

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

Excerpts from

Desiderio desideravi (1963)

Volumes 1 to 4

by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2006, 2007, 2010
(some items from translations by Mary Cole)

VOLUME 1

January 1, 1963 (Talk 2)

DD 1, 28-49

{37} In the end it is always the same: Christ wants to be reborn; Christ wants to relive his life, his life of suffering, but also his victorious life in all of salvation history and world history. Yesterday we recalled how our formulation unites both views.

But what I may still add – I think that I should now do it for the first time and later come back to it often, because for us how we stand to the *Mother of God* is a question of survival – when we use the word “Christ,” the other word [“Mary”] always resonates with it. Christ... If I therefore say “the victorious bringing home of the world through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father,” [where everything] here on earth [comes home] to the Father (and the more grim the situation, the more dangerous it is...) – then the main accent is {38} not that all things are perishing, but always that there is a more accelerated “bringing home.” Do you see the positive here?

According to this, even *death*, whether we look at it this or that way, is again and again a means to life. Behind death is life, life! What kind of life? Whether we say the life of Christ, whether we say being gripped by or totally surrendered to the Father... the meaning of death and of sacrifice is always life. And we would do very well to implore this attitude for ourselves. (...) The meaning of all of this is life, is the Resurrection as in the life of Christ. The life of Christ, not only the poor, humble, and scorned – the crucified Christ – but also the glorified life of Christ, the risen life of Christ should repeat itself in world history, in the history of our personal lives, and in the history of our Family.

Of course to hear something like this is very nice. But I think we ought to say to ourselves, implore for ourselves the grace, that our world [that is,] what we are saying about it, should become our world. We then gain a standpoint, an unshakeably firm standpoint which

nonetheless is not swayed by natural events. For instance, when we think of the priest Hubert Mohr¹ – I don't need to tell you much about him—he once had this standpoint. {39} But it seems that he was extraordinarily idea-oriented. What caused him to falter was the fact that these things did not dawn on him as reality, as a supernatural reality, they did not penetrate him deeply enough. At least this is very well possible. After all, there is an old saying, *corruptio optimi pessima*². When someone who has stood very high falls, he falls very low. Therefore, incredibly much depends on us living and swimming in this world of the otherworldly, supernatural world, simply as our atmosphere. As the birds are in the air and the fish in the water, is how we must swim in this supernatural world, in this otherworldly reality.

And may I repeat? Where the order of salvation is concerned, we now see in every area of life again and again the *mission of the Blessed Mother*. The Protestant theologian Asmussen³ once wrote the lovely words – it must have been during the Marian Year: We must not imagine the order of redemption – let us say instead the supernatural order, which for all practical purposes is the order of redemption – as an isolated, mechanically constructed edifice. It is an organism, and everything depends on every inhabitant of this organism finding the place foreseen for him by God, and that everyone is viewed in his [right] place and treated as the order of things expects

¹ Former Pallottine who studied in the Pallottine seminary in Schoenstatt and belonged to the Cenacle Generation of Schoenstatt priests and Pallottines. After World War II he was a prisoner of the Soviets and then studied in Moscow. He fell away from the priesthood and the Catholic faith and married. As a Communist author based in East Germany he wrote two “exposes” of the Catholic Church in the early 1960s: *Das katholische Apostolat: Zur Strategie und Taktik des politischen Katholizismus* [The Catholic Apostolate: On the Strategy and Tactics of Political Catholicism] (Berlin, 1962), which included a critique of Schoenstatt, and *Katholische Orden und deutscher Imperialismus* [Catholic Orders and German Imperialism] (Berlin, 1965).

² Latin, literally: corruption causes the best to fall the worst. In English: The bigger they are, the harder they fall.

³ Hans Asmussen (1898-1968), *Maria, die Mutter Gottes* (1950).

and demands. He then applied it to Our Lady, he as a Protestant theologian. There is surely nothing to be doubted about his principle. After all, it is a concrete application of what we as Schoenstatters have always followed from the beginning: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. The objective order of being is the norm for the order of our living. The being determines what we “should” and what we “want.” As a result, it is not as if we simply or primarily based things on our needs, that is, that the soul has a certain need, a certain inclination to the Blessed Mother. No, that is not the starting point; the starting point is the objective order of being. And this objective order of being – this is very significant – {40} is true for everyone, be it men or women, young or old. Whether I have a need to attach myself to Our Lady – I don't know, should I say a “mother need,” a need for complementation? Even earlier, in my younger years when I was personally tossed about by fierce struggles of faith, I always said: in this regard I never had any difficulties. For me it was always self-understood: if God is God, then he knows in all of his institutions to take into account the human nature that he created. And then it is self-understood that the role of Our Lady in the plan of salvation gives an answer to special needs of our nature, here the nature of man and there the nature of woman. But I do not cling to her because such needs are fulfilled this way. Why do I cling to her? Because I know the outlines of her position in the objective order, in the objective order of being.

Now it is this way; this is now the great question: What does this position look like? I already touched on this last night. For me the Blessed Mother is simply an appendix [=extension] of the divine order of the world or – allow me to repeat the other expression – the entire order of salvation has a Marian modality. The loving God has seen to it that Our Lady is in intimate relationship with the entire order of salvation.

Yes, in this way we must not overlook: how did it come about that the life process to which Schoenstatt owes its life is a covenant of love with the Blessed Mother? Why not a covenant of love with God? Why not a covenant of love with Christ or with the Holy

Spirit? But for us it is self-understood: if it is a covenant of love with Our Lady, it is also a covenant of love with the Triune God.

Covenant of Love! What does this covenant of love with the Blessed Mother look like in the overall plan of salvation? Let us notice three expressions: First this covenant of love is an *expression* of the covenant of love – let me be direct – with the Triune God. But not only an expression, but also and at the same time a *means* of keeping faithful to this covenant of love with the Triune God as perfectly as possible. Therefore: expression and means. I think I must now repeat the last word: [It is a] *safeguard* of the covenant of love with the Triune God.

{41} I don't know if I can tell you so clearly how I carried this inside of me all through the years. In earlier years I could often say how frequently I had decided: Next year I will try to lead the whole Family deep into the mystery of Christ. I grew up in a time when the mystery of Christ was not under attack. It was self-understood, was it not? Every Christian clings to Christ. As a result, I always presupposed, also when working with our Sisters, that this is solid, this will not be shaken. But what is lacking is, well, what the loving God wants to give to today's world. You must naturally hear that what I am telling you is not a dogma. Of course, if I want to build my life only on dogmas, then I might as well quit. But it is so clear that the loving God wants to round out the feeling and thinking of the entire order of salvation today in order to place the position of Our Lady more strongly into the foreground. You see, therefore [I say it] again: a covenant of love with the Blessed Mother is an expression of the covenant of love with the Triune God, is a means in order to give shape to this covenant of love with the Triune God, and is a safeguard.

Perhaps this helps you understand that through all the years I actually hardly ever came away from Our Lady. This was the thought that came to me again and again when I noticed: Yes, you really ought to do that [=give a course on Christ]. But as soon as I wanted to start giving the course, I always sensed that the things weren't secure enough [in the attachment to Mary]. In one way or another it

must be secured. If the Blessed Mother has this position, like I just told you, you will see how justified this is. And, oddly enough, I never managed to give a course focused on Christ. I said something about it every time. But do you understand why? It was secure. The times lived from this, did they not? For me the saying is always: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. What {42} is it that must now be stressed above all? And if this is true... and I think it is true. What is true? The Blessed Mother is truly an expression. For if it is not a faith-filled relationship, then it is a relationship with a dead woman, is it not? Of course, I can do that with, I don't know, anyone [you might name]. If I think in a Catholic way, it is self-understood: Everything supernatural is an expression of the covenant of love with Christ, with the Triune God, is a safeguard and a means. Then you will understand of what importance it is: our covenant of love is first of all a covenant with Our Lady, in a direct and tangible manner.

I think I would have to develop this thought here a little; I hope to do so later, too, depending on the needs [of the tertianship]. Right now I certainly don't need to exhaustively discuss all of Mariology with you. You see, it is not as if I had an intellectual grasp of everything back then. Even though I rarely say anything essential today that I didn't already say in the past. That, too, is a rare phenomenon. It would almost seem as if there were hardly any growth [with me], from the beginning on I had the fullness: *gratia plena*. [But we] don't want to put it that way. But [there was] nonetheless a certain self-understood fullness, wasn't there? It is this way – for years I can say it to you with intellectual clarity – for centuries Mariology in the Church has been working with a certain – I think I may call it – organic onesidedness on the fundamental relationship between Mary and God. You also see that all the dogmas which we know concern themselves with the fundamental relationship of Mary with God: the likeness of God, mirror of the glories of God, Immaculate Conception. Fundamental relationship with God, with Christ – how deep it was! Yes, *propter honorem Christi* [for the sake of the honor of Christ] the Blessed Mother should and had to be immaculately conceived. So it is with Virgin of virgins and all that we know about Our

Lady. A great line [of thought].

And in modern times? To be sure, I just told you: with organic onesidedness. It is not as if the second line in her life were not also considered – in some times more, in others less. But for several decades, perhaps even a century, the Blessed Mother stands before us more in her fundamental relationship to us, not to God.

{43} And you see, Schoenstatt took this up in a unique way from the very beginning. If you consider the Mariological truths which have been elaborated in the Universal Church since 1914, it is always again and again: Our Lady in her relationship with us. If you want to contrast these [two lines, they are]: Mother of Christ, Mother of God – and our Mother, her relationship to us.

(...)

Now you will ask me, how did I personally always maintain that. Then I must first point out to you things which I have said many times in the past: We are – nor did I ever want that, not that I did not have an interest in dogmatics – not a dogmatic movement, not {44} a philosophical movement. This is not the same as saying we have no dogmatic truths or don't know any dogmatic theology. Secondly, we are not a psychological movement. Again, this does not mean, of course, that we don't have anything to do with psychology. Nor does this mean that we could not have men in the Family [who are experts in these fields. But the] Family as a whole can never pursue heretical⁴ allures. Do you understand why not? The individual may do it, but not the Family. Why not? Because it is not its task. What is our task? What do we want to be? A liaison officer between all the sciences and life.

(...)

{45} I hear that you have the course on the “Marian Priest”⁵. You must just make sure that you don't get wrapped up in too much

⁴ Presumably meant in the sense of contrary to Schoenstatt's primary focus.

⁵ The retreat course which Fr. Kentenich gave for priests in 1941.

study⁶. Unless you lack clarity on something, then of course you must study and not let loose until you have reached clarity, especially in questions about our Mariology. You can understand why, can't you? If the entire life process revolves as founding act around the Blessed Mother... It is clear, if you cannot accept that, it will be impossible for you to grasp the spirit of the family.

I can read to you again what Father General [Moehler] recently wrote, in June. The question was asked, whether one {46} could accept as selection point – *conditio sine qua non* [a non-negotiable condition] – for acceptance and for education, that someone believes – we used to call it the “secret of Schoenstatt” – in our covenant of love. (Answer:) No, no, it cannot [be insisted on for admission to the Pallottines]. But for us [as Schoenstatt Fathers] it would have to be a condition for acceptance. Anyone who cannot believe or hold fast to it – I say it expressly: the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother – clearly does not stand on the firm ground of the essential structure, the essential structure of the life process, which is viewed to be the beginning, the root, the source of the entire lifestream. It is clear that it cannot be demanded there [for the Pallottines], but *we* must be able to demand it. After all, so much depends on us having the correct understanding of this.

(...)

{47} You see, this was always my thought which later penetrated our whole history: However, my contribution – it is not as if I had no interest in scholarly presentation – should be [to show] in and through Schoenstatt that *history proves what great power Our Lady has* – the victorious power of the Blessed Mother in and through Schoenstatt – so that Schoenstatt's history is a tangible proof of her power to educate and lead. This is how it was from the beginning. In reality

⁶ Fr. Kentenich's concern is for the process which the participants need to make in the tertianship. The primary focus is not on study, but on overall spiritual and personal growth.

these are things which are always worthwhile: when I know how something came about, then I also know {48} what it is. In this way I will be able to also say: Schoenstatt is undoubtedly a chosen work and instrument in the hand of our dear Lady – and now comes the great purpose – for the Marian transformation of the world in Christ from Schoenstatt.

January 1, 1963 (Talk 3)

DD 1, 50-73

{55} First: When I think of the reality of the covenant of love, I must stress again and again: with the Blessed Mother! You must always hear that quite exactly. Of course, if you correctly hear, you will hear everything which resonates along with it. It is so important that we must declare: If we are called, called through Pallotti, to call to life the world confederation, then it is only possible on the basis of the covenant of love. It is always the same {56} thought: Glorify yourself and glorify us! And if you are the Interceding Omnipotence and you want to glorify our family in this way – it is always the same – nothing is so high that we cannot or could not or should not reach out our hand for.

Second thought: But if one understands by Pallotti's guiding image to be the idea of apostolate in universality, that is, in the way one otherwise understands universal apostolate; if one keeps in mind that we don't take any vows, then I think I must say with all due deliberation: I suppose one could try it without the covenant of love. But I wouldn't dare it. If you think of the context – universal apostolate, that is, apostolate in every imaginable area, without the strong bond of the vows – if it is not backed up by some other power, a tangible power, I would consider it very difficult.

Third: But if one sees the goal, the guiding image, [only as] an immediate, concrete task – let's say, such as the Redemptorists see parish missions as a task – then I think we must admit: We could do just fine staying the way we are and how we have developed, without the covenant of love, [by which I always mean the covenant of love] with the Blessed Mother.

I may take these thoughts a little deeper, already so that they make a permanent impression on us. If you imagine how back then [April 1951] I stood before the gates of the Holy Office, full of disappointment! If you know me a little bit, then you know how much I looked forward to standing there at last – because I wanted to present the [Schoenstatt] Work to the Church. And I naturally

presupposed that it would take place exactly according to the way I always do things: with a singular scientific attention to detail and conscientiousness. After all, it was my conviction and position that what we are dealing with is a truly great work for the well-being of the Church. And you know how the Church reacted, how Trier reacted. It is always this way – if I may use an image – of the great vision of the entire movement not so much as the slightest word.

(....)

{57} In such moments you will always find me totally calm. If I ever get upset, all you need to do is put me in some danger and you can be sure that I will become calmer than even someone who is always in bed. Why? You may now understand it better. Because then I have only one task: [Mary,] I glorify you. It is a simple task, don't you think? You should make a note of it for yourself when you, too, face great personal or family crises. No matter what, my reaction is: I will glorify her and take care of her!

How simple a solution this is! We don't even need to be especially intelligent; nothing could be simpler. Of course it presupposes a genuine, supernaturally anchored trust, a deep conviction [in the reality of] the other world.

And then she will take care of everything else. Of course, Our Lady was given rough treatment and she may treat us the same way; she will give us a rough treatment just as she received, and was made to wait long periods of time and perhaps she will also make us wait a little longer now, but it does not matter. If the fundamental contours of the plan of God are clear, then we will have nothing better to do than to remain true, again and again, to this objective and verified truth.

January 3, 1963 (Talk 7)

DD 1, 141-165

{142} Perhaps I can summarize what we discussed this morning in another way. The Blessed Mother *is really my Mother*. [I mean this] not only morally or in the sense of a maternal feeling toward me. Really my Mother – really the Mother of God. Alone to be able to place two such expressions side-by-side – what a wonderful essence! It reaches upward, reaches downward, reaches to the sides. Now it would not be correct to say she is in some way infinite, but rather, has a certain *endlessness*. When we also remember what theology teaches us – that God's words are deeds – for instance, when Christ formally assigns Mary to be our Mother (cf Jn 19,26f), then words are deeds, are realities. From this we can draw immediate conclusions about how endless her motherly sentiments, thinking, and concern must be.

If I extend the thought – it is a thought which I personally like to reflect on in silent hours – it starts like this: Because she was conceived without sin, her heart is completely and totally feminine and completely and totally maternal. You may have scarcely been able to guess the vast ramifications of this simple, unassuming sentence! There God must give you deeper insight some day. What riches are to be found in the heart of a woman! This is something we normally do not guess, even if we had a wonderfully good mother. There are treasures there, endless riches. If this is true – you must think about this, alone on the natural level – then how tender must the maternal heart of Mary be, because she is free from original sin!

This is the thought that I like so much to reflect on: Our Lady is now glorified in heaven, including her body, which also means her heart. {143} And when we imagine such a thing: a motherly heart which is already endlessly rich, indeed rich not only toward me, individually – “My Queen, my Mother...” – [but also to the whole world...] and then [I] consider how this heart is now enthroned, glorified, in heaven, and what influence this heart has on the heart of God, then we must admit: This can have a very profound signifi-

cance, can be very decisive, if we are convinced that the Mother of God is really my Mother. I am now deliberately saying *my* Mother. Of course we cannot restrict it too much; after all she is *our* Mother, too.

January 4, 1963 (Talk 8)

DD 1, 166-190

{180} “Under the protection of Mary we want to educate ourselves...” The Blessed Mother must do it! We were obviously thinking of her here as a co-educator. You know the story. Because the young men first had to learn to supplement the education they received from others with their own self-education, it is the primary thrust: “We {181} want to *educate ourselves*...” This is how the great ideal is presented. In reality it is the ideal of the new man: “...to become firm, free, priestly personalities.” This was 1912 in October.

Two years later came a twofold insight. The first insight: Self-education alone doesn’t take us very far. If the Blessed Mother is not made more strongly a part of the family as educator, then we must expect that we will always be unfinished and unpolished. Hence the change from “Mary, we want to do it under your protection” to the strong change in the Founding Document: “No, *you* must take our education into your hands!”

And then the simple, popular idea... At some later moment I think I ought to speak with you about this in more detail in the context of Nazareth and Bethlehem, that is, the context of the origins of Christianity. Then you will see that this is all so incredibly simple. It presupposes a native humanity which is not at all complicated. This is how it was here. The plain, simple idea: We want to bring Our Lady down from heaven. How simple a thought! It is naturally an idea which is congenial to Christianity, and which [became more vibrant], especially later [on in Church history]. At that time we were not at all familiar with these things, such as all the apparitions which had taken place here and there⁷; or rather, we knew of them in general, but didn’t pay any attention. Now all of these Marian appari-

⁷ No doubt referring to the most famous Marian apparitions of the 19th century: Paris, Rue du Bac (Miraculous Medal, 1830), La Salette (1846), Lourdes (1858), Pontmain (1871). Fatima (1917) only took place after the founding of Schoenstatt in 1914.

tions of modern times always emanate from the thought: Our Lady comes among us, she descends in a certain sense from heaven, wants to dwell in our midst. The same thought was at work here [in 1914]: The Blessed Mother wants to be drawn down here into our Shrine, and here she must take over our entire education. Please reflect a little on this idea and how simple the whole process was.

Of course, you will then say, “How was it possible for you [=Fr. Kentenich] to think this way? You have told us that you had so many complications [in your thinking as a young man] – skepticism upon skepticism!” And yet, this totally simple, unaffected way of thinking which also lives in the totality of the faith consciousness, {182} of the awareness of faith of the Church [also lived in me]. For everything which we know from the theology of pilgrimage places goes in exactly the same direction. The Blessed Mother wants to dwell among us and wants to continue her work, especially her formative work, her educational work among us.

Now there naturally came, as you already know, what is also a very simple idea, [the article] that a famous lawyer had persuaded Our Lady through his own efforts to come down [to the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Pompeii]. I am deliberately saying this in a very simple and uncomplicated way. This immediately awakened the thought in me: If it worked for him, if such a thing is possible, should it not be possible [for us] to draw down the Blessed Mother as educator? To be sure, other considerations were also in play which were also expressed very frequently: As long as the youth is together with me, I can do everything to protect them and lead them on an upward path. But how long does it take before they will be in all kinds of other hands! But if I managed to place them into the hands of Our Lady and could persuade the Blessed Mother to take their education into her hands, you see, then I could (...) “sleep like a baby.”

January 4, 1963 (Talk 9)

DD 1, 191-215

{196} Of course, I could now reach into the past and explain to you how my personal relationship to Mary has been since my childhood. It was always the same: I have held fast to her with an almost spontaneous (*köhlerhaft*) faith – which is quite typical of me and has been the case ever since [I was a boy]. When I grasp something, then it does not take long for me to carry it out. It is therefore not as if I experience a long period of mental torment. Once I grasp it, I carry it out. (...)

Now at the very least you could say to me: But how does this fit together with what you have said here and there, including what you can read in the *Apologia pro vita mea*, about my difficulties, my difficulties of faith? Well, I have already explained it many times: {197} Its effect was not at all on any one truth, therefore not the Marian truth either. The main struggle was not primarily something religious at all, but the question: How can I know the truth? Is there truth at all? It is therefore the skepticism which was very much fed by the academic thinking found in the years of my youth. In that regard I, too, am a child of my times. In the positive and negative sense of the word. I don’t know if I am expressing this right, but I think, if I explain [it would be like this]: this interior intellectual struggle, this uncertainty about the ability to know the truth barely touched what I believed. I do not want to say – did not touch – but *barely* touched.

(...)

{199} I don’t want to say that my faith was untouched, but it was so minimal that it would be hard for me to say how far. At the very least I can say: This intellectual frost clouded the warmth of faith, the tenderness of faith. (...)

I often later described it this way: What I personally experienced was, of course, a kind of psychological compulsion. And how many

compulsions there are everywhere today! Of course, the object [of the compulsions today] is [often] different than mine. But with maturity a person can take the essential lessons of one compulsion and apply them to other compulsions. To add perhaps just one more thing: I, of course, was making the mistake that many make: I demanded and expected a metaphysical certainty. You see, a philosophical-metaphysical certainty about the fundamentals of the faith does not exist. Much less when it comes to the individual truths!

In addition, I had an unusual outlook on life. When someone suffers from precisely such problems, when someone – perhaps I can put it this way – is *fanatical about the truth*, not only to the point of defending it everywhere to his utmost and being ready to give his all for it, [but also] to the point of seeking such an exaggerated degree of certainty that he wants metaphysical certainty in all things, then such a one simply has a tendency to always observe life. And details we all take for granted then became for me, humanly {200} speaking, a big problem.

There was once a fellow seminarian, an upperclassman. He was quite talented. But when he talked, I think at least 99% was untrue. There are such persons who are fine conversationists, but are making up everything. Perhaps I'm exaggerating a bit, but you get the point. In any case it became a problem for me. I thought: For heaven's sake, he can talk brilliantly about dogma, but does he really believe? Does he believe that what he says is true? You see, it was a kind of *Zwang* [compulsion].

(...)

{210} There you will find, among other things, an extensive study on the nature of the Marian Sodality⁸. I would highly recommend

⁸ Father is referring to the *MTA magazine* (magazine of the Schoenstatt Sodality starting in 1916) and the reprint of this particular talk in Fr. Ferdinand Kastner, SAC (ed.), *Unter dem Schutze Mariens* (Limburg: 1st edition, 1939), here

that you read it. I don't know if I will get back to it. That is about the Marian Sodality as I saw it. (...) {211} You really ought to read it. I put it in the mouth of Alfons Hoffmann, or [rather,] had him give it⁹. You will immediately see that I was the one who shaped the material (...).

Things went even deeper. It was in 1917, still during the war. Here you will see how much courage there was! There was at that time, as far as I know the details, the first conference on the pastoral care of youth. Mosterts¹⁰ was the motor behind it. Professor Rademacher¹¹ – some of our family from Cologne should still remember him – had to give a talk on Marian devotion and the youth. I don't really know how that {212} came about. In any case, I was in contact with him. I made the first year of the *MTA* available to him. He used the material and evaluated it in scientific fashion. And afterward, when it was published (...) some people expressed concerns: Such a thing can hardly be published because the effect of the whole devotion on the boys was “not homespun enough.”

Can you still remember the answer which I gave? You really ought to read it¹². Perhaps I will come back to it. Sometimes a few spoken words quickly make [a historical text] come alive. I wrote on the psychology of Marian devotion. You will therefore see that I had clarity about all these things from the start.

cited according to the 3rd edition (1940), p. 180-200.

⁹ As a talk to the Schoenstatt Sodality.

¹⁰ Fr. Carl Mosterts (1874-1926), pioneer of Catholic youth work, general director of the Federation of Catholic Youth in Germany.

¹¹ Fr. Arnold Rademacher (1873-1939), professor for fundamental theology in Bonn.

¹² *Unter dem Schutze Mariens*, p. 254-260.

January 5, 1963 (Talk 10)

DD 1, 216-239

{216} My dear confreres!

After everything we discussed yesterday, a great, wide field lies open before us. We could remain here a long time to work through all the material I pointed out to you yesterday. You must decide whether to do that, either individually or as a group. The things you find here in *Under the Protection of Mary*¹³ are pretty obvious. But if one gives their content some critical study, the things go in much more deeply.

Our main concern yesterday was to reexamine the *image of Mary* that the family had from the beginning and to ask how this image lived so clearly in the family from very start. If you page through the Founding Document¹⁴ (or even the Pre-Founding Document¹⁵, but above all the Founding Document) one finds the clearly evidence: *It is about the Mother of God in her relationship to us*. Of course, it is not as if this were something new. That is simply the image which was so extraordinarily and strongly in the foreground of the Church's faith-awareness of that time.

If you want to draw the line into the future, for instance to the Second¹⁶ or Third Founding Documents¹⁷ – you could, or you really should do that on your own – then the image of Mary that you find will always be the same: *Mary as our educator*, both of the individual and of the community.

(....)

(228} *A great Marian devotion*. If we ask the Jesuits how they

¹³ That is, Fr. Ferdinand Kastner, SAC (ed.), *Unter dem Schutze Mariens*.

¹⁴ October 18, 1914.

¹⁵ October 27, 1912.

¹⁶ October 18, 1939.

¹⁷ September 24, October 18, and December 8, 1944.

view the Marian devotion of the Marian Sodality¹⁸, they like to answer: It is really just the dogmatically grounded Marian devotion [found elsewhere in the Church], but fostered with special fervor and love. We can say the same thing about ourselves. After all, we have stressed again and again: The dogmatic reasons are left to each person; we only ask that Mary's position [in the plan of salvation] – as long as it is dogmatically free from error, even if there are differing understandings in the background – *be taken seriously*.

Now, if we look more closely, what practically does the *Marian devotion of the Marian Sodality* look like? The Marian Sodality developed certain formulas which summarize what its Marian devotion looks like. If you examine the first years of our magazine, the *Mater Ter Admirabilis*¹⁹, you will find on the front page [of each issue] next to the picture of the MTA:

“Eligo te hodie in Dominam, Advocatam, Matrem meam – tuere me Servum, Clientem, Filium tuum”²⁰!

[“I choose you today to be my Queen, Mother, Advocate – accept me as your Servant, Client, Child!”]

What image of Mary do the members of the sodality have here? “I choose you today to be my Queen, Advocate, and Mother.” And then the flip side, seen from my perspective [as a member of the sodality]: “Accept me as your servant...” (this corresponds to “Queen”), “...as your client...” (this corresponds to “Advocate”), “...as your child” (this corresponds to “Mother”).

If we now look more closely, what is important for us right now

¹⁸ The Marian Sodality was founded by Jesuit Fr. John Leunis in 1563 (See J. Niehaus, *New Vision and Life* (Waukesha, 2004), p. 68-70). Throughout the history of the Marian Sodality, the Jesuits were its main protagonists and spiritual guides. At the time of this talk, the basic situation had not changed. But a few years later, in 1967, the Jesuits recast the sodality as the “Christian Life Communities” and eliminated its distinctive Marian dimension.

¹⁹ The *MTA magazine*.

²⁰ Text from the solemn consecration to Mary made by all new members upon their admission to the Marian Sodality. The consecration formula was written by St. Francis de Sales (1567-1622). See J. Niehaus, *New Vision and Life* (Waukesha, 2004), p. 78.

is this: With this threefold perspective how do we see Our Lady in reference to ourselves?

Domina mea [my Queen] – This is not the relationship with God, although it presupposes that one is in relationship with him. (...) {229} If you now read what I wrote back then about the analysis of the act of Marian devotion²¹ then you will notice that this formula was my starting point. The question is: With this perspective how do I see the love of Mary? Well, how do I see her? (...) We see her in her greatness [in general], but also in her greatness to us. The formula says, after all, “I choose you to be my Queen,” that is, *my* Queen; the accent is on me. My Queen. Of course, the things that are said between me and my Queen are rooted in the objective order: She *is* Queen; she is Queen, Queen by coronation, in the Kingdom of God. But the accent is on me: She is *my* Queen. This is the greatness and high dignity of our dear Mother. My Queen.

Advocata mea [my Advocate] – what does this mean? She is my Advocate. I don’t know if you can imagine how often I have personally invoked this expression in my heart throughout the [current] struggles, especially with the Church. I do not have an advocate²². The Church will not allow me to have an advocate. Are the jurisdictions within their rights? It is not being examined. There is no advocate. For me I have always taken very seriously the fact that *she* is my Advocate; she is the Advocate of the entire family. This only takes seriously Mary’s role as a secondary cause who acts on behalf of [God] the Primary cause²³.

{230} Therefore: I choose you today to be my Queen, Advocate, and Mother. There are these three basic relationships; this is the threefold perspective in which I can see her. Let me stress again: These three perspectives are in reference to me, to her fundamental relationship with man. The fundamental relationship with God is

²¹ In his response to Professor Rademacher, letter of April 8, 1917, as published in F. Kastner, *Unter dem Schutze Mariens*, p. 254-260.

²² Here Fr. Kentenich clearly not only means advocate in the general sense of “someone who represents my cause,” but specifically in the sense of a lawyer.

²³ At this point in the talk there is no paragraph on “My Mother.”

presupposed.

And then we see ourselves: Accept me as your *servant*. Now, this is naturally an expression which sometimes makes one nervous. But what is meant is: I serve as her vassal, her subordinate. That is concisely expressed: “*Tuere me servum.*” Later on, Grignon de Montfort took a great liking to this²⁴. Let me specifically remind you that the term is not about groveling enslavement. It is a classical concise formula, expressing a tender and profound [relationship of] dependence and attitude of service.

Accept me as your *client*. In my utter helplessness I must rely on my Advocate. I cannot restore my own rights, such as those which may have been denied me here and there. I need a God-appointed Advocate.

Accept me as your *child*. Three basic relationships between her and us.

In philosophical thinking (...) one likes to simplify wherever possible. And so the client and child in “Accept me as your servant, client, and child” are often seen as one, since they are essentially two functions of the same attitude: As my Mother she is also my Advocate. This explains why [one often finds] only two basic relationships. So how does the Blessed Mother stand before me in the objective order? *As my Queen and as my Mother*. But notice: it is in reference to me.

{231} So, how should I respond? We now enter the topic of the *psychology of Marian devotion*. What will I need to do? Well, there will probably be two things. First: *presuppose*. And if the presupposition is not there, then create it. What must I presuppose? A *sense for greatness*²⁵, a sense of awe in the greatness of others. If I do not have that, I will not connect with Mary as Queen. What must I foster in myself? A *childlike attitude*. Childlikeness as a fundamental attitude. If I do not have that, my soul will not respond to

²⁴ The term “slave” or “servant” of Mary has a central place in the Marian devotion of St. Louis Marie Grignon de Montfort.

²⁵ German: *Sinn für Größe*.

Mary [as Mother]. In Marian education I must therefore do all I can to reawaken these basic sentiments in others' souls: respect for greatness and a sense for greatness, along with simple childlike self-giving as well as general self-giving in all areas of life.

If this basic attitude is there, or if I am able to awaken it, then I only need to transmit, against this background, the image of our dear Blessed Mother in its two basic features. She is Queen of Heaven and Earth, and she is *my* Queen. Now of course, if the sense, the organ for high dignity and greatness has been lost, then the image of Mary under these aspects will not easily take hold. But my words about Mary, especially to teenagers, ought to place her high dignity and greatness in the foreground again and again. And then we must watch: Does the other react to such an image of Mary, and how?

(Now, [as an educator] I must not only say these things for pedagogical effect; I must be convinced that Our Lady really has an extraordinary greatness, a queenly dignity bestowed on her by God. If my words are only utilitarian but do not carry an inner conviction about her objective greatness in the order of salvation, you will see that everything connected with my Marian education will collapse tomorrow or the day after.)

The same can be said about the image of Mary as *Mother*. Back then – you can read about it – there were those who felt that {232} the whole article by Professor Rademacher²⁶ was faulty because they thought we had an ideal youth here in Schoenstatt, all with normal, healthy relationships [with their mothers] at home. What they were trying to say was: If there is a healthy relationship to one's earthly mother, it's easy to ascend from this starting point to the experience of Mary as a supernatural mother. My response was (...): You are in error. Even if I could say that the boys here had totally healthy family relationships at home²⁷, this was never my starting point. Now,

²⁶ The article by Prof. Rademacher published in 1917. It was based on a talk in Düsseldorf which evaluated the Marian devotion of the Schoenstatt Sodality as documented by their own writings in the first year of the *MTA magazine*. See correspondence of Fr. Kentenich with Prof. Rademacher, 1917.

²⁷ Which was not always the case.

[even then many had difficult mother relationships] – and if that were already the case then, how much more so today! And *today* one must normally assume that the fundamental relationship with one's earthly mother is often burdened. Hence: dig deeper! Dig much, much deeper! How deep? To the point where the boy or girl – back then it was only boys – becomes aware of his or her *helplessness*. And it is truly not hard to lead boys and girls of that age to an awareness of their interior helplessness. After all, in the normal stages of growth everything is growing in the [teenage] soul, is blossoming, is shooting to the sky. Highest ideals are awakened. But on the other hand there is the constant sorrow of limitations. “Rejoicing to heaven, depressed to the grave...” What is one to do? Or at least: what did I do? I made the boys more keenly aware of this experience. Of course, a young man or young woman will not like to do this, will not like to admit [being helpless], because one has the feeling: I am going through this all alone; I am ashamed to make myself aware of how weak I really am.

{233} To summarize: I presuppose; if I cannot presuppose, I must awaken it. This is the profound feeling of helplessness. (...) Now economic helplessness has long been in the awareness of our Catholic people. But the helplessness in the interior, moral, religious sphere – this is what I must very clearly bring to people's awareness. And then – you immediately understand the context – when, in the abyss of this helplessness, I see [Mary's] image portrayed or let her rise like the morning sun in her motherly power, motherly kindness, and motherly wisdom, then the fundamental relationships between her and me will clearly and vividly take hold.

VOLUME 2

January 7, 1963 (Talk 12)

DD 2, 24-50

{32} Now I think I must add something we will need to discuss more than once later on. It is tender, loving Marian devotion. We have already discussed the *analysis of the act of Marian devotion* a few times under its *philosophical* [aspect]. Here we say: *actus*, the act of Marian devotion, *est formaliter simplex, virtualiter triplex*¹. You must verify and make the conclusions on your own, even as I did, about how I can and should bring others to a deep Marian devotion. Unless the longing for greatness is awakened, I will not have the organ I need to see the Blessed Mother as Queen. Unless I experience a profound helplessness, I will not be able to correctly grasp the concept of Our Lady as my Mother and Helpmate, as my Advocate. I will be able to grasp it with my head, but it will not set any life in motion.

{33} Then we discussed the analysis of its *psychological* aspect. When we speak of love of Mary one can distinguish between *Marian attachment* and *Marian attitude*. Of course the theologian, especially the abstract theoretical theologian, will by and large be more inclined to the latter: [to seek] the attitude of the Blessed Mother in all religious and supernatural truths and persons. Now I suppose I can do what others do: be satisfied with showing the Blessed Mother in the different formal dogmas or even in the [other] defined teachings of the Church, like: “What was Mary’s attitude to God the Father?” etc. Marian attitude. That takes great effort. And I can probably say afterward with a certain inner satisfaction, “I have synthesized and illustrated all of dogmatic theology using the image of our Blessed Mother.”

But will my satisfaction be justified? With all due respect! *How*

¹ Formally it is one reality, but it manifests itself in three ways.

will such a presentation become fruitful, more fruitful, most fruitful? Now we can see how simple this all is. If I have a tender love for Mary, the Marian attitude will spontaneously follow, will it not? But if I do not first stress and try to deepen the Marian attachment in all directions, then my presentation of the Marian attitude, while a little more concrete than a merely abstract discussion of dogma, [will lack] the interior vitality rooted in love. I must therefore place much importance – especially when we begin to educate young people from the ground up, or when we want to educate ourselves to reach a new level – on achieving a childlike, a deeply childlike Marian devotion.

Do I need to repeat this from the psychological standpoint? Is it not self-understood? Even though I have often repeated it and often must repeat it, I think I should not release or dispense myself from it. You see, it is simply the *essence of love*. What is it? Put in simple terms: *I in you and you in me and we two in one another*. This is love. Or if you must use a more psychological term: a *fusion of hearts*.

{34} If you look at practical life, think of father and mother and how it often happens. Is it not true that love – this fusion of hearts – is a fusion of life as well, a transmission of life? In so many cases the old saying comes true:

“The way he coughs, the way she brays,

Each happily copies the other one’s ways².”

But it is not as if one were doing an impersonation. No, real love is at work – I repeat – just like one often observes with an older couple or when our parents get old: the older they get, the more similar they become to one another in gestures and manners. It is not mimicry, but comes about because love is a real creative force.

Therefore you must see to it – including for yourselves if you want to totally understand Schoenstatt – that you really receive this gift: *a tender childlike Marian devotion*. (...) *Learn to love the Bless-*

² Friedrich von Schiller (1759-1805), German poet: *Wallensteins Lager* (1798), Scene 6. In other words, husband and wife tend to take on each other’s mannerisms.

ed Mother with all your heart! And the more tenderly you learn to love her, the more you will have the key which opens our entire religious life, the more we will have the seed which helps us to deepen and make fruitful our entire religious life.

(....)

{45} If I think of the development of our Sisters, whose spiritual life I know more exactly than scarcely anyone else, I have to tell you – for instance now, when you get to know your housekeeper [Helene Müller] – my whole task is to help her to become human again. In reality she became inhuman; one could say superhuman. But superhumanity without humanity is always subhumanity. Can you imagine how someone is so supernatural that every natural emotion is killed and every natural attraction to anyone is felt as God-only-knows how [distressing]? For religious persons striving for the heights this is much more the problem today than finding the way to God. The latter they bring along. But what is missing is the {46} [process of] becoming human. (....)

Of course, it is the case that people with high ideals often have the feeling: that is too human. We need to learn to be human, don't we? That is always the case. We can even say: *First human, then Christian, then totally human*. Do you understand what this means? Of course it is difficult. Now you must not understand this sequentially, that is, don't say: So, now I live six years as a human, then six years as a Christian, then six more years... No, no, (....) these are always shifts of accent. They always want to be seen as a whole. I must only differentiate what is the main accent at any given time. (....)

Religious persons frequently go the way I just described – very, very frequently. God must have a particular intention behind this.

If you take the time to read what is in Part III of *Everyday Sanctity*... (....) [you will find] many saints who were grateful when their parents died. Then along comes Francis de Sales and says this may be fine, but don't count me one of them. How he cried when he

father, his mother died! This is not to say {47} that we educate ourselves to cry. It only means that we educate ourselves to not suffocate any healthy natural emotions. This is the most important. And man today is so susceptible; we must shield and protect him from unnecessary feelings of pressure. How many conditions of depression today are not caused least of all by suffocating a humanity which should be perfected and ennobled, which should be raised up into the supernatural order by grace!

January 8, 1963 (Talk 14)

DD 2, 56-73

{66} How did we end up with this picture? It was not chosen through deliberation, after much thought and discussion, but rather: it was in God's plan, given to us through the law of the open door.

Nowadays you can hardly understand the situation we were in back then. I had to naturally keep my plans for our young [seminarians] in utter secrecy and silence [because it would have seemed too bold for the rest of the faculty]. This was also true after we had identified with the Shrine imploring a place of grace and education. It made a great deal of sense, already because of young people's need for things to see and touch (the same need of popular thinking [and piety]), to find a picture. Of course, our great concern was: where will we get a picture?

At the time we moved so much in the shadows [of the seminary], in the cellar as it were, that we simply thought again and again: we must not draw attention to ourselves, we must remain so much in the shadows that no one notices what our true intentions are.

And so it happened that, at first, we were in a great bind. I have already told you about one of our boys, Bezold was his name. To be very blunt, he later hanged himself. Our history really mirrors all the highs and lows of humankind. (...)

And at that time there lived in his neighborhood, the area he came from, the Baroness of Oer. And the way teenagers are when they are excited for something (and she had made a beautiful painting of the Immaculata), he decided to write and ask her to paint us a picture. He wrote the letter, but it was never sent. The Rector intercepted it.

And now there was a former Jesuit with us, Huggle by name, who always sat next to me at the meals. And as things go, in conversation we came to talk about pictures of Mary and he said: Why, I saw a very beautiful picture of Mary in an antique store in Freiburg. I told him, he ought to have them send it to us. I wanted to pay him for it. To my recollection it cost {67} about 23 Marks and some odd cents. He did not want anything for it, of course. One can say: this is helplessness.

I always see all these little things as the law of the open door.

This is the fact of the matter. Now the picture was to no one's liking. But because we had nothing else... You see, you can only understand that when we understand our helplessness, our "arcane discipline" [i.e. remaining in the shadows]. This is how different and incomprehensible our aims were to the rest of the community and the rest of the house!

And as you know, I then used every opportunity to read into this picture and then read out of this picture everything which I had to say about the Blessed Mother. As a result, with time the personal, interior sentiments [which the boys had for Mary and about life] became associated with this image.

In retrospect you really ought to examine what God's intention was with this, should I say, "mistake"? Interpret it as you want, but at least from the standpoint of the style of art [which would appeal to the boys] it was the wrong picture. But what was the divine intention behind this?

{102} I think we must say that Marian devotion became the *formal* principle³ of our entire movement (...). In my opinion, in the Marian Sodality (...) Marian devotion is a *form* principle. (...) *Form* principle⁴ or formative principle means a thought, a truth wants to form practical life. (...) {103} *Formal* principle – and there may be more than one – means *tota in toto* [totally in every part]. Exactly [like the question] “Where is my soul?” The entire soul is in every part totally and totally in every part. (...) Applied to our [Schoenstatt spirituality]: Marian devotion is at work in some way or another everywhere, in all our actions. [emphasis modified]

(...)

{104} [Regarding our stand on the teaching of Mary’s universal mediation:] What has come about in the Family, has come about so consciously dependent on her that in retrospect we must affirm: because we cultivated our dependence on her so consciously, we have the right to suppose, to say, to claim that we are a work and instrument – indeed, a pronounced work and instrument – in the hand of our dear Blessed Mother. We have a right to say: She is our foundress, she is our educator and our leader. This is the general line of thought.

If we later take another look at the sources, such as the founding documents, you will find these trains of thought there too, and even if somewhat hidden, still clear enough for the studied eye. In the background it is self-evident that we did not mean it in an obligatory sense. But to the extent that we belong to Schoenstatt, we have a right to trace back all the graces we have received to her, and therefore have the obligation to make her an active part of our practical

³ German: *Formalprinzip*.

⁴ German: *Formprinzip*.

daily life and to make ourselves dependent on her in all things. Hence, we therefore {105} have the right to apply De Montfort’s formula to ourselves in all circumstances:

*Everything through,
everything in,
everything for,
and everything with the Blessed Mother*⁵.

Now I want to ask you to check this out for yourselves. Of course it is clear: What I say here, the things that I list one after the other and put next to each other, it conveys only a moral certitude, not a metaphysical certitude, nor a dogmatic certitude; it is no dogma. But for our practical lives moral certitude is sufficient.

What does this expression mean? – also independent of De Montfort, even though the expression is from him. This is not the way the Marian Sodality says it; it leaves each one freedom on this point. We want to refresh our memories at this point about how we differentiated *three degrees of Marian devotion*: an ordinary, a great, and an extraordinarily great⁶. The Marian Sodality is characterized by a great Marian devotion. The extraordinarily great devotion in the sense of the formal principle is what one finds in De Montfort’s Marian devotion. Our Marian devotion is like this too, according to the way it gradually developed. Hence, from the very beginning we had – and it developed more and more strongly in this direction – an extraordinarily great Marian devotion, that is: we connect everything in our lives with our dear Lady. In this regard De Montfort, no doubt, went farther than we do. We can therefore see that what we received from him was only a confirmation, and in some things also a deepening, without adopting and accepting de Montfort in all his parts.

(...)

⁵ St. Louis Marie Grignion de Montfort (1673-1716), *True Devotion to Mary*, No. 257-265.

⁶ See DD 1, 213f and 227ff.

{112} If I now ask: What did De Montfort's Marian devotion especially add to what we had always been striving for from the beginning [from 1914]? First, it gave us clarity about what we called the capital of grace. (...) {113} We give to the Blessed Mother 1) all material goods and ultimately our minds and hearts, 2) the value [merits] of our good works, 3) our entire personality⁷. All this with the same intention: total surrender to her in order to secure the total surrender to God and as an expression of the total surrender to God. [emphasis modified]

⁷ Compare these three points with what De Montfort says in, *True Devotion*, No. 121-125.

VOLUME 3

Vol. 3, p. 67-71 (25th Talk), and p. 86-87 (26th Talk).

(Introduction by Fr. Hans-Werner Unkel, translation Mary Cole)

*The text is particularly significant because Father Kentenich was talking to a **founding generation** and aimed at forming them as his co-founders. He was confident that they would assimilate his words into open hearts, reflect on them independently, and fully accept the responsibility being handed over to them.*

In order that the ideas should not remain in their minds, but should sink into their hearts, he repeated the central thoughts several times, each time from another perspective. The following passages can be found in the German edition of DD, 1963, Vol. 3, pages 67-71 (25th Conference), and pages 86-87 (26th Conference).

[67] So I should embody the ideal of the Good Shepherd. Let me highlight a few elements of this ideal, which are of particular importance to you at the moment. You will then not find it difficult to continue to spin the individual threads until you finally have a really large fabric before you.

1. Jesus the Good Shepherd – Old Testament background

“ **I am the Good Shepherd**” (Jo 10,11a). That is a general characteristic. I don't know what I should now emphasise in detail. I shall first of all interpret the words as spoken by our Lord. It is as though our Lord is embracing the whole of world history, the whole of salvation history, as it took place in the people of Israel.

[The picture in the context of the history of salvation for Israel]

[68] Jesus reached back into distant centuries. When he used the picture of the Good Shepherd, he was well aware of how the people

of Israel, especially the Pharisees [and scribes] had understood it. He reached back to the preaching of the Prophets. How did they depict the ideal of the shepherd? The priests and kings [as the shepherds of the people] should serve their people in some way. The prophets filled in the details of the picture. They pointed out to the priests and kings: Look, Yahweh has made you the shepherds of the people. Are you really their good shepherds? Some of you may have been, but on the whole there has been a great deal of depravity. The prophets then went on to describe the negative picture in classic terms. Shepherds, you should serve the sheep, but what have you done instead? Look at how much profit you have made at the expense of your sheep. You have fed yourselves on their milk, you have made use of their fat (see Ez 34,3).

[Prophetic criticism and prophecy of redemption]

Can you understand what that means? You have not served the sheep, you have abused the sheep [for your own selfish purposes]. The sheep had to serve you, you have not served them. Then [after this criticism] a great prophecy follows: A time will come when I will send you shepherds foreseen and pre-destined for you by God from all eternity. Our Lord is the answer to this prophetic utterance. We can assume that the people listening to him had a clear understanding of the context. The scribes and Pharisees lived out of the Scriptures, they taught out of the Scriptures [the Old Testament].

2. We, the disciples of Jesus – called to be shepherds

The general criticism now begins. You should emphasise our Lord's words in this way: I am the Good Shepherd. Can you understand what that means? I am the Good Shepherd prophesied and foreseen by the Prophets.

[69] Let me ask you now to have the courage to apply those words to yourselves, precisely in the way you need them at present. This

presupposes that our faith in our mission [for the Schoenstatt Family] has a solid foundation. You may then have the courage to tell yourselves: I am *the* good shepherd foreseen from all eternity for this little community, which I have now to lead, to bear, to imbue with soul; I am *the* good shepherd foreseen for this task.

[Application to those who bear responsibility: the Paterfamilias]

We will not find it difficult – especially since we are so strongly orientated to faith in Divine Providence – to remember at all times: What has become a reality in life here [in Schoenstatt] is in keeping with a plan. When we are together here as the 'founding generation' [of the new community], and when we think of the leader and leaders [the Paterfamilias of the little community], we think of the significance of those words: I am *the* good shepherd foreseen from all eternity for this epoch in time. None of my equals, no one before me, no one who comes after me, has been given the task which has been given to me. I was foreseen for it by God. I may be very clearly convinced, I can be certain that if I do not give my all to fulfil the task God has given me for the present situation, my life will ultimately be a tremendous fiasco. However, it will not just affect my own life [as Paterfamilias], the whole community will normally fail, because the shepherd foreseen for it has failed. I need somehow to see my mission with this organic oneness, then I will become aware of how much depends on me...

[Application to each individual member with a view to leading the Schoenstatt Family]

If you realise that you are the beginning of the community of priestly leaders, and if you are aware that generation after generation will follow you, you will see clearly how much depends on our little community. How much! Unless we see our mission clearly, we will probably lead the generations that come after us astray. How much depends on the good shepherd [the paterfamilias], whom God has

foreseen for us! How much depends on us as a community of leaders, of shepherds, of fathers!

[70] I think you cannot stress this sense of responsibility too much or too seriously. Otherwise we will be in danger of becoming mass-men on a higher level.

When you are together, you should, however, be careful not to think only of the coming generations. You must also think of your own generation here and now. When you meet, you should consider: what can we do for later on? However, you should not forget to ask at the same time: what are the needs of our little community here and now? [...] Let me repeat: I am the good shepherd. We are the community of good shepherds, which has been given such a great mission, generation after generation.

[Summary of what was said in 26th Conference, pages 86-87]

[86] “I am the Good Shepherd”. May I repeat something that is most important, and that I want to beg repeatedly for you to be given? It is this tremendously strongly anchored sense of responsibility. What does our Lord want to stress? He wants to point out how much responsibility he bears, because he is the Good Shepherd foreseen by the Father from all eternity for the whole world, and for the whole order of salvation.

I am the Good Shepherd. I have also been drawn into our Lord’s work as a shepherd. For whom? First of all for our own circle [our little community]. Try to find out for yourselves whether it is an exaggeration when I say that I have been called by God – for as long as I live - to bear responsibility for the mission of our community for our present times. So if I fail, what will be the consequence? If I do not bear the full responsibility, disorder will enter into the history of the world and salvation, and I will be to blame. So we can conclude that our community depends essentially on me and my

fatherly activity.

[87] Let us pray for one another, so that these thoughts may touch us deeply, and that we may be torn out of the levelling tendency of our way of thinking and feeling. Perhaps we could formulate such ideas in a special little prayer we have made for ourselves and that also takes up our personal ideal. Then we will be able to impress the thoughts presented to us upon ourselves - not just on our minds, but also on our hearts.

[The three characteristics of the Good Shepherd]

[71] I would like to place the emphasis somewhere else as well: I am the *Good* Shepherd. In contrast: I am not a bad shepherd. I am not a lazy shepherd. I am not a selfish shepherd. I am a good shepherd. Now comes the great question: How can we describe the ideal of the Good Shepherd? When you meditate on the parable [in John 10], you will find that our Lord describes himself from three points of view: The Good Shepherd is characterised by his
Shepherd’s love,
Shepherd’s concern and care,
Shepherd’s faithfulness.

3. Ways to assimilate these thoughts personally

As I describe these qualities of the Good Shepherd, please keep two trends of thought in mind and think both these questions through for yourselves:

Firstly:

How did our Lord himself live the three characteristics of the Good Shepherd – the love of the shepherd, the faithfulness of the shepherd and the concern and care of the shepherd?

Secondly:

What do these three characteristics mean in my life, presupposing that I have been called to the priesthood?

[...]

[72] In conclusion, allow me to ask you once again to do what I have already suggested a number of times – we should try to break these thoughts up for yourselves into their tiny elements. It is less important to remember the large context; that is more a matter of study and learning. You can do this if you like. However, for our practical lives it seems to me to be better to pick out the thoughts that have touched your hearts somewhat. You can take it that God wants to impress you more deeply with those thoughts. If you like, you can help yourselves by asking three methodological questions:

- a) What is God saying to me through these thoughts that have aroused me inwardly, that have inspired me?
- b) What can I tell myself? And thirdly,
- c) What do I want to say to God? What is my answer to him?

Then I should like to remind you again not to forget to allow the sun to shine on you. Which sun is meant? It could be our Lord, it could be the heavenly Father, it could be the Blessed Mother. What is important is to be quietly open – unlocked – for all that comes from above. It may even seem to us that we have fallen prey to a sort of quietism [inactivity]. “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts!” (Ps 94).

January 16, 1963 (=Talk 26)

DD 3, 174-101

This selection⁸ is taken from a conferences held by Father Kentenich in 1963. He considers the importance of childlikeness for the development of fatherliness. He also considers some of the distorted forms of fatherhood that are common today.

{77} [We are speaking of] a *Father kingdom*. By this we mean, first of all, the growth and unfolding of the religious world into and toward God the Father. Building a Father kingdom! Alone if you begin to think these thoughts through on your own and to place them into the world of today, you will find that the lack of love for the Father, for God the Father, is ultimately one of the most important reasons why the figure of the father on the earthly plane is being more and more watered down. It is both a cause and effect. Why do we have so few fathers? To seek the psychological, metaphysical reasons, we must admit: *A person who has not in one way or another become a child of God the Father will hardly be able to truly become a father.*

You must make the connections yourselves. Because we recognize and acknowledge God too little as Father, we really don't have a proper image of fathers any more. Since we ourselves have developed too little our spiritual childhood toward God, we can hardly become true fathers. As we have already said more than once: The Spartans never became strong personalities, even though they are famous as the epitome of the martial arts. Why? They remained eternally fragmented, dwarves, as it were. Now comes the reason which goes quite deep: *If you have never been a child you can never be a father.* If you have never been a child you can never become a mature man.

Do you understand what this means? We often consider the ideal of woman using the image of the tree. The root is childlikeness, the

⁸ Here: Talk of January 16, 1963, Vol. 3, p. 77-81.

trunk is strong motherliness. In a certain sense we can say that *childlikeness is also the root of genuine masculinity*. Hence the term “eternal child.” Just as one speaks of the “eternal feminine,” one can also speak of the “eternal child.” This means that childlikeness is a permanent feature, a permanent need, a permanent gift. This means it is not just a passing phase for today, tomorrow, and the next day, but needs to be taken into permanent possession, come what may.

But it cuts the other way too. When we see that God the Father is so little known in the world today—also among us Christians, us Catholics—one cause is the distorted image of fathers in the natural order. It is therefore both a cause and effect. And how distorted the image of fathers is today! One even speaks literally of “father murder.” What are the practical consequences? If we consider the developments psychologically, especially in today’s mechanized, industrialized and industrial culture, in today’s technological culture, we simply have to say that *maleness is on the way to becoming something incredibly sterile*.

Three Distorted Forms of Fatherhood

You should put three expressions together: *fatherliness, authority and creative power*. They belong together.

Fatherly authority — we have already talked about the essential part of this: *auctor esse*, being the author of life. It is practically the same as being a “creative force.” And the aim of this creative force is the formation of real substance, of the inner person⁹. The aim of real, genuine fatherliness as a creative force is therefore always to form the inner person. But what does maleness look like today when it takes on the form of fatherliness? Mostly confused and leading down the wrong path.

When we speak of *fatherliness* in modern culture, then in all honesty we must admit that it takes *three main forms*.

⁹ In German: *Wesensformung* or *Wesensgestaltung*. Literally the “formation of the essence [of a thing or person]”.

1. First Distortion: Rigid Formalism

The first form is a *rigid, merely formalistically maintained fatherliness*. I am speaking in typologies again. In other words, you will never find such an example in real life which is literally like this, but the trend goes in this direction. How often do you find this! For that matter, when we think of the families belonging to Schoenstatt here [in Milwaukee]—the parents suffer a great deal from the fact that to the children the father does not mean as much as their fathers meant to them. They desperately try to cling to the old ways, using their old memories of how their fathers treaten them when they were young¹⁰. In reality it is nothing more than going through the motions, helplessness, not knowing the right way any more. The functions of parents, namely fathers or grandfathers, are not fulfilled [from within], but are exterior acts without an interior attitude, and therefore without interior creative force.

2. Second Distortion: Mimed Authority

Then comes a second image of father. In essence, if I may use the expression, it is *a kind of mimed fatherliness*. It is frequently like this: I want to act outwardly as if I were a father; I want to use all means to maintain my exterior authority. We have already talked enough about the difference between interior and exterior authority. You see, a mimed authority is a purely exterior authority without interior authority, and therefore without creative force, without educational power or influence. The woman instinctively fosters this process and way of acting in the man. In such cases, practically speaking, the authority, namely the authority in the sense of the formation of the inner person or of life, has passed over to the woman. The woman has become the final authority in the formation of the inner person. And the woman therefore knows how to outwardly foster what the father is doing, this miming of interior

¹⁰ See the example of Gilbert Schimmel and how he tried to be a good father in Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, *Gilbert Schimmel: The End Crowns the Work* (Waukesha, 1996).

authority. But in the meantime the real creative force of education is growing in her. But that is only a transition. After all, how will the woman of today, especially when we think of America, [where] the woman who is drawn into the whole economy, how will she be able to undertake from within a formation of the inner person and of life? More and more she will share the same fate as the man. *The “father murder” of today will lead to the “mother murder” of tomorrow and the day after tomorrow.* Just think about what this means for today’s culture!

3. Third Distortion: Deconstructed Authority

Now comes the third stage. What are its characteristics? It is the *complete tearing down of authority*. Instead of a man trying to form the inner life of his children, instead of working to become capable again in the formation of the inner person of his children, he settles for the formation of knowledge, but not even by teaching the knowledge himself, but by letting others do it, either the Church or the school or the state. In fact, his sole perspective is the following purpose: My children must find a place in the present economic order or disorder, must learn to fend for themselves. In the end, however, where is the power, the creative power, the creative power built on inner authority which grips and forms the essence and life of the young man or woman?

Childlikeness: The Source of Fatherly Creative Power

When you hear this brief sketch and yourselves take on inner responsibility, starting with your own large family, and then perhaps for one another, for our vocations, etc., I hope you understand again how important it is that we have real fathers again, fathers with fatherly authority and creative formative power, when it comes to the formation of the inner life of a young person or a generation. These are all thoughts that can and want to leave a deep impression on our concept of fatherliness, Father kingdom, and community of Fathers. And the more you become aware of the broad cultural context, the more you will feel swept up in modern life, the higher the ideal will

soar before your eyes, the more seriously you will strive for self-discipline, already from the perspective of you yourselves becoming more and more children of the Heavenly Father.

If all of this is true, which I have only sketched in passing, what is my task as a man? To be a child before God! To be sure, we know the technical term: *To God a child — to men a man*, i.e. a vigorous personality. How important it is, therefore, that we ourselves come to know God as a father and can learn to love him as a father, already alone in the context of today’s cultural collapse! In this way or in a similar way you should think through these thoughts for yourselves and expect and beg for light from above.

January 18, 1963 (=Talk 30)

DD 3, 147-155

{149} Now came the 22nd. It raised the spontaneous question in me: Have you not forgotten to include *Pallotti* in your plans and in the realization of your plans, inasmuch as it was possible? Now it is not as if this first broke out on January 22, [1942]. I had already grappled with it before, because for me it was [such a central fact]. You can reach this conclusion because since 1916 the Apostolic World Confederation¹¹ was one of the central aims.

I could therefore have said to myself – if I had sensed any kind of a failing in this regard – that God wanted to point it out to me, seriously point it out to me in this situation. But no matter how hard to thought, I always had to say: No, you have held fast to the idea and, to the extent circumstances allowed, you tried to realize it. With this I came to inner peace. Not that I had been restless before, because it was always so alive in me, but it had to be tested one more time.

Therefore, after I reached this conclusion, which took place with particular poignancy on the 22nd, his deathday, I could now go forward, including to Dachau, with a great inner peace [about this question]¹².

¹¹ The specific mission of St. Vincent Pallotti which Fr. Kentenich adopted as part of Schoenstatt's mission. See Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, *200 Questions about Schoenstatt* (Fourth edition: Waukesha, 2005), No. 36.

¹² J. Kentenich, talk of January 18, 1963 (DD 3, 149).

VOLUME 4

January 21, 1963 (=Talk 34)

DD 4, 33-54

{38} By the way, you can sense that [the fact of] *God's guidance* in world history, in salvation history, and in the history of each individual [shows in] two [conflicting ways]: On the one hand the most difficult-to-digest problem facing humanity – and Christianity – today [is the problem of God's Providence]. And at the same time that faith in Divine Providence is probably what still lives most deeply in the faithful. If you ask the faithful how they managed to stay Christian, even thoroughly Christian, you will always find that faith's essential practical substance has always been in the form of faith in Divine Providence, and still is. Observe life. For instance, think of your PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS and how simply they believed, again and again, that God was leading them in everyday life. We want to take what is alive there and make it our own by reflecting on it and consciously living it¹.

¹ DD 1963, 4, 38 (January 21, 1963).

{70} I have a question here that I want to answer now²:

“1.) May one call someone to the ideal of complete selflessness if he still has things to make up from the teenage years, things which he suppressed ascetically: if he lacks awareness of his self-worth, if he is rigid? How must one influence him and direct him if, in spite of his immaturity, he becomes a father either through marriage or priestly ordination?”

After everything we have talked about in these days – first from one side and then another – presupposing that you see the complete picture – you may be able to answer it for yourselves.

No, by no means may one do that! Today you must presuppose that the humanity of those who come to you will be totally “un-fermented.” Of course I am exaggerating now. You must always understand that. I always drive things to a certain extreme, which always indicates the direction of things. Therefore, totally uneducated. And according to my observation and experience you can be sure of this: Someone who still has to make up for a missing experience – and this takes a long time – who has not made up for it, is very rarely completely mature. Exceptions {71} confirm the rule. This is why education today is also so difficult. I will take the time to discuss this question a little, even if it is [connected to our topic] by only a few drops, falls more outside our theme. Maybe the things will end up making an impression because they are dealt with in such a down-to-earth sequence, going deeper into your hearts. These are such essential questions!

You see, even if one says – I want to use the expression, our technical term – someone has something to relive from the teenage years. Let me repeat again, when this period in the development of the soul is missing, then you may be able to get the person to strive

² Bodo-Maria Erhardt had written down a question for Fr. Kentenich on a piece of paper.

for the highest ideals with his will, but you will experience many, many times: It does not take long until there is a powerful fall like Icarus.

During these days I received a letter. At first I thought: I wanted to share the content with you sometime, but then set it aside again. It is about a young man with a deep sense of striving. He was led by someone who did not understand, who did not understand the interior life of his drives, and directed everything much too objectively. And the effect was [this]. For years the young man managed to deliver himself to the highest love of God. But then the point in time came when the part of him which had been suppressed and not built up – you must understand this well – when the suppressed drives came to life with elemental strength, he then threw off any and every yoke and married a girl that was, in reality, not worthy of him. She bore him some children. In the end it turned out that the girl was much nobler in marriage than she appeared ahead of time. He was obligated, that is, was bound by the circumstances, to marry the girl because [he got her pregnant]. But it turned out to be a truly happy marriage. Then the girl died. He didn't stand it very long; found another {72} woman who had been married. And now the question: What should he do?

I only want to mention the case because it is symptomatic. You must see to it that no matter how at home we are in the supernatural world we must always think naturally. May I repeat it again? Please take this as a norm: If a young person did not experience these years at an earlier stage, today there are many, many – you must always count on that – [who will need to make it up]. Now, we are all to some degree unreliable, [burdened] with a particular unreliability.

Secondly: Here you also have the method, the way I personally always think [things through] and where my wisdom comes from – in reality not from books, that is my originality, [but from] observing life and having the courage to put in practice what I have learned. Therefore not to say: This is dangerous, one cannot say it this way. If the truth is behind it, then one must naturally have the courage to stand up for the truth. Suppose for example that there is someone

who is personally attached to you. Now one normally will probably say very quickly – and so it is – that at first it is a very primitive love, therefore a self-centered love. But it *must* be like that, don't you think? You must not overlook, if you see yourself and others in a psychological light: If the individual drives do not come to a certain satisfaction, if the individual drives are not someday given proper mooring, the development will stop. Then there will be a break somewhere, there will be a chasm and the person will not come any farther. With this I only want to say: When someone is attached to you, likes you, loves you – they can express in whichever way it might be – then you must count on this state of affairs to go on for a long time. You only need to observe life. How is it with a child in the natural family? If we already use the expression “primitive” – it is simply taken for granted in the family that the child, when a child loves, is primitive, the child “clings.” Why cling? If we investigate scientifically: Because this satisfies a need in the child. I therefore love... If I translate it now brusquely... Take the child... Why does it love Father and Mother? For his own sake, because he {73} receives something, because a drive is satisfied, but satisfied in a noble manner.

Please apply this to said circumstances. Then you must naturally say: If you drive the child away too quickly, push him away so that the primitive attachment, the primitive love, becomes, let's say, a priestly, a mature love, than the purpose of the psychological urge has not been fulfilled, that attachment is not yet deep enough, not strong enough. Then it is exactly as if the person was never attached in a primitive, vibrant way. Then I am back to the situation: Here me and there God; I am in too strongly direct a contact and connection with God. Of course, this can often become a very heavy cross.

You see, these are the things which remain the same. To the extent that I can follow it back, when I think back on the novice masters which I personally got to know – that is, I only had one – but also the others whom I got to know... By and large it is this way, this is something very few men can stand for a longer time. What do I mean, “stand for a longer time”? Of course, if I, as spiritual director

and novice master, only want to say: Here, this is the objective law, so go and do it, etc.... then I have gone about it in a very cheap way. Then I am not a director of souls; I am either a theologian or philosopher, but not a director. [To do this] one must naturally have the strength, but also the fatherly love. Without fatherly love it won't last in the long run. Otherwise one will throw off the yoke.

And ultimately it really shouldn't be a yoke at all. If interior love truly unites, let us say, father and child with one another, and I know that here is an anxiety, a neediness, then I can hear the same thing a thousand times and a thousand times more. This does not normally come easy for a man. It costs too much time. I need to keep that in mind. This is why I have so strongly pointed out to you the aspect of {74} personal concern, that I am personally concerned about every smallest detail in those entrusted to me. Of course, you must not overlook that these things are weighed in more than one scale. I must respect the circumstances, must make sure that other things do not suffer because of it. But in principle this is how things are.

Therefore, *the answer to the question*: You must not do this at all and must wait God only knows how long until you lead a young man – or any soul in your direction – to this level of selfless love. (...) No, I must not do that. This is why spiritual direction costs so much love, so much time, so much patience.

(...)

{75} ... I only want to tell you what I personally always did. It sounds all the more distinctive when you think of the Pre-founding Document. (...) Yes, it was my goal from the beginning. *When I came into the school* [in Ehrenbreitstein in September 1911] and saw how confused the situation was there, which predominated there, then it was always clear to me – in keeping with my way of always acting only in line with principles – it was clear to me: You will now use the free time for taking care of souls outside the school. What I *must* do in the school is what I will do. I will concern myself with *my* students; I will not concern myself with the others. At that time I was

asked to become prefect, after being scarcely ordained. But based on the thought: “No, the way things are, one can scarcely expect anything to come of it; you need to let it run,” I refused with all my might; of course, in proper form. But in contrast, *when I became spiritual director* – the others were naturally used to me liking to go out and do helpouts – I immediately stopped it. *Ordo essendi est ordo {76} agendi*. I was guided by the thought: If you want to fulfill your task, then you must be available to the boys day and night.

That cost quite a few battles. At the time it was something totally new! First of all, it was something brand new that a school had a spiritual director. Of course, there were two spiritual directors before me, but they gave the introductory talk and then the health of both collapsed. (...) So I was appointed and immediately made an end [of my part in the helpouts]. When I was approached to take a helpout I always said: “I would like to, but I don’t think I can fit it together with my position.” Do you understand why? It is always: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. If I have been given a position which, ontologically, has this content, these demands (when I was given the position, the other things were given to me as well) I am obligated to God to do everything in order to truly fulfill this office, even – and back then I demanded [this right] which was totally extraordinary – even if it goes late into the night. This is always only said on the level of principles. Of course, in real life it can happen, too.

January 24, 1963 (=Talk 39)

DD 4, 154-179

The Spirit of the Vows and Secondary Causes

{154} Yesterday we touched on the problem of secondary causes and how it applies to marriage. We must not overlook the fact that this is a topic which we will need to study in greater detail. After all, we want to elaborate the lifestyle befitting our type of community and put it into permanent form [in constitutions].

To do this we must develop a particular form of the *spirit of the vows* for our family. And what we have to say about this can always be traced back to the *theology and pedagogy of secondary causes*. We also want to keep in mind that for us it is not only a matter of what one otherwise means by the spirit of the vows – the spirit of poverty, the spirit of chastity, the spirit of obedience. Putting the words next to one another, you already sense that it always revolves around the secondary causes.

Poverty – our relationship to economic things. What is our attitude to them? Obedience – again, it is about secondary causes. God speaks through secondary causes. Here you see the entire field of secondary causes which we later studied in the most diverse directions. And we ought to seek an adequate form.

Not only the *spirit* of poverty. It must also take on specific *forms*.

Not only the *spirit* of obedience, but also specific *forms*.

Not only the *spirit* of purity, but also specific *forms*.

Observations with the Trappists

I remember – it was in 1949, when the battle with Trier³ began – it was when I was conducting a four-week retreat for the Fathers {155} of the Holy Family⁴. There it dawned on me pretty much for

³ That is, the difficulties that followed the Episcopal Visitation of February 1949 and Fr. Kentenich’s response of May 31, 1949.

⁴ Starting on February 11, 1949, Fr. Kentenich conducted a four-week retreat with the Fathers of the Holy Family in Buenos Aires.

the first time – since they are very exact in this area – that the spirit of the vows and the form of the vows form a lifestyle, that is, something which we call a permanent attitude. Not “something” in the sense that one does this or that because it happens to come that way, like so many other things. No, no! The spirit and form of the vows must leave a mark on our entire character, must leave a mark on our community in every aspect of life.

In order to prepare some things that we will later want to discuss, let me point out the one or the other thing. Right now the main thing is more that we slowly begin to draft a first version of the constitutions. When we therefore think, for instance, of the intermediary things, of the economic things, material things, there are diverse and various possibilities.

Years ago I visited the Trappists several times to give a retreat⁵. You will experience something similar when you make first contact with other lifestyles; you will notice certain things. If we want to trace what I am talking about back to a principle, then I would have to {156} say it this way: [The Trappists] fervently strive to reduce the intermediaries, the secondary causes, the earthly things, to a minimum. In other words: As few intermediaries – earthly things – as possible. For instance, the songs are deliberately without accompaniment, or only to the extent it is absolutely necessary. Do you understand what this means? Nothing which is pleasing to the senses, in order to lead the senses upward to God. Notice how different the lifestyles can be! Here one could even categorize the different orders based on these features.

Or another example. People usually have the need, under normal conditions of development, to not always be bound to a community, but need some time alone. [With the Trappists] the drive to be alone almost seemed to have died. They spent the whole day together. Of

⁵ Fr. Kentenich gave a retreat for the Trappists in Mariawald Abbey in 1922 or 1923 and again in the Fall of 1940. The latter retreat was on “Our Times, Apocalyptic Times.” Fr. Kentenich probably also visited this monastery on other occasions to give talks.

course, this can all predispose [the person] for mass-mindedness. This example, too, shows a strong tendency on the one hand [by the Trappists] to eliminate all secondary causes and, on the other hand, [in modern everyday life] almost an oversaturation, an exaggerated excess of secondary causes. In every area of life...

Our Lifestyle Must Take the Secondary Causes into Account

Well, *what stand do we take to the secondary causes?* How must we stand – to use the old expression – not only to the *spirit of poverty*, but also to the *form of poverty*? Of course, the first thing we know, we sense, is that because of our mission we cannot run away from the world. We are constantly in touch with secondary causes – with economic things, with people, etc. What we must do? Which is the way we must seek? You understand why I stress this: first because the discussion touches our topic and, second, because these are questions to which we must take a stand, and not just from the point of view of personal likes and dislikes.

Seeking a Valid Form of the Vows for all Generations

The points of view will, of course, {157} be very different. I could imagine someone saying, “I am so independent of earthly things!” That might be a virtue. But it might also be a vice. Can it really be a vice? There are very many things which seem quite virtuous, but are really the opposite. If I am really so independent of earthly things – as virtue or vice – I can naturally have a whole room full of precious treasures and it won’t disturb me. What we are looking for is a form of life that is valid for *us*. Valid not only for me personally, not only for my generation, but for generations. This is the great work of gifted founders, that they find forms which have perpetual validity for their followers. And these forms must naturally be deduced from the goals which we are seeking to fulfill.

Of course, to speak quite generally, we will say that we must reach the point – independent of the forms, forms must be there – that

we like St. Paul can say, sooner or later, “I can live with abundance⁶.” We will also need to be able to do that sometimes, depending on where we are, where we live and work, and in which circles we mingle. We can live with abundance. “But I can also live with practically nothing.” Please consider what this means. How much interior independence! It is easy to say in theory. I must be interiorly independent of the things, in any case free from being enslaved to them. Then I will have achieved the main thing. But because we are human and bound by the laws of corruption, and because we form a community which wants to last for generations, {158} we must find specific forms. You must really visit the individual houses of the different orders and examine how they cultivate, for instance, poverty. Then you will find in many places today that there is not much left of poverty. It often is just something on paper. That, of course, is not the way we want to do it. When we have forms, they must also be lived!

Binding Forms but not Enslavement to Forms

You can therefore sense that our approach to the secondary causes is a key for resolving many, many questions. And we will also do well to hold onto that reflexively and then to say to ourselves: What we elaborate in this direction should be seen, read, and kept from the final principles. And then, if I personally don’t need it to come to God, but if we are already a community and have committed ourselves to our community, then we are naturally bound to keep these forms. The difficulty is then, as in all things human, that *the obligation to the form does not become an enslavement to the form.*

Thoughts on Obedience

The same applies in the area of *obedience*. You will sense that it

⁶ Phil 4,12: “I indeed know how to live in humble circumstances; I also know how to live with abundance. In every circumstance and in all things I have learned the secret of being well fed and of being hungry, of living in abundance and of living in need.”

is one of our most essential tasks to find forms of obedience which are in part anchored in tradition, but which also correspond to our unique being. You will probably – just like me – examine the structure of the Jesuits in this area. You see, they are so fundamentally built on obedience! Naturally, [our obedience] should not only be a military obedience, but one animated by love. Do you understand that here, too, we are talking about secondary causes? Obeying God? No, there is something in between. The question is always: How do we stand to the intermediaries? Of course, it is always easy to say it in theory.

{159} Examine *the importance obedience has for us is in the long run*. To start with: We do not have [vows], as the Jesuits and others have. The Jesuits even have a double vow in this regard. I often told this to our Sisters: You must imagine a barrel in which the staves have to be held together by iron rings. How many iron rings do the orders have? These are the vows. At least three, some have more. The Jesuits: See how much depends for them on obedience! And what do we have – ignore for now the other things that go with being a priest⁷ – as Schoenstatt priests or Schoenstatt Fathers? (...) *Formally speaking and as such, in all these areas we have absolutely no vows*. In other words, *the juridical bond that we have personally and as a community is, ultimately, only obedience*. Even poverty... If I consider the whole structure as it took form with the Sisters, then it works this way: formally speaking, poverty is not safeguarded by the virtue of poverty, but only by obedience.

All of this is quite consciously traced back to final and most final principles. It is analogous to how it was in primitive Christianity or the early Church – even poverty. Even chastity. We demand neither a vow of chastity nor anything else, but for us – I am thinking now of the Sisters where everything has developed in its most purebred form – it is always obedience which secures everything. As a result, formally and juridically speaking, our Sisters cannot offend the virtue of

⁷ That is, upon ordination every priest promises obedience to the bishop or (through the bishop) to his major superior, and lifelong celibacy.

poverty. Formally and juridically speaking it is always a failing against obedience. I mention this so that you see how important obedience is. If I extend the image of the barrel and see poverty and all the other elements, then I have to say that what for others is held together {160} by three iron rings must [in our case] be held together by one ring, by obedience. How strong must then be the character of obedience so that our community can exist and be fruitful!

(....)

Thoughts on Virginity

{162} Once again, the concept of secondary causes, this time in reference to *virginity*. Of course, juridically speaking, we are only bound to it through obedience. Everything which obliges us juridically is practically always thought this way: the most external bond is the only bond, just as it was originally in primitive Christianity. Obedience was the bond which held everyone together and united them. You see, in this direction too we must find at least a certain lifestyle. What should our lifestyle be in contact with women, in contact with our feminine branches [in the Movement]? It is not as if it is individual to each person. You really ought to keep that in mind: If someone sees one of us, then he or she knows in essence how all of us are without exception. That there are differentiations is fine, they may and must exist. I am emphasizing all of this (....) So that we can now work on it in silence [the silence of the tertianship] and to see, to consider what the general outlines of our draft of the constitution must look like.

January 25, 1963 (=Talk 42)

DD 4, 228-244

{232} We must *see to it that we have a pronounced identity*⁸. If we are wishy-washy, a jack of all trades but master of none, then it will not produce any attraction. It is also a mystery. Just observe how few the vocations have been for the Pallottines here [in Wisconsin] all through the years, how few vocations they attracted! Almost every other community, including those that came later, have attracted more vocations. (....) How should we attract them? Through our ideal personality.

But secondly, also through *vocational excellence*. I think that these are things which we should primarily draw from the wellspring of our spirituality – everyday sanctity. If I have been chosen for a vocation, then I will concentrate my whole energy on it by accomplishing something in my vocation, something thorough, something useful. It must not be driven by ambition. No, it must be love of deeds, love of my family. We must really have persons who are experts in all fields, men every bit as qualified as others. At least this is the ideal we want to hold on to from the start.

You see, in this context we do not want to ignore how very wise the *Jesuits* are. {233} They must often hold their own on isolated posts. But we must not overlook how carefully they stay in touch with each other (....). They are very wise in this. But what is even more important is something we ought to consider imitating (....) They only let their vocations be ordained *at the age of 33*. During this whole time they go from hand to hand, from one Jesuit atmosphere to another! And it happens this way: If I have lived in the same atmosphere until my 33rd year and let it form me again and again, then (....) with 33 years I will have a firm interior foundation, and I do not need to fear that I will later be swept away by everything that comes at me from all different sides. (....)

If you observe how the Jesuits do it, they retreat again and again;

⁸ German: *daß wir einen ausgeprägten Typ darstellen.*

they are by and large always the ones who give, not so much the ones who take. {234} When there are workshops, especially today when so many communities lack the means, all kinds of things are [offered] to educate and teach the religious by regional or diocesan teams⁹. That can be fine for the common good. But if we want to be a community of leaders with such a clear identity, then our *nourishment must come primarily from our own forces*. If this would be the case until approximately the 33rd year of life, if we could train ourselves that long, be formed by one another, then we would finish as persons with a firm foundation. Really see to it that we gain vocational excellence!

This naturally presupposes a very wise government. This naturally presupposes that each one also does something for his education, that we give it enough time. If one must do everything at the same time, the danger is great [that things will end up upside-down]. (...) Then one will not be studying now, but working – for example, for the movement – and afterward, when they want to be working for the movement, they start to study. (...) There must be a time of sowing; each person needs this! Of course, here as elsewhere, exceptions confirm the rule. (...)

And now you stand here as a founding generation. This is an unusual situation. But regardless, I think you must really see to it that you have {235} studied, diligently studied.

⁹ Apparently a comment on common training courses for more than one religious community.