

## 1951 Congress

Shortly before he went into exile, Father Kentenich held a Congress for leaders of the Schoenstatt Movement in which he enlarged on central ideas, many of which had contributed to misunderstandings with leading prelates in the Church. One section of this congress was devoted to

### ***The Idea of a Home***

#### Eleventh Talk

... On the first evening we stated that *the longing for a supernatural atmosphere is a practical form of our eternal homesickness*. Homesickness for eternity points us in the direction of our eternal home. We want to make this our starting point. ... Our subject is enlarged and the mind can enjoy the strong and brilliant light it finds in the idea of a home. Heart and will must also be enlarged: The *idea of a home* should come to life, as should *our sense for a home* and our *love for our home*.

There you have a constellation of thoughts. Proclaim these thoughts into the present-day time and world! Let this constellation shine into the darkness of our present times! What echo will return? It will be a confusing medley of voices and the responses will be many and varied. We should not find it difficult to pick out two essential elements from the confusion of voices that comes to meet us.

The first element: *the problem of a home*, to the extent that we mean it and want to depict it, is ultimately the *problem of our present day culture*. Hence, homelessness is the core of today's cultural crisis. Of course, homelessness within the almost infinite parameters as we understand it.

Home! The word and the life process it implies can be seen in a variety of contexts: We can speak of a local, spiritual and metaphysical home, or of a home for the mind, the soul and home as a place. We will later see what the individual expressions mean.

A second element: If we want to know that this homelessness in its extreme form is like, we need only think of a certain type of people today - the collectivistic people whose soul is marked by this comprehensive homelessness. Collectivistic people have been radicalized, they have been torn out of all God-willed bonds and deny them absolutely, and hence lose their individuality. They become part of the masses. We are justified in saying that they are people who are comprehensively homeless. All bonds have been dissolved in a radical way - their bonding to God, to the clan, to other people. This many-sided and complete homelessness can in a very justifiable sense be called the "punishment of hell". Hell essentially consists in total homelessness, in the antagonism of souls. Seen from this point of view, countless people already live to a great extent in a sort of hell. It is complete homelessness, the opposition of the soul to God and other people.

From here it should not be difficult for us to point people today towards heaven. Heaven essentially consists in the visio beata (the beatific vision, the vision of God), in the integration of the human soul with God, and hence at the same time with other human beings, to a mysterious depth. People who have made contact with one another here on earth will find this relationship deepened and perfected in the bliss of eternity.

*The whole of Western culture today is on the way to a comprehensive homelessness. That is to say, it is on the way to an earthly hell, not on the way to heaven, nor is it on the way to a sort of earthly heaven.*

“The crows cry out  
and hasten on whirring wings to the town:

It will soon snow -

Woe to those who have no home!”<sup>1</sup>

If a catastrophe is impending in nature, the animals are the first to sense it. That is when also the crows want to fly home from the fields, they want to go to human dwellings. Woe to that crow which does not find a place of safety in this catastrophe! Which crows are meant today? The people. The human masses. People have become restless because a cultural catastrophe is approaching. They “hasten on whirring wings to the town ...” What town is meant? It is obviously a mysterious town, because all earthly towns are increasingly drawn into the cultural crisis. The basic and fundamental human drive to have a home is not being answered, and so we hear that woe! “Woe to those who have no home!”

Homelessness is growing even in our own ranks. Foreigners who have flooded into our area as a result of war and post-war conditions have brought in foreign ways of thinking and a strange culture. Many of us may have become homeless. They may be able to repeat the word home, but they no longer understand the nature of a home. They may equate home with a full purse, with a certain high standard of living. However, these do not make a home. I can be at home and be hungry, I can be at home and be poor. I can have a full stomach and a full purse and be and become completely homeless.

What is our great task, what is the great pedagogical problem? The core of education today inside and outside the schools must simply be to provide a home, fostering a home. Homelessness and being deprived of a home has to be complemented and replaced, it has to lead up to the *re-conquest of a home, the idea of a home, the sense of a home, and love for our home*. Since we are in the thick of life today, surrounded by the problems and needs of today, we all know that repeated attempts are being made from all directions to re-conquer the home. Cultural evenings are organized. In the schools attempts are made to re-awaken a sense of a home in the children, their love for their home is deepened and the idea of a home is a central thought of the whole of education. Such attempts have been successful here or there, but failed elsewhere. Usually people lack an insight into the deeper and ultimate connections, as is usually the case today. This is where our work begins.

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<sup>1</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche: Isolation - a Poem

Did we not ask our Lady on the first evening to give me the insight I need to open up the roots of the problem today? Now my task is to answer two questions as far as possible from ultimate principles:

First question: What do we mean when we talk of a home?

Second question: What is the function of devotion to Mary in connection with the home, the thought of a home, a sense of home, love for our home? What is her function in the framework of the crisis of our culture today and in the work of overcoming it? (...)

Let us begin with the first thought: *What is the nature of a home?*

Of course, the idea of a home is always seen in a Catholic light. What transcends time will constantly re-appear. Catholic teaching will always prove the special character. Let us consider three definitions: a popular one, a philosophical one and a psychological one.

*Firstly:* the popular definition is this: *Where there is love, there you find a home!* Or: Where there is a father, a mother and brothers and sister, there you have a home. Where we feel secure, there we are at home!

A homeless person can be compared with a matchstick lying on the street that everyone can trample on.

We can distinguish between a home for the mind, a home for the soul or heart, and a place that is our home. What is the feeling of the people in this regard? The people always want something that has a soul or heart. So the popular definition or description of a home for the soul is *where souls (hearts) live in one another*. That is a home; not where souls live next to one another or even in opposition. This concept of a home for the soul or heart offers us at the same time the effect of a home. It gives us a feeling of security. A person who wants to arrive at a state of living in others' souls or hearts, and hence experiencing a home, may not simply want to be given security, they must also give it to others. The existential philosophers today tell us that the basic feeling of people is angst, fear. Catholics shake their heads and say: the basic feeling should be calm, security, a sense of being sheltered.

Allow me now to add a few thoughts on homelessness as a philosopher and psychologist. Homelessness means losing your soul, losing your character and losing your religion. Would you like to examine this statement to see in how far it is true? From this you may be able to understand to some extent what happens when people emigrate. I have personally visited many countries and have met many German immigrants. The majority cannot bear it, even when they are better off than here in Germany. It is too difficult to find a home in a foreign country - the possibility to live heart and soul with, for and in one another. That is why life is so difficult for immigrants. Would we be able to stand on our own in a foreign land? To have a home is quite a different thing from having a full stomach or a full purse. A home is something mysterious. Let us pause here and make comparisons in different directions.

*Horizontally:* *In popular terms a home is synonymous with the family.* The most fundamental and primary form of feeling at home is normally to be found in the family, the natural family. Here many questions arise. I again turn to the fathers and

mothers amongst us. Do my children find a home in my family? I ask myself as the husband: Has my wife found a home in me - and vice versa? Does my family know what it means to live heart and soul in one another, to feel secure in one another, to experience protection and security in one another? We know that this spiritual process costs many a sacrifice. The "family table" is and remains a table of sacrifice<sup>2</sup>. This is because living heart and soul in, with and for one another essentially includes being liberated from self-seeking. That is why there are so few sound families today. We are simply unable to get away from an infantile attitude. A sound family life presupposes the death of morbid self-seeking.

Let us look upwards: If the drive to be at home is a fundamental drive of human nature, as we have already indicated, we can understand why *our Catholic religion is at bottom a religion of the home*.

We find a home where there are a father, mother, brothers and sisters, as we said. Does not our Catholic guarantee that the living God, who created heaven and earth, is my Father? Is the word Father filled with meaning for us? Does it tell me something, or is it simply a word that can be blown away by the wind? Our Catholic faith confirms that we also have a Mother, a heavenly Mother; that we have brothers and sisters. We all know such truths well. We have passed them on often enough at home and at school. Why do they now sound so new to us? Because they have been placed in a different context. Why has religion too seldom become a home to us? Must we not say that most of the people today are either orphans or half-orphans? The orphans have neither a heavenly Father nor a heavenly Mother any more. They do not know God as their Father, nor do they know the "blessed among women" as their Mother. Hence their insecurity and the fundamental feeling of angst or fear. If the basic drive of the human soul, the drive to be at home, is not sufficiently answered or met in this world or the next, anxiety will grow. (...) Must we not say to many today that the Catholic Church has become cold. We have to fetch our Mother Mary home. Our love for Mary does not have a sufficiently solid foundation.

Countless Catholics become ill from homelessness because they do not know God as their Father. We have to fetch our Mother home! We have to fetch the Father home! That is no easy task. If we could use the Bible and dogmatic teaching to draw a satisfactory picture of our Father and Mother, our task would be easy. However, you need to recall all we said yesterday about a radical cure and a normal cure that are needed to help people today to become spiritually sound again. (...)

I would like to repeat one or the other key thought. The idea of the Father and Mother - God my Father, Mary my Mother - will normally not grip me inwardly unless I have had a very profound natural and subconscious experience of what it is to have a father and mother. It is not enough if only the superficial levels of the soul are filled with the thought of Father and Mother, but the deeper levels are not touched. Unless in such an instance someone experiences later what it is to have a father or mother, or if they do not have a contrasting experience or supplementary

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<sup>2</sup> A saying of Adolf Kolping (1813-1865), a German priest who became known as the "father of apprentices and journeymen". He started life as an apprentice shoemaker and then studied to become a priest. He worked for the moral renewal of young people, for a Christian ideal for families and social justice. The Kolping Movement has spread worldwide.

experience, the idea of the Father and Mother will meet up with difficulties. Please repeat these thoughts until you have the ideas clear. (...)

If we give all our associations a family character, we will help to overcome the cultural crisis of homelessness through a profound and comprehensive sense of being at home.

“You cannot have God as your Father if you do not have the Church as your Mother!”<sup>3</sup> That is to say, not just our religion, but our whole concept of the Church must increasingly become that of the family<sup>4</sup>. (...)

How blessed are they who have a home and can be a home for countless people! Father and mother! Do you not want to be a home in future for your spouse and for your children? Children, do you not want to be more of a home in future for parents, brothers and sisters? Millions of people who have become homeless today cry out for a home for heart and soul. We should be so deeply at home in God and - if necessary - also deprived of a home here on earth, so that we can offer a home to countless numbers of people.

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<sup>3</sup> Taken from Cyprian of Carthage, 6th century.

<sup>4</sup> The Second Vatican Council (1963-1965) saw the Church not just as the People of God, but as the Family of God<sup>5</sup> Heinrich Pestalozzi: How Gertrude Teaches her Children (1801)

Twelfth Conference

## THE ESSENCE OF A HOME

... What do we understand by a home?

We have distinguished between a popular, a philosophical and a psychological definition. We looked at the popular definition yesterday. Now let me say something about *the philosophical definition*. We will take up thoughts we touched upon yesterday and extend them in every direction. We are dealing with three thoughts: the essence, the development and the value of a home, of the idea of a home, of a sense of being at home, and love for our home.

First question: *What is the essence of a home?*

In order to reach our goal more quickly, let me give you a definition of a home right at the start and try to explain it. Linus Bopp offered this definition: *A home is that part of our physical, mental, psychological and spiritual living space in which we receive and give security, but which is at the same time a symbol of our security in God.*

After all we heard yesterday we should understand the definition immediately. Nevertheless it might be worth our while to reflect on it in order to grow more quickly into the world of values it contains. Try to visualize your home for a moment. Then imagine you are in a foreign country. What is awakened in you when you think of your home? A place! If you come from the country, perhaps you will be thinking of a house under pine trees, under trees, surrounded by a certain amount of land. How can I describe the place where I have been at home if I come from a town? A whole host of emotions, of emotionally coloured values are awakened when we think of our home. That is the original feature of a home - we experienced things in a way that touched mind and heart at our home.

Unless we have had such experiences, there is no home, or at least no profound home, a home understood at a deeper level. So it may be that my home, my house, is situated in a barren place - my home will speak to me because of the experiences I had there which touched mind and heart. It may be that when I travelled the world I saw many wonderful places that have inwardly inspired me, yet they never became my home. Why not? They are not connected with experiences that touched mind and heart.

A true home speaks to us constantly after we have spoken to it. While the picture of my home comes alive in me, I remember all the people I grew up with - father, mother, brothers and sisters, friends, neighbours, whoever it may be. These memories awaken a feeling of warmth in my soul. All who have been kind to me appear now before me, as well as all those who hurt me, although they meant it well with me. So a feeling of warmth is connected with the awareness of being at home, the experience of being at home. If, for example, I am overseas and learn to speak the foreign language brilliantly, the memory of my home awakens my mother tongue

in me and lets it speak to me. Think of all the associations we have with our mother tongue! Our joys and sorrows.

People who have travelled the world, who have mastered any number of languages and who have forgotten their mother tongue, suddenly begin to speak in their mother tongue when they are old and approach death. Or, for example, when people who have emigrated want to go to confession, they prefer to do so in their mother tongue. However, if they want to hide something, they prefer to speak a foreign language. Practices that have become part of us remain connected with our mother tongue even in foreign countries. So the owner of a pub adds up the accounts in his mother tongue. How deeply our mother tongue is connected with our home!

Heaven arches over our home if we have had a Catholic home. We have not just had I experiences that touch mind and heart in general at home, we have also had markedly supernatural and religious experiences.

Let me summarize: When we ponder on the picture I have drawn for you of a home, you will immediately pick up the three essential elements of a home: There is a physical home - a definite place. There is a spiritual, psychological home - it is characterized by experiences that touch heart and soul. Then there is a metaphysical home - our earthly home and the experiences we had there are a symbol of our heavenly home. These three elements constitute the essence of a home.

We have already spoken about God's law governing the world and have applied it to our bonding to persons. If a person has grown up soundly, they live in a whole net of bonds. By nature we are "nest-bound beings". Besides bonding to persons, there is also bonding to places - bonding to our home.

*Which law does the experience of being at home follow with regard to its metaphysical element?* In much the same way as bonding to persons follows the law of organic transfer and transmission. God transfers some of his qualities not only to people, but also to places - some of his kindness, wisdom, beauty. Law of organic transfer. The love that ultimately belongs to God, is transferred first of all to certain places, but in an organic way. When a person bonds to a place, they at the same time set up bonds to what the place symbolizes and ultimately to God. A home is associated on the level of experience - not of ideas - with security, protection, safety. So the earthly home is a symbol of our heavenly home, which will ultimately offer us perfect security, protection and safety.

We have shown why people today cannot come to terms with their picture of God and so are driven by insecurity and trembling fear. From the psychological viewpoint, the deepest reason is a lack of sound experiences with their father and mother, it is a lack of experiences that make up a true home. Please impress this on yourselves - we are not concerned here with ideas, in the first place, but with emotions. I must have experienced the love of my father, my mother, on an irrational level, otherwise I am not sufficiently secure, there is no sense of safety. It is essentially the same when I transfer these expressions to my home. Unless we have experienced a true home, human beings - not just man, but in a pre-eminent way woman - will remain a vagabond in life. The homelessness of people today can be found in a lack of

experiences that go to make a true home. Even if people today can call a place their own, they are often not at home. The experiences are lacking.

Homelessness is the core of the problems of our culture today, it is the shadow of our culture. So helping people to find a home is the great task placed before us. A home, looking to be at home directly in God alone does not solve the problem. We have to prepare a home in people at some place on earth for the people. Then the supernatural experience of being at home will be sound, it will then penetrate deeply into heart and mind. Unless heart and mind are touched, nothing is safe. There is not enough security and stability. Do you notice which direction our education has to take today? What interests us is the creation both of a natural and supernatural home. I might almost say that at present it is more important to create a natural home. The law of organic transfer will function automatically.

We hardly need to study the law of organic transfer. It usually occurs naturally, spontaneously and irrationally. Imagine a Catholic home. What do we think of when we think of a Catholic home? Of wayside shrines, of crucifixes here or there, of the Church at home, of our own home. What pictures are hanging on the walls? This is even more true of places of pilgrimage. What experiences did we have there? Alban Stolz points out that there are not just times, but also places, where special graces are given to us. Marian places of pilgrimage are specially important in this regard.

All these seemingly unimportant things at home are a symbol to us of God and the divine, of our supernatural home. When we have seen how family members, especially our fathers and mothers, took these religious things seriously, how they knelt down when they passed a crucifix and asked for a blessing, etc, when we saw that they were gripped by the reality of these religious symbols, the law of organic transfer and transmission worked automatically.

To summarize: *Our home is the place to which God has sent us from eternity into this temporal world, it is also the place from which we return to eternity out of this temporal world.*

Fathers and mothers, what can I say to you? Do not underrate these things, especially religious customs. Those of you involved in social work know how often attempts are made to awaken interest in the idea of a home. See to it that those who talk about a home, do not overlook the religious dimension, religious customs. People with a different mentality often suppress the idea of religious customs, and so an essential element of a religious experience of a home is missing. ...

What is the deepest reason for your attachment to Schoenstatt? It is the spiritual, graced experiences which you connect with Schoenstatt, either as a Movement or as a place. The talks that are given here do not on their own create this sense of being at home.

May our Lady bond us ever more strongly to herself. We are all of us a bit of a vagabond. Today all of us must again become inwardly more relaxed, we all need to be more deeply bonded and at home somewhere once more.

Let us now apply what has been said to our practical, everyday lives.



*A home comprises two things - a gift and a task. As a gift it is God's present to us. Theologians even uses expressions we would probably not have thought of using on our own. They call a home a sacramental. They call it a special gift and grace.*

A home is - and this is the important thing educationally - at the same time a serious and urgent and binding task, an extremely difficult task, especially today. The first thing we have to do is to ensure that all three elements of a home become a reality we can experience.

I do not want to speak in detail about bonding to a physical place. A hint should suffice. Those who have a say in the planning of new residences should see to it that huge blocks of flats are not favoured, but rather individual homes. These huge concrete blocks are hardly suited to promoting an experience of being at home in a child. How fortunate those people are who have their own home! The fathers of families should try to provide a home of their own for their wives and children, if at all possible. We need great goals. A home is a task.

However, I must also see to it that my children have deep experiences that touch their souls, in the first place those that are morally valuable - the feelings of gratitude, respect, or wonder. These things go to make up a home. Someone who does not possess these qualities cannot have religious experiences, cannot talk about a home.

We also have to see to it that the home becomes the vehicle of the religious reality, that the whole religious spirit of our children is connected with this place. We may not leave everything to the Church or Church associations. The parish priest, too, has to ensure that his people have religious experiences. The people need something they can hold onto, they need experiences. (...)

It is truly a difficult task to educate someone to have an awareness of their home, to learn to love their home. Those of us who travel around ... may not take this task too lightly. Do not think it is carried out by a few talks. We should bring up small groups who see it as their ideal to create a home - but with the scope we have described. We should not just see individual parts of a home, we have to create an organism that unites all three elements - the local, the physical and the metaphysical. This will be difficult, because people are inwardly so demoralised and torn apart.

In this context, let me raise another question. *When may I leave my home?* If circumstances rob me of the place, I cannot do anything about it. Let us presuppose that it depends on us, on our decision, to leave our home and go somewhere else.

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Allow me to draw your attention to another point. The same principle applies to what I have said about bonding to a place as to bonding to persons: *I may not attempt to lead it onwards (to God) too quickly.* For example, suppose someone is beginning to experience what he or she had missed earlier and now meets it in an educator. The usual pedagogical practice today likes to say: See to it that the bonding does not go too deep or lasts too long. Quickly lead them to mature childlikeness. Please

observe the natural family. How did God envisage education in a family? How long may a child enjoy primitive bonding in the natural family? Please try to understand this: It takes quite some time before vital bonds have been set up with another person.

The same applies to bonding with a place. Look at how long it takes before a small child has experienced the reality of his or her bed, until that spot in the house begins to speak to them. We have to reflect on these things today and get clarity on them. If this is led onwards too quickly, it is impossible for true bonding to take place. It takes time for true bonding to come about.

The same applies when people become bonded to me. It can be a burden to me. But it does not depend on me. I have to bear their primitive childlikeness for a long, long time. If you want to make people mature too quickly, you will achieve the opposite. All bonds and attachments will simply collapse and we will have created a collectivistic person.

If we come from a sound background from which we have brought these sound experiences, it is not so necessary for us to find a home in this way. However, if people have been deprived of a home from the beginning - and the numbers of such people is growing constantly - they need a longer time to put down roots.

There you see the great problem of our culture today. How are we to give people a home on the natural level to start with? Unless we manage to do this, we will normally not manage to give them a home in the supernatural world. There are exceptions, but the normal way is that people must in some way be bonded on the natural level with all the fibres of their soul. If they have not set up such bonds, their souls will be wounded in that spot. A person who has grown normally needs to be held by an organism of bonds - to places, persons and ideas. You should now ask yourselves: Where is the weak point in my character? Where can I still allow myself to be complemented and completed?

If you see the problem in this way, you will always enjoy your work as an educator. You will enjoy even the slightest growth.

If a religious community has to educate young people, how many crushes are awakened! Let them have their crushes! All that matters is that you yourself do not have a crush! If someone has never had a crush, whoever has not loved in an infantile way, will never be able to love with any depth or intensity.

These are very serious and difficult problems that are presented to your souls. They have to be seen and solved. If our culture today does not see them, they will be tangibly evident to everyone tomorrow or the next day.

It is a masterstroke to awaken the creative forces of the heart and to give expression to them in ourselves. People today who are so collectivistic in their attitudes, will find it very difficult to bring up a sound humanity. They find it hard to get reflexive clarity on these things which in the past we normally took for granted without having to spend much thought on them.

I think I have now answered the question as to the nature of a home. The light we are seeking will shine out more brightly when we ask how a home develops. If I know how a thing has developed, I know what it is.

## **The Development and Value of the Experience of a Home**

In the last conference we revealed the essence of a home. What we said yesterday at the start of our considerations will now become an increasingly filled reality. A home, in the way we see it, could be the core problem of education today.

*We want to ask how a place becomes our home, that is to say, how the experience of a home comes about.* This touches to some extent on the psychology of a home. To start with, let us create a foundation for our considerations. The best way to do so is to take up Pestalozzi's comparison with a spider's web<sup>5</sup>. By using this comparison he is trying to show that human beings are nest-bound beings. This is grounded in the essence of their character as created beings. Even God is (as it were) a nest-bound being, not out of weakness, but because he is the fullness of Life. This is because there are three Persons in God. From this you can conclude how deeply the we are social beings, since we are created in the image and likeness of the Triune God.

Human beings need to be at home in an organism of bonds. To the extent that we are integrated into this organism of bonds, we will be sound. This can be either an organism of bonds on the natural or supernatural level, and ultimately the interplay of these two organisms.

In the symbolism of the spider's web, the human being is compared with the spider. The spider spins its web with itself as the starting point, and lives in the centre of this self-made net. The spider can spin whatever and wherever it wants. Human beings are not as independent. Let us recall what has been said about the fundamental impressions taken in by human nature. Whatever comes from outside into the human soul settles on the ground of the soul and works there. It is not something I have within my power to determine. I cannot decide in every instance what I take into myself. I might almost say that the impressions we take in from outside ourselves are determined by fate. After my nature has taken in something on the irrational level, the law applies: *Quodquod recipitur ad modum recipientis recipitur* - what I have taken in, is taken in according to my character. We should call to mind in this context the whole field of prejudices - our irrational, rational and superrational openness to values.

Can you still make sense of these expressions? Whatever penetrates to my unconscious has been taken in irrationally. The effect of impressions and the values at work in our unconscious make up our irrational openness for values or our irrational perspective of interests<sup>6</sup>. They play a role in the development of our experience of finding a home.

In order to help you to understand what I am saying, let me use two expressions: a centre of associations, and a point of convergence. A home is the centre or focal point for the association of our ideas, and the centre or focal point where our feelings converge.

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<sup>6</sup> If we see our interests as a landscape, some are more pronounced than others, some things are more important to us than others.

*Home - the focal point for the association of our ideas.*

Father and mothers will repeatedly see these things in their own children. The first impressions of children have a twofold function. The first function is that these impressions provide the material which is later digested by the mind. The ancient law: *Nihil est in intellectu quod prius non feruit in sensu* - nothing can enter the mind which has not come through the senses<sup>7</sup>. The consequence for our practical lives is this: the first impressions taken in by a child provide the direction for the rest of that child's life. You can compare it to a barrel. It keeps the smell of whatever has filled it first. So the first impressions of a person can never be completely eradicated from their soul - the same applies to later impressions. So the first impressions provide the direction for the rest of their lives, because all the other impressions are associated and connected with these first impressions. The centre for the association of our ideas: the first impressions, movements, feelings associate themselves with all future concepts and ideas. How important, therefore, is the attention and care of parents for a child! How careful we have to be to prevent destructive, impure impressions entering the mind and heart of an infant and hence penetrating to the imagination!

Psychotherapists are of the opinion that many symptoms of psychological illness can be traced back to the impressions of earliest childhood. Whoever knows life today at every level, also knows that much that we absorb in theory later does not go in, because there are countless impressions that have already penetrated us and have not been sufficiently digested, because we have not been able to select them during our childhood. Our parents did not supervise us sufficiently. We have become what we are without any guilt on our part, perhaps through the guilt of our parents.

Think of all the impressions children today are exposed to! How many, many impressions are passed on by the many films they see. Hence the necessity to be on our guard when dealing with tiny children.

All of us have to ensure that we are surrounded by an untroubled and pure atmosphere. As a psychologist I may say: If we manage to give those entrusted to our care a pure and noble atmosphere in which to live, they will be immune against negative impressions. So, whoever has experienced a sound natural and supernatural organism of bonds, will be immunised against ugly impressions from outside.

Referring back to the second element of religious education, notice how important connection with a noble community, a supernatural, religious community is. It is this atmosphere that heals us. How often we have experienced that people who have lived in "the shadows" out in the world begin to blossom when they come into a community. How many people who are psychologically ill are healed spontaneously.

However, we have also to see to it - this is the second consequence - that our children do not change from one place to another too often. Today we treat people as though they are like we were when we were children. People today are often very different. It may be that some are still like that, but on the whole homelessness, as

the illness of our times, spreads further and further. If I naturally sit like a spider in its web, I can allow all sorts of things into me, but not if I have to spin a web - or nest - for myself for the first time as so many people of today have to do.

How much psychological illness you will find in people today, because they have not experienced a sound organism of bonds. That is why children should not change from place to place too often, if at all possible. I naturally know about the tragedy of life today with its repeated movements from place to place. We can only create a home in a definite place as far as it is possible today. (...)

When we think of our girls, we may not forget the woman is by nature far more bonded than man. It is natural that if our girls, especially if they are studying, have to deal constantly with ideas, they will easily become psychologically ill. That is why they cry out for some balance. Unfortunately they all too often find this balance on a lower level.

Can you now understand what is meant when we say that a home is a centre for the associations of our ideas? I received my first ideas at the place I call my home, and all the ideas that were added later have been associated with them. Whatever is not associated in this way has not been digested. It gets stuck somewhere and has still to be digested.

#### *Home - a centre for the association of feelings*

Let us now descend into the world of the unconscious and subconscious. Our home is the centre where our feelings converge. Pestalozzi described this process in his book "How Gertrude teaches her Children" (1801). The tiny infant has left its mother's womb. It lies in its cradle. A being bends down over the child and rocks it. The child experiences this being as a kind power. What does that imply? All the feelings of the child are awakened and concentrated on this being. That is how a child comes to know its mother.

Led me list a number of expressions in connection with the description of this process. In the child there is

- a transfer of feelings
- a flash-over of feelings
- a paralysis of feelings
- a stagnation of feelings.

This helps us to descend into the region of the subconscious which is still being examined today, and which has to be taken far more into consideration when we form characters or mould personalities<sup>8</sup>.

#### *Transfer of Feelings*

An example: someone approaches the child's cradle, whom the child will later admire as his or her father. The feelings which the child spontaneously associates with his or her mother are transferred to the father. If the child has come to know the mother as someone who is kind, this experience is transferred to the father. If the father is kind, and the child experiences this, then the child associates this second

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<sup>8</sup> Although Father Kentenich made use of expressions coined by psychotherapists, he consciously went his own way. In a Study he wrote in 1962 he distanced himself expressly from their one-sided ideas, which he examined critically.

kind person with the first kind person, the mother. However, if the mother is an unnatural mother, the association is not with kindness, but with fear and fright. If the mother sees it as her task to show her child through her own behaviour that she loves the child's father, there will be a transfer of feelings within the child. The mother draws the father into her own circle of experience and hence into that of her child. The feelings awakened in the child by the mother are transferred to the father. Later in life this feeling will be transferred from the first person I have met to all the other people who awaken my love in some way.

Collectivism sees the father only as the begetter, the mother as the nurturer of the child, not as that child's educators. The child is then handed over to the state. What a dreadful effect these ideas must one day have!

In addition there is a *flash-over of feelings*.

The first experience, the first person who awakened my feelings, may well disappear from my conscious experience. The feeling flashes over. I notice on countless occasions that it nevertheless lives on. For example, there is someone who studied years ago. The religion teacher awakened his emotions. He loved that teacher in a noble way. Later the teacher disappeared completely from his life.

Many, many years later he suddenly receives news of the teacher's death. Only then does his soul discover how deeply he unconsciously loved his religion teacher. That is a transfer of feelings, but also at the same time a flash-over of feelings.

If we understand the law governing the transfer of feelings, we will not find it difficult to understand that the normal way of devotion to Mary leads to love for God the Father.

If my natural mother loved the Mother of God, the Blessed Mother will be drawn into my experiences with my mother. It will not take long for my heart to love our Lady as well, because this is the effect of the law of the transfer of feelings. If a mother loves our Lady, her child will transfer his or her feelings to the Blessed Mother in the first years of life. Transfer may not take place too quickly. A child may love his or her mother passionately. The transfer of these feeling will take place organically, not mechanically.

The same applies to God the Father. If the natural father is drawn into the law of the transfer of feelings, it is easy to pass these feelings on to the heavenly Father. The experience that God is my Father will become a function to the extent that as a child I have felt safe and secure in the love of my natural father and mother.

You notice again and again - I now turn mainly to the fathers and mothers - that the core of reform is to be found in the family. Our fathers must take their task seriously and rather give up activities outside the family. They again need to see that their main task is in the natural family. (...)

You need to keep the problem of our culture today in mind. Our nature has become sickly. It was also sickly in the past, but not to the extent it is today.

There is also a type of *paralysis of feelings*.

These are poor people and they suffer under it. They never experience the feeling of bliss. Essentially they lack a feeling of tact. They have to reason everything out. Religion gives them no joy. Nothing makes them happy. Their feelings have dried up. This might be the expression of a sickly disposition, but it can often be traced back to the way they have been treated as children.

### *The Stagnation of Feelings*

We all experience this. How many religious people are led by God in such a way that they can keep their love untouched by earthly love. Everything that is not God - away with it! My God and my all! Such people often only arrive at a childlike love for God through a contrasting experience. They often keep their hang-ups to the end of their lives, they remain stilted, unless they experience later in life what it is to be a child.

As educators we have to be very careful in the way we educate. What a tremendous task we have! "Educators are people who love and who never give up that love!"

When I see a person with paralysed feelings, how easily I take on the role of Samaritan. How easy it is for me to pour oil into that person's wounds. How much patience I must have!

People who suffer under the stagnation of their feelings feel insecure in relation to every natural feeling. Feelings have been completely suppressed. Everything that God receives is the product of their will, but he does not receive everything, because their feelings have stagnated. Their feelings have first to be awakened through someone they can perceive through their senses. Normally we proceed to God via people, not from above downwards.

May I take it that the matters I have been presenting to you, however imperfectly, have been understood to some extent? Whoever does not see life before them, will not be able to understand the full implications of these problems.

Let me summarize: The development of the idea of a home sees the home as the centre and focal point for the association of our ideas, and as the point where all our feelings converge.

A number of questions have been raised and need to be answered.

First question: If I have a person before me who had an unnatural father and perhaps a prostitute for a mother - forgive me the harsh expression - what will become of them?

If we have grown up in a sound way, we often feel that we are morally on a higher plane. We should be humble. What would have become of us if we had not had good and noble-minded parents? I think I have already given you a theoretical answer to this question. Think for a moment on all that has been said about later experiences, contrasting experiences: a radical cure and the normal cure. You really need to study these thoughts. You will find an answer to any number of questions raised today.

Do you still remember what was said about a good example? If I do not manage to bring about all that has been said in its classic form, there is still one thing I can do: allow the creative force of good example to have an effect. I can allow a supernatural and transfigured atmosphere to emanate from myself. "I feel pity with the people ..." (Mt 15,32; Mk 8,2). If I have such a poor person before me, there is no need to pass judgement on them. What should I do? First digest everything that this poor creature has experienced and allow it to pass through my heart...

We must allow ourselves to be influenced by the whole organism of thoughts and study them as a whole, so that we can find an answer to the questions as they present themselves.

There is another problem: "Well, I was able to have religious experiences at one time. I grew up in the normal way. However, I now have a certain inability to experience religious things."

You are mistaken. Let me give you two answers. Let us presuppose that there is a certain cooling of your feelings or a paralysis of your feelings: I am no longer able to take in religious things. All I know is dryness upon dryness. Let me tell you: Wait a while! What you experienced at one time - I am now speaking as a psychologist - will come alive again later. I have already pointed out to you that there are impressions that sink down into the unconscious, but they come alive later. ... For example, when I am older and had a good mother when I was a child, how much longing I feel for her later in life! The original experience awakens to life again. The same will happen here. That is the first answer: Even if things are as you say, the experiences will awaken to new life again later.

The second answer: Do you think that if we are striving seriously for holiness, God will grant us blissful feelings all the time? If we want to belong completely to God, if he wants to possess us completely, the time will come when God will place us on the operating table and take away our feelings - the feeling that we are good, that we are behaving well, that we are religious. Usually he does this if we have given ourselves to him completely. Indeed, the time will come when God will see to it that we are deprived of our good name, that our passions are whipped up to the roots of our being, that great floods of filth break through. Why? We have to learn to free ourselves for our selves.

A picture: A child in its mother's womb is united with every fibre of its being with the life of the mother, although it is not aware of this on the level of its feelings or intellect. That is the state I am referring to. Later, when I am mature, it seems as though I have lost the joy of my feelings, but every fibre of my being is vitally connected with God. Although I feel unhappy, I am nevertheless sheltered in God's embrace. One picture out of many ...

What I am stressing now will only be understood by those who want to become holy educators, who not only want to educate others, but also themselves. We know that a number of women saints experienced how their lowest passions were whipped up on such occasions. When this state subsided, they asked our Lord: "Where were you?" To which he replied: "Deep in your heart."

These are two very different states: if, when we are older, God takes us in hand and we have to do without such feelings, or if we have grown up without feelings during the normal course of our education.



A final question: We have attained an ideal state - perhaps we will reach it one day - when our earthly home has become our heavenly home as well. In this case the earthly home is a symbol of the heavenly home. It is not impossible that when the earth is transfigured at the end of time, we will find our heavenly home here. (...)

You should now ask yourselves: What can I do to offer a home to all the people God has given me? If I cannot offer them a place, then a person. Everyone should be able to find a home in me. In order to be able to do this, I must have a home in God. If God has not given me a home in my developmental years, if I had to do without a home, I will consume myself all the more selflessly, joyfully and sacrificially to offer as many people as possible a home through my being, my life and my love.

*The last question remains: What is the value of a home? Wouldn't you like to find the answer to this question yourselves?*

To be without a home is to be without a soul, without a character. We may also not allow ourselves to leave our home or lose it. This does not mean I must remain at the place, that is not necessary.

Can you understand that if someone is driven out of their home, it can cause a severe illness? Displaced people! Think of the history of Christianity. Bishops were driven out of their dioceses. Such an unjust punishment can hurt very deeply ...

I must see to it that I have a home forever. Then, according to the law of transfer, I live in God in such a way that my earthly home remains and is always present even though I am never there. It is the same when we are bonded to people - if I love people wholeheartedly and have taken them up with me to God, the home remains even if I never see them again!

Homelessness means a loss of character, a loss of morals, a loss of one's soul, loss of religion. That is why we have to solve the problem of the home as one of the core problems, the central problems of our culture today. Rooting people in a home is the heart and centre of our entire work of education.

*Fourteenth Conference*

## **LOVE OF OUR HOME AS THE FUNDAMENTAL FORM OF A SOUND SELF-LOVE**

The psychological definition sees the home in relation to the soul or psyche. So we can describe our emotional bonding to our home as follows: *Love of our home is the fundamental form of a sound, needy, organic self-love which is capable of and needs to develop.*

So love of our home is part of love for ourselves. We have even said that it is a form of needy self-love. Love can be needy, natural and supernatural. The meaning of educating people to love their home is to allow needy self-love to grow slowly to become natural and supernatural. Whoever wants to know more about this should study the third part of "Warkaday Sanctity". This threefold love is described there in an original way. When people are striving for holiness, it is always important, especially today, for them to take not of needy and natural love. In religious circles you can also find psychopaths because they have no antenna for needy and natural love. They detach the supernatural from the needy and the natural and become ill. Former generations which were substantially sound could bear this more easily. People today, who are always poised over the abyss, have to be treated with greater care.

Is my love of a home a fundamental form of needy love. If it is only natural-supernatural love, it will lack warmth.

What about our self-love? Are we allowed to love ourselves? We have to differentiate between self-love and self-seeking. We have to oppose self-seeking.