

Education and the  
Challenge of Our Times

Perspectives for Catholic Educators

by  
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**FIRST TALK:  
THE EDUCATIONAL POWER OF PRAYER**

Because of the advanced hour (8:30 P.M.) you probably expect me to give you no more than a word of welcome. My sincere welcome, then, first to those of our family who return here year after year to gain light and strength for the mastery of everyday life and to cope more effectively with your pastoral and educational problems. Then, too, I welcome all those who have found their way here for the first time. May these days impart to us what we all expect: light and clarity in the confused pedagogical situation of our time, and the strength and courage to apply our weak shoulders anew to the grave tasks that await us.

What has brought us together in such great numbers is *the deep concern about the future of our poor enslaved people*. I mean the people to which we are joined by the bonds of blood and destiny, the people so highly favored and endowed as to become the envy of other nations on earth, a nation which has been plunged into the darkest night, the deepest abyss of confusion, but which—let us hope—will also be the first to once more find the road back to the sunlit heights, becoming in turn a guide to others on the way out of darkness and degradation to the heights above.

It is our common concern for the education of this people that has brought us together. This concern trails us like a shadow. It will accompany us during the next few days and return home with us. It has always been that way, for educators are lovers who never abandon the object of their love. And this love reaches new heights when the people we love has become ill and weak and lies helpless on the ground.

It is probably this concern which is also the bond uniting us all regardless of political persuasion or vocation in life. May I also suggest that during the next few days we permit this concern to inspire our every action:

Our praying,  
Our speaking,  
Our hearing and listening.

These are the three thoughts with which we shall concern ourselves a little more closely tonight so that we have correct basic attitudes which we will build upon in the days ahead.

**1. OUR PRAYING**

Our praying will draw inspiration and remain inspired by our ardent concern for the future of our people! But what does prayer have to do with our educational task? We know the answer, of course, and we have known it for a long *time* - *prayer is the greatest educational power in heaven and on earth*.

**a. THE EDUCATIONAL POWER OF PRAYER**

If we examine Sacred Scripture and compile all that is written there about the meaning and purpose and significance of prayer and the right relationship between prayer and work and prayer and education, it is not hard to sum it all up in the thesis:

*God desires a certain orderly relationship, a certain harmony between prayer and work. When this harmony is disturbed, a great catastrophe ensues in the entire world, also in the world of educators and education.*

If we keep this thesis firmly in mind we will understand, or at least gain an inkling of the origin of the acute crisis of our present age. That we live in a frightening chaos is something we can feel; that the world of education, too, is confronted with truly chaotic conditions and must actually live in the midst of these conditions, we know only too well from personal experience. Whence the chaos? Obviously the relationship between prayer and work - the work of education - has been radically disturbed.

We therefore understand why Our Lord during his earthly life placed so much emphasis on prayer. Before every activity that played a major role in his plan of salvation we see him climb to the summit of the mountain in order to pray. Prayer represents a great and unique educational force here on earth! On one occasion Our Lord found himself surrounded by a helpless world, one just like today. It is then that he said, "The harvest is good, but the laborers are scarce. Beg the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 10, 37f). Is this not the same situation in which we find ourselves today? Do we not have the same longing for strong educators? Do we not want to form and educate our youth in such a way that they will be able to stand up to the later storms in life?

What means does Our Lord recommend for the formation of such strong characters? New organizations? The construction of new buildings? No, he knows and acknowledges only one means: "Pray to the Lord of the Harvest!" What is it that Our Lord wishes to make us aware of? The world power, the educational world power of prayer!

The Apostles walked in his footsteps. Driven by necessity they had permitted themselves - quite understandably - to engage in an excessive amount of work, which gave them no rest. Thinking this over one day, they came to the conclusion that they must get rid of much of their external activities (cf Acts 6, 1-6). They ordained deacons, thus freeing themselves for the prime activity of every true Catholic educator: Prayer! There again you have the same thought expressed very clearly! Prayer is a priority factor in all education!

If we now cast a glance back over the centuries we find ample evidence to substantiate our thesis. We think of Cardinal Ximenes, the great Spanish statesman, whose duty it was in the name of the king to receive and carry on diplomatic negotiations with all foreign envoys. Not seldom did these envoys have to wait before being received. Ximenes was praying! When rebuked for it he answered: When Ximenes prays he rules his land and people."

It is not hard for us to apply the word to ourselves. Who is Ximenes? I am! When I pray I rule my little world, I educate; in fact, I am more educationally active than I would be if I kept moving my hands and my lips in perpetual motion or constantly performed outward deeds.

About the great pulpit orator Lacordaire we know this: Before he mounted the pulpit he knelt in prayer. Once on the pulpit, he swung the whip of God's word. He was convinced that all fruitfulness of external activities is ultimately measured by the intensity of one's interior life and secured through the power of prayer.

Another pulpit orator used to say before mounting the pulpit: "I must first make my immediate preparation." What immediate preparation did he make? He knelt down and prayed the rosary!

We can thus understand how St. Bernard could summarize his experiences of a lifetime in these words - Pauline in thoughts and phraseology, "Now there remain these three: the word, example, and prayer, but the greatest of these is prayer." When we allow these and similar trains of thought to pass through our mind it does not seem difficult to acknowledge from the bottom of our heart: Indeed, prayer is a first-class educational power.

## **B. TH. REASONS FOR THIS POWER**

However if we wish to explore the deeper reasons for this, there are two that stand out above all others. The first tells us that it is prayer that first makes us able to interiorly and accurately grasp our pupils. The second reason tells us that it is only through prayer, that is, the cultivation of the interior life, that we enter into the correct relationship, the efficacious, almost almighty union with the living God. I suggest that you take the trouble to give a little more thought to these two reasons.

### **PRAYER IS THE GREAT POWER IN FORMING THE PUPIL**

First reason: *Only prayer conveys the right disposition to the educator and makes him capable of recognizing, striving for, and achieving the true goal of education.*

What is that goal? Do we only want to train our youngsters in a few social graces or do we not want to form them as children of God and members of Christ? Children of God who are able and ready to independently and autonomously master their lives out of the great ideal am a child of God! That is precisely the goal of education!

Now we are aware that such a goal is unattainable without a good supply of actual graces. That much is dogma: we cannot lead anything like a Christian life without many actual graces. What then shall we say when it comes to the ideal of education, to great heroic Catholic personalities! Who of us would believe, for example, that he could without many graces avoid all venial sin? And is it not of the very essence in educating God's children to lead them so they not only avoid mortal sin, but are receptive for all things divine? This is impossible without actual grace. Christ says: "Without me you can do nothing" (John 15, 6). And Paul, in his congenial way, adds that we cannot even think a good thought without God, that anything we do in connection with saving our souls - including education - be it desire or the deed, ultimately comes from God, the eternal and unsearchable love. The major premise is clear: Without actual graces, an abundance of actual graces, we shall never reach the goal of education of our pupils. And now the minor premise, a profound conviction in its own right and a weighty axiom of the spiritual life: Prayer is the normal and ever-available tool to make actual graces flow our way.

Has not the Savior stressed this for us very clearly and unmistakably when he says: "Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you; for everyone that asks receives, who seeks finds, who knocks, to him it shall be opened" (Mt 7,7f). Has he not used such ideas and formulations to make us very clearly aware of the power wielded by prayer in forming and shaping men?

The Fathers of the Church and teachers of the spiritual life have consequently taken great pains in exegising such passages of Sacred Scripture for us. They take them to mean: "If a man does not ask, neither does he receive; if he does not knock, neither will the door be opened for him." I wonder if we all correctly understand what this means. Prayer is the universal, all-surpassing means of obtaining actual grace in rich abundance. Without these actual graces, these precious actual graces, the training of a child of God is absolutely impossible! This is Church teaching.

We understand St. Augustine in the same vein when he says, "Do the best you can, and what you cannot do, pray for!" We would do well to apply these words to ourselves. All these pedagogical tools we know and have become familiar with, as well as others that are new to us, are good and proper. "Do the best you can!" But, as St. Augustine adds, "what you cannot do, pray for!" Do you get the idea?

For there are many things in education which we cannot accomplish by our own efforts. And might it not be true that the tragic condition of modern education derives partly from the fact that we, as educators, have forgotten to become men and women of interior prayer? There again you have the same thought: Prayer is the greatest power in forming our pupils!

## PRAYER IS THE GREAT POWER IN FORMING OURSELVES

But I have stressed yet another point - and this is the second reason which moves the educational force of prayer into a particularly bright light: only by means of prayer, through the cultivation of the interior life, do we gain the right relationship with the living God, the Great Educator of the nations. Here too we may pause for a moment. Who is the real educator of our youth? Who is it that shapes and forms the character of our people? Who is it? Who is the true shepherd of soul? "Only one is your teacher . . ." (Mt 23,10). Who is this one? It is the great God, the eternal, the infinite. It is Christ! And we all who are privileged to call ourselves and be educators are but tools in his hand.

In God's plan of salvation we have become his instruments through the sacraments that imprint an indelible character on our souls, through Baptism and Confirmation. Priests are his instruments in a special way through priestly ordination. Ontologically we are incorporated into the priesthood of Christ and share therefore in his triple office of priest, teacher and shepherd. But what exists in the order of being (*ordo essendi*) must, according to the axiom *ordo essendi est ordo agendi*, become life and action. The objective "order of being" is the norm for the objective "order of action." And what is it that makes us willing instruments, that brings us in contact with the great work master? It is what we call "prayer," the inner life, interior prayer.

The educator who lives apart from Christ has only negligible educational power. At best, he has at his disposal a little human ingenuity. And, under normal conditions, how far does he think he will get with this ingenuity especially in the present abnormal conditions? You see, when I am the Lord's instrument the work I accomplish is principally due to my connection with the prime mover. I might say, our insignificant strength, our powerlessness needs to be joined to the omnipotence of the eternal work master. Of those, therefore, that approach their educational activity in this intimate connection with Christ, the living God, it can be said, that they must be successful in the long run, must become almighty" in education.

Where does our powerlessness come from? Largely from the fact that we trust too much in our own resources, that we maintain too little rapport with, are too little espoused to and united with the omnipotent, living God, the great educator, Christ, may he be praised forever.

Thus we understand, for example, why St. Therese, the Little Flower, placed such strong emphasis on the cultivation of the interior life. Yes, back to the wellspring, back to the master craftsman! One single word springing from a profound inner union with the divine work master will be infinitely more fruitful than all the many other words though they fill entire books - spoken without this marriage with the divine power.

Many of us, I am sure, have listened to Father Lombardi. He speaks very plainly and yet his word has great power of suggestion! Those that have listened to him must have felt it: Here is a man who lives what he says, who draws from the fountainhead of all knowledge, a man who is deeply attached to Christ and permits Christ to use him as an instrument. Christ wants to and shall work through him. That too seems to be the recognition that is beginning to dawn in ever widening circles, as far as *Catholic Action* is concerned. How much has been accomplished, externally speaking. I am thinking of the many creations of religious zeal in the wide, wide world. How much has been done in the name and within the framework of Catholic Action! And what are their results? Not many! What seems to have been missing? Contemplation! Enough action, but too little contemplation!

This is where the secular institutes wish to step in. They remain in the world, but they wish to draw deeply from the divine springs. They wish to remain in constant contact with contemplation and thereby see to it that action is supplemented with contemplation and passion.

Thus we see the world as a whole. Only in this way do we fully understand the meaning of the word: Prayer joins us to and brings us into intimate union with the divine work master, with the great

prototype of all educators. What else is there that can make us nearly as fruitful, as far as educational achievements are concerned, as this constant living contact with the master craftsman?

In parentheses it should be added that not only the fruitfulness of education depends on prayer, but that we must even fear to endanger our own salvation without a deep cultivation of the interior life. What is true of all educators is likewise true of all shepherds of souls who are meant to be teachers in an eminent degree. We hear experts in the spiritual life, men and women who have looked deeply into the plan of God and have examined man's earthly existence in its light. They all proclaim with one voice: Either the cultivation, the careful cultivation of the interior life in the case of all those that are in charge of souls, or on the other hand the danger of eternal damnation.

### **MARY, EDUCATE ME TO BE YOUR INSTRUMENT**

While Fr. Kentenich was in Milwaukee I spent a few years with my sister in Chicago. At the time I did not belong to the League and didn't know Schoenstatt. However, Schoenstatters at home in Germany had given me greetings for him and I wanted to pass them on. So one day I went to Milwaukee with my sister. As we were leaving, Fr. Kentenich told my sister, "Bring your little sister back." Then he waved and called out "Long live Schoenstatt!" I have never forgotten this moment.

Since my sister did not want to travel again, I went to Fr. Kentenich on my own a few weeks later and from then on regularly every three weeks!

At first I was very homesick for Germany. I asked Fr. Kentenich once whether he wasn't homesick for Schoenstatt. He answered me quite simply, "I belong to God!" He then took me to the MTA picture and said with deep conviction, "Don't just look at Our Lady in the picture; she is really with us in this room. Our Lady is always close to you."

Fr. Kentenich led me increasingly to Our Lady. He taught me little ejaculations to repeat often during the day, such as "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, educate me to become a perfect instrument in your hand," or, "Dearest Mother, lead me where you would like to have me most." He attached special importance to the little consecration. He taught me to keep a spiritual daily order. He also gave me much Schoenstatt literature to read. Once I asked, "You were in Dachau, weren't you?" He only said "Yes," and gave me a typewritten history of Dachau to read. I had recently read a book about Dachau, so I knew about the atrocities. Fr. Kentenich's description dwelt far more on how Our Lady had helped them.

Soon I was no longer homesick for Germany, but for Milwaukee, and I could hardly wait for the three weeks to pass. My sister could not understand this.

When I left the USA I gave Fr. Kentenich a poem I had made myself. He said he had to give me a poem in return. He looked for a funny card with a bird's nest and a dwarf sitting next to it, and wrote:

"As long as I am in my nest  
I need not fear the lightning flash.  
This nest is my own Mother's heart,  
which always bears me heavenwards,  
to God, the wellspring of all bliss  
The Father of all mercy, love." J.K.

*(Mosaic Stones, contribution from the Women's League, p. 33f)*

Cardinal Lavigerie has said: "The true shepherd of souls" and that holds true for every educator "either strives for holiness or he is constantly in danger of plunging into hell." I believe we should not so lightly dismiss such thoughts, such sayings, as exaggerations. They are to be taken literally.

In the light of what has been said, it is not too difficult for us to somehow classify the various priest and teacher-personalities. Cardinal Gibbons speaks of various types of priests, and I shall follow his lead. He distinguishes between copper priests, silver priests and golden priests. If I am to apply the comparison to our subject at hand I might add one more step and maintain that there are also tin educators.

Which is the criterion that allows us to draw the line between the different types? It is the union with God, the eternal educator, the union of life and mind and heart with the living God!

I am thinking first of the *Copper Educator*! If I may speak more in terms of the Prussian civil service and teacher-type, then he stands before us as a man of iron discipline and duty! The *Copper Educator* fulfills his duty very exactly, but only to the extent that duty demands. After school hours he goes his own way. Once he has closed the door behind him, his mind is closed as well. Then he is no longer the teacher, but pursuing his private interests. If I may refer back to our point of departure, we can say: the union of life with Christ must be conceded to him; what he lacks is the necessary union of mind and heart.

When we think of the *Silver Educator*, then we have to climb up. He works not only during school and office hours, but beyond that. You can see him day and night, how he works and slaves and pushes himself. He never seems to get tired. But what is the deepest motive of his activity? Either ambition or a false sense of self-assertion and self-development. Hence he is termed in teacher and educator circles as an ambitious climber who must play first fiddle everywhere, who must have a hand in everything, who must have the first and last word in all things. He may live in union with Christ, he may even have a certain union of mind and interest with him, but his greatest deficiency is the lack of perfect union of mind and heart. That becomes painfully apparent when hard knocks impede his work, when success evades his best efforts, when misfortune and failure stalk his life. He may stand tall for a time, but sooner or later the difficulties and hardships of life will crush him.

It might be well for us to examine ourselves to see what type of educators we are, the first or the second? The third type represents the *Golden Educators*, the *ideal teachers*. With them, sovereign calm is joined to great activity. To their union of life and interest is added a most tender union of mind and heart with Christ, the Eternal High Priest and Educator of the nations. Because of that tender union of heart and mind they so carefully cultivate, they know that cross and suffering, failure and contempt are the best means of shaping and forming human beings. They go about their duties faithfully. They are lovers that never lose sight of the object of their love, not even when they have closed the door behind them. The solicitude for their country and its youth goes with them day and night and occupies the center of their conversations and their life, their prayers. Masterful, ideal educators! And the more crosses and sufferings, contempt and persecution they encounter, the more they grow into Christ, the more the chalices of their souls are opened to Christ, the more Christ can channel and radiate into them all his divine powers. We should like to be such educators!

Do you understand what this means? In any case we may, and should, take home with us from all these considerations the thought: Prayer is an educational force of the first magnitude!

I have added yet another type: The *tin or cast-iron educator*. He fulfills only his most essential duties, without inner glow and warmth. The union of interest, mind and heart with Christ occupies no room in his life.

All in all: We understand how important it is for us to maintain a constant life-line as tools with the master craftsman and as secondary educators with the Primary Educator.

Just read again what great masters in education can tell us about the subject. I am thinking more, for example, of St. John of the Cross. Of certain educators he says, "They make much noise. They talk a lot and never get tired of it. But," he adds, "they are men who can be compared to a blacksmith

who strikes the anvil with his hammer. Much concussion, but little repercussion. Wouldn't they be better off to withdraw from time to time to pray, to cultivate their inner life before stepping into the school and before the people whom they are meant to educate?"

A saintly priest lay on his deathbed. He anguished as he looked back on his past life. Would he face his judge with empty hands? Most likely it was his confessor who tried to calm him by reminding him how many sermons he had preached during his life. To which he replied: Sermons will be the last thing I talk about unless I'm asked." What did he mean? *Beaucoup bruit de rien*, much smoke and no fire! In my sermons I sought myself, not God. My actions have not flowed from an interior union with the eternal, the infinite God.

## MARY, THE EDUCATOR OF THE NATIONS

The living God needs instruments. He wishes to use us in forming men. To make the work easier for us he has placed before our eye a classic prototype and ideal pattern - the Mother of God! She is the tool of all tools and, as such, hers is the great task and mission in life to be and remain the educator of the nations under Christ, the living God.

I wonder if it is not worth our time to stop here for a moment to ask: Is she really the great educator of the nations? Has she been appointed and destined as such by God?

She has been solemnly proclaimed as teacher by the Savior: *Ecce Mater tua*. Behold your mother! (John 9, 27). Surely it is not difficult for us to hear in this commissioning to be a mother also her commissioning to be a teacher. To be a mother means to be a teacher in every regard.

The clearer the dogmatic and biblical picture we have of Mary, the more deeply we grasp the thought: "The Mother of God, the great educator of the nations, an instrument in the hand of the divine master-craftsman." And what is our image of her? It is the image of the Blessed Mother as the permanent companion and helpmate of Christ in his entire work of redemption and education.

Here in Schoenstatt we like to call her the *Mater Ter Admirabilis*, the Mother Thrice Admirable. What does that mean? It means that she is *the* educator, the preeminent teacher of the nations!

From what has been said so far it will be easier to understand what the popes have taught. Leo XIII, the great pope who spoke out on all the great issues of his time, was not embarrassed to publish ten encyclicals on the Mary. And his last will and testament is similar to that of Christ. He foresaw mighty waves crashing upon God's Church and foretold the coming revolution. He felt that the Church, humanly speaking, was doomed. What could he do? He proclaimed to the world and to the Church: *Ecce Mater Tua!* It is the task of Mary, the great teacher, to lead the Church victoriously out of the hurricanes of our time to the light above. *Ecce Mater Tua!* God's own Mother stands before us as the great educator working in close union with the Eternal Educator, the living God!

Or think of Pius IX. He proclaimed the dogma of Mary's Immaculate Conception. This truth of our faith was not under attack at the time. Why then did he proclaim that dogma to the Church? He gives the answer himself. He wished to insert this gem into the crown of the Heavenly Mother in order to compel her to lead the coming generation onward and upward into the heart of God, to prove herself as the great Educator of the nations. Fifty years later, reviewing the past, Pius X asked the question: Have the great expectations of Pius IX been realized? Weighing the results, he had to admit many shortcomings but concluded: It is as if an inner voice were telling me the expectations will soon be fulfilled. Our Lady will reveal herself directly as the great educator of the nations; she will crush Satan's head and lead the Church to certain victory. She is an instrument, a perfect instrument, the instrument of instruments in the hand of the all-wise Eternal Educator.

We think of Vincent Pallotti's saying: "She is the Great Missionary, she will work miracles!"

Applying it to our thesis we can say: She, the great educator, will work miracles of transformation in souls, miracles of education.

Do you feel the supernatural atmosphere that envelops us here? The great dogmatist and pulpit orator Bussuet, who knew how to speak the people's language, used to say: It was through his Mother that God wanted the Savior to come into this world. Obviously men too can come to God only through the Mother of God. In other words, the road on which the Savior came to us is also the road on which we must travel to God, the road of becoming God's children through God's Mother. Thus she stands before us as the great educator, the perfect and ideal instrument in the hand of the Eternal Educator.

If you wish to take the time to examine how the Blessed Mother has revealed herself as the great educator through the ages, our eyes and mind must concentrate on her relationship with Christ. It is theologically quite correct to say that, in respect to externals such as the vocabulary then in use, etc., Mary was the teacher and educator of Christ. But in the things that are deepest and most basic, in the relationship of God's child to God, it was the other way around. There Mary was the pupil and the Savior the great educator. And with what success did Christ educate Mary? We shall try to return to these thoughts on another occasion. Suffice it to say: Mary is the masterpiece of Christ's pedagogical skill.

In this connection may I point out how unsatisfying it must have been for the Blessed Mother to find herself, as a mother and teacher, without an educational object. Hence we understand it very well that the eternal wisdom, yielding to this desire on the part of his mother to teach and shape human souls, has placed all mankind as educational objects at her feet. We too have been given unto her. She is our great educator!

Once you get a close look at Our Lady's educational workshop at heaven, you will find it easy to repeat with the masters of the spiritual life: All the saints in heaven ultimately owe their holiness, their character formation to the profound cooperation of the Blessed Among Women. They have become the masterpieces of education - God's education and hers. Furthermore, we can easily trace this same maternal influence in early Christianity in the lives of the apostles. This influence appears especially strong in the case of St. John, our Lord's favorite disciple. Obviously he was of a deeply religious bent as well as supernaturally enlightened; however, from the few texts of Sacred Scripture connecting lines can easily be drawn between him and the Blessed Mother. This unusual mystical depth which we take for granted in the Blessed Mother, we also find in St. John.

And, since we are joyfully aware that the Blessed Mother as our Mother Thrice Admirable and most admirable educator has established here in Schoenstatt her throne of grace, we want to open our hearts to her influence.

## **2. OUR SPEAKING**

Concern for our country accompanies us during these days. It has an influence on everything we do, not least of all on our praying. At the same time, however, it has an influence on our speaking.

I don't even know whether you have a great desire to do much talking during these days. When we are touched by the divine, we may well feel like Peter: "Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man" (Lk 5,8). When the divine inbreaks into our inner self, the soul desires to remain silent. I do believe, at any rate, that we should make an effort during these days to leave aside all superficial, superfluous conversations. Any conversation we carry on should be inspired by concern for our nation.

Don't you think that we have more than enough material and work to so to think through these thoughts? What we do say, therefore, should be prompted by our concern for our poor, enslaved nation, a nation which, though highly gifted and favored, finds itself now in a morass of shame and

degradation.

This concern should likewise inspire our hearing and listening.

### **3. OUR HEARING AND LISTENING**

To be sure, this reminder is mainly addressed to myself. Bear with me as I try to point out passable roads in the world of education. What makes my work easy is the knowledge that I am supported by an entire army of praying men and women. For our idea is not just to attend a series of lectures and absorb a great many thoughts. What we expect to gain from these days is interior clarity. If we gain this clarity, do not overlook that we owe it to the great world power of prayer, i.e. the men and women keeping a prayerful vigil behind the lines and imploring our Heavenly Mother during these days to spread her hands over us and let us experience the full impact of her educational power.

When we go out as true educators into practical life, serving our people, then she, the *Mater Ter Admirabilis*, has in truth become the thrice admirable educator, teacher and molder of souls. If we should not succeed in casting light into the darkness, if we should not succeed in returning to the workshop of education with renewed courage, we expect at least the one grace to look upon the external unfruitfulness of our educational effort as our great educational cross, to take it willingly upon our weak shoulders and then, hanging on the cross, help to redeem the world. We do hope however, that the Blessed Mother will glorify herself during these days in one way or another as the Great Missionary. She not only *will* work miracles but already *has* worked miracles: miracles of inner transformation, of the grace of a home, of interior fruitfulness.

**SECOND TALK:  
THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL UPHEAVAL OF OUR TIMES  
AS BACKGROUND FOR THE PRESENT CRISIS IN EDUCATION**

Last night's introductory remarks revolved around two words which are written with indelible ink in our book of life. The first word: Constantly growing concern! The second: Our country and our nation! As Christians and Catholics we are in the habit of looking on concern as an essential part of Christian living. To put it more precisely, we are aware of **a tension between reasonable earthly care and divine carefreeness.**

The Savior has deeply engraved an attitude of carefreeness in our heart. In clear strokes he has revealed this to us in Sacred Scripture. We know the words: "*I tell you therefore: do not fret about what you are to eat, or what you are to drink, or to sustain your life, or about what you are to wear . . .*" (Mt 6, 25). And: "*Seek first the Kingdom of God and the justice it requires, then all other things will be given you besides*" (Mt 6, 33).

If concern is meant to be a part of Christian life, then we as educators simply take it for granted that a certain educational and educator's helplessness will ever follow us like a dark shadow we cannot escape.

**I. THE EDUCATOR'S CONCERN**

This general educational helplessness derives from three sources: from the person of the pupil, from the person of the educator, and from the educational processes.

. The pupil, be it a boy or a girl, an adult, or a nation at large, will always confront us with grave difficulties. The source of this problem lies in the essential nature of man. Just as each person is a mystery of God's creation, a gift of God and a risk of God, so too is each young person. They are a mystery of divine wisdom, a mystery of divine omnipotence, a mystery of divine mercy. And who would dare to deal with mysteries without trembling in his heart?

"Take the child and educate him!", heaven says to the Catholic educator. "Educate him to be a child of God and a member of Christ! Make this child capable of deciding, independently and autonomously in all life's situations, to say a heartfelt **Yes** to everything the heavenly Father wishes of him."

And this human child to be educated represents a risk taken by God, especially since the fall of our first parents, since the great revolution broke in upon our human nature. Ever since there has been a constant tension between the three strata of man's existence: the body, the mind, and the soul elevated by grace. All three of them would like to develop individually and separately. The taming of these three strata, their integration and direction towards one great God-appointed and God-desired goal, is the perennial challenge of true Catholic education! We all know and experience day after day both in ourselves and in others the infirmity of the human will and the human heart; how both need to be chiseled, integrated and directed towards the one, great, God-desired goal. The free and unruly human will, with all its tragi-comical tendencies and diabolical propensities, shall be bound, led and directed upward toward the final, highest and ultimate good, i.e. God. The teacher who has such a profound concept of his work, envisioned and ordained by the good Lord himself, naturally is haunted by feelings of helplessness and concern.

2. The same is true of the problems deriving from **the person of the educator**, be it ourselves, the official educators, or the subversive "co-educators," the streets and alleys, and the public milieu or the most formidable of all seducers who causes us the most trouble, the devil, the world of darkness, and

all diabolical influences!

Educators who look upon their work with the eyes of God, educators who never tire of remaining lovers, who never abandon the object of their love, sense the terrible problems these **subversive co-educators** continuously create for them.

We spoke of the environment as a subversive co-educator. Of course, we have always known that

**THE DIVINE SMILE IN THE HUMAN CRY**  
by Margaret Fenelon

Dear God,

Why did you make chicken pox? They really don't seem to make our lives any easier. Or cars that break down, or money shortages, or family problems, or leaky plumbing, or viruses, or tornados, or floods. Or any of the other things that seem to make our lives miserable. If we were made in your image and likeness, then why must we be miserable, Lord?

Sometimes it seems as though we spend all of our time shuffling from one catastrophe to another. And just when we set things right, something else comes along to stir things up. Dear Father, don't you think there could be better ways for us to spend our time?

This life is a mystery to us. There are so many things we'd like to know, so many things we need to understand. But our minds just aren't capable of comprehending the way you do things. Our ways are not your ways, Lord.

We may not be able to make sense out of the way you do this. We may not be able to understand the suffering of this life. We may not be able to see the loving hand behind the iron glove, but we know it's there. You told us so through your Son, Jesus. Behind the seemingly endless struggle of our lives lies a power far beyond all human knowledge and understanding. That power is you, Lord the omnipotent Father God. You are the reason for our existence and the compass that directs our lives.

We know that you are infinite wisdom, eternal love. You are the center of the universe. You are the beginning and the end of all things. You are the ever-present Father God. You are perfect, and everything you do is perfect.

You are the source of our life, the source of our strength, the source of our joy. You are our Father, our creator. Everything we have and are belongs to you. And therefore we spend our entire lives seeking you, Father. Looking for you in spite of, and yet because of, the frailty of our humanness. (. . .)

To have true love is to have true joy. And what is joy? It is the resting of the appetites in the possession of a good. We must strive to be joyful children of the Father. We must achieve an inner detachment. A detachment from this world and an attachment to the living God as the eternal good, to his wish and will and to his plan. This inner detachment will bring us true joy, true love. (. . .)

Father, help us to be children of the sun. Mend our wings and let us soar ever upward. Fill our hearts with true love and joy. Help us to find your loving wisdom behind all of the trials and tribulations of our lives. Help us to be detached from this world and seek only eternal love. Help us to patch the leaky pipes and withstand the terrible illnesses with a divine smile. Help us to mend the broken relationships and fix the broken down cars with a spirit of inner joy. Help us to find comfort in true love even when we feel our hearts are about to break. Help us to find justice and mercy in your omnipotent wisdom. Hear us when we cry, comfort us when we mourn. Show us the path when we don't know which way to go.

*(Schoenstatt Family Magazine, March-April 1992)*

the human will is not under absolute compulsion in that respect; vis-a-vis his environment he remains free. But our surroundings can put the will in dire straits. As we will later see, this factor has frequently grown, particularly in our days, into such a formidable source of compulsion that it becomes difficult in individual cases to decide whether the human will, confronted with such a tyrannical environment, still retains its true freedom.

What must we do? We must educate the inner man, we must immunize him to such an extent that he will always emerge victorious in this battle for his milieu, in this struggle against the subversive co-educators. We are all familiar with the tragic laws of heredity; we are learning more today also about the tragic impact of the environment. Here again our educators must be on the front lines leading the battle against these sinister powers.

Moreover, let us never forget that the weak point in human nature is, especially in our days, being used and misused in very prominent fashion by him who, as Sacred Scripture says, "*goes about like a roaring lion . . .*" (1 Pt 5,8).

In her diary, Ida Frederica Goerres wrote a short paragraph in which she tells of her experiences with and her ideas concerning the devil. "The discouragement which paralyzes me is to a large extent a temptation of the devil. Slowly I begin to understand that even in normal everyday life we have more to do with the devil than we think." Often it is hard to distinguish whether our own sick nature is at work, or if the devil has made a pact with it. It is a safe bet to assume that, whenever the difficulties surpass the ordinary measure, the devil has entered into a partnership with frail human nature.

It is therefore an essential part of a teacher, his daily bread, to face gravest educational difficulties.

**3.** The same also applies to the **educational process**. For education does not solely depend on God, on streets and alleys and on the devil, but also, to an eminent degree, on us. For we are the chosen educators. And we must not lose sight of this: in education we accomplish much more by our very being and through our actions than by words and the traditional disciplinary methods.

In this connection it might be good for us to recall the outstanding artists, the great painters. They have produced great, even immortal, works. We too would like to become artists in the field of education; we too would like to leave behind great masterpieces. Could we perhaps sit at the feet of these great painters and learn from their example? History is able to tell us three things about them: they were men imbued with an extraordinarily clear sense of **realism**, tremendous **idealism** and forceful **vitalism**. Their realism revealed itself in their mastery of presentation and their adeptness at mixing colors. Because of this the centuries have not been able to erase what they projected on canvas.

To realism they simultaneously joined an all-surpassing **idealism**. The image they wanted to paint hovered constantly before their eyes. They fell in love with it again and again until it came to life in their mind's eye, setting the brush in motion.

To this realism and idealism came what - for want of a better expression - I would call "**vitalism**". While falling in love with the magnificent picture that hovered before their eyes, they made a sincere effort to embody and realize the picture in their own person and in all their actions.

Do you realize why I emphasize this thought? What is our main means of education? Being a practical example, embodying the ideal of our pupils before their eyes. But this is also where our greatest limitations begin. *Homo sum, nihil humanum a me alienum esse puto!* I too am human, and nothing human is beyond me! How much wavering and vacillating are in my own soul, how much confusion! Today "yes", tomorrow, "no", ecstatically cheerful one day, down in the dumps the next. The man I am sadly greets the man I ought to be!

We are familiar with the life processes indicated here and must therefore confess: The true educator will never completely overcome this helplessness.

## II. THE EDUCATOR'S CAREFREENESS

*When I spoke yesterday of "concern," I should have added one more word:*

It is an extraordinary concern deep down in our soul that has urged us to come here, and that will accompany us also out into the world again. It is not just the usual anxiety of education, it is an *extraordinary* anxiety of education that urges and compels us and gives us no rest. Still as Christians we know that in the plan of God, the all-wise Creator of the universe and the Great Educator, a certain tension will always remain between this extraordinary educational anxiety and care and a divine carefreeness.

Divine carefreeness! Who is it, after all, who holds the reins—also of education in his hands? It is the wise God, the Divine Artist. As an instrument in his hand it is also the Blessed Mother of God, the great sculptress of God's children, the great educator of the world and of men.

We want to be concerned, but not anxious. And in order to restore a creative tension between what amounts to an almost knee-knocking anxiety on one hand and divine carefreeness on the other, we shall do well to reflect on precisely what the root cause is of this unusual anxiety. Once we have found this source, we can presumably counteract it.

**The root cause of this extraordinary concern and anxiety is an extraordinary degree of uncertainty and helplessness in the entire field of education.** Here we need to pause and think: Where does this uncertainty and helplessness come from? From an objective and verifiable condition: The prevailing cultural and spiritual confusion of our time.

Here we have the two expressions that we need to focus on: **Cultural** confusion and **spiritual** confusion! Let's take them and weigh them in both. We do not know: which is the cause and which the effect? We sense that what is cause today is effect tomorrow, and vice versa. Who is it that forms and shapes culture? It is man, i.e. his spiritual condition. But also vice versa: the realities of environment and its educational impact point out to us that man is in turn strongly shaped, formed, transformed and, yes, also deformed by contemporary cultural conditions.

Let me first carefully draw for you an **overall picture** of the prevailing cultural and spiritual confusion of our time and then, as time permits, fill in the **details**.

The overall picture mentions both in one breath: cultural conditions—spiritual conditions. Subsequent details will alternately stress one or the other. We hope that, as a result of these reflections, new light may enter the light-hungry soul and, with it, perhaps courage and strength to put our weak shoulders again beneath the heavy burden of all educators.

### A. OVERALL PICTURE OF THE CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL CONFUSION OF OUR TIME

#### 1. LOSS OF A CULTURAL-SPIRITUAL EQUILIBRIUM

What are present cultural and spiritual conditions? If we look carefully I believe we all have to admit: the world - and, with it, also the world of the soul - is torn from its moorings. It is out of balance to an unheard of degree! And why is it so much out of balance? Let me give you the answer: Because human society has lost its natural center of gravity. And what is that center of gravity? It is the eternal, living God and the essential order of the universe established by Him, the *Lex Aeterna*, the Eternal Law.

Because human society has almost completely lost and abandoned this center of gravity, we have lost our sense of balance. We can compare mankind today to a drunkard, who for some time stands poised at the edge of the abyss and then, no longer able to hold himself up, plunges into nothingness. This is our present condition. Think of a snowflake which begins to tumble high up in the Alps. At first it rolls slowly; then it becomes a roaring avalanche, sweeping away and destroying everything in its path. That is the situation today!

To this imbalance is likewise joined an endlessly growing  
loss of absolute standards,  
loss of roots and  
loss of a home homelessness  
and a vanishing sense of belonging.

Thus mankind of today staggers along, tripping and stumbling in the dark. True, the picture is more a preview of things to come, but present developments definitely point in that direction.

In our own Catholic camp we think of our Catholic youth organizations and the Liturgical Movement. We have been accustomed for some time to youth organizations of all kinds, examining, hammer in hand, as true children of their time, everything with critical eyes, to see if what Christianity has taught us should be taken seriously, if it is true. There is a lack of reverence for the past, a mania for probing and experimenting! The entire Christian edifice, every stone of it, everything in its dogmatic and moral order, especially the sixth commandment, is tested: Is what our elders tell us really true and genuine? Are they living it? Lack of respect for the past, exaggerated experimentation, the desire to try everything for oneself. Do you feel what is in the making?

Existentialism is also alive in our Catholic circles. There is a strong distrust of everything that is old. You see, that's where the fall begins and it seems in many places, even in our Catholic circles, the fall is into a bottomless pit.

Let me repeat: I am generalizing; I am giving you a preview of things to come. I am merely showing you where the present development will end. It might be worthwhile to ponder just how far along in that development we are now.

In this connection I recall the parting remarks made to me by the Apostolic Nuncio to Chile, a man who was Nuncio to China for many years, who knows the world and has traveled a great deal and whose favorite occupation is to decipher and interpret the present world situation. A young confrere accompanied me to the audience. He was educated in Chile and attended the seminary there. When in the course of the conversation we touched on the subject of modern man, the Archbishop remarked: "Today it is absolutely impossible to understand the modern man. I just don't understand him anymore. And even you," here he turned to my youthful confrere "though you are still young, are already too old for it; for the ideological changeover in modern man is so complete, so catastrophic, that it is, at least for the present, absolutely impossible for us to correctly understand and interpret him." You must bear in mind that over in Chile conditions are still more orderly and more settled than in Europe; their population is not as fluid as ours.

What will the European man look like, especially the German? We have recalled that it is we Germans, highly gifted and favored though we be, the first-fruits of the modern age who have plunged into the gaping abyss. This explains the dissolution of age-old ties and traditions in many areas. The loss of absolute standards, the loss of roots, the vanishing sense of belonging and of a home are becoming more pronounced with each passing year. If the revolutionary change is already so radical in the man of Chile who has not passed through the hell of World War II, how much confusion, aberration and gyrations in the scale of values should we not then expect in Europe! The

picture cannot be painted for us in dark enough colors if we are to remain humble on the one hand, and on the other hand take new courage to reunite ourselves with God and to seek and find ways and means to lead confused modern man back to God again. After all, our extraordinarily deteriorated human nature, whose faculties have become impoverished to the extreme, wants—and we believe and hope, and that is also our joy and desire—to come to God, wants to become holy and devout. Our generation too wants to become open again to God and the things of God. Yet, how helpless we are in the face of this new situation! Don't forget, the day after tomorrow the situation will be more desperate yet. Don't ever think that we are already on the way back up. On the contrary, we are going to sink deeper and deeper into the abyss and when, yes when, are we going to reach the bottom?

Fortunate indeed are those educators, who under unstable conditions such as these, can daringly step in and take command! Away with all cowards who don't know whether they are coming or going, who desperately try to hold on to the old shore, taking their cues from it, or try to orientate themselves on the new shore while refusing to acknowledge any objective order of being.

It's this way with modern man: his spiritual capacity has shrunk. **His spiritual faculties have become impoverished all down the line**, especially where the leap into the world beyond, the supernatural, the divine, is concerned.

Over and above all this modern man has become **the man of the silver screen the "film man"**. He is at the mercy of external impressions and his individual actions no longer have any organic connection with one another. It is as though his individual acts no longer spring from the core of his personality. Thus we stand face to face with a type of human personality which is ultimately disjointed nonsense. I believe that, if he really continues to develop along these lines, one must say that by the day after tomorrow we shall be faced with the complete dissolution of human nature. Surely, Almighty God will not permit that. However, the loss of the center of gravity and the consequent imbalance in human society has gone so far that one can speak of **dehumanized** human beings, of **depersonalized** men, of **mass men**.

I was made aware of how far this trend has gone during a visit to Uruguay. The Bishop of Salto invited me to address a gathering of college students on the world situation. I did so with my usual frankness. Afterward I was asked to leave the place as quickly as possible, or my life would be in danger. Why? I had argued that the collectivistic man was spreading even in the academic world. I just want to show you by this that the downward spiral we are witnessing here at home can be found all over the world. An extremely sad picture! Am I right, therefore, when I characterize the entire world situation as chaotic, confused? You have the wavering, vacillating man of today who is completely thrown out of balance, who is rapidly racing towards the abyss. And what is the outcome? Who knows? Who is going to break mankind's fall at the "bottom"? You may rightly object here: Father, you are generalizing. But don't forget: the development, even in our own ranks, points obviously in the same direction, in fact, is running towards the same point.

What shall I cite as an example? Think of a most successfully conducted parish mission. How many, at most, attend? 95%, or 70% to 80%? A magnificent success! And how long do the results last? Often it only takes a few weeks, or even a few days, and it's all over! You see, the man of the silver screen in the religious life! The man of the "momentary impression"! What he hears does not affect his innermost self; his actions do not spring from the depth of his personality, hence do not influence his personality. And how frequently is the question asked today by teachers and educators: What shall I do next? I no longer understand our young people! Often it goes so far that here and there, in our direct contact with Catholic youth, we conduct group meetings, make sure they pay their dues but, unable to exert any influence, stand before them helpless and bewildered. Even in Catholic neighborhoods, where traditions are still strong, one feels that trend towards the left. Where will it all end?

If we may paint gray on gray and black on black—and we educators today must call a spade a spade—we must admit: a new generation, a new humanity, is growing up which in the final analysis **has completely lost its organ for the religious** dimension and for the divine. And that is the worst one pass on about any age. I can have bad eyes, which is a great evil. But when the eyesight is gone, what then? A new humanity is growing up which no longer possesses an organ for the religious, for the divine. We must understand "It is the curse of wicked deeds—that they in turn beget only wicked offspring." A people that was once offered the grace of conversion but is rejecting Christ, is racing to its own doom. Here you have a picture of our time.

And now the question: What are the deeper reasons for such a pedagogical situation? We shall briefly answer this question in our next talk.

### **THIRD TALK: THE REASONS FOR THE PRESENT CRISIS IN EDUCATION**

In my last talk I presented to you an extremely dark, gloomy, an even crushing and discouraging picture. Would it not be natural for this to fill us with a certain pessimism? Should we not shake our heads and say: So that is how human society will end, one that has been so exceedingly richly endowed by the Father-God, whom he has created entirely according to his natural and supernatural image and likeness; the end of a human society for whom God's only begotten Son shed the last drop of his Precious Blood! Yes, pessimism wants to fill the soul and shake it to its very foundation!

Or too, we may ask ourselves: Are we confronted with a collapse, with a destruction of the human race, such as at the time of Noah? Will a new spring, a new generation, rise out of the ashes, a new family of God out of which a new tree can blossom and grow? Who can give a clear answer to this? Who has ever given counsel to Eternal Wisdom and looked into his plans? One thing, however, I believe I can say with certainty: Against this dark background shines out to us an unprecedented new optimism; it is the strong quiet faith that a new world is in the making, a world replete with sunshine and light, a world in which Christ, the King of the World, and His holy Mother the great Queen, alone emerge victoriously. And we who are walking in the darkness may look upon ourselves as road builders for this glorious new age to come, though our path lead through fog and darkness, and though somewhere along the road a bloody death may await us.

## **2. THE REASONS FOR THE PRESENT CULTURAL-SPIRITUAL CONFUSION**

However, before we unveil and draw a picture of this future filled with light, we want to take a moment to measure the pulse of our time. We have drawn the picture of the cultural and spiritual world situation black on black, and gray on gray, and for the sake of honesty we have stressed that the picture is not all black. Now to build our own road toward the new age of light and toward the tasks we have to solve during the period of transition, let us ask the question: Wherein lie **the reasons** for such an unhappy situation? Once we know them, we might find we can deal with them.

Though we, the children of an extremely decadent era, should be filled to the very bottom of our souls with a divine carefreeness, we nevertheless know that the Lord demands of us a certain concern. He doesn't say we shouldn't care. He says we should not **worry**. In order to gain direction and a sure aim, for our pastoral and educational activities as well, let us ask why this unfortunate situation exists. The reasons are twofold, one coming from a comparison and the other from a clear analysis of facts.

### **a. THE COMPARISON**

Comparing our situation with that of our opponents, must we not admit that the opposition, from its standpoint, have scored a resplendent victory and is indeed engaged in what appears to be a victorious campaign? Must we not admit our helplessness when we see the singular appeal and confidence of our opponents? The opposition knows how to appeal to modern men, how to entice them into its nets in a massive way. Indeed, the opposition can chalk up fruits, splendid fruits of education and transformation! Religious men and women who but yesterday and the day before yesterday were daily communicants, have been taken in tow by the adversary, throwing away all moral restraints and having no scruples in betraying others indiscriminately: "miracles of transformation," if you will. At any rate, the other side has phenomenal results and a powerful appeal to show for its efforts!

Think for a moment of the passively inclined Russian people. How that nation has been stirred! What an amazing activism it is showing us! At least a part of its people are living a life of unquestioned victory and demonstrating an energy of which one would not have thought possible for such a passively inclined people capable.

In contrast, you find helplessness and apathy in our ranks. How difficult it is today to appeal to the

**PRIVATE AUDIENCE**  
by Sr. M. Annette Nailis

Most of us learned to pray during the early years of our childhood, usually taught by our own mother. She folded our little hands and showed us how to pray in a manner suitable to our age; we prayed to the Father in heaven, to Jesus and His dear Mother; we were taught to present our wishes to them. We are speaking now mainly of vocal prayers, a practice we have continued all these years and still love today. However, there is yet another form of prayer. In it we do not pray to God with our lips, but solely with our interior faculties. This is called the prayer of meditation.

*Promise me a quarter of an hour of meditation daily and I promise you heaven*, St. Theresia once said. Perhaps something within you objects to the very idea of meditation. This I can well understand, because many sincere souls use the wrong method with the result that they rack their poor brains and still seem unable to meditate. Now I will show you a very simple way of learning to meditate. You will find that it will not tire you. On the contrary, it will give you courage and strength for a new day.

Meditation, for the everyday saint, means simply to be alone with God, to have a private audience, a heart-to-heart talk with Him.

There is an incident related in the life of St. John Vianney, the saintly Cur of Ars, regarding a humble working man who visited the church every evening. Father Vianney, noticing that he never used a prayer book, nor moved his lips, asked him one day what he was doing. The good man replied, *I just sit there and look at Him and He looks at me, that is all*. Did he not make a fine meditation?

There is a story told at Schoenstatt of a very busy young lady who several times a day, whenever time permitted, fled from the noise and rush of her daily routine to the shrine of our Mother Thrice Admirable. Without saying one word she looked and looked at the picture of Mary and the child in her arms and from the depth of her soul the words echoed and reechoed: *You are my mother; I am your child*.

St. Francis of Assisi spent entire nights exclaiming, *My God and my All!* Francis Xavier never wearied of repeating over and over again just one phrase, *O Most Holy Trinity!* The soul of St. Ignatius rested for long hours in this thought: *God alone in all things!* Surely we recognize that we are dealing here with a very deep form of interior prayer or meditation.

The everyday saint has a method of praying which is well suited even to the drabest working day. First he looks at God, and then he thinks of God looking at him. God, to him, is not an **IT** far away, but a loving **YOU** in closest proximity. Hence, he does not talk into empty space, but as a child to a beloved father, a knight to his great king, a bride to her spouse on the cross or hidden in the tabernacle. He speaks as friend to friend, as *I* to *you*, to the personal, immense, Divine You. The more informal this heart-to-heart talk becomes, the better it is.

The subject of his conversations with God is not a pious theme from a book of meditations. What is the subject closest to his heart? It is the day just passed or the impending new day. Yesterday's joys and sorrows, its work and pain, its surprises and disappointments; all these he reviews again in the light of God and speaks of them to God with the simplicity of a child.

(quoted from *Everyday Sanctity* in: *Schoenstatt Apostolate*, Advent 1989)

religious and moral sense of modern man! What's the reason? You will say: the opposition addresses itself to the masses and makes no demands. Way off the target, a colossal error! Remember, the opposition has its *elite* too, men and women attached with every fiber of their heart to their ideology. Also, great demands are made of them, not only of the elite, but of the masses as well, greater demands indeed, than those we educators make on ourselves.

What are the reasons for our helplessness? What's the underlying cause of this poor showing? Does it lie only in the educator?

## THE POWER OF SATAN

We must never forget that, by and large, modern man loves darkness more than he loves the light. If you want the key to understanding the present world situation, let me say: Don't bank without the banker! Don't forget, the **devil** is going from victory to victory in Europe today! Without diabolical intervention the present stunning victories of the opposition are simply inexplicable.

My mind goes back once more to my world travels. You can imagine how frequently, especially in the beginning - since I was one of the first to find his way out of Germany (after the war) the question was asked of me time and again by members of the hierarchy: "*How is it possible that a people as highly educated as the Germans could so completely fall under the power of the underworld and perpetrate the kind of atrocities that have come to light? Such a thing is simply unthinkable, especially for us Americans!*"

And the answer? I have given it in private conversations and public addresses, for example at the University of Montevideo and in Chile, on the subject "*The future of the Americas and Europe in the light of the present world crisis.*" Time and again I made the same assertion: "You cannot explain the things that have happened in Europe if you do not take into account that the devil has been unchained." And I have added: "If Almighty God permits the same thing to happen in America, then I guarantee you that the devastation here will be no less than in Europe."

After all, we have not come here just to listen to a few talks. We are motivated by a profound sense of responsibility for the future of our poor German nation and fatherland, yes, for the future of the whole world. We must take into account not only the very real existence of an evil **principle** in the world, but of a sinister **person**, the personified malice. Not only is the *mysterium iniquitatis* real (cf 2 Thes 2,7), but the person of the evil one who sits on the throne (cf Rev 13,2), the devil, the underworld, and these are presently unchained. We absolutely must take that into consideration.

Today, undoubtedly, man loves the darkness more than the light. I suggest that you ask yourself this question: "What must I do in order to break the diabolical influence - in the case of my school as well as my people?" There, on the other side, we see before us the great *Antidiabolicum*, the Blessed Mother of God, called by God to crush the devil's head. That's why we find today in ever widening Catholic circles a new emphasis on Mariology, on love and devotion to the Blessed Mother. What am I to do? We recall all the things the liturgy tells us in that respect on the subject of **Exorcism**. Why shouldn't we, as devout fathers and mothers have done in times past, use holy water and the private exorcism when we see those entrusted to us in peril, in peril from which we cannot deliver them? *Exurgat Deus . . .* (Arise, O Lord . . .) Yes, the living God shall arise and put all his enemies, especially the diabolical powers, to flight! You see, even the quiet faith in this phenomenon gives us a certain tranquillity and direction in our striving for self-sanctification.

## THE NEED FOR PRACTICAL FAITH IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE

A further cause for the lamentable cultural and spiritual conditions of our time lies in the fact that the man of today has a unique, pronounced **receptivity for secondary, not primary, values**. Secondary values are earthly, sensual values: power, pleasures, possessions. The primary values, God and the things pertaining to God, have been pushed into the background through the process of secularization which began in the late Middle Ages and has reached its climax in our times.

Here we must pause for a moment to put a finger on the weakness in our own position. We ourselves, the educators and shepherds, do not stand firmly enough and with both feet on the ground of the reality of the transcendent, supersensitive, supernatural and primary values. They are not **real** to us; they are too much **ideas**. Oh, how we feel that everywhere today! What is the root cause of this?

At fault is not merely the general secularization of our time, but also the nature of our education. The very root of the supernatural life, faith and the spirit of faith is sickly and infected, not infrequently even among those who can speak with religious fervor and enthusiasm about faith and religion. God and the things of God belong too much to the realm of ideas. God no longer stands before us as a living person but merely as an abstract idea. Perhaps one generation can stand this for a time. In Catholic circles we delight in speaking about the transcendence of God. But in altogether too many cases the transcendent God has become so transcendent to us that he has lost all connection with life. You see, God's imminence, or more correctly speaking, the whole theological edifice of our faith, the entire organism of our faith, enters our life by means of a **practical faith in Divine Providence**. Anyone who fails to teach this practical belief in Divine Providence and the immanence of God repeatedly contributes to making the root of the tree more sickly all the time. One of the three messages of Schoenstatt is the message of practical faith in Divine Providence! We must make this belief in Divine Providence a central part of our life!

Our question must be: How does the God of Life enter my life? To shift from one possible situation to another, pointing out the presence of the transcendent God here and there, in the Blessed Sacrament, within the human heart all this may be perfectly acceptable and useful but the cardinal point of modern life, the deepest test of our religion, our faith, must be the practical belief in Divine Providence. Through it alone can we recover our lost faculty for the primary values. The practical faith in God's Providence continually activates the will, the heart, the emotions.

I believe you should hear these things not merely as one assertion alongside others. They go to the heart of the matter. Hence cultivate the spirit of faith: "Faith is the root and foundation of all holiness" (Council of Trent). Cultivation, most careful cultivation of the spirit of faith, that is, of a practical belief in Divine Providence down to the smallest details of everyday life, must be the favorite topic of my sermons, of my personal counseling and in the classroom. Eventually I can help the most cooperative of my pupils to ascend from God's immanence also to his transcendence. Transcendence and immanence, however, will always beautifully complement each other in the proper proportion.

### **THE NEED TO CALL FOR SACRIFICE AND IDEALS**

Now a third point also becomes evident. Where the spirit of faith is again at work, opening and forming in us the organ for the ultimate, transcendent, supernatural values, we may take it for granted that the spirit of faith will also press on toward the spirit of sacrifice and practical deeds of **heroism**. I have already pointed out that the opposition is making demands, indeed, heroic demands. And we don't have the courage to make demands!

Not only does the opposition make these demands, but it actually reaches with an enormous dynamism into the lives of modern men. It is called **the dynamics of the personal achievement**. We must view all these things in the larger perspective. In itself the opposition is a fly-by-night. It has no great tradition. How about us? We can go back and point to martyrs, to great personalities in God's kingdom on earth, to the church, to men brilliant in mind and heart. The opposition cannot do that. And yet it attracts the masses. You will say that the whip stands behind it. That is not completely true; something else besides stands behind it, the dynamics of action sturdy, personally initiated action. Do you know what that means? Don't you think that in that aspect we are all weaklings? Don't you think that not only do we make too few demands on our following, but that we actually don't take seriously enough the **dynamics of the supernatural**, of religion, affecting our personal lives?

We are familiar with the classical word about the educator. What you **are**, not what you **say**, is the foremost educational factor today. Who still believes the spoken word today? There is no reliable word left, except it be uttered by him who actually tries to live it. The only Bible modern man still

reads is the reliable, earnest life of the Christian. Religion is hanging in the clouds. It doesn't change people. And because we are changed too little, they no longer believe our words. The educated educator! Dynamism! If we join both together, on the one hand the tradition of centuries, on the other, the power of grace, the power of faith which enables us to despise all earthly things, it will not be long until we shall sweep along with us our youth, a youth so hard to appeal to and one that has largely lost its sense for higher things.

Father Lombardi has declared at the end of his journey: German youth is still noble and receptive, but who is going to impart to it the ideals it needs?

### THE NEED TO BE GOD'S INSTRUMENTS

**We must embody these ideals even more powerfully than we have in the past.** Or do we say that the religious renewal of the world is something "distant" and "lost" in the supernatural? Of course, as educators we feel ourselves too weak. *Deo gratias!* Let me later sing the praises of this kind of humility, which deems itself helpless and weak in the face of the present world situation. But don't forget: Almighty God chooses the weak, not in spite of but **because** of their weakness! And who doesn't feel weak today? The educator, physically tired, helpless in the face of failures, how else could he feel? Yet, what does the Lord say? "*God has chosen the weak in order to confound the strong*" (1 Cor 1, 27). Who is strong? The opposition is strong today. What has the Lord promised? "*Lepers shall be cleansed... the dead shall rise again*" (Mt 11, 8). True, we rationalize and say: "That was only meant for the apostles." But what is the deepest meaning of it? With the weak God wants to do great things, extraordinarily great things. What does he demand in return? The courageous leap into the dark, the deathleap of faith, hope, and love, the death-leap of the heart, the will, and emotions. I have to reach out for this, and God will do great things through me. There is an element of divine carefreeness in this attitude. If I may put it this way: my greatest care shall be to be endlessly carefree! Bold lines of action I shall visualize and then throw myself into the arms of God and let him take care of the outcome. He does wish to rescue the modern world.

This is the **dynamism** that is strongly at work in the enemy camp. We may have congenial, popular orators, but where are the men and women, the educators that make an effort to live what they teach?

### THE IRRATIONAL PREAMBLES OF FAITH

Should you be successful in exalting apologetic demands of the present age, you will find it a great help to refer to what we used to call *Praeambula fidei rationabilia*, i.e. Rational preambles of faith. Everything there revolves around intellectual processes. Please don't forget now, we are today stepping out of the age of rationalism into an age of topsy-turvy irrationalism. It used to be this way: If I wanted to transmit the faith to others, for example, to pagans, I had to resort to certain preliminary arguments, such as those proving the existence of God, God's intervention in the affairs of men, the founding of the true Church, etc... All this had to be historically demonstrated. These were the preliminary arguments!

However, this is no longer sufficient. The **complete** man, the entire man not just the intellect - must be led into faith. Hence a new phrase is being coined, the *praeambula fidei irrationabilia*, i.e. the irrational, non-argumentative preambles of faith. In other words, side by side with preliminary rational conclusions, we also have **preliminary living experiences**. Psychology speaks of them today. It inquires into previous experiences, not just intellectual persuasions, for my whole emotional life, my entire personality must be imbued by my faith. Today the whole man needs to be drawn into this business of religion, even the subconscious man. Three kinds of *praeambula fidei irrationabilia* must be distinguished:

*Praeambula fidei ascetica* (previous ascetical experiences)

*Praeambula fidei psychologica* (previous psychological experiences)

*Praeambula fidei experimentalia* (previous practical experiences)

**Previous ascetical experiences** include the experiences of moral weakness and religious dryness. They create the atmosphere for the sense of dependency on God. The man who does not feel his helplessness in the face of the mystery of eternity and in the face of the present world situation, does not have the roots, personally and emotionally speaking, out of which the things of religion can easily grow.

**Previous psychological experiences**, too, create valuable starting points for religion. Parents and teachers should therefore carefully foster, to the extent possible, even in immature children, an organ for purity, truthfulness and reverence. Such children will then also be open for *God's* purity, truthfulness and reverence.

**Previous practical experiences** are obtained when the educator practices what he preaches. When educators live their convictions, their followers cheerfully adopt them. Lives lived, the dynamics of daily living, have a much greater impact today than any amount of spoken words.

I believe I have given to you now one of the two answers, that of juxtaposition. It would be worthwhile to elaborate on this for a time because we are dealing here with ideas that are basic, ideas we may not lose sight of, because they must now and for the rest of our lives direct our thinking. If as Catholic educators and shepherds we cannot recapture a supernatural daring, if we do not relearn to cast ourselves into the arms of God and to make bold demands on ourselves, on heart, mind and will, even on our body, we shall look for success in vain. God expects of us enlightened concern, so that divine carefreeness may lead to victory all down the line.

## **b. ANALYSIS: APOSTASY MEANS DECAY**

Let me give you a second answer, one that probes even deeper. Our comparison will be followed by a brief **analysis**, based on basic principles, of the present world situation. Let me begin with two observations which essentially amount to the same thing. The **first observation** stems from St. Augustine, and we use it merely as a spring-board for a better understanding of the second. Augustine says: "*Haec est voluntas Dei ut omnis inordinatus animus sibi ipse sit poena!*" "This is the will of God, that every disorderly spirit becomes its own punishment." Disorderly is every spirit which has fallen out of step with the objective order of being and of life. A spirit, a creature, a human society that is disorderly, practically speaking, already lives in hell. That is the present situation. I mentioned this as we began to evaluate the situation. Why is the world lying prostrate on the ground with its equilibrium out of whack? Because man has lost his center of gravity. This center of gravity is the living God and the objective order of being dwelling in Him and emanating from Him into the world and the history of mankind, the *Lex Aeterna*. "*Pax tranquillitas ordinis!*" (Peace is the tranquillity of order), says St. Augustine. Today's world is without peace; the man of today bears the sign of Cain, the flight from God, continuously on his forehead (cf Gen 4,15). Discontent is his characteristic mark. Because modern man will not be integrated into the objective order of all creation, because he has parted company with the living God, with the objective order of existence and morality, confusion reigns supreme!

The **second observation: Apostasy means "decay."** We who wish to become masters of self-education really should, in order to master and penetrate the world situation, dwell at great length on this law. Apostasy means decay! What is meant is the apostasy from God, from the God-ordained and God-impregnated order of existence, morality, and life. Apostasy means decay! Decay of human resources and atomization of human society. Because of the apostasy from God we also find the decay of the basic relationships between man and man. As educators we should re-orient ourselves again and again on the experiences that life teaches us. I think, for example, of our university students, how

little ontological philosophy they really know! The gospel that is preached there is not a gospel based on the order of being, hence is not "Good News."

Today the message of existentialism philosophy proposed to help man master life. It may save him momentarily from the confusion and onrush of the incoming tides. However, it is too little oriented on the objective order of being and the law *ordo essendi est ordo agendi* (the order of being is the norm for order of action). Actions must be based on the objective nature of things.

For example, if I wish to know how to educate my children, the boys and the girls, I must first study the objective structure of their being. God has built into them incarnate divine thoughts and wishes. I must be willing to learn how to see and judge this objective order. In the end it is the objective order which gives me a clear answer as to what I must do. Results will not always fall into my lap in a matter of days, but I will harvest them in the long run; I shall be as victorious as God himself so long as I orient myself on His objective order. It is not necessary that success come my way immediately and visibly. God will give success when it pleases Him.

### **THE PRINCIPLES OF APOSTASY**

Apostasy means decay! Three basic principles must be considered here.

**First Principle: Partial apostasy** from God and his objective order **means partial decay**. To those of you who will want to set out on your own, I especially recommend that you dwell on this point for a long time and do some extra studying.

**Second Principle: Total apostasy means total decay!**

**Third Principle: Total apostasy also means total decay with a purpose.**

Let's look first at the second principle of our analysis. Complete decay is the situation we have before us on all sides, total decay in human society, total decay also in man, in his individual strata.

If you wish to restudy the correctness of this law historically, I suggest that you read Leo XIII. It was his strong suit to base all his ideas, also his reform plans for human society, on the objective natural law. In his day the destructive forces were not as powerful as they are today. But they had definitely deserted the natural law. Leo XIII felt certain that the development was leading to the abyss and that rescue can come only when society returns to the natural law.

If you will allow me to characterize the conformist spirit of the world we live in, I might cite the following words. They come from Hettinger: Humanity without religion becomes brutality and, finally we may add, bestiality. Humanity without religion! Do you understand now what this struggle for a pure and ethically noble human race implies? The center of gravity, God, has been taken away! Humanity without religion degenerates into brutality! Man, who no longer lives by the objective natural law, will sink to the level of a brute. And brutality becomes bestiality. There you have the situation of modern man as we have experienced it in concentration camps and as we will experience it in even worse forms in the immediate future. Apostasy means decay! Man has abandoned wellsprings of living water and exchanged them for a self-made cistern.

Other terminology describes the same condition:

*homo sapiens* becomes *homo faber* (worker)

*homo faber* becomes *homo lupus* (wolf)

*homo lupus* becomes *homo diabolicus* (slave of Satan)

The Middle Ages called man *homo sapiens*; it saw in him the wise man, open for and directed

towards God. Today the *homo sapiens* has become the *homo faber*. He is the everlasting worker who no longer has time for God. He no longer wants to have anything to do with God; he is always rummaging in earthly things. Work, work, work! He is the worker, the artist, who wants to create a new world without God. And now this *homo faber* has degenerated into the *homo lupus*, the wolf. His predatory nature has come to the fore. Hence the lupine greed, teeth and cruelty!

Although this is not universally true, we must bear in mind that the whole development moves in this direction. Which brings to mind the words of Nietzsche: "God is dead. And it is you and I that have murdered him!" Apostasy from God! Later on he added: "At midnight modern man stealthily makes his way to the grave of the God he has murdered." During a lucid interval Nietzsche asked the grave question: "What did we do when we unchained the earth from the sun?" To where does the earth tumble now? Is it not teetering at the brink of the abyss, and must we not fear that we will plunge overnight into the pit of nihilism?

There you have the great outline, the great thesis: Separation from God means disintegration, total separation, total disintegration. And if we may pause here for a moment to apply our categories to our youth, male, but especially female, what does the disintegration look like all down the line? That's the point where we must descend to the practical life in order to apply the general pedagogical situations to the concrete situation with which we are presently concerned.

#### **FOURTH TALK: THE CONSEQUENCES OF MODERN MAN'S DECAY**

The grave educational problems that have brought us here are rooted in an extraordinary pedagogical plight and helplessness which springs from an impenetrable, muddled and confused cultural and spiritual world situation. In order to find our way out of the labyrinth, to come from darkness into the light, it is our task to try to obtain a thorough understanding of the cultural and spiritual world situation. We are using a double approach; we have started by trying to survey the complete picture, then we will go into more of the details.

The complete picture, as we have seen it, is sad, onerous and discouraging, doubly so when we cast a glance at **the causes** which have produced it. Its ultimate cause, as we have seen, can be reduced to the principle: Apostasy means decay.

Before we return to the third principle, we must take another look at the second. We know the general outline of what **total decay** looks like. So far we have been dealing more with principles, with theories.

#### **APOSTASY-DECAY AND THE NEW YOUTH**

We may be anxious now to see them **applied to the object of education beginning with the youth.**

Now, seen in the light and supported by our experiences and personal observations, **what do the symptoms of decay in modern man look like?** The question is of importance, not only because we are dealing with living human beings, but for still another reason. As I have said before, what I am describing is not generally valid at present but a preview of things to come, with the current trend leading strongly in this direction. For this reason, if for no other, the question presses itself upon us: At what stage of this decline do we find ourselves today? How far has the situation progressed? Are we still far removed from the last stage or very close to it?

Anyone giving his view on the subject admittedly finds himself in the awkward position of being able to speak from his own limited store of observations and experiences. And you know how great is the variety of souls we must consider. It makes a vast difference whether I am a teacher and educator in Oldenburg or in the Rhineland. Not only are there different types of people, but even the currents of the times vary greatly. Here too, in dealing with the practical description and concrete presentation, we must say again and again: What we are trying to convey **approximates** the true state of affairs and is largely meant to serve as a stimulant for each of us to make his own observations and give his own accounting for it. Having said this, I wish to point out a few characteristic traits of our present day youth.

#### **FIRST TRAIT: RESTLESSNESS**

**First trait: a terrible restlessness.** We all very well understand this, for it is the very hallmark of adolescence. Unless appearances completely deceive us, all mankind is passing through a period of adolescence today. And if the hallmark of adolescence is a permeating restlessness affecting both body and soul, a confusion of personal aims and purposes, then we can well understand the restlessness of our time.

Modern man - so the experts, especially in the medical field tell us - matures early in body and late in soul. Not only those educating girls, but all educators of youth should remember that. Physical maturity arrives much earlier than it did in past decades, in boys as well as in girls. But spiritual maturity remains extraordinarily late in coming. What does this mean? It takes an extraordinarily long time for our young people to reach spiritual maturity. The end of the process used to be

somewhere between the ages of 18 and 22. When may we expect spiritual maturity today? Can we expect it at all? You must not overlook the well-founded view that all mankind finds itself today in the midst of an unprecedented period of spiritual adolescence. What does that imply as far as the individual is concerned? This must be weighed carefully: How many emotional shocks has mankind had to go through today? Mentally and spiritually these impressions have been digested too little or not at all.

I remember very distinctly when I was in the concentration camp trying to imagine what the outside world was going through. I could picture a great spiritual confusion, as was evidenced by the faces of those around me. It could not be otherwise. After all, man is not made of iron and steel. Because of the dreadful convulsions of the years gone by, we understand the strange and variegated unrest of modern man. Shouldn't we educators take that into consideration when we try to evaluate and make our demands on youth?

### **SECOND TRAIT: CRITICAL SPIRIT**

A **second trait** goes with the first: an extraordinarily **critical spirit**. We could not expect this to be any different either. Think of everything our youth has put its faith in, in recent years, and how bitterly it has been disappointed! If we have a clear picture of the situation, we must wonder how our youth can have any faith left - faith in living men and women, faith in those of us who stand before them as their authority.

Moreover, during the last century parental authority has been on the decline. Children were stirred up against their parents and indoctrinated with revolutionary ideas. Parents have had to devote more and more time to their jobs away from home. Consequently, the deepest meaning of authority has not been realized.

Authority comes from *auctor esse*, to be the author. When, for example, do I become the *auctor* of a faithful following? If, through my whole God-imbued and inspired being, I lead them through me to the world beyond. Lack of this kind of *auctor-itas*, author-ity, has caused the critical attitude. We find this lack wherever we go. This nagging tendency is simply a contemporary disease that can be found even in religious houses, new and old.

### **THIRD TRAIT: INABILITY TO FORM JUDGMENTS**

To this are added the traits of the "man of the silver screen," who reacts only to sensual impressions and can neither think nor form judgments on his own. Anyone, therefore, who steps out into the public today, who dares to stick his neck out, who is different and thinks differently from the rest, must expect to be jumped on and shot at from all sides. Still, he must remain calm. Such attacks are really of little consequence. Those that hate me today may embrace me tomorrow. For the generation being raised today is a generation bereft of character. Their words are not to be taken seriously, whether of love or hatred. It is a strange phenomenon of our time: The **inability to form judgments**.

It used to be different. Take, if you will, our parents and grandparents who were modest enough to say: In my trade I am the expert carpenter or shoemaker. In other fields we follow other experts. The priest is an expert in religion. Today we know everything, and yet we know nothing. (This new breed) cannot formulate a clear judgment. Indeed, they are no longer able to arrive at a clear, independent conclusion. And, strangely enough, this is true more often than not even in philosophically trained circles, with men whose scientifically exact training ought to make them capable of clear reasoning. How often they are, in things pertaining to practical life and the evaluation of life, absolutely incapable of forming their own judgments! Do you realize what this means? Anyone who doesn't take this into account will be unhappy; anyone oblivious to this will only too readily follow public opinion, defer to the judgment of the masses, and leave his flag to be

whipped by the wind. Who is a man of true character? The man who has a clear goal and resolutely pursues it, who doesn't care whether bricks are hurled at him and wound him. It's immaterial to him! The man who wants to accomplish a task today must be aware of who modern man really is and expect his incessant harping.

Indeed, if we examine things more closely, we will find ourselves doing the same thing. How frequently we ourselves judge and react on the basis of mere impressions, if for no other reason than because some person of power and influence has made a sweeping statement.

Today's youth faithfully reflects the impact of the silver screen. To judge them it is necessary to regard the dynamics of modern man. The more passionate the voice—recall the events of recent years—the more people believe it. It's not the contents, but the spirit that moves the masses. Modern earthbound man wants to be addressed emotionally and sensationally. Who wins the masses today? The man with the forceful voice, who resorts to all the trappings of modern sensationalism. With what results? Oh, a brief moment of attention, a few fleeting impressions; that's all.

At this point we would do well to take another look at the situation and examine the impact of radio and television in the formation of our youth. This problem deserves a special study. Because all these things exercise a powerful appeal on sensual man, anyone desiring to steer clear of the reefs and shoals of our time, must impose on himself every possible restraint and keep, as far as possible, his young people from them. We must once again raise up a generation capable of thinking and judging for themselves.

Is not the tendency in sensuous man to criticize and nag the very hallmark of the years of puberty and immaturity? And if it is true that mankind today is again in a condition of adolescence, why should we wonder?

#### **FOURTH TRAIT: EXTREME MISTRUST**

**The fourth trait: Extreme mistrust.** Whom can you still trust and confide in? Is this not even true in our own ranks? Someone can come to me with the most pious expression in the world and I, knowing religion can also be exploited, suspect him of being out to hoodwink me! Mistrust! How much negativism has come our way these past few years? Add to this that modern man has become totally rootless and wavers to and fro, and you will understand where this terrible lack of trust comes from; then you will also understand how in the end, that the one who will always be victorious is the one who invokes clear principles, who looks neither right nor left, but inexorably goes his own way, regardless of whether success or failure mark his path. For a while modern man will bow to the educator who plays both sides of the game, but it won't be long before he seeks shelter with a man who is anchored in the eternal, the man of God. Here we have seen four traits characteristic of modern man, especially modern youth.

#### **OTHER TRAITS:**

If now you dig deeper you will find that souls of that type are suffering from an emptiness that is simply endless. The emptiness of modern man! And how empty he is! And, because 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!

You see, that is also the reason why modern man is suffering 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! This is typical of adolescence, especially among girls.

It is no different in monasteries. In religious houses of men or women note the mania of comparison. Why? It's easy to understand. There is nothing in me that fills me. I do not possess myself, I am not possessed by God. And so 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 making comparisons, the highest with the lowest, and vice-versa.

The result of this is 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. We are not surprised. Apostasy means decay! There in a few strokes you have a picture of the moral decay of modern man and modern youth. And, because we are children of our time, we expect to find these phenomena to a greater or lesser degree in ourselves.

I wonder if you realize how far this cultural and spiritual disinterestedness has gone and how, in order to compensate for it, a frightening secularization of life is growing apace everywhere. Thus you have on one side the apostasy, or at least the alienation from God and from eternal laws and on the other side the unmistakable symptoms of decay I have outlined.

#### **APOSTASY-DECAY AND FEMINISM**

Because **girls and women** are inherently more tied to nature and emotion-bound and are extraordinarily receptive to the people around them, they are especially vulnerable to the heavy blows and the muddled and confusing tendencies of our time. As nations have noted from time immemorial, when a people are in decline, only by the religious instinct of its women can they still be saved. But once the woman is religiously disoriented and has cast religion aside, the process of decay hastens to its demise. If the words "Apostasy means decay" are true of all mankind, they are particularly true of womankind.

In order to characterize today's young women and, in fact, women in general, let me introduce three terms: Secularization, emancipation, and "hysterization."

#### **FIRST ASPECT: SECULARIZATION**

**Secularization** is naturalization. Leo XIII calls it the plague of laicism<sup>1</sup>. The woman of today is becoming more and more worldly and is increasingly losing her sense of the divine, the supernatural. Instead of expounding on theories, let us consult life. Educators without number declare again and again: The signs of spiritual and moral decay are much more prominent in today's girls than in today's boys. Countless educators must confess: In dealing with modern Catholic girls we are much more helpless than in dealing with Catholic boys. Do you understand why? I believe the reason is obvious. If apostasy from God means decay in general, it must affect woman with particular severity because of her structure.

#### **SECOND ASPECT: EMANCIPATION**

This secularization immediately results in a variegated **emancipation**. In times of complete confusion the diagnosis must be clear, but the dosage of application moderate. Emancipation! You see, the woman of today is not satisfied with just being man's equal. She is obsessed with being a

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Kentenich, *Hochschulkurs*, Study for Fr. Turowski, Dec. 1952, manuscript p. 22 (168), where he describes laicism as the violent separation of all areas of life from the God of revelation [JN 2002].

man! It is almost a foregone conclusion. Since she no longer has a scale of values of her own, she chooses man's scale of values in all things. Apostasy means decay! Because the great words, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1, 38) are no longer valued, they have been regressed into "Behold the handmaid of man!" And because, and to the extent that woman no longer wants to be the handmaid of the Lord, she sinks deeper and deeper into the slavery of man. In her search for emancipation she seeks deliverance from the moral laws. That is the strong tendency in emancipated modern woman. And here the word comes true: Once women part with God and the moral law, as Schiller says, "Women turn into hyenas."

Also at work is an emancipation from the basic idea of womanhood. We sense that on all sides. If we trace the ideal of womanhood historically through the last few decades, we find an extraordinarily strong identification with the ideal man, not only in Germany, but all over the world. I might add in passing that we see the same thing with regard to religious apathy. This more or less missing or dying feeling for everything religious is not only found in Christianity, but everywhere. This then is the complete picture, a strong downward pull, away from God and toward creation. It is no longer the personal God that stands in the center as the measure of all things, but **Man**.

Only a few years ago we heard the goal of a generation of warriors; it promoted the identification of woman's identity with that of man. There appeared a certain sickening phenomena, of which men were chiefly the cause. This was because men no longer wanted women who were so distorted by feminism and infected with the madness of becoming men. To this was added the greed of the totalitarian state eager to exploit all human resources, even women. Only a desperately few feminine groups still insisted on going back to the original, the metaphysical ideal of womanhood. And so we have before us the sorry picture of modern woman, the woman emancipated from any and all authority, especially parental authority.

What we have said about being overly critical must be multiplied many times over where modern feminists are concerned. They are critical to the extreme, emancipated from all authority. Who is still willing to serve today, who wants to obey? That, too, represents an emancipation from the original idea of woman.

And what is the original idea called? It is **Mary**. The Mother of God represents that ideal in ever valid form in her own personal ideal but also exemplifies it in her words and actions. "*Ecce ancilla domini!*" Behold the Handmaid of the Lord! (Lk 1, 38). Here we have the humble yet strong servant deeply attached to God! The eternal ideal of womanhood consists in giving away, giving away, giving away, for time and eternity. That's the way it was, and that's the way God meant every woman to be.

And the woman of today? How do the signs of decay manifest themselves here? Pleasure-seeking, loss of character, loss of religion! Not "give" but "take". The "I" stands in the center. Hence, away with the will to serve, with dirty work; away, too, and above all, with all domestic work; rather work in a factory, even if it is on the assembly line, just to be free after working hours and be able to enjoy the evenings! This explains the enormous craving for excitement, this superficiality all down the line, thoughtlessness, insecurity, helplessness.

### **THIRD ASPECT: HYSTERIZATION**

A final trait! The last stage in the emancipation of womanhood is **the hysterization of her nature**. If her identity, tied to nature and emotion-bound as it is, is loosed from its moorings, diametrical contradictions of frightening proportions will come to the fore. The emotional ups and downs are no longer of the ordinary variety which we all experience, but become extreme. Her heart, full of love today, is, under identical circumstances, filled with fearful hatred tomorrow. These oscillations of the emotional pendulum, these changes of mood, have their ultimate source in a boundless egotism.

And we want to be honest, for we are before the eyes of God, and we are among ourselves. Is it not true that we often find this phenomenon most strongly exhibited among so-called virginal souls who flee the world because they are afraid of the hardships of life, particularly the hardships of family life? Normally a noble woman is formed most strongly in the family circle where she has to endure suffering upon suffering, where she cannot forever ask: Is this good for my health; do I have to do this or that? Where are the valiant women of days past who served husband and child, and who were therefore able to check the brutality of man and the helplessness of the child?

There you have the picture of modern man in concrete form.

### **THE EDUCATION OF GIRLS**

Here we want to stop for another look at our **education of girls**. One of the normal elements in the education of girls used to be **preservation**. We still find that in extreme form in South America. How carefully girls are protected there!

The child is almost adored, treated like a little majesty. Then come the teen-age years and parents are no longer able to cope with their children. For the little majesty is everything . . . The little majesty is then turned over to a boarding school for her education. But who will be able to tame this little "queen"?

However, preservation alone is no longer enough today. Modern conditions demand a change of emphasis in the education of young women, even in our convents. Because life today is being shaken to its very foundations, the accent must be on **immunization** rather than preservation!

If we are only interested in preservation and no longer in immunization, what can we expect? Modern life demands an adjustment here. The tests of strength which the modern girl must withstand in the world are enormous. So it is that we are also responsible for providing a measure of preservation. This consists in standing shoulder to shoulder and in mutually inspiring and helping one another. To stand alone in today's battle of life is too much even for men, not to speak of women, whose natures are so much more susceptible. There, too, it is imperative to find the golden mean, whenever and wherever possible! Our education must lay greater stress on immunization.

To review what we have discussed, I believe that I have sufficiently demonstrated what is of importance to us here: Apostasy means decay! Having completed the dark picture, the time has now come to throw some light on the present world situation. It may be somewhat consoling to realize that what is true here is true all over the world, though that doesn't solve our problem. The question still remains: What is the deepest, ultimate, God-intended meaning of this manifold, if not entirely uniform, phenomenon of decay? The third answer is given by the third law: Total apostasy means a total decay with a purpose. To outline the meaning of this decay will be our next step.

## **FIFTH TALK**

### **THE PURPOSE OF DECAY: A NEW SHORE**

Are we not tired of this analysis of the signs of decay? We have dealt with them in general and described them in detail. Now the question arises: Is this meant to be the end of all good things which God Almighty has given man? Doesn't He, without whose will not even a hair falls from our heads, have the ability to lead mankind to the ideal condition for which he has created it in the first place? Man was conceived to be the natural and supernatural image of God. As king of creation he was to walk through the centuries and millennia. His call is to be, and remain, and increasingly become the crown of all creation.

Now what forms does the decay of this proud ideal take on? Is modern man, as we see him before us, languishing in acute spiritual and moral anemia, capable of striving for this ideal at all? What is God's intention with regard to man, and what does Almighty God intend to do with the human race?

What has God not already done! What pains has he taken on behalf of his vineyard! Hasn't he sent sunshine and rain; hasn't he loosened the soil around the vine and then tamped it down again? And now this terrible disappointment! The vine, instead of bringing forth magnificent fruit, is infested with insects. What shall become of the vine? Should it be cut out, root and all? It has become terribly dry! Shall it be cast in the fire? (cf Jn 15, 6).

#### **B. THE MEANING OF DECAY IN THE PLAN OF DIVINE PROVIDENCE**

Once again: Not even one hair shall fall from our heads without being incorporated into the plan of eternal wisdom. What, then is **the deeper meaning of these frightening signs of decay?** What does God want? Surely, more than one little hair has fallen! God knows how to feed the birds of the air and watch over the lilies of the field. Will he not protect and sustain his natural and supernatural image in still more prominent fashion? Is the meaning of the signs of decay total collapse - the end of the world and of mankind?

The French thinker Demester, in his masterful way of putting thoughts into words, has left us this literary gem: "When God wipes out something from the chalkboard with his eraser, it is to write something new." May we add to it? If it appears that God's wish today is to almost completely wipe out the writing on the board of time with powerful strokes of his eraser, he must obviously want to write on it something tremendously new and important. Hence the question: What will this "something new" be? What will come forth from chaos, what will emerge slowly from the ashes? God wishes to free man from the old shore and pilot him to a new shore.

#### **"LION'S CLAWS"**

What does this new shore look like, this light, this new world, the new frontier toward which Almighty God wishes to lead the world and all mankind?

After the death of Paschal, a handwritten sheet of paper was passed around at a social gathering in Paris. It went from hand to hand with the question: Whose writing is this? The answer was not slow in coming: it could only be Paschal's, for Paschal writes with lion's claws! Shouldn't we expect them again? Why do I tell you this? Don't we all sense the "lion's claws"? Doesn't it seem as if God himself is reaching into the history of the world today with lion's claws? Doesn't it look as if he wished to completely destroy all that is dark and half-hearted in order to replace it with something new and surging and powerful, the result of slow, deliberate growth, to be sure?

We are standing at the end of a critical period of world history which had its beginning around the

**"THE MOST BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCE OF MY PRIESTLY LIFE"**  
by Fr. Francis Cegiělka, SAC

I met Father Kentenich on the *'Lagerstrasse'*, the main street of the camp in Dachau. I greeted him with the words, "This is the most beautiful experience of my priestly life to see you here in Dachau." ( . . . . )

The concentration camp Dachau was considered the saddest place of human life, a place of suffering and deep trial. Then Fr. Kentenich was brought into this earthly hell and he became the strength, the source and the angel of consolation, a messenger of God to help those who suffered under the burden of the Nazi's exterminating system. In the saddest experience of life, the presence of our Father and Founder in Dachau was the most consoling spiritual experience. ( . . . . )

In a conversation with Fr. Kentenich I found an explanation of his resistance to famine.

I asked our Father, "How can you be satisfied with the little portion of bread we receive?" He answered, "I really do not need so much food, for my soul and heart are at peace, united with God."

When the soul is uplifted it influences also the needs of the body; the soul strengthens the body. The concentration on the divine brings much joy to human hearts; the joy and peace of the human heart overcomes the tendencies of our emotional system, of all our appetites, and consequently also the craving for bread. If man does not enjoy the inner peace of heart he burns much organic energy in his system and thus needs abundant fuel for his daily life.

Psychology confirms this fact also: Peaceful men enjoying the spiritual equilibrium do not need as much food as people who lack this tranquility of mind. The body is dependent on the soul and enjoys the benefits of inner peace of soul and heart. ( . . . . )

The greatest suffering for all of us was not so much the famine as the systematic crushing of our human dignity. We were considered and treated merely as numbers and not as human beings. Our Father and Founder not only preached about the great dignity of the children of God but he was also filled with this great truth. Conscious of his own great dignity as child of God, he reacted differently than we did to the cutting methods of the Nazis.

He did not accept the crushing system in the same negative way as most of the prisoners. He did not seem to suffer when he was offended; the blows of the others did not seem to impress him as deeply as they influenced the people who consider the opinion of others the basis of their dignity. Fr. Kentenich was never motivated from without, but from within, following his conscience. We have seen in our father and founder the great masterpiece of our MTA, for he confessed often times: "Whatever I am and have, whatever I possess is a gift of our MTA." ( . . . . )

Following the philosophical principle: the order of being is the order of acting, our father and founder had accepted the sufferings in Dachau as a consequence of his priestly vocation. A priest especially must become another Christ; he needs suffering and a cross. He cannot prolong the mission of the crucified Lord if he is not nailed to the cross in this form or in another. We cannot contribute to the triumph of the Church without suffering. Suffering is a sign of divine predilection and a promise of divine blessing for all our activities, a pledge of our triumph and the triumph of the Church.

Fr. Kentenich received the strength for his daily life and the love of the cross from the Covenant of Love. It became also for us the foundation of strength, hope and confidence.

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year 1500. What has grown up and gathered momentum in the years since is now running its last lap and is in its death throes. A new world stands before us, once more projected into the centuries by the Almighty. What does the new shore look like that is almost within sight? Who would venture to give an unequivocal answer to this question? Don't you see that we are walking here on virgin soil? We are between two shores; we must leave the old one behind. Undoubtedly God wants it that way - therefore he writes with lion's claws. He wants to tear us loose from the old shore and lead us to the new shore. What does the new shore look like? Who knows? There you see our total helplessness from another point of view.

### **WHAT WILL THE NEW SHORE LOOK LIKE?**

Now you understand why even noble educators who have remained true to their great basic principles,

who live in and out of God, are searching and feeling their way through the gloom. Modern mankind is constantly searching! What will the new world, the new human society look like? What will be its face?

Not so long ago at a university convocation, an American drew a comparison between German and American Catholic piety. He stressed the following difference: "You Germans cling desperately to what is old, and you have neither the time nor the ability to orient yourselves to what is new and coming!" That may be partially true; on the other hand, it signals a healthy outlook on life, showing that we Catholics never completely break with the old tradition. Loyalty to tradition is and always will be the hallmark of a true Catholic. And he who wants to reach the new shore may not ignore tradition. Who is there to give us a clear motto today? Mark well what Pius XII points out to us over and over again: Hold on to the old, the eternal, but also look ahead to the new.

I still recall vividly what a bishop told me recently: "I permit anything in my diocese that is good." Behind this you detect a helplessness on how to reach the new shore. Once more we ask the question: Where does Almighty God wish to lead us? What is the meaning of all these cataclysmic events God permits and ordains in our days? Who would venture to give a categorical answer to this question? An approximately clear answer you may expect today only from a **metaphysician** and **prophet**.

## 1. THE METAPHYSICIAN'S ANSWER

What does the **metaphysician** tell us? *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. (The order of being is the order of action.) *Operatio sequitur esse*. (Actions follow from being.) The objective order in creation is eternal, just as God is eternal. If ever we moderns needed metaphysically gifted leaders, both among the clergy and the laity, it is now. We can no longer operate on mere religious instinct. The metaphysician always tries to clarify the objective ontological structure behind every process of life, every situation, and every created being. Then he knows, and is convinced, that within this order of creation, this ontological structure - let me express this philosophically - we may speak of an *universale formale* and a *universale materiale*, that is, a divine original-idea, a basic divine idea, that is built into the ontological order and which is as eternal as God. That is why the objective order of being always asserts itself sooner or later. Today we witness the blasphemous attempt to stage an ontological revolt. Not revolt, but loyalty to the basic objective order of being, must be our aim.

Modern man is groping for a momentary solution, for a way out of the confusion, but he no longer has the capacity to penetrate to the foundations of truth. The metaphysician is right in saying: All created things are incarnate thoughts of God, and incarnate wishes of God as well. What does the thought of God for our time look like? Shall I go into details? If I do so, it is only to show what direction the structure of our thinking must take if we are to slowly open up a new road into the future and gain a somewhat sure footing in a time when everything is in tumult.

### a. THE NEW COMMUNITY

What does God's idea, which is built into **the essential structure of human society** look like? That much we sense: At the other shore are community forms distinct from those we had yesterday. The metaphysical educator asks in the first place: What is the essence of community life? it is:

living in one another,  
living with one another,  
living for one another.

He then proceeds to carefully cultivate this threefold spiritual attitude, this living in, with, and for one another, permitting it to assume concrete forms as time goes on. In this way Schoenstatt has emerged with all its different forms of community life. And you will see later that the forms that have thus evolved anticipate future developments. The communities on the other shore will be something like it.

With respect to old community forms, one should not approach them with the desire to demolish them. That would be radically wrong, for they, too, have a mission to perform, one that is not limited to a given time but is timeless. What good will it do to take away their distinctive garb and norm of life and modernize them? It means taking away their basic strength. These things have a significance that is beyond time. They must hold on to their particular forms but reconnect them to their original meaning and purpose. This is reform of human society from the standpoint of metaphysics.

## **b. BODY CULTURE**

Take, if you will, the modern tendency that is spreading far and wide, known as **body culture**; take the relationship between the sexes. Don't you feel the movement of the pendulum from one extreme to another? Everything is boiling. We moderns want to be "up to date". So, of course, the modern girl must follow the American fashions. Germany is an especially favorite field of experimentation for eastern and western ideologies. Not only militarily, but also ideologically, they are trying to win Germany to their side. What to do about it? Be on guard and imitate nothing! Penetrate the depths! See things in their proper context!

Body Culture! What is the meaning of the body? How must it be viewed from a metaphysical standpoint? Today **Body Culture** has become a **Body Cult**. It has even penetrated deeply into religious communities. Is the meaning of the body only defined by figure, beauty and health? And what of the basic ontological and moral laws being violated in the process? *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. The order of being is the norm for the order of action! We must study the meaning of the body. This meaning, especially of the feminine body, cannot be defined as being an object of lust for the opposite sex! The meaning of the body is to be an instrument of the soul! It stands at the service of the soul, is the soul's partner, is in a certain sense its equal. The body is the dwelling place of a soul endowed with grace, hence the temple of the Triune God.

Please understand what I am trying to say: Seeing clearly means penetrating to the deepest truths. It means remaining calm when others are up in arms. Surely, a young woman might say, if I don't go along with everything, if I don't drink with them and dance with them, I am finished; I won't get a job and I won't get a man! What can we conclude from this? We must see to it that a new generation arises and stands shoulder to shoulder, that a new world be created, that marriages be entered into, inspired not by a new, but by the age-old ideology. You must think these thoughts through and with their help work out your own position and the answers for yourself and others.

Certainly you can adapt yourself reasonably here and there. God's basic structure of creation admits to a variety of forms. The ideal man subordinates his life to the objective order of creation down to the smallest detail.

## **c. METAPHYSICAL THINKING**

Let us return in this context to the question of the education of girls. What does it mean to be a girl? What basic idea does God have of a girl? We are familiar with the benchmarks which have given us orientation over the years: All soul, all surrender, all purity! From there our outlook on clothing, on modesty, on self-discipline take their orientation as do on the ideal of virginity and the relationship between the sexes. These are eternal laws, based on the eternal thoughts of God. *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi!*

You understand now why the metaphysical thinker can to a certain extent answer the question: What will it be like on the other shore? To put it another way: We must learn the art of discerning God's original idea from the underlying essential structures and existing forms, then proclaim it and wait

for new forms to emerge, or- to the extent we are convinced of their continued merit - to cling to the old and proven forms. We may be sure that we will triumph in the end, even if the only victory is that the soul becomes open and receptive for the divine.

Think of all the attempts that have been made along these lines. Think of the various **forms of parish societies** and what has happened to them in our own country! Immediately following the First World War the word went out: Everything must be granted by the dioceses. Not long after that we heard the exact opposite proclaimed. Any calm and thoughtful observer had to admit that this was bound to fail. After all, the underlying structure of our age requires a strong centralization. The same must be said of any **clerical movements** today. There are no longer any Chinese walls. It is easier to understand why men must come to the defense of the old isolation. Yes, priests and lay people should be organized on a diocesan level, but since the dioceses themselves constitute part of an organism, their efforts must be super-diocesan at the same time. The reason? The trend towards internationalism is sweeping the world. It is therefore much better to have a central agency which filters spiritual currents. It is similar with parish youth organizations. They are short-lived unless they take into account the underlying structure of a parish community.

It is apparent that these things will tomorrow, or the day after tomorrow, collapse. Many, many things run themselves dry. Apostasy from the order of being always means decay. Hence the man who has a clear line to follow remains independent of many pitfalls in the chaos of today.

In striving for our goal, we must therefore orient ourselves again and again on the objective order of being. Therefore I am right in repeating: In the confusion of our age the metaphysically orientated shepherd and educator can be for us the signpost to the new shore which is undoubtedly intended by God.

## 2. THE PROPHET'S ANSWER

There is one other source to whom we can turn for solutions to this dilemma, and that is the **prophetic educator**. Please don't get the idea that by this I am referring to someone who is constantly having visions. Rather, I mean a shepherd and educator who is completely and entirely convinced of his mission, who is totally "gripped" by God, who from head to toe carries and embodies the divine in his person and knows how to apply it to his time.

It is not enough to live in union with God. We must be totally gripped by God. The same must be true of our mission in life. We must be completely sold on it! We live in a time when the world's destiny is being decided for centuries to come! God himself must effect the change. The source of our knowledge is the time in which we live. *Vox temporis, vox Dei*. The voice of the times is the voice of God! We must therefore be profoundly convinced of the significance of our age. Generations of centuries to come will be impacted by the distinctive character we leave imprinted on our time.

And what do such prophetic leader personalities have to tell us? What clues do they give us concerning the future? Why is the Almighty using his eraser to so boldly wipe the handwriting from the chalkboard of our time? What does he want to write there? Before us stands the modern image of Veronica, her veil dripping with blood. Almighty God wishes to imprint Christ's image on that veil, above all under the triple aspect of  
a heroic childlike spirit,  
an ideal, perfect community life, and  
a bold tendency to form oneself, strong desire to shape the world.

You see, anyone with a flair for ultimate connections should really pause here to examine and weigh: What is the meaning of all this? What does Almighty God wish to imprint on the Veronica image of our age, upon her veil dripping with blood?

## a. HEROIC CHILDLIKE SPIRIT

First, **heroic childlike spirit**. How do I know that? From the pulse of our time. God speaks to us through current events, through time. And what is the spirit of our age searching for? Just visit the enemy camp. There you find a concerted effort to cultivate the collectivistic man. Its aim is the primitive man who responds to only the most primitive needs of the body. That's why he is hurled into primitive situations. The environment forms the man; primitive environments form the primitive man who cannot manage his own life, who is dependent on others right and left. The primitive man is content when his primitive needs are satisfied; for a bowl of porridge he surrenders his right to liberty and the pursuit of the divine life within himself. And on the other hand you feel with what elemental power the scourge of the new world comes down on our shoulders and besieges us. Who can stand up to all that? To this we add the uncertainty: What will it be like tomorrow and the day after tomorrow? Who can give an unequivocal answer to that? Who can master this great uncertainty and insecurity in today's world? Only the ingeniously naive man, only the plain, simple child. Against the primitive man we must set up the naive man. To the profoundly religious man a childlike spirit is the practical answer to all questions.

Therein lies the mission of St. Theresa, the Little Flower. Not only has she showered a rain of roses upon the world, but she has a unique mission for the present day with her asceticism of "spiritual childhood."

This Spiritual Childhood, which we all need so badly, includes three elements: humility, trust, self-surrender.

**Heroic humility!** How much we need that today! Acknowledgment of our weakness is humility. Let's be honest enough to admit that today's humanity is spiritually sickly and the generation we are to educate is substantially, and in all its faculties, sickly. We must therefore train man and educate him to the recognition of his weakness, his littleness. It would be worth the effort to conduct a whole series of lectures on humility, the heroism of humility!

However, the heroism of humility needs to be supplemented by the **heroism of self-surrender**. Man must belong to someone. If he may not belong and does not want to belong to himself, then he must belong to the Eternal, Infinite Love.

Humility and self-surrender are supplemented, and the tension between the two is overcome by the **heroism of trust**. Heroic humility, heroic self-surrender, and heroic trust! But don't tell me now: "That's all fine and good, but how do I, as someone, who has to educate children, take the child, the object of my education, as the ideal of my personal striving and self-education?" Childlikeness, seen from the religious point of view, is not childishness, is primarily a feeling of being sheltered, but heroic self-surrender to the eternal God.

Heroic spiritual childhood strives for perfect self-surrender, for the surrender of the soul and body and all its faculties to the eternal, divine, heavenly Father. And when we as men speak of spiritual childhood, we merely wish to describe our basic relationship to the Eternal God. Spiritual childhood is the root of vigorous manhood, as it appears to man. Before God, a child, before men a man! Unless we learn to be small and helpless, before God a simple child, and grow in that childlike simplicity as we grow older, we shall never have the necessary strength to make a man's contribution to the welfare of humanity.

You must never forget that a bullet shatters hard surfaces. But when it strikes a soft surface, such as cotton, it can do no harm. It is the same way with the hardships of life! When these hardships find me deeply unite with

the Eternal God, I can hold my own. Recall, if you please, the enlightened word of Pestalozzi: "The greatest misfortune of our time is the lost sense of childlikeness, for it makes the operation of God's fatherly providence impossible."

This is how you must visualize God: Sweeping through the world, writing with lion's claws. He wishes to destroy not men, but human pride—particularly unenlightened pride! God's eternal desire to enrich others is boundless, but he must first remove the obstacles. Human pride must go! "The greatest misfortune of our time is the lost sense of childlikeness . . ." It is therefore the greatest good fortune of a community and an individual to recover this lost sense of childlikeness, for it makes the operation of divine fatherhood possible beyond all imagining.

The renewal of the world must be done by natural means. We must dare the death-leap into the outstretched arms of God. It is God who wishes to make use of us as his small instruments to create a new world. And we, as his little instruments, should offer and surrender ourselves to Him.

Hoelderlin tells us that the men of Sparta who are regarded in history as the ideal of robust manhood, will always remain fragmentary, unfinished, will never become sturdy specimens of manhood. Why? He who has never been totally a child can never be completely a man, can never attain the full maturity of manhood. Applying the words to our case: No one can be totally and completely a man, stand firm as a rock in the sea, unless he cast his roots deeper and deeper at the same time into the paternal heart of God.

Listen to another word from the Indian philosopher Tagore: "God wills that in holy wisdom we recapture our childhood!"

If you wish to know, therefore, what is the special feature in Christ's image that must be deeply imprinted upon our age, the answer is: heroic spiritual childhood!

## **b. PERFECT COMMUNITY**

A second answer: **Perfect community life!** What leads us to this conclusion? For an answer we have turned to the priest and educator who is completely gripped by his mission; he always looks toward God and seeks to determine God's wishes by orienting himself on conditions as he finds them at a given time. He finds the watchword verified: "Apostasy means decay!" How human societies have decayed! Released from the prison of individualism, man has passed on to the prison of collectivism. The different intellectual currents are mutually dependent. One extreme drives the other.

What is God's intention? What lines does he wish to etch into the face of our time? **A most perfect community spirit!** You see, if we want to ready ourselves and our youth for the new age, if we want the natural family to be prepared for it, we must carefully cultivate the spirit of "togetherness," of living in, with, and for one another. To feel responsible for each other! Responsible for the family table! These are hard words which we must again impress on ourselves: The family table, as our elders tell us, is not a table of pleasure, but of sacrifice. Kolping says: "The family is the hearth of a blazing love that aids and bears with one another." The perfect community reflects the words of St. Paul: "*Help bear one another's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ.*" (Gal 6,2)

## **c. DESIRE TO FORM ONESELF AND SHAPE THE WORLD**

Another line which shall be etched into the face of the world of tomorrow is this: **a strong desire for forming self and shaping the world.**

The source from which we discern God's intention is again found in the present world situation. In his own time the Lord has recalled this to mind by saying: "*You know how to read the features of earth*

*and sky; how is it you do not read the signs of the times? And why do you not look into your own conscience to decide what is the right thing to do?" (Lk 12, 56) Vox temporis, vox Dei!* The voice of our time is the voice of God! "The tragedy is not that the bad are bad, but that the good lack the courage to be totally good," (Pius XII) that we don't have the courage to cast ourselves headlong into the surging tide and leave the rest to God. What we lack is the spirit of conquest, mission consciousness, the strong desire to shape and form and perfect ourselves and others. Perennial youth is the mark of true Catholicism. Today we find ourselves pushed back into the sacristy. We must plunge into the stream of life and work and work and work some more, all we can.

Is this a contradiction to what we said last night? Prayer and sacrifice, we said then. Christian life is in perpetual motion. What did Don Bosco tell us? "The devil does the work of ten, and we must do the work of a hundred!" Nothing without you, nothing without us! Our cooperation is indispensable! A strong desire to shape, form and perfect ourselves and others must be a part of our life. We must have the courage to make a decision. If we wait and wait, who will operate the switches of our time? Each one in his own place must be willing to take the responsibility for the job God has for him.

Once more the question: What will the image of the new man on the other shore look like? *Ecce homo!* Behold the man! (Jn 19,5). There he stands before us, the image of redeemed man: Christ before Pilate! His countenance bruised, his body crushed. *Ecce Homo!* And on the other side: *Ecce homines!* Behold the men! See the phantoms we moderns pursue! The timeless image of Christ is the ideal image of man. The man elevated by grace, the completely perfected man, the man immolated to God in love.

#### **MAN ELEVATED AND PERFECTED**

The image of the **elevated and perfected man** is the ideal we must reconquer today. We must find our home in the other, supernatural world. It is the world modern man has left behind. *Agnosce homo dignitatem tuam!* Recognize, O man, your dignity! (Leo the Great). What does modern man, what *do we* still know about the reality of the supernatural world? The elevated man possesses a new level of existence. He has been elevated to the rank of nobility of divine sonship. The realization of his dignity as a child of God has its roots in the existence of the supernatural reality. We must preach and proclaim that time and time again with fervor and zeal, cost what it may.

You will say: Modern man is not receptive to this. One answer which we should never forget is this: If modern man is to become receptive again for religious values he must be **deeply Marian**. I consider it almost completely impossible for man today to remain religious and open for supernatural values unless he makes the attitude of the Mother of God his own again and again. Mary is the personification of openness to God and possesses the charisma to communicate this to all her children. We must perceive this task, difficult though it be.

This timeless image of man must also include **the naturally perfected man**. There is an intellectual, economic, vitalistic and hedonistic perfection of human nature. Is it possible that my tainted nature will ever reach all these perfections? Here we must employ a principle of selection. It is this: **Organically one-sided religious-ethical perfection**. We must consequently strive to get man safely to the other shore and to keep him from perishing! We must strive for the ideal of the organically one-sidedly religious-ethically perfect **man!** If we persist in squandering and dissipating the bit of strength we still possess today by placing culture in the foreground, there will not be much left over for this religious-ethical effort.

The ideal must remain: organically one-sided religious-ethical perfection. I said **organically** one-sided. Where the strength is sufficient to pursue the intellectual, cultural perfection of human nature in addition to the religious-ethical, one may do so. But if we have to choose the one or the

other, we must strive today with organic one-sidedness for religious-ethical perfection. Take this with you as a guiding norm.

How many false starts and wasted motion we have in our parish organizations! Cultural activities have been placed too much in the center! Culture must arise from religion and morality. And how many accord to cultural and aesthetic values the place of religious values. Our foremost preoccupation must be: how can I form religious-ethically perfect human beings? All other things are merely the outgrowth of this overall attitude, means to an end. *Ecce homo!* The Savior stands before us also as the **immolated man**. How many natural and ordinarily desirable values our Savior has sacrificed! We too must sacrifice values, if need be, cultural and aesthetical values, in order to bring the religious-ethical in us to the fore so that the Almighty may indeed triumph over us. We must offer sacrifices. Without the sacrifice of natural values, natural perfection is impossible. The *gratia Christi* (grace of Christ) is *gratia cruce signata* (grace marked by the cross); every grace of Christ bears the sign of the cross.

If God is to rule over us, the animal in us must be silent. Even the angel in us must learn more and more to forego purely natural needs. We must incessantly dare the death-leap for mind, will, and heart.

This should, I believe, give you an overall, albeit sad, picture, but one also with much light in the background, a picture which somehow points the way for us, a picture which seeks its complementation through a more detailed presentation based on contemporary cultural and spiritual conditions.

## SIXTH TALK THE PHENOMENON OF A TOTAL TURN OF TIME

We have established a broad framework for understanding the cultural and spiritual situation of today. As a result we were able to gather around us a great number of valuable building stones. Our primary task will now be to assemble these stones into a grand structure, into a genuinely Catholic educational system. Today's work will take us a small step further. The drawing of the overall picture will now be followed by an attempt to elaborate a few of the details on our canvas. These points of detail have already been roughly indicated. They revolve around both contemporary cultural and contemporary spiritual conditions. Here, too, we must confess that it is difficult to distinguish between purely cultural and spiritual phenomena. It doesn't really make much difference. The important thing is and remains that we understand our time and our people.

Let us study the signs of the times with an eye especially on the pedagogical situation. To be sure, we feel that we are dealing here with a subject that is not easily exhausted. Can I depict in a few strokes the task the good Lord is entrusting to us educators here and now?

For the sake of clarity let me begin by proposing a thesis. After that I shall try to substantiate it in detail, point out its importance, and draw some corollaries.

The **thesis** is: **We are experiencing a total turn of time marked by world-cataclysmic upheaval.**

This is not merely rhetoric. Through a process of clear, objective thinking I would like to try to explain an event which affects us all to a greater or lesser extent.

### A TOTAL TURN OF TIME

To explain the thesis:

We speak of a total turn of time. It will be worthwhile to carefully weigh every word in order to quickly comprehend the whole afterward.

The term **turn of time** calls to mind such related terms as the "end of time" and "crises of time." When do we speak of a time of crisis? When certain shocks interrupt the normal routine of life. Frequently we experience such crises in our body, for instance, such as an upset stomach and the like. How often, too, does our soul experience its ups and downs. The result is a certain spiritual shock. And if it assumes major proportions, we speak of a crisis. In the same way we can speak of a crisis of time. In the end, however, the results of such shocks are always beneficial; time ultimately returns to its starting point, to its origin.

If the shock causes a permanent departure from the old riverbed, we speak of a **turn of time**, but not of the end of time. Who of us would venture to say that we are standing before the end of the world? Rather we are talking about a turn of time, a turn in **history**, not the **end** of history.

Yesterday we gathered and put together the essential elements of this development. A turn of time implies shocks so fundamental that the original situation cannot be restored. Everything seeks, as it were, a new center of gravity, everything pushes with elemental force toward a **new** world order, one never experienced before. We have said yesterday: Today everything is rushing head over heels toward a new shore. And now the question: What can we take along with us from the old shore? What is timeless? We have given the answer to this question in broad strokes. What we now want is to find the new shore toward which Divine Providence points us through the turn of time.

Furthermore, we are speaking of a **total turn of time**. Do we correctly understand the words? There is a fragmentary, a partial turn of time and a total turn of time. We speak of a total turn of time when the totality of mankind, the whole world in all its parts, seeks a new shore. For example, we would have a partial turn of time if mankind, prompted by contemporary currents, left the intellectual image

## THE FOUR GRAINS OF RICE

Once there was a good king who ruled wisely and who ruled well. He was loved by all the people of his kingdom. One day the king called his four daughters together and told them that he was leaving on a long journey. "I wish to learn about God. I will spend a long time in prayer. In my absence I will leave the four of you in charge."

"Oh, father," they cried, "don't leave us. We will never be able to rule the kingdom without you."

The king smiled. "You will do well in my absence. Now, before I leave I wish to give each of you a gift. It is my prayer that this gift will help you learn the meaning of rule." The king placed a single grain of rice in each daughter's palm. Then he left.

The oldest daughter immediately went to her room. She tied a long golden thread around the grain of rice and placed it in a beautiful crystal box. Every day she picked up the box and looked at it.

The second daughter also went to her room, where she placed the grain of rice in a wooden box and put it in a secure spot, under the bed.

The third daughter, a very pragmatic young woman, looked at the grain of rice and thought, "This grain of rice is no different from any other grain of rice." She simply threw the grain of rice away.

The youngest daughter took the grain of rice to her room and wondered about the significance of the gift. She wondered for a week, then a month. When nearly a year had passed, she understood the meaning of the gift.

Months turned into years, and the four daughters ruled in the absence of their father. Then, one day, the king returned. His beard was full and his eyes sparkled with illumination gained through years of prayer. The king greeted each of his daughters, and then asked to see the gifts he had left them.

The oldest daughter rushed to her room and brought the crystal box. "Father," she began, "I carefully tied a golden thread around the grain of rice and have kept it near my bed where I have looked at it every day since you left."

Bowing to his daughter, the king accepted the box and said, "Thank you."

Next the second daughter presented her father with a grain of rice. "All these years I have kept the rice secure under my bed," she said. "Here it is."

Again the father bowed, accepted the box, and said, "Thank you."

The third daughter rushed to the kitchen, found a grain of rice, ran back and said, "Father, here is my grain of rice."

Smiling, the king accepted the grain of rice, bowed, and said, "Thank you."

Finally the youngest daughter stepped before her father and spoke. "I do not have the grain of rice that you gave me," she said.

"Whatever did you do with it?" the king inquired.

"Father, I thought about that grain of rice for nearly a year before I discovered the meaning of the gift. I realized that the grain of rice was a seed, so I planted it in the ground. Soon it grew, and from it I harvested other seeds. I then planted all of those seeds, and again I harvested the crop. Father, I have continued to do this. Come, look at the results."

The king followed his daughter to the window where he looked out at an enormous crop of rice stretching as far as the eye could see. There was enough rice to feed their entire small nation.

Stepping before his daughter, the king took off his golden crown and placed it on her head. "You have learned the meaning of rule," he said softly.

From that day the youngest daughter ruled the kingdom. She ruled long, and she ruled wisely, and she ruled well.

*(Shrine Soundings, Lent 1992)*

of man and reached out for a new, let's say, vitalistic or economic image of man. Today, however, the ontological revolution is a total and radical one. Everything is shaken. The total ontological revolution has taken the turn of a total moral and cultural revolt. Hence it is clear: This **total revolt** from basic values must be followed by a return to **total fidelity** to these values. That is why everything again drives towards a new, regenerated world. A new heaven and a new earth is in the making! (cf Rev 21, 1-8) That is what is meant by a "total turn in time."

## MARKED BY WORLD-CATAclysmic UPHEAVAL

We added: **marked by world-cataclysmic upheaval**. In other words: the entire world stands under this shadow of catastrophe. Go anywhere in the world and you will find that even in the huts of Indians and Negroes anything that was touched by modern culture in any way, shape or form, has been drawn into this cataclysmic jumble. A world catastrophe is in the offing, a total world change. All that is old is being rejected! And yet, there is an anxious search to keep what might be useful for the formation of the new man in the new society, the formation of the new earth, the new world. With this we have hopefully made the terms a little bit more understandable.

In order to penetrate more deeply, we must answer three questions:

First of all, we want to briefly **characterize** the present world situation, then make an effort at **interpreting its meaning** and, finally, draw from it **helpful conclusions** for our own self-education and for that of others.

### A. CHARACTERIZATION

You suspect, I assume, that the picture our characterization will draw for us will again be a rather dismal one. And if we were to dwell on it at length, we should justly fear being called pessimists. We do not want to be pessimists, however, but realists, and we want to look at the situation, the world, as it really is. Against this dark background the sun shines so much brighter. This sun is a new earth and a new heaven, just as our Lord has obviously foreseen as the culmination of the dreadful catastrophes of our days.

The characterization can be seen from three points of view: the biblical, the philosophical, and the historical. Three points of departure, three diving boards which will in the end, land us in the same water.

#### 1. BIBLICAL CHARACTERIZATION

From the **biblical standpoint**: What Sacred Scripture can tell us about the present day world can be neatly and simply expressed in the sentence: We plainly live in **pronounced apocalyptic times**.

##### a. "APOCALYPTIC TIMES"

Let me begin by reiterating that I do not think that the end of the world is imminent. Apocalyptic times can mean the "latter days" or the "last days." The "**latter days**" means the time from Christ's Ascension to the end of the world. In this sense of the word we evidently live in apocalyptic times, but without any reference to the end of the world. After all, we have lived in apocalyptic times ever since the Ascension.

Apocalyptic times can also mean, however, **the "last days,"** the end of time. Such is its meaning in the strictest sense of the word. What we said about "latter days" is the meaning in the broadest sense of the word.

We can also speak of apocalyptic times in an intermediate sense of the word. These are periods that look much like the end of time. They occur sometime between the Ascension and the end of the world, but share many of the features of the end of time. They are a frightful prelude, or dress rehearsal, of the unspeakably more dreadful final scene.

When we say, therefore, that we live today in an out-and-out apocalyptic time we mean a time in which we find all of the criteria cited by Sacred Scripture concerning the end of the world. With this the ground is prepared for a second explanation, for an explanation of the phenomenon.

## **b. DREADFUL CATASTROPHES**

What are the signs the Apocalypse, which the Savior himself has pointed out to us concerning the end of the world? We will find dreadful catastrophes in the physical, moral, and religious order.

And all this is largely and predominantly caused by an unprecedented march to victory on the part of Satan and diabolical forces. There you have a brief characterization of our time!

**Dreadful catastrophes in the physical order!** You might think of the seven seals which the apocalyptic seer saw being gradually opened. The first four seals contain the four apocalyptic horsemen, riding roughshod across the world. Horses and riders symbolize terrible wars, revolution, famines, and diseases (cf Rev 6, 1ff). Are not the four apocalyptic horsemen sweeping over the world today? Have not the majority of us in old Europe already heard the gallop of these horses? And don't we suspect that they are galloping again to the gates of Germany, the gates of Europe? The four apocalyptic horsemen are waiting outside! At once the question arises: must we expect that the First and Second terrible World Wars be followed by a third? Modern wars tend to be total wars! If the signs of the times do not completely deceive us, we must expect that collectivism soon will set out on an unprecedented march to victory, not only in Europe, but throughout the world. That is the world cataclysm which has shaken everything. We see a scourge of God before us. It seems that he is lashing out mercilessly against our world.

A **spiritual** showdown is inevitable. We are already in the thick of it. And because we are not aware of it, many fall victim to spirit of the world (*Zeitgeist*), and many in the West have adopted opinions concocted and propagated by the enemy. But must we expect an armed showdown as well? In any case, we should prepare those entrusted to us as if they had to expect in the foreseeable future the ordeal of an even bloodier world war than any experienced so far. "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." Nothing can surprise us if we are prepared. The odds seem great that it will come to an armed conflict, even though no one seems to favor. Know, that once the wheel starts rolling, nothing can stop it. Just as there are imponderables in the lives of individuals, there are also imponderables in the lives of nations. Before you know it someone has pushed the fatal button and the final deadly escalation has begun! One thing is clear: we are living in out-and-out apocalyptic times. Enormous catastrophes in the natural, physical order are breaking loose all around us!

We also find similar **catastrophes in the moral order**. I referred to it several times yesterday. Love is dying everywhere, the evil chants of hate are triumphantly taking its place! The moral order has done a complete about-face. We think of the Ten Commandments. How deeply are they still written in the hearts of men? Yet these commandments of God are the laws of right living. He who disregards them sins against the laws of human society, yes, even against the laws of men. We think here of the first, second and third commandments of God. Where are they still honored today? Where is the living, personal God still being adored with heart and soul? Then think of all the other commandments! They are all profoundly shaken up today. One thing we are all acutely aware of,

the supremacy of hatred over love is growing by leaps and bounds. Thus has our Lord himself described the end of time.

Furthermore, **catastrophes** are also found **in the religious order**. Do we not see it over and over again! The world has forsaken the living fountains, the living personal God and has carved for itself idols whom it adores.

Finally the Apocalypse describes an endless march to victory of the powers of Satan. Note the twelfth chapter which opens the description of the victory marches of diabolical powers, painting them in magnificent colors.

## **THE REALITY OF EVIL**

We also bear in mind today that it is not merely human malice that is at work but, above all, diabolical malice? This malice is used by Satan as an instrument. We are almost tempted to pause here in order to examine soberly whether or not we have exaggerated just a little bit in what we have said. The central question is this: Does the frailty of human nature alone suffice to explain the enormous amount of sorrow and evil in our present day world? For an explanation, do we need the influence of the devil? The teachers of the spiritual life give us the answer. In passing let me mention just one.

Years ago one of the most brilliant German theologians, Scheeben, made this statement: Much evil in the world can be traced back to the frailty of human nature, and this frailty is in turn a result of diabolical influence. So we can say that the world, inasmuch as it is evil and malicious, always stands indirectly under the influence of Satan. But that is not the point of this discussion. Our question is: *Must we not, at least in many, many cases, acknowledge the direct influence of the devil today?* After eliciting his line of argumentation from the comprehensive vision of dogmatic theology, he stresses this point: When human nature goes so far as to commit extraordinary atrocities, one must assume that this is the direct influence of the devil. With that Scheeben summarizes his study, not only of the entire field of Dogma, but of everything Sacred Scripture has to say on the devil and his influence.

Behind the frightful atrocities the world has witnessed during these past decades, and behind the even more frightful ones we must expect to come, lurks a diabolical influence. You may recall my answer to the burning questions of the North American episcopate.

Some years ago (1940) there died in Münster (Germany) the brilliant "religious watchdog of German philosophy," Peter Wust. He experienced the tragedy of modern humanity in his own life. From the philosophy of Enlightenment, from extreme idealism he slowly and painfully found his way back to the practice of an earnest Catholic life. For years the question kept bothering him: Is not evil the predominant force in the world? Must we not speak of a Mono-Satanism? There is much sorrow and evil in the world! And then on the other hand: Can one really maintain, as is often done in Christian circles, "*anima naturaliter Christiana*"? By nature the human soul is Christian. Is it true? Is that much good hidden away in it? In reality, is not the very opposite true? Is not human nature more naturally a predator? And what else can one expect of this predator than that it is instinctively and constantly searching out its prey? This is the burning question with respect to the nature of man. Later on Wust thought his way through to the genuinely Christian conviction: both are found in man, the predator on the one hand, the angel and the child of God on the other. On the basis of this insight he constructed an entire philosophy. I mention a few thoughts in passing; we might come back to them later on, for much depends on gaining the genuine, true image of man.

## **THE NATURE OF MAN**

What is man? He is a **compound creature**. His boundaries reach into all the levels of being he is animal, angel, and child of God. Hence he combines within himself all of creation.

However, he is also an **vacillating creature**. He vacillates between the various strata of his being.

And he is also an **eternally searching creature**, seeking the ultimate, the divine, the eternal in all things. "Our heart is restless, O God, until it rests in you," says St. Augustine!

But man is also an **endlessly perfectible creature**. Hidden away in human nature there is the propensity to become a saint, an angel, and a criminal. The predator is as firmly established in man as the child of God. It is therefore important for us to repeat over and over again, not only with our lips but with our life, the saying of Leo the Great, "*Agnosce homo dignitatem tuam!*" Man, recognize your dignity! Yes, man, recognize and live your whole resplendent dignity! If man does not see in himself the divine image, his divine dignity, if he does not become aware time and time again of the good and noble within himself, he is bound to sink eventually to the level of the predator. Then Nietzsche's remark about the "blond beast" may come true.

Why do I remind you of this? Because according to our concept of man, although human nature has been broken by original sin, a great deal of what is good and noble is still hidden away in him. His nature is capable of both: to be a criminal or else an angel, a saint! That is what the philosopher meant: To become the one or the other, we need but **will it**. We must learn to overcome the beast in us, but also to make the child of God in us grow!

Do you realize now what the words mean: We live in a total turn of time, marked by world-cataclysmic upheavals? We have indicated the catastrophes; but what will the world look like after the change? During his years of agonizing struggle Wust tried to interpret the meaning of pain, the significance of the diabolical. For years he could not come to a conclusion. When he became deeper and more mature, he clung with great fervor to the words of St. Augustine: *Quanta malitia hominum contra concilium trinitatis?* What does the malice of men amount to when compared with the counsels of the Trinity? He saw before him all the malice of mankind, an enormous amount of malice in nations and peoples. Yet, of what account is all this when placed side by side with the providential designs of the Most Holy Trinity!

### c. THE VICTORIOUS HOMEWARD MARCH TO THE FATHER

This brings us face to face with the question which we shall discuss in the second point: What then is the deepest **meaning** of the dreadful catastrophes of this **apocalyptic confusion**? A turn in history always signals a turn in the lives of men! History takes a turn, a leap forward, and man must turn with it.

What is the design of the eternal God in catastrophes of this kind? Not even one hair falls from our heads but that his wisdom and love has foreseen and planned it from all eternity! What is God's intention in upheavals of this kind? It is the same thing Wust felt and experienced at the height of his life and which we have previously called the victorious homeward march of the elect to the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit. They are to accelerate man's return to his God and Father; that is the main thing! You see, we who are thrown into the midst of the confusion of our time, a time which confronts us with one puzzle after another and causes so much confusion among our following, must try to feel the pulse of our time and get a clear idea of what Almighty God wants to do with us through crosses and pain and sorrow. A victorious homeward march! We want to return to the Father, detach ourselves more and more from the opinions of men.

There is one thought you will find in Wust that has already become flesh and blood in our Schoenstatt family: as a warning to the nations, God has permitted the German people to be the first to plunge into the abyss. However, he obviously also wishes the German people to be the first to rise to the light, to the sun. The meaning of the frightful ordeals for our German people? A victorious

homeward march to the Father, away with human fear, complete surrender to Christ!

There you have the second thought: the victorious homeward march of the elect to the Father **through Christ** in the Holy Spirit. Wust deeply grasped this thought toward the end of his life: the theology and philosophy of the cross. The true philosophy of life is the philosophy of the cross! What does the Lord want? He wishes to speed up our likeness of Christ. The life of Christ, the passion of Christ is to be continued and completed in us. The great meaning of world events, the profound meaning of world catastrophes is a speeding up of our conformity with Christ. Pallotti used to pray: "My Jesus, my Lord, expel myself from me and take my place. My life and all my deeds shall be annihilated. Your life shall be my life. Your agony shall become my agony. Your death shall become my death. Your resurrection, my resurrection. Your ascension, my ascension. Let all that is yours be mine."

Only in the light of faith can we fathom all that this means. If we are to help our German people we must earnestly strive to realize the meaning of the apocalyptic era in ourselves, but we must also train our nation in and lead it more deeply into the spirit of faith, into the supernatural meaning of life and the spirit of sacrifice.

In the farewell letter Wust wrote to his disciples shortly before his death we read: "And if you should ask me now, before I pass on and leave you for good, whether I know of a magic key that could open to you the last door to the wisdom of life, It would tell you 'yes, indeed!' And that key is not reflection, as you might expect to hear from a philosopher, but **prayer**. Prayer, taken in the sense of complete surrender, makes you calm, childlike, objective. To me, a man grows deeper and deeper into the realm of humanity"not humanism "to the degree he is able to pray, meaning of course the **right kind of prayer**. Prayer implies the deepest *humilitas* of the spirit. The great things of this earthly existence are only given to souls that pray! However, there is no school of prayer like **suffering**. Read again what Heinrich Seuse, in his booklet on 'Divine Wisdom' (Part I, Chapter 13) says about the nobility of earthly suffering in connection with prayer."

With this, I believe, we have the guiding lines of our discussion a little more clearly before our eyes. We are beginning to understand the meaning of living in a total turn of time, marked by world-cataclysmic upheaval.

## SEVENTH TALK GOD AND THE TOTAL TURN OF TIME

If we were to characterize the present state of the world in one sentence, we could best do it by saying: We are experiencing a total turn of time marked by world-cataclysmic upheaval. From which we conclude: In such a **total change of time** the living God demands of us a **total change of life**.

We wanted to shed light on the present world situation from three standpoints. The biblical perspective tells us that we live in pronounced apocalyptic times. The total change of life demanded by such an out-and-out apocalyptic era requires of us heroic childlikeness, perfect community, and a strong desire to form ourselves and shape the world.

**Heroic childlikeness!** We emphasized this point strongly at the end of the last talk: Not **away** from God, but **toward** God. A victorious homeward march to the Father! Acceleration of this homeward march through heroic childlikeness, through living in intimate union with Christ. Heroic childlikeness in Christ Jesus!

**Perfect Community!** If you read the Book of Revelation you will notice how it constantly speaks of choirs of angels and congregations of men. What does Almighty God demand in an apocalyptic era? The change of time must also usher in a change of life! This change of life includes the perfect community. It is needed because we cannot otherwise withstand the heavy blows buffeting us from all sides.

The apocalyptic turning of the tide furthermore demands a **bold decision for Christ**. The tide toward self-development and self-sanctification is part of the meaning of an apocalyptic time. There the devil and the living God each vie for our allegiance. If we are not to fall victim to Satan, we must surrender ourselves to the living God "seated on the throne" (cf Rev 6, 16), so that we may cooperate with him as his living instruments in shaping the change of life that goes hand in hand with the change of time.

### 2. PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTERIZATION

The second standpoint is philosophical. Allow me to be brief here and refer you to last year's October Letter. Please read what it says.

#### a. FALSE IMAGES OF MAN

The philosophical perspective calls our attention to a whole collection of erroneous and **false images of man** that have been experimented with for the last 400 years, but that have all back-fired so badly that we must say: Unless we can find a complete, total change in human life, unless we can replace errant images with God-projected images, human nature as a whole will either perish or remain confused and sickly to the bone.

We begin with the turning point of the 15th century. At that time the medieval image of man, the **theocentric man**, was still predominant; God stood in the center of all things, and everything we know and teach today about man's relationship to God was publically lived. If grave sins were committed here and there, they were viewed as grave sins. They took seriously the fact that man is the natural and supernatural image of God. In those days God was man's measure of all things; everything revolved around Him. God was a great blessing for man himself, also for the image of man.

Then came the great rupture at the time of the Renaissance. Man's vision was totally changed, away from God and toward man! Now man began to become the center of the world and the measure of

all things. Modern man is therefore anthropologically centered.

**THE JOYFUL MELODY**  
retold from a German publication

Once there was a tiny joyful melody which sprang forth from the heart of a young man. This joyful melody was as carefree and happy as a little bird flying from one branch to the other; it was as pure as a waterfall gushing forth and refreshing as a breeze in the morning. The young man rejoiced in his melody. He thought it was so beautiful that it would be the best gift he could give to God.

And God smiled when he heard the young man's melody. "My son", God said, "your melody is truly very beautiful. Always take good care of it! I want to help you so that it becomes perfected." And so God gave to the young man the experience of true, faithful love and sheltered him more deeply in his heart.

Thereupon the joyful melody in the heart of the young man began to be transformed. It kept its joyful tunes but they became fuller and more animated. Again, the young man went to God and played his joyful melody to him. God nodded affirmingly but still was not quite satisfied. He sent him back to his family and provided him with much suffering.

This helped the young man to mature. He struggled and in accepting his suffering, he overcame it and grew deeper into God's loving heart, the shelter offered to him previously. The joyful melody stayed alive in his soul and matured with him. Mixed with the experience of suffering and pain, the melody could reach out for higher tunes now and its joyfulness was paired with gentleness.

In prayer the man turned to God again: "Lord, accept my little melody! You will find my heart's blood and longing immersed in it. It is the best I can give to you."

And with his merciful eyes God gazed at him: "I still have another gift prepared for you, the last and most difficult one to accept." And God sent him loneliness.

From then on the voices around the man became silent. All the more he could concentrate on his melody which had meanwhile become a most powerful hymn of praise. And once more the melody experienced a period of transformation; it became more spiritual through the bitterness and grace of loneliness.

Then God accepted the little joyful melody and said: "Now you are perfected. Now I can send you to my people!" And everyone who heard the joyful melody was deeply touched and became very joyful.

*(Schoenstatt Family Magazine, Winter 1993)*

Apostasy means decay! The apostasy from God, from the objective world order, has had frightful consequences over the last four or five hundred years. Because man cannot live without God, he has made for himself a false god, the god of Self. At various times he has worshiped the head, then the stomach, then the life of his drives. But that did not satisfy him. Eventually he found in the machine a god and master outside of himself. These are the images of men that have been projected in the course of centuries:

The intellectual or rationalistic,  
the vitalistic,

and the collectivistic image of man.

In the case of the **intellectual** or rationalistic image of man, the intellect forms the center, represents the highest value, but it is an intellect divorced from God, divorced from the organism of human nature. It is apostasy from the objective order of being. The mind then comes to be viewed as the great antagonist of life (Ludwig Klages). It is the task of the proclamation of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin to break with this intellectual image of man.

Soon the intellectual image was replaced by the **vitalistic** and **economical** image of man. The vitalistic man makes idols out of the life of the drives in one of three ways: 1) the predator is predominant, worshiped and adored, but divorced from God and the organism of human nature; 2) nature is rigorously disciplined, and thoroughly subdued but holds man a slave of nature; 3) the last ramification of the vitalistic image of man, as it is today cultivated at our universities, is Existentialism, where the human task is perceived as being the mastery of all difficulties by sheer force of existence, but divorced from God and the supernatural. "Grimly do I bear up under the blows of fate which drive me on!"

These are the images of man that have taken their turns. They have all gone bankrupt and have only succeeded in making human nature sick and tired.

And the human image that predominates today is the **mechanical** or **collectivistic** image. Man has no longer found enough satisfaction in self-deification, and so he has tried to find his god outside of nature, that is, in the machine. The man, who in God's design was to be his image and likeness, has now become an image of the machine. Read again, if you please, what I say about this in the October Letter. Then you will realize that "Apostasy means decay."

Mankind stands at the brink of the abyss. Where will it all end? Can it sink still lower? Can the image of man become even more distorted than it is now?

You must not overlook that our images of man leave their mark on history. The whole of modern history, as we have witnessed it ourselves, is the history of images of man that have so mightily reached into the workings of time.

## **b. THE NEW MAN**

Not only a change of life, but a total change of life must now come. What will it look like? See the lines which we have already drawn: heroic childlikeness, perfect community, but also a strong desire to form self and shape the world. Or, if you want to hold on to the line we pursued yesterday: We must transform the image of man into an *Ecce-homo* image, transform it through Christ into Christ! We must aspire to the elevated nature, the transfigured nature, the naturally perfect nature, but also to the sacrifice of nature.

The perfecting of nature is to be understood in the sense of an organic and one-sidedly religious-ethical perfection. A complete, total turning to the original ideal is imperative. Today it is not sufficient to just say: Away from intellectualism and the search for the aesthetical! The total collapse of the world around us indicates that only a complete change of life will suffice; otherwise we will have misread God's intentions. Then will we have stopped at the halfway mark and need to start all over again tomorrow or the day after tomorrow.

Therefore the question stands before us again and again: What does the other shore look like; what do man and human society look like on the other shore? Our answers, from various angles, are always the same.

## **3. HISTORICAL CHARACTERIZATION**

If you will permit me a passing reference to **history** let us read what the October Letter says about it. I should like to call your attention to the following: It is a matter of course that the environment exercises a strong influence on the soul. Change of environment always means spiritual change or a change of life as well. Think of the great law of the Greek philosopher Anaximenes: *Per quoas causas res nascitur per easdem et dissolvatur oportet*. In other words: The cause by which a thing comes into being will also be crucial to its transformation. Vast cultural upheavals have invariably also been the cause of changes in the image of man. How great, for instance, was the technological change towards the end of the Middle Ages: The invention of the art of printing, the telescope, the invention of gun powder, etc . . . ! How many constellations of stars were discovered! All down the line new frontiers of world conquest could be seen. America was discovered. New religions came into existence. A complete external change! And the effect? The changeover from the Medieval image of man to the Renaissance image of man!

But are not the changes that the world experiences today much more powerful than they were then? We don't even notice it any more! Just imagine how the Europeans came to Africa and America bearing firearms. How helpless the Americans and Africans were in comparison! And what are the changes that affect us today? We think of the atomic bomb, the airplane. Must not these external changes produce powerful spiritual and psychological changes as well? But we don't even take into account any longer the powerful spiritual shocks anymore and consequently don't realize, unfortunately, that modern man is no longer capable of digesting all the impressions he takes in.

Let me ask those of you who think largely with your hearts: When you take in new impressions, how long does it take them to reach your soul? How long does it take for you to digest them? If you do not digest them, does it leave you nervous?

Today the whole human race has so many impressions to absorb that it cannot keep up. What the age of technology has brought us came so fast that we were unable to digest it all in the soul. Our historical considerations might have made clear to us that changes in the world around us always results in a change of life and that, in the case of the present upheaval, Almighty God has a similar intention. What does this change of life look like? How can we digest everything in our soul, even the dangers that menace us through the atomic bomb? The answer is always the same: God demands heroic childlikeness, perfect community, and a strong desire to reform self and others; in other words, he demands the *Ecce-homo* image of man. You can think through the reasons for this on your own.

Once more: What do changes in the world around us mean? At the end of the Middle Ages Europe began to make itself the ruler of the entire world. And today? Nations of the East and of the West wrestle for world domination. That's what we are up against. And, just as a spiritual change came as a result of a mighty upheaval then, so today we may expect something similar. In every instance, Almighty God demands a change of life through the change of time, a strong change of life along the lines we have described.

I wanted to save a little time yet for the second point so we may go into it in more detail.

## **B. INTERPRETATION**

The deep meaning of the catastrophes that surround us is the change of life. Yesterday we shed a continuous stream of light on the meaning of these catastrophes. Have we not said repeatedly that the meaning of the catastrophe is a change of life unto the highest ideals?

Let me deepen this thought a little more for you. There before you stands a magnificent manifestation of **the fundamental law of divine pedagogy: *Opera Dei ex nihilo*** (The works of God begin from nothing!). God wishes to crush man's pride, to thus glorify Himself. When you see before you the present state of affairs: Ruins upon ruins all over Germany. And most likely the world will yet

witness more and more of the same. What does it mean? *Opera Dei ex nihilo!*

We may say: God **loves** nothingness,  
God **seeks** nothingness, and  
God **uses** nothingness

to bend human pride, to glorify himself, and to make human society happy. That is the governing principle of the great God! Sentence after sentence must be weighed carefully: God loves, God seeks, God uses nothingness!

## 1. BECAUSE WE ARE SMALL

In the beginning, before heaven and earth were made, there was nothing. God has created the physical world out of nothing. *Opera Dei ex nihilo!* When we think of the religious, the moral world, **Christ** stands before us as the Redeemer of the world. The same holds true here: God loves and seeks nothingness. Did Christ save the world by his miracles? No, through his passion, through human failures! *Et verbum caro factum est!* The Word became flesh (Jn 1,14)! In Christ's countenance we see mirrored not only divine features but also countless purely human features. Externally, he breaks down before his foes: He hangs on the cross. That's what the work of redemption looks like: *Opera Dei ex nihilo!*

Next we see before us the early Christian community. Paul characterizes it this way: "Just consider, brothers, your own call; not many of you were wise, not many influential, not many noble by worldly standards. But God chose what the world holds foolish to put the wise to shame" (I Cor 1, 26-27). *Opera Dei ex nihilo!*

Next we see before us the greatest in the Kingdom of God, **God's own Mother!** Because here on earth she was the little insignificant handmaid, she pleased the Most High most. **Because** she was little! Not **despite** her being little, but because she was little! At least such was her own estimate of herself in the sight of the infinitely perfect God. "You are the One who does the greatest works through little ones!" Thus we could, with slight changes in the lyrics of the song, give expression to a great law of the eternal God. How frequently we've had occasion during the last few days alone to point out that we are not equal to the gigantic tasks of rebuilding a new world and the great tasks of education today we feel so helpless and small! But that is just what Almighty God wants: we should feel small and helpless and yet dare the critical leap into the heart, the will, into the very arms of God. Why does God love the little? He wants to bend the proud neck of modern humanity, he wants to crush the pride of modern man. For is not everyone today engaged in building a tower similar to the biblical tower of Babel? A new world shall arise, not just a world, but a world consciously and deliberately **without** God, which means a world **with** the devil. The new tower of Babel without God is to pierce the skies!

God loves the little ones! He goes through the world, crushing pride and conceit. He does it through "the scourge of God," the adversaries we have before us. They may be of various shades and colorations; in the final analysis they all want the same: a world order, a world government without God! At present two world powers are vying to take command (cf Eph 6,12). These are the great battles of our time.

Something great, something grand must come from these birth-pains. What will it be? Perhaps God is preparing a great united world to pave the way for a victorious Christianity to lead man back to God. God wants to bend, to break the proud neck of the nations. That is the great law of divine pedagogy: *Opera Dei ex nihilo!* You may rest assured: just as at the building of the tower of Babel in biblical times, so today God will again come down and cause confusion among the nations and permit its proud tower to collapse in order to bend the neck of the nations. The great basic law: *Opera Dei ex nihilo* also holds good for us.

Cortez Donoso has given us the gist of his studies in these words: "My study of the history of Christian nations has convinced me that there are times in which the Church, regardless of how much she tries to defend herself against diabolical influences, will be beaten down, will be pushed into the background. We are witnessing that today! When, however, to all appearances the eleventh hour has struck for the Church, God suddenly appears on the pinnacle of the temple of time, sounds the trumpet, and then the walls of Jericho collapse."

## 2. GOD WISHES TO EARN THE VICTORY

What does Almighty God want? He Himself wants to be the Savior, the redeemer of his Church; He wants us to feel small. *Opera Dei ex nihilo*; that is the great law of divine pedagogy.

How much preaching is done in Christian circles! How many experiments are made in parish work! And what are the results? Blow follows blow as we are being pushed against the wall, and the losses become worse all down the line. The Lord God alone wants to have the honor of saving and redeeming the modern world. And precisely, in this glory which the Lord seeks, lies our true and deepest and greatest happiness. Man shall once again yield to God and acknowledge his dependence; he shall again practice the heroism of spiritual childhood and realize that it is not **we** who do it, that we can only be instruments. **God** does it all! Time and again we must dare the death leap into the heart of God.

On the other hand, we must earnestly strive for a perfect community. We cannot stand alone.

Added to this must be a strong desire for perfection, permitting ourselves to be formed by Divine Wisdom. We must remain little, we must affirm our littleness before God so that he will accept and make use of us for the great mission of restoring the present and future world! That is the meaning of the current situation.

I don't know now whether these thoughts are anchored so deeply in us as Almighty God would have it, whether our soul is now able to overflow in deep inner joy at suddenly seeing the great magnificent goal light up against the dark background of so many failures and breakdowns. How many breakdowns there are! Don't we ourselves feel how helpless we are in the presence of the moral law? Has not our nature, too, become sickly? This, however, is the great fundamental law of the divine pedagogy: man shall break down, so that he will stretch out his hands for God. God wants to save us; God wants to make us happy and redeem us.

Our entire pedagogical effort must promote with all its strength the **genius of naivete**. Only one who becomes a genius of true, naive spiritual childhood can understand and overcome today's world and be used as an instrument in the hands of the Eternal, Unending Love.

## C. FINAL CONCLUSIONS

Now that we are familiar with the characteristics of our modern age and have made an effort to interpret their meaning, let us proceed to draw the final conclusions. Permit me to use as a point of departure the picture of the flood. I would say we must not imitate the contemporaries of Noah, but Noah himself. His contemporaries sensed the enormous catastrophe which threatened to overcome them. What did they do? They spent their lives eating and drinking and making merry. While dancing they were caught by the great flood (cf Gen 6,11; 7,1ff).

That is the picture of today's world! We should not permit our eating and drinking and high living to stifle the nobler instincts within us. We don't want to yield time and time again to the urge for substitute satisfaction. For we do not know whether we are still in the final stage of the flood or have

already reached the turning point of the new time. Unless all indications deceive us we have not yet reached the deepest abyss. Unless all appearances deceive us, we must expect that the darkness will become much darker still and that the breakdowns have not yet reached their end by a long shot.

Why? The voice of the times is the voice of God! Mankind of today has almost lost its mind, is no longer able to judge for itself, has become irrational in its attitude. And an irrational generation can only be healed and brought back to its senses, humanly speaking, by irrational means. We must walk still deeper and deeper into the night. For there are still millions who expect that the knight in shining armor who will rescue them will be of this or that theory, or Free Masonry or collectivism. And, unless human society learns better the hard way, we dare not hope that a massive return to the living God is possible. There are still millions upon millions today that believe in a Red Paradise; only the sorry experiences of practical life can convince them otherwise. That's the reason for my intuition that we are not yet standing at the beginning of a new time, but that we must descend still deeper into the abyss. Hence, we should not act like the contemporaries of Nah; we should not eat and drink and make merry and deceive ourselves with a superficial round of activities, but

1. calmly await the deepest abyss yet to come, and
2. build an ark

What does that mean, **to build an ark**? You see, anyone who fails to see the tremendous value of building an interior ark and building an exterior ark will stand helplessly in the face of the present day world.

## **1. MY HEART THE INTERIOR ARK**

**Our own heart** should be an ark. Who rules and reigns in this ark? Because the heroism of spiritual childhood, the genius of naivete is demanded by the Almighty; only the great, Triune God may reign in that sanctuary. The ark shall be lined with pitch inside and outside (cf Gen 6,14). Nothing may enter, even the hailstorm of our present time may not dethrone the eternal God in our hearts. How are we going to manage to convince modern man to transform his heart into an ark? I would like to ask: How will we manage it? Don't we ourselves also suffer from the illness of our age, the lack of a sense of guilt? We just don't have a sense and consciousness of guilt anymore. And where there is no longer a healthy sense of guilt, the openness and receptivity for God is naturally restricted and as time goes on, even becomes impossible. A man who doesn't feel guilty doesn't feel his need of redemption and, if he doesn't feel the need of redemption, he also doesn't feel the need of a redeemer.

Modern psychotherapy tells us that modern man is so nervous because he has no longer any sense of guilt and because he no longer recognizes the boundaries between existence and faults. How little is said to us today about the importance of a cognizant and acknowledged weaknesses and awareness of our sins! One of our modern psychotherapists calls our attention to the great number of people today who are suffering from neuroses induced, not by too much work, but because they find it impossible to live with the idea that they are human, that they have a body, and that they are, as sexual and social creatures, dependent on others. I believe we just don't have the right slant on this any longer. Nietzsche has correctly assessed the modern time by saying, "If there were gods, how could I stand to not be one!" Modern man can no longer manage his limitations.

We too find it hard to live with our weaknesses. It would be good to speak once more at length of spiritual childhood and humility because it is a vital means for remaining physically healthy and regaining one's spiritual health.

You see, the failure to correctly understand and acknowledge weakness and guilt is one of the most basic causes of uprootedness and nervousness in modern man. Unless we all re-learn to orient ourselves on highest ideals and therefore feel ourselves helpless and little, we shall discover that our human nature will break down more and more. Listen to Nietzsche, "If there were gods, how could I stand to not be one!" We don't say that consciously but, unconsciously, we glorify ourselves. And

if, in spite of this, feelings of guilt assert themselves within us, it is something obscure and falls short of the consciousness that I have personally offended the great personal God. I must acknowledge that in truth I have sinned, I am little, I have laden personal guilt on my soul toward the personal God! We do not even suspect how sickly we human beings are today. If we are to regain our health, if we are to educate hale and hearty human beings, be they adults or children, a great deal depends on our nurturing a healthy sense of punishment and penance in the world of today.

This is all part of the interior ark. The ark must be built; otherwise we will have no power to resist. Present day humanity is sick and will become sicker yet; we will make many more mistakes than we have already made. We have to expect that. That's why so much depends on our being small and feeling small. The genius of spiritual childhood, of humility, of littleness! This would be material for a complete course: The essence, effects and roads to true humility, to genuine littleness! That's what the interior ark which we must erect looks like.

## **2. Schoenstatt — an Exterior Ark**

Wherein consists the exterior ark? Members of the Schoenstatt family are probably familiar with the words of the Second Founding Document: "We want to be an ark. We would like to gather those who are called by God to help renew the world." We would like to gather and consolidate all those willing to submit to the great laws of the Divine Educator in a tightly knit community, in order to save them from the coming flood. That, after all, is the meaning of the Schoenstatt Movement, that we represent an ark.

A new world shall be created, which an individual cannot do. Unless they are in some way members of another and new world, they will break down and not reach the other shore. The meaning of the entire Schoenstatt Family is to be an ark, a stratified kingdom with a clear direction toward the new shore; it also means the mobilization of every conceivable power at our disposal. That's why we must gather our forces, close our ranks as much as possible, in order to form a solid phalanx.

A second point: We don't want to collect only ourselves but as many as possible of those who are already swimming in the flood and have not yet gone under; we want to fish them out and bring them into the ark so that they may reach the other shore.

And finally, a third observation: We must not forget to make demands on all those that have already been received into the ark. This is not just a game! Where ultimate values are at stake, where a world is collapsing, play must cease and serious demands must be made. And if failures stalk our path, as they will, a feeling of guilt will ensue. It is essential for us to regain a feeling of guilt in the presence of a high ideal; only thus shall we regain our health. This sense of guilt and the need of punishment must be cultivated more vigorously all down the line.

If we thus go our way, then—I believe—we have accurately assessed the present state of the world and drawn the proper consequences. Then may we say indeed that the word applies also to us, "This is my beloved son—my beloved child—in whom I am well pleased" (Mk 1, 11). The individual, the community that is of such a mind, is the beloved child, in whom the Almighty is well pleased.

## **Appendix: Outline of a Modern Pedagogy for the Catholic Educator**

*The remaining seven talks from the 1950 Conference on Education are not yet translated into English. This appendix is designed to give the reader a general overview of this second part of the conference. The thoughts are numbered 1 to 40 to facilitate discussion. Numbers in parentheses (→) indicate cross-references to relevant pages in the first part of this book.*

1. The goal of Catholic education is ultimately the ability and readiness to independently and autonomously live the life of a child of God as a member of Christ. (→ 4, 18, 103)
  2. To do this the educator becomes familiar with the uniquely personal interests and perspectives and receptivity for values of each person being educated. The goal is that the objective value-complex thoroughly become a subjective value-complex of the pupil<sup>2</sup>.
  3. The general principles of education are built on a line, an approach, and commitment.
  4. One end of the line is rooted in the educator; it is priestly fatherliness and motherliness. "Priestly" means a fatherliness or motherliness which is metaphysically anchored; the educator must be anchored in the supernatural world (→ 44). "Priestly" also means having a share in the mission of Christ, the Eternal High Priest, through baptism, confirmation, and (for priests) ordination (→ 6).
  5. The other end of the line is rooted in the pupil; it is the ideal, both the personal ideal and the community ideal.
  6. The limits of the approach are respect and love. They are the secret of a true educator. He must have respect for the one he is educating; he will then get respect and love in return. Without them one can train, but true education must always strive to be in the atmosphere of respect and love.
  7. The approach includes the art of opening the soul. In order to "open" the soul, we need to know how to hear, how to listen, and how to "listen between the lines." To this must be added our receptivity to youth's idealism and radicality, and their loyalty to a true leader.
- 2 2 2
8. In our Schoenstatt pedagogy we distinguish between the "guiding stars" and the fundamental forms of education.
  9. The guiding stars are:
    - education in ideals,
    - education in attachments,
    - education in the covenant,
    - education in trust (→ 62f),
    - education in movement [or organic growth].
  10. The fundamental forms are the 3 parts of the "message of Schoenstatt":
    - practical faith in Divine Providence (→ 31-33),

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<sup>2</sup> *Wertsättigung* or "value saturation" is a key to Fr. Kentenich's educational approach. Meant is the progression from knowing an objective truth (an "idea-complex") to being in its possession as a subjective value. The educator works to "saturate" the values associated with the objective truth by helping the pupil conquer it as meaningful. Ideally, such values grow into an organic whole – the subjective "value-complex."

- the covenant of love of God with his creation,
- divinely inspired mission zeal.

Or, spoken pedagogically:

- education in faith
- education in love
- education in one's mission or apostolate.

11. Education in ideals is

- 1) education through attitudes more than forms,
- 2) education in humility as opposed to self-importance,
- 3) education to freedom as opposed to fear or compulsion.

12. Education in attachments

- 1) is an answer to the widespread lack of roots and modern man's need for a "nest" (→ 22, 94),
- 2) is built on three great truths taught to us by the order of being:
  - a) There is an organism of attachments in the natural order.
  - b) There is an organism of attachments in the supernatural order.
  - c) The natural and supernatural organisms of attachments are bound together in a clear, God-willed way.
- 3) is rooted in attachments to places, persons, and ideas.

13. Education in the covenant:

- 1) is an answer to the longing of our hearts,
- 2) is a practical way to overcome deism, fatalism, and transcendentalism. Apostasy means decay! (→ 38-41) We are too little attached to God. Many see God too much as an idea; they lack a deep personal attachment to the personal God! (→ 31f) In covenant education God "goes out of his way," as it were; He is constantly moving to come close to us. Our task is to be constantly moving towards him.

2 2 2

14. The forum of [Catholic] education is twofold. It includes an official forum and a private forum. The official forum consists of the parochial schools, the pulpit, and the confessional. Three theses:

15. First thesis: We want to be grateful for the official forum. Given, for instance, the significance of the atmosphere in education, we know how important such a closed Catholic setting can be, especially in the face of the "secret co-educators" of the streets and public opinion. (→ 18f)

16. Second thesis: We must expect that these official fora will be taken from us in the near future.

17. Third thesis: Already now we must be ready to return to the private fora of education! Let me use a peculiar expression for this "return to the catacombs." I mean the "catacombs" of the family, the group, and the prayer corner [i.e. the home shrine].

18. The "catacombs" of the family. The family is nothing less than the nucleus of human society, and in a certain sense the nucleus of the Church. Therefore we work at all costs to save and defend the family! Especially in our Schoenstatt families we must:

- 1) Work painstakingly to develop family morals.
- 2) Work to develop a broader family spirituality.
- 3) Work to develop healthy family customs.

4) Work to develop a pronounced family ethos<sup>3</sup>.

19. The most important of these is the pronounced family ethos.

The father must cultivate an outspoken sense of his mission as a father,  
the mother as a mother,  
the child as child.

Wherein lies the father's sense of mission? In his dignity and task as a father. Wherein lies the mother's sense of mission? In her dignity and task as a mother. Wherein lies the child's sense of mission?

20. Father. The permanent measure of the father's dignity is the dignity of the eternal Father-God.

We see God the Father in his unchangeableness. Fathers today live this too little! They sway in the wind of "conventional wisdom." They sway in the wind of the whims and passions of their heart.

We see God in his omnipresence. The earthly father must also be "all-present" for his children, either physically or at least spiritually. He constantly bears them in his thoughts and interests and in his heart. Other interests are secondary because these are his children and he makes sacrifices for them.

God the Father is all-knowing. The earthly father must also know everything about his children—not an oppressive knowing, but a kind and strong, uplifting knowing. It is uplifting because the father always believes in the goodness of his child, even when he has been disappointed a thousand times. He believes in the unique mission of his child.

God the Father is all-wise. His image, too, has the wisdom to know how much his child can bear, both in the burdens and in the gifts.

God the Father is holy. Fathers should be holy as the heavenly Father is holy. And who is holy? Whoever centers his life on the eternal Father-God and His wish and will.

God the Father is merciful and just. This is also the ideal of the earthly father: unyielding in justice, honesty, integrity! He does not "bend the rules" but is the personification of justice and truthfulness. But he is also infinitely merciful and knows how to forgive when the prodigal son returns home.

21. To the child, the father is the living original form of authority. It is not enough that the child follows a law. The law and the will of the father must be one and the same thing for the child. The child must feel an authority that stands contrary to the upwelling of its inordinate drives, an authority that has the right to punish. But everything depends on the authority approaching the child in the right way in the very first encounter. The father educates to obedience and the ability to take risks.

Because we no longer have any genuine fathers, we no longer have genuine children and so very few religious children. The child instinctively transfers the image to the earthly father to the image of God the Father. If mankind today is sick, it is because we are unable to find our center in the eternal Father-God, which is largely because our earthly fathers are so feeble a reflection of God the Father.

22. Mother. The mother's authority is dependent on the father. We must never forget that the father is the final center point of the family!

Parents should never argue in front of their children. When a mother knows how to educate her children to obedience, even though the father's authority is marred by brutality and caprice, it will be a lifelong blessing for them. Girls who have such an image will be balanced. How quickly a woman can turn wild if she does not have or recognize an authority over her (→ 51f). The world around us can sing other songs, but we hold fast to the order of being (→ 39, 59f).

Everything God has created in human nature, in the being of father and mother, is not only an incarnate thought of God but also an incarnate wish of God (→ 56f). Therefore, "Behold the

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<sup>3</sup> An ethos refers to the "genius" of an institution or system, its ideal excellence. In this case Fr. Kentenich is speaking of a "culture" of family excellence and high-minded striving.

handmaid of the Lord!" the mother must be the source of balance in the family. The more she places the father in the fore-ground, the more united the family will be and the more the father will see to it that the mother is in the center of the family (→ 48-50).

23. The mother has the task of teaching her girls [and boys] the art of "bearing and enduring" [of leading by carrying responsibility and crosses]. This includes the art of enduring the occasional misuses of authority by the father (→ 66).

24. Child. The sense of mission of being a child depends largely on the way the parents treat the child, on how the father is truly a father and the mother a mother (→ 39).

1a) The root of this sense of mission is the awareness that I am a gift of the creative power of God and the procreative action of my parents.

1b) For Catholic children there is the further root that I share in the being and attitude of Christ as a Child.

2) This sense of mission is expressed in the dignity of being a child and in deeds of childlike love.

25. The "catacombs" of the group. We must not belong to those who are paralyzed by the oncoming hardships and say, "Forget about it. We can't do anything anyway." Did not St. Augustine give us the motto, "Do the best you can, and what you cannot do, pray for!"? (→ 5)

Don't just fold your hands in your lap and give up! If we accomplish no more than maintain our sense of orientation on the objective order of being, we will have done our part. Whether we meet with success or failure is not for us to decide. The greatest success may lie in failure as it liberates us from our self-centeredness and for the inpouring of God.

26. For millennia history proves that groups, clubs, and small organizations have frequently been the mother of revolution. Think of the renewal movement that Christ began with his little group of apostles! The ideal is to carefully educate a small elite group with the aim of reaching the masses. If we retreat into the catacombs of the group, it is to make plans to conquer and renew the world (→ 94f).

27. What characteristics should these groups have?

1) They must be creative.

2) They must stress the spiritual life and religious and moral education.

3) They must have world-conquest as their goal.

28. The "catacombs" of the prayer corner [the home shrine]. This is the special corner of our home where we like to go in prayer. It used to be called the "Lord God's corner." What is there? The cross and the picture of Mary. Here is where we get our strength.

2 2 2

29. Christ, the Great Educator, should be our example; Mary should be the co-educator who helps us—and those entrusted to our care—become more and more like Christ.

30. Christ, the Great Educator. Perhaps today, when we prepare ourselves for difficult times, it is the image of the Good Shepherd which especially speaks to our soul (→ 10f). The Father works creatively and effortlessly; Christ works with great effort. He gives his last drop of blood. He lets the education of the world—including my education and the education of the Catholic people—cost him something. It costs him a great deal! (→ 67f) It can all be summed up in the one sentence:

I am the Good Shepherd.

I am the Good Shepherd.

I am the Good Shepherd.

As an educator, I too must be the good shepherd.

31. We live the "virtues of the shepherd":

- 1) Shepherd's love,
- 2) Shepherd's loyalty,
- 3) Shepherd's care for his flock.

32. Mary, the Great Co-Educator with Christ. Once again Mary stands before us as the great educator of the nations and as our educator (→ 12-14). Our progress has been stopped in the battle against atheism and heresy. We have no other choice than to bring Mary into the fray. She must be the one who saves us from our helplessness!

- 1) Mary is the Great Adversary of Satan (→ 13, 31).
- 2) Mary is the Great Christ-Bearer.
- 3) Mary is the Great Sign of Unity. The new community of nations must have a head and a heart. Christ is the Head, Mary is the Heart! (→ 28)

33. The importance, aim, and method of Marian education for the coming difficult, catastrophic times is:

34. Importance. Marian education gives us:

- 1) A personal receptivity, openness, and sensitivity to the divine (→ 67f).
- 2) A great objective ideal who is an answer to the great anthropological difficulties of our time.
- 3) The guarantee that we can reach this ideal.

35. The ideal that Mary radiates is human dignity.

As the Immaculata she gives us the ideal of:

- 1) our nature in its unbroken state,
- 2) the natural and supernatural fullness of life,
- 3) courage in battle and certitude of victory.

36. Aim. The aim of Catholic education is the ability and readiness to independently and autonomously live the life of a child of God as a member of Christ (→ 96). When Marian education is integrated into the organism of Catholic education, the aim is broadened.

The aim of Marian education is the ability and readiness of the member of Christ and child of God to climb independently and autonomously  
from as perfect a Marian attachment as possible  
to as perfect a Marian attitude as possible, i.e. to as pronounced a Marian work- and lifestyle as possible.

37. The heartpiece of Marian education is an unaffected, heartfelt love for the Blessed Mother. This Marian attachment, this childlike love has a unique power to transmit life. When I have a childlike love for Mary, it is the best and surest way for me to acquire her attitude—to God, to life, to Satan, and to self.

38. The final aim of our spirituality is, of course, Christ and the Triune God (→ 80). Through Mary we become receptive to God and Christ. My Marian attachment will not only give me

a Marian attitude toward Christ;

it will also lead to

a Marian attachment to Christ, a glowing love of Christ!

39. Method. Now I only need to apply what I have said:

- 1) See to it that one idea-complex predominates, namely the Marian one.
- 2) Constantly work on the associations between word, truth and values, including between the partial value [e.g. Mary] and the central value [e.g. Christ and the Triune God]. Constantly devalue the opposing illusory values.
- 3) See to it that the great idea-complex becomes a subjective (and objective) value-complex.

40. If I am dealing with pupils who are religious from the outset, I take their religious interest as the starting point. I must see to it that their Marian devotion is an organic point of passage leading to the Triune God. If I am working with pupils whose motivation is ethical (for instance, a special love of purity), I point out how Mary is an example of purity (or humility, etc.).