful. So many people in the world are so much greater than we are; perhaps we would all need to be thrown into the world in order to see how hard life really is. (133)

(ii) The modern soul is weighed down with *sickness*. I will only speak one word about the sickness of the modern soul: a great inferiority complex⁷⁸. We must view the modern ten

⁷⁷ Because of the Nazi persecution.

⁷⁸ See Fr. Kentenich's comments on this topic in 1950: “The emptiness of modern man! ... [B]ecause he is so empty, he runs in constant pursuit of worldly satisfactions. How empty the man of today must be, and no wonder, for he has lost God! [Hence,] modern man suffers from a strange mania, **the mania of constantly comparing himself with others**. Nations and nations, communities and communities, professions and professions, are continuously comparing themselves one with the other! ... It is no different in monasteries. ... Why? ... There is nothing in me that fills me. I do not possess myself, I am not possessed by God. And so

dency to self-idolatry as a kind of compulsion; man wants to escape the devaluation [of his person and dignity] and therefore overcompensates. That modern man is so hypersensitive in this area is a great burden. We may advance economically, only to notice our isolation because it makes others feel inferior to us⁷⁹. Let us see the two poles of this tension: our economic security and the [faltering of the] calm and equanimity of our soul. How do we resolve this tension? Regarding economic security: should we [as Schoenstatt priests] try to be economically insecure? No, in previous years we concluded that our poverty is not Franciscan. We seek a moderate middle position in economic security. [We should:] a) Be human and gracious to all people today. b) Be on guard against extravagance in our way of living.

Be human and gracious and simple in what we eat and drink and buy, but do not become a beggar. Which style of poverty do we want to make our own? Franciscan? Benedictive? No! Our style of poverty is Marian, that is, unpretentious. If we

I must somehow, here or there, seek recognition from someone; I compare and compare. And this mania of comparison is always in combination with an inferiority complex. Hence the fomenting class warfare of our days. The various classes are forever comparing, the highest with the lowest, and vice-versa.

“[This leads to an] endless **tendency to compensate**. Man seeks compensation. The inner void does not permit real joy to break through. Thus one looks for compensation by satisfying the senses in all directions. The schedule of divine, absolute values is destroyed; the moral law is pushed aside, especially the sixth, seventh and eighth commandments.” (*Education and the Challenge of our Times* [2nd ed., Waukesha, 1996], p. 46f)

⁷⁹ This phenomenon became acute in the years after Vatican II, as Msgr. Joseph Schmitz pointed out in his 1970 series of talks in honor of Fr. Kentenich’s 60th ordination anniversary: *Zum Priesterbild*, p. 9f: “One American sociologist occasionally speaks of the ‘world power of envy.’ In the power network of today there are two little-noticed but steadily growing currents with a quiet but powerful effect: the world power of envy and the counterpart that answers it: the ‘world power of the bad conscience.’ Many of those in possession of some privilege feel a certain burden in relationship to others. Whether this privilege is about possessions or education or authority, one feels uneasy and embarrassed, almost ashamed.”

can be a calm in the midst of our time’s restlessness, how can we diminish the tension [of others]? Be human and kind. Modern man is burdened by guilt and evil, but the guilt is worse. There is an incredible amount of guilt in the world. What does the world look like today? On the one hand people refuse to admit there is guilt. On the other hand it is terribly difficult to say who in particular is guilty. Man today no longer recognizes the existence of guilt. Our opponents no longer speak of sin, but of misfortune. How many millions of people, including many, many priests, are filled with the same spirit. They say that it is all misfortune; no guilt is involved. At the very least [the modern mind set believes] there is no such thing as mass guilt or national guilt. This is why there is so little interest in atonement. Other times also sinned gravely, but they also did serious atonement.

If I as priest, who really am a priest, cannot even say for certain if modern man can correctly grasp his guilt, can I just go and etch guilt into the popular mind and soul? Am I allowed to say, “You are guilty, you must do penance”? Modern man is not receptive for this. It causes him to break down. Will we be understood at all? We ought to pay heed to the practice of all the great missionaries over the centuries, including Bishop Sailer⁸⁰. The principle is this: when we speak in public, our message is solid⁸¹ and clear; and so, we also remind people of their guilt. But when we speak individually, we are kind. Whose guilt is it? I can help myself around this question by always pointing to the ideal. This should ease the forming of a sense of guilt. Which class or person is guilty? In the end the entanglement is hard to sort out. For instance, who bears the guilt for a revolution, etc.? (134f)

(b) Second, the “angel” is *uprooted*. Observe life. Today man is

⁸⁰ Bishop Johann Michael Sailer (1751-1832), Catholic professor and theologian and later bishop of Regensburg.

⁸¹ German: *massiv*, that is, not hollow but every ounce what it is, like a great wall of rock that one cannot get around.

uprooted in his mind as well as in his heart. Whatever has not yet taken root is systematically uprooted⁸². The *intellect* is uprooted. If all the great ultimate truths have been taken away, where does it leave me? If the only thing our Schoenstatt family had to give were great ideas, we could be very grateful. To have a home in great ideas is important. Modern man is homeless. He no longer has great ultimate truths. The ideas he used to cling to as absolute truths are taken away from him. My heart is moved with pity for the people (cf Mk 8,2). If I had this attitude I would be freer from my feelings of self-righteousness.

The heart is uprooted. Homelessness of the heart. Where is there a heart that still beats for me? Who can I still trust? Who still gives a tender place in his heart for others? We can not even count on this in the family any more. Mass misery.

What answer can I give? First, I try to alleviate this suffering by proclaiming again and again great shared (*gemeinsame*) ideas⁸³. How important this is, given the uprootedness of modern thinking. [We let the people know:] Thousands think as I do. We stand together; I am not alone with my ideals. I must do this much more energetically today. Then, make sure that we do not become buried in ideas. As few ideas as possible, but the few should be solid and firm. Make sure that communities are formed and that they process these [ideas]. Make sure that the parish church becomes a home. When we think of our [Schoenstatt] family, we see the little shrine as our spiritual home. Bind people to our Schoenstatt shrine. Not least of all, I must and may make sure that my followers have a place in my heart. My people must know that they are loved.

⁸² See Fr. Kentenich's comments in the "America Report" as cited by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus in *Visit to America: Fr. Kentenich's Travels in the United States, June 5 to September 6, 1948* (Waukesha, 1999), p. 176, 208-211. See also his extensive reflection on homelessness in *Forming the New Person* (Waukesha, 2003), especially the Eleventh Talk.

⁸³ To have the support of a clear, coherent set of ideas is the third of four keys to healthy religious experience elaborated by Fr. Kentenich in his groundbreaking pedagogical conference of 1951. See *Forming the New Person*, p. 27f and Eighth Talk.

A real priest can hardly do anything without causing tensions. If I give myself to one person, I will have less time to love someone else, and yet I strive to be "all things to all men." (135f)

(c) The "angel" is burdened, uprooted and, thirdly, *in constant motion*. This is the special characteristic of our modern times – absolute dynamic. When I go into our times today, I must, first, remain flexible; otherwise I will be cast aside. I must be able to listen and to understand. Dogma alone without psychology and pedagogy will not win the day. Our times are like a teenager. How difficult it is to educate teenagers.

What should we do? First, rest in ultimate great ideas; second, be understanding about the fact that modern man lives with such vacillation and uncertainty⁸⁴. We should therefore motivate and not be too quick to judge and condemn. Be patient and never forget what we call moderate optimism in human nature. I believe in the good. (136f)

(3) We distinguish between three levels: the "animal," the "angel," and the "child of God." The third level is the child of God in us. How much distress is in this level! We see how modern man flees from God, and see how cold people today have become to God. See what people today suffer over God. Here we must feel [the suffering] and ask ourselves what we can do to become all things to all men.

First and foremost, we must be a transparency of God⁸⁵. Above all else we must see to it that we embody Christ in our life. This is the very best way to point people back to God. We priests are always a cause of uneasiness in others as they think of their relationship to God. But for this uneasiness to have a healing effect, we must see to it that we ourselves are gripped by God. A constant drip hollows the stone.

Second, our whole way of preaching must be more positive.

Third, pray and sacrifice much.

⁸⁴ Cf. J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 120-139.

⁸⁵ This relates to the fourth key to healthy religious experience elaborated by Fr. Kentenich in 1951; see *Forming the New Person*, p. 27f and Ninth Talk.

Is there more we can do? We should at least try to make Mary the patroness of those entrusted to our care. The way we entrust ourselves to the Blessed Mother ought to be my ideal when it comes to entrusting my own to Our Lady. How many dioceses in France and Belgium have consecrated themselves to Mary. We do it out of the deep conviction that what I cannot do, she must do. She is the Great Missionary, she will work miracles! As Vincent Pallotti said, “*Mater habebit curam.*” (137)

END OF EXCOURSE

(b') The first tension-field is generated by self-giving. *The second tension-field is generated by self-preservation.* How many tensions can arise from this! Self-preservation can be justified and unjustified. Over time, things to which I am connected can become addicting. Self-preservation can become self-seeking. Who dispenses us priests from this? How can such crises lead to addictions of possession, pleasure, power? When outward successes no longer come our way, we must all be on guard for these three addictions. When our successes become fewer, we start looking for a substitute, a substitute in the self-aggrandizement. Then our desire for things becomes insatiable. Think of how stingy clergy can be, or the alcoholism of the clergy, or the need to be in total control. When this power-hunger cannot express itself in the parish, then I direct my rage at the poor housekeeper and she must constantly bear the brunt of my frustration. We are human. [*Homo sum, nihil humanum a me alienum esse puto!* – I am human, and nothing human is far from me!⁸⁶ (137f).

⁸⁶ Terrence (2nd Century B.C.), *Heautontimorumenos* I 1,25.

Thirteenth Conference

My dear confreres!

I want to begin with a few thoughts that follow up on our last conference, thoughts for our practical daily life. We could give ourselves the answer. I only want to point out the one or the other thing. (139)

(b' continued) *First thought:* love of self can become self-centered and self-seeking. We cannot let the next generation become a generation that cries over every bump and bruise⁸⁷. The times we live in are austere; yet they awaken in us so many [false] needs. One wants to be happy in this world. When these young men are ordained, what will happen to them? It seems that the only way God can change anything with us priests is to use the whip. We have become so bourgeois and comfortable. Who of us can allow the Kingdom of God to enter his heart when the place is already taken by the goods of this world?

Let us take the simplest of examples. We must be vigilant, both the younger and the older generation. As priests we are constantly in danger of seeking affluence and enjoyment more than what God wills. Why? Because, by and large, the care of souls gives us too little satisfaction. Lack of joy in the care of souls causes us to rationalize and indulge in all kinds of things. This does not happen out of bad will, but because we simply have so little joy. (139)

We must become more austere, robust, unpretentious, and do so for the sake of our ideal. We want to cultivate poverty based on great purposes, and so we ask: on what things have we spent money in the past? We do not want to promote “idol pedagogy.” There are three kinds of pedagogy: ideal pedagogy, idol pedagogy, and odol pedagogy⁸⁸. Our pedagogy

⁸⁷ German: *ein wehleidiges Geschlecht.*

⁸⁸ Fr. Kentenich may be playing with the Greek word *odous* for tooth. If so, then this phrase means a pedagogy of baring one's fangs and asserting one's power, such as the Nazis were doing at this time.

must not become a pedagogy of idols. This is a danger for Christian humanism. What kind of a person is a Christian humanist? It is usually a pagan humanist with a thin veneer of religion. We must see the limits; our modern times and the Third *Reich* are making us face higher and higher demands. If God has given us a mission we cannot just play around. (140)

Second thought: When we think of ourselves, there is the great balancing act between cultivating good physical health and all the time we devote to others. All of us must set aside some time every day for keeping up our good health, unless the Good Lord has given us a dispensation. But we should not just accept [such a dispensation] without question. We must always do something in this regard. What all do our nerves have to put up with nowadays! Make care of your body part of your daily routine. Gymnastic exercises, breathing exercises, and the like. If I do something on a regular basis, it is self-denial. It serves my health and saves money. I must gain a healthy feeling of life, and this is something I can help make a reality! If we live healthier lives, our pastoral work will also go better. It is different if we have an organic illness. (140)

Third thought: When we are rejected by those who were entrusted to our care, even by good Catholics, it is something incredibly difficult for a priest who is zealous for souls. It would seem that God wants to purify us in order to seek God in the souls. We are purified by the big disappointments which occasionally come our way. But we can also be abused by those entrusted to our care. Our money, our time, our energy. Unless we are totally certain that God demands the time of us, we should set aside some time for study and prayer, and I should also have some time left over for my health. I many, many cases I can find more time for myself. Our personality can also be abused, the way we give ourselves entirely for our flock. This is where I return to our main line of thought. (140f)

3. Third tension: divine two-in-oneness vs. human two-in-oneness⁸⁹

Third tension: divine two-in-oneness vs. human two-in-oneness. This involves the question of priestly sexuality. Here as elsewhere, we notice two poles.

(a) *Divine two-in-oneness* is the deepest reason for celibacy. Why have we chosen to be celibate? We have already heard many reasons for celibacy. Let me repeat some of them: We are God's total possession. If we belong totally to God the way St. Paul means it, then I have no time to devote the power of my love to just one person. What does that mean in practical terms? I like to tell the Sisters, "Why do we remain virginal women? Because we love the Lord and love one another. Because we belong to God and men." This is why we cannot be bound to just one person. Otherwise it is [a gift] only half [given].

The interior context of this becomes quite clear to us because of the framework we have elaborated in this retreat. We think of the community of tasks and being which we share with Christ as his priests. He (and we) are *sacerdos et hostia* – priest and sacrifice. A total sacrifice. From this source flows the reason for celibacy⁹⁰.

⁸⁹ The German word *Zweisamkeit* could also be translated as intimacy (here: divine intimacy and human intimacy). But Fr. Kentenich's discussion of human *Zweisamkeit* makes the term "two-in-oneness" more applicable, expressing a "heart-and-soul" earthly relationship that can take place on many levels. Elsewhere, Fr. Kentenich uses *Zweisamkeit mit Gott* as the complement to *Einsamkeit* as a reality in priestly life. In other words, solitude is necessary to discover "bi-solitude" (or two-in-oneness) with God.

⁹⁰ See *Aus den Menschen für die Menschen*, p. 23f: "God has created so many good things for this world, placed so many things at our disposal, made so many professions possible. [But the priest's choice is:] 'Lord, you are my portion' (Ps 16,5). I reach out my hand for the eternal, the infinite God. In my vocation God is in a most singular way the center of my thinking and desires. 'Lord, you are my portion and my inheritance!' You are the one who sees to it, even if only in eternity, that I will receive my inheritance in the most perfect way possible: God, the eternal, the infinite God.

It is so important nowadays that we regain our enthusiasm for celibacy. Why?

- a) Because celibacy is under such heavy attack today. The devil apparently attacks what is most damaging to him.
- b) Because celibacy is difficult to maintain; so extraordinarily difficult to maintain.

What does the celibate person sacrifice? Two things. What does marriage give? Husband and wife.

First – a deep-seated need for complementation.

Second – a deep-seated need to be sheltered⁹¹.

We could illustrate this with many quotes from the newly published book of aphorisms⁹².

(i) The need to be complemented. The full idea of man and humanness is partially embodied in the one and in the other – partially in the man, partially in the woman. Hence the strong mutual attraction between the sexes. In the married state, an ideal marriage gives one the experience of profound spiritual complementation. What does woman offer man? We admit: it is something beautiful and great. In celibacy we sacrifice something truly valuable. Why? For the sake of a value which is still greater! (....) (141f)

(ii) Second, in marriage husband and wife find shelter. As the years go by, a time comes when everything turns calm,

“And so we understand – just to illustrate it with one practical point – that the priest’s unique ontological structure is immersed and must be immersed in a deep solitude. The priest who cannot live in solitude (*Einsamkeit*), that is, in *bi-solitude* (*Zweisamkeit*) with God, who cannot let go, at least interiorly let go of everything which is the world, of everything which belongs to the world as soon as God’s finger touches this or that object, is missing an essential element of his ontological structure. This is doubly and triply important for the priesthood in the West, because it is joined to celibacy.”

⁹¹ To have a home in the heart of a cherished other.

⁹² In 1939, a collection of Fr. Kentenich’s aphorisms on purity, sexuality, and celibacy was published under the title *Vom Reichtum des Reinseins*. One of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, Sr. M. Bonifatia Warth, was the editor. In English it is called *The Jewel of Purity* (Waukesha, 1994).

when people no longer chase after me. It is then that loneliness appears all at once⁹³. Then we feel the sacrifice of not being married. We want to consciously look at this sacrifice. If it is not difficult for us, this may be a sign that we are sufficiently anchored in the supernatural world. I seek in God what husband and wife give to one another – the ultimate and deepest complementation and shelter. I can only do this if my faith is as high as the heavens and Christ makes it so real for me that I can almost touch it. Otherwise I am tilting at windmills. At the same time we must bring it together with striving for heroic love. Nowadays we are all tired. Name someone today who is not tired. All the more reason to remember:

First – divine two-in-oneness is one pole.

Second – human two-in-oneness is the other pole. (142)

(b) *Human two-in-oneness*. We must cultivate this second pole because we are human and because we are priests.

(i) Because we are human: We must realize the deepest part of what it means to be human. We are social beings and must live in relationship with others.

(ii) Because we are priests. As priests we must be the slaves of others for Christ’s sake. Because of this we must be maintain contact with others. (142f)

Now comes the tension. The tension-field is found:

First – in our humanity.

Second – in our priesthood.

First, the tension is rooted in our humanity. Men and women are attracted to each other by a mysterious force. It is magnetic and

⁹³ Regarding modern loneliness and flight from loneliness, Joseph Schmitz’ comments, based on Fr. Kentenich, in *Zum Priesterbild*, p. 63f: “Our founder was of the opinion that one will never be completely rid of this feeling of loneliness in spite of all experiments [e.g. priests leaving the priesthood, youth turning to drugs, marital infidelity, etc.]. From this he concluded there needs to be a stronger development of genuine community. The distress will not be resolved by jumping ship but ultimately by being anchored in God, even while supporting and carrying each other” (p. 64).

the danger is great that I will want to give room to this attraction in ways that celibacy does not permit. We will feel our humanity's desire to form a bond which attaches us in all areas of life. [Our vow to] celibacy prohibits this.

Secondly, the tension is rooted in the priesthood. I am urged by my priesthood to be a slave to others but, looked at from the perspective of Christ, by bending down in service to others in the equivalent of what we call *priestly fatherliness*⁹⁴. The danger is that my fatherliness gradually becomes grandfatherly. Grandfatherliness wants to enjoy, to pamper, to become sentimental. (143)

How can we resolve these tensions? Let us take the little book *The Jewel of Purity* and look at the chapter on the five⁹⁵ "Lofty Towers"⁹⁶.

First tower: brightly burning, tender love of God. Why is this

⁹⁴ In *Zum Priesterbild*, Msgr. Joseph Schmitz brings out an element of Fr. Kentenich's approach that could easily have been quoted from the latter: "Modern pastoral work requires much contact with and care for the world of women. If we want to serve women today and lead them upwards, then we must devote ourselves to their pastoral needs. Interior walls must take the place of exterior walls. And the best protecting wall is a firm, supernatural attitude. Are we not too one-sided in using exterior ascetical means? For us moderns it is not enough to have exterior safeguards, but must wrestle our way through to a totally supernatural view of the world and of life. We should use the ascetical means, but they only fulfill their purpose when they flow from or seek to cultivate this [supernatural] attitude. If they are only an end in themselves, then they often achieve the opposite. (...) We must be trained in clear principles so that we know which principles to apply and how to apply in each situation. Our approach to women could be described this way: the same God-willed fatherliness which we let grow in our dealings with men and boys must be extended to women and girls. Supernatural fatherliness must be the bottom line of our attitude. I then draw the practical consequences" (p. 58).

⁹⁵ The stenograph says "four," but the book speaks of five towers.

⁹⁶ See, *The Jewel of Purity*, p. 89: "As the garden of paradise is guarded by an angel with a flaming sword, the paradise of chastity according to one's state in life must be protected by five lofty, invincible towers. [1] The first tower is called: an outstanding, tender *love of God*. [2] The second: deep *humility*. [3] The third: enlightened, effective *mortification*. [4] The fourth: a creative zeal for one's *work*. [5] The fifth: spontaneous, noble *joy*." (Author's translation)

tower invincible? Why can this tower never be taken? Because the whole power of my love is absorbed by God and my self-giving is for his purposes. So I don't need to fear that earthly love will suddenly sweep me off my feet. The more I cultivate a love of God, the more this tension will diminish. Such a love of God must be especially *childlike* in nature. Those familiar with priestly life must say: Does not childlike devotion to Divine Providence give us all something of what married people find in practical family life? If I cling with childlike love to the [heavenly] Father and the Blessed Mother, I find something that married people find in the family. The more I give myself over to a faith in Divine Providence, seeing the hand of the Father and the Mother behind all things in the light of providence, the greater my certainty in the face of all the fits of my sensuality. But tensions will remain, or else we become much too superficial.

When we speak of love of God, I specifically stress that this love of God must also take the form of *love of Mary*. There are two reasons for this. Experience and history show that Mary has a distinct charism of radiating purity and humility.

Purity: If I love the Blessed Mother, I have the guarantee that as interceding omnipotence⁹⁷ she will glorify herself [in us] in a trait which was so essential to who she was.

Humility: What significance does it have in preserving purity?⁹⁸

But we would need to tell ourselves that if an all-male or all-female boarding school fails to foster a tender Marian devotion, there will soon be evil consequences.

This love, true love of purity rooted in love of God, must then expand to love of others. I can and must love others, too. This

⁹⁷ A title which Fr. Kentenich liked to give to Mary. See J. Kentenich, *Mary, Our Mother and Educator* (Waukesha, 1987), p. 90 and note.

⁹⁸ Answers to this question are found in *The Jewel of Purity*, p. 94f. For instance: "In addition to love of God, true humility is the most necessary and most important safeguard for purity." "Humility creates the harmony between the experience of feeling little and feeling great." "Sacred Scripture calls pride the source of all evil. Therefore, humility must influence all virtues, especially purity."

is discussed in the book *Living Love*. We distinguish between childlike love, bridal love, love of friends, etc. If we want to remain celibate in the right way, we must be conscious of the differences.

First: my bridal love belongs to God alone.

Second: it is right and just that any of the other fundamental forms of love can, and must, be directed to human others.

In a healthy, normal way we therefore cultivate friendship, brotherly love, childlike love. This is something which our [current Catholic] pedagogy greatly neglects. The love of God that is taught is much too abstract⁹⁹. (143f)

What do we want as Federation priests? The family¹⁰⁰ presents us [the gift of] love of Mary because it wishes to raise up a pure generation. The family expects us to grow close to one another along the lines of friendship, and to mutually support and protect each other.

What protection does celibacy offer us? We want to renew our determination to not only not neglect our group life, but to make it as effective as possible. Don't just get together and complain. Remember, community can also make us mean¹⁰¹. (144f)

⁹⁹ One of Fr. Kentenich's constant themes was the necessity of adequate preexperiences of love in the earthly order to develop a healthy love of God (see for instance: *Forming the New Person* [Waukesha, 2003], especially Second Talk and p. 115f). He especially saw Schoenstatt's covenant of love with Mary as a key to developing such an organic love of God. In a letter to Fr. Adelbert Turowski, SAC (December 8, 1952), he wrote: "Because this is a convenient place [in the letter], let me refer back to the covenant of love again. We are accustomed to claiming it to be the one truly effective way to save the [modern] personality which is threatened from so many sides. Hence our thesis, and its numerous variations: a personality is enkindled and enkindles only through self-giving (*Hingabe*) to a personal You. (...) Seen this way it should not be a surprise that we have worked to develop a carefully balanced pedagogy of love as our educational system." (*Nüchterne Frömmigkeit*, Vol. 1, p. 182).

¹⁰⁰ Fr. Kentenich could mean the Schoenstatt family in general here, but it seems likely that he means the Priests' Federation as family.

¹⁰¹ An old German saying: *Gemeinschaft macht gemein*.

Second tower: humility. This safeguard diminishes the tension between the two-in-oneness with God and the two-in-oneness with fellow-man. Burdened as we are by original sin, humility and love must go hand-in-hand. A deeper humility makes love burn more brightly. When I accept myself in my smallness, many, many difficulties are overcome¹⁰².

What practical things can we do so that humility really protects and defends me and my purity?

First, *beware of thirst for adventure*. Our current youth living in the Third Reich is a child of our times. Something of today's widespread thirst for adventure clings to them, too. It is a thirst that wants to try everything, including sexual things. They ask: Are things really as the moralists say? The right humility will say: Listen to the voice of your elders, too. The first link in a chain pulls the whole chain with it.

Second, *beware of sympathy*. The great law is this: interior unaffectedness, exterior untouchedness in keeping with one's state in life. For us as priests this means exterior, perfect untouchedness.

Third, *deep reverence*. Humility and reverence go together. We must have reverence for all things human, including the body.

Fourth, practice a certain *open-heartedness*. I should practice this open-heartedness by asking someone mature for his advice and following it, for instance from my confessor. The tensions will then certainly be less. (145)

Third tower: mortification. The general effect of mortification is to discipline the drives, including sexual drives. We should

¹⁰² Fr. Kentenich does not mean a humility as it is often misportrayed – a pathological inferiority or a symptom of low self-esteem. Quite the contrary: "*I can be someone special in the eyes of God*. That sounds odd [to say] that I can be someone special in his eyes. But our depersonalization, our disesteem has reached such proportions. We think this is humility. This is not humility! What is humility? Am I called to be someone special in the eyes of God? Yes, really! I can be someone special to God!" (*Schoenstatt's Instrument Spirituality*, p. 134). See also J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 258f.

not directly mortify our sexual drives; they should be mortified through the overall educational effort. (145)

Fourth tower: industriousness. I must also try to engage myself creatively. Being industrious, getting things done. I am an image of the Creator, and so I must be creative, otherwise my creative energy will easily seek a baser outlet. One will want to be creative on the level of basal instinct. When prayed that he be restored to health, Pope Pius XI replied, “If healthy, then healthy enough to work!”

What work do we want to do? See to it that we continue to educate ourselves in theology and the sciences, and continue to undergo spiritual schooling – also because of the benefit for our life in the celibate state. Which young people still want to study nowadays? How many just repeat what they have heard. Then they no longer have the ability to make their own decisions. We ought to be industrious students alone from the intellectual joy that it gives. In a time of decline – the Third Reich – we ought to remember that. Our family must maintain high standards. We must let ourselves be forced to think things through and to study. Is that not “vital” [filled with life and vitality]¹⁰³? The goods of the spirit [mind and will] are also filled with life and vitality. But it is not vitalistic. St. Thomas is also filled with life and vitality. But “vital” does not mean irrationalism. Irrationality that is not regulated by the mind will become sick, even hysterical. Some years ago the masculine devils were at work, today it is the feminine devils¹⁰⁴. Thinking is real life. But, of course, we do not want to separate thinking from the will and from the heart. The same is true of our pastoral work. Always be at work. Those

¹⁰³ Here Fr. Kentenich contrasts “vital” and “vitalistic,” that is, that which is vibrant and alive in a healthy sense vs. certain modern tendencies to just seek thrills and stimulus for the passions and senses.

¹⁰⁴ An allusion to the fact that in his own youth (the turn of the 20th century), there was an overemphasis of cold dispassionate reason, including in priestly formation, whereas Europe after World War I became increasingly driven by irrationalism and 1) its search for sensual pleasures and stimulus, or 2) its thirst to be led by an absolute dictator capable of world domination.

who are not pressured by the outward situation have a hard time working. And then? How great the sexual crises become. (145f)

Fifth tower: joy. Man can simply not live without joy, and so we want to do everything we can to cultivate joy. This includes supernatural joys. This is why we say that love is the prime drive not fear.

All of this is about living [the gift of] love. Our family must be a bed of lilies. Where Mary is, the lilies always bloom. Our Schoenstatt youth should be a bed of lilies. Whoever belongs to the Blessed Mother of Schoenstatt should be a bed of lilies, and if the lilies lose their luster, then we see to it that they regain their old fragrance.

We should not only stress the rational preambles of faith, but also the irrational ones. That is, we not only stress the intellectual prerequisites, but also the non-intellectual. Love of purity and reverence are such irrational preambles. They are the best way to achieve a great spirit and conviction of faith. We cannot just engage in a sexual pedagogy based on morals, but also engage a sexual pedagogy based on ideals. (146f)

4. Fourth tension: office vs. charism

This is the tension between obedience and freedom. As Catholic pastors be have a limited pastoral authority. This stands in contrast to the Protestants. We must do sacramental pastoral work; this is what our care of souls requires. It is part of our office. [In contrast,] charism is an initiative that comes from ourselves.

I do what my office demands of me. I hear confessions, celebrate Mass, etc. But where, on the other hand, do I take the initiative in my own right? This tension has been part of Catholic pastoral work throughout history. There are times when it is especially difficult. Even the best pastors suffer from this tension. On the other hand we understand that so many say that our office demands this [or that]. This is conservatism in the Church. Its premise is: if I don't come today, I'll come tomorrow. On the other hand is movement, mobility.

In times of transition there were always great pastors of souls who suffered from this problem. They understood how to obey Church, even while taking the initiative. Most people break under this burden. This is how one can tell a true reformer. On the one hand he obeys and on the other hand he takes the initiative. We think of Dominic and Ignatius. If we live in a time of transition, we must take it for granted that the struggle will always be there. We should not let slander get us down; it is par for the course. The things that are said about us! (147)

How do we solve this problem?

First, hang on. Such tensions are part of living in a time of transition. If I experience no difficulties at all, including with my fellow priests, am I really on the right path?

Second, for me it should go without saying that I think: God leads me through my superiors. Be respectful! Know how far the duty of obedience goes, so that I am better able to maintain a necessary, respectful freedom. Let me point out *Everyday Sanctity*, p. 259, where we read:

“The everyday saint knows the art of sanctifying all his activities and transforming them into God’s service. In the light of faith he recognizes that he is a subordinate and God speaks to him through the voice of his superiors, guiding and sanctifying him. He strives for the highest in everything. He is not content with fulfilling written commands and wishes exactly, readily and perfectly, nor does the inner attachment of the will to orders completely satisfy him. Instead he strives for the highest degree of obedience and for sound, blind obedience – which is obedience of the intellect. Therefore he adheres to the principle that the task is right which his superior has assigned him. If, however, he sees that it is a less than expedient course of action, he respectfully points this out in a reverent spirit of frankness. If this is of no avail, he then submits the natural light of his intellect [to the will of God expressed by his superior] and practices blind obedience, letting the light of faith shine into his soul with increased brightness. This light clearly shows him that God knows how best to lead all things, including the errors of superiors, according to the plans of his providence. If others are trying

to love God and do so without bitterness or the poisoning of mutual relationships, then [the everyday saint] continues without worry.

“Still, this does not prevent him at a future time, when he is free to decide the matter on his own, to decide and act as he felt necessary in the first place, if this is what he thinks God asks. In this way he unites frankness, initiative, and reverent obedience¹⁰⁵.” (147f)

5. Fifth tension
(Not elaborated)

Part 2: The tension between nature and grace in the life of a priest

(Not elaborated)

(End of transcript)

¹⁰⁵ M.A. Nailis, *Werktagsheiligkeit* (Limburg, 1937), p. 288. English translation: *Everyday Sanctity* (Waukesha, 1998), p. 216f.

Appendix:

I Owe My Priesthood to the Blessed Mother

Note: it was usual for Fr. Kentenich to conclude his retreats and courses by connecting the topic of the retreat with the Blessed Mother. The transcript of this retreat ends abruptly without any such conclusion. As a small substitute, the following passage is added from 1963, spoken by Fr. Kentenich at the celebration of a First Mass of Thanksgiving of the newly ordained Fr. Günther Boll, who had been led on a very winding and demanding way before he could be ordained. These words were spoken on November 1, 1963 in the Exile Shrine in Milwaukee¹⁰⁶.

{217} If we pause to do some genuine Catholic reflection, and see and verbalize the larger perspectives, then for us it is self-understood that every priest can say in one way or another: I owe my priesthood to our dear Blessed Mother.

We only need to recall something which is more or less an accepted opinion of the Church: “*Ecce mater tua – ecce filius tuus*” [Behold your Mother – Behold your son] (Jn 19,25). The words, in the most direct sense, are directed to John personally. But it is also in keeping with the text’s meaning to apply it to the priesthood, indeed to all God’s creatures, to everyone called by God. Our Lady – the Mother of priests, Mother of the Priesthood.

Mother of priests – if Mary’s mission is to be the permanent and official helpmate and companion of Christ in the entire work of redemption, then she must clearly exercise special motherly power toward [Christ’s] leaders in the world and in the Church, the priests. That is something we simply take as self-understood. As a result, every priest could say, if he pays attention to the order of being: I clearly owe, in one way or another, my vocation and my way to the

¹⁰⁶ J. Kentenich, sermon in the Exile Shrine, November 1, 1963. *P. Joseph Kentenich an seine pars motrix*, Vol. 1 (Berg Sion 1985), p. 217f.

priesthood to the Mother of God.

But for him¹⁰⁷ it goes farther. Here it says: who led him {218} these many years, especially the years of struggle? It is our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, who, as we believe, has the mission to educate leaders, educate priests, educate a people for the modern transformation of the world to Christ. This young priest has been led via the covenant of love to the priesthood but at the same time to [the charism of] *paternitas divina* [divine fatherliness].

Indeed, this is something remarkable about our family: as the Great Educator, Mary has led Schoenstatt in a most singular way not only to Christ, but also in Christ to the Father. Through Mary and from Schoenstatt, the Eternal, Infinite Love wants to establish a great Father Kingdom in the world of today.

(Possible alternatives: JK on Mary and the priest – see 25th jubilee of Fr. Baldauf, June 29, 1951, in my loose files, from Chile. See also Sfk 1924, 4th talk/in the Shrine)

¹⁰⁷ For Günther Boll, the newly ordained priest who was celebrating this first Mass and to whom this sermon was directed.