

YOUTH

Texts for Reflection and Discussion

(translated by Mary Cole, some unresolved items clarified by J. Niehaus)

14th Conference (1913) in: UdSchM [ed 1939], p 137f.

Self-education in puberty

So how does the teenager have to educate himself in these points [= in view of his over-flowing vitality]?

We all know the guiding principle. To start with, we have to obey our natural drives. This is obvious when we consider the sudden growth of the body. Since we are unable to add one cubit to your height, it is equally impossible to reduce it, or slow down the development of individual members - unfortunately – especially for the fashion freak¹! He would give everything if only he could take the beauty of his childhood into adulthood without the interruption of puberty. However, he can't. You simply can't change the laws of nature. We have to obey nature, and that includes its urge to develop its energies and care for outward appearance. The only thing we must avoid is excess.

Teenagers, in particular nature freaks, have to show, use and develop their strength through taking part in gymnastics and swimming, through games, jumping and climbing, in fact, wherever they have an opportunity – an allowed opportunity. However, *ne quid nimis* – don't exaggerate it. The danger of excesses is very great. Since a teenager is still too immature to judge his abilities and limits correctly, and above all because the strength of his will does not keep in step with his physical development and physical strength, each spontaneous idea – the rougher and wilder the better – is immediately put into effect without further reflection. This happens all the more easily and quickly if his nature is sounder and stronger. If, in addition, he seriously neglects to strengthen his will, his roughness turns into systematic violence, and in all probability he will be ruined for the rest of his life.

¹ Fr Kantenich is using two concepts to characterize two different types of teenagers: the nature freak and the fashion freak.

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931), p. 29

Young people instinctively pick up the signs of the times

We may not overlook that whoever knows the souls of young people, whoever knows our present-day culture, whoever knows the general principles of psychology and culture, will know that just as animals are the first to feel the onset of an earthquake and prepare for it, so **our young people have a very fine instinct that picks up an incipient earthquake in a culture.** That is why it is so important for us adults to be in constant contact with the next generation, not just in order to teach them, but also to pick up intuitively from them the spiritual currents of the next epoch that are developing and growing.

I think it is one of the great successes of the Youth Movement that so many adults have been thrown out of their formalism and one-sided, morbid and sclerotic attachments – they have become more malleable.

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931), p. 50f.

Take hold of *today's* young people

We want to talk about the young people living *today*, not as they were in the past. That is often the tragedy of our Catholic pastoral system, our Catholic asceticism and pedagogy. We often try to take hold of people who no longer exist. They did exist at one time. However, we continue to apply pastoral methods that were perhaps effective with former generations.

That is also why the conservative attitude, which is connatural to the Catholic Church, gradually becomes granite-like and sclerotic.

Yet the Church has been commissioned to go out into the whole world and teach all peoples [cf. Mk 16,15] all times, all zones, that is, all generations! So the Church has been commissioned to take up and form the people that exist **today**, with the present structure of their souls, with their present spiritual needs and battles and problems. We experience day by day that the souls of the young people of today differ essentially from the generation before us. However, it is possible that we are not yet sufficiently aware of this, and it is to a great extent to blame for the lack of success we have had in our educational work.

If I may now sketch a picture of the soul of today's young people with a few strokes, I would like to juxtapose two statements: inner lack of orientation

coupled with great, outward independence, and a constantly growing inner sense of inferiority.

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931), p. 75

Conduct youth work in small groups, while remaining aware of the all-embracing context of the times

Then, although we can carry on with our youth work in a small framework and behind closed doors, we will be inwardly in contact with the whole world, and with the whole soul of the times. That has to be the case. If I exercise the smallest activity in the smallest framework against a huge background and context, I will always be surrounded by surging life. I will never be bored as an educator. Then in the smallest group we will always exercise a great influence on great world events. That is what we need. We have to escape from the levelling tendencies of the trivia of everyday life and increasingly see the huge context. We need to learn to measure our little activities all the time against the huge context.

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931) 82-83:

Education of the heart through Marian Devotion – both with girls and boys

[82] When we are educating boys and girls, we have to emphasize their emotional lives. We need to emphasize it more, because the harsh realities of everyday life automatically destroy far too much, far too early, in the education of girls. However, you may not expect me to enlarge on this. I merely want to mention it.

Consider: How can we educate their emotions, how can we take hold of them in a Catholic sense? It is a tremendous pity if our teachers also gradually lose the inner warmth of feeling for the supernatural. How should we mediate the warmth of feeling to others, if we ourselves have become inwardly so empty?

[83] Hence the serious challenge: A strong character is only enkindled by someone with character that is genuine, strong and vigorous, and oriented to the supernatural. If I am personally too naturalistic, if the supernatural fire of love of God does not burn and glow in me, how will I be able to enkindle this fire in those entrusted to my care?

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931) 94:

Education to act responsibly is at the same time political education of young people

It is [not just up to the Nazis], also we [in Schoenstatt] have to educate young people in a political sense already in early childhood. Basically this happens when we teach children that they must feel responsible for a certain group. If we foster this sense of responsibility everywhere – in the associations, at school, in the small child, we will have created a foundation for political training. If a child, or a young person, cares for a specific group, they learn to transfer this concern to the state.

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931) 96-98:

Importance of an educator's character² for the formation of the heart

From time to time we find that as they mature young people undergo a crisis of faith in Christ, but they hold onto devotion to Mary with their whole soul.

From a logical point of view this cannot be explained, because devotion to Mary only has a meaning because of Christ. Yet what is the solution to this almost inexplicable devotion to Mary? It is because devotion to Mary has been deeply anchored in their hearts while they were young.

By the way, this shows us how important ***the education of the feelings and heart*** of the small child is, also in school, indeed in every respect. Now that the education of women has been so strongly oriented to that of men, we must be very careful to ensure that our education of women does not copy that of men. Many Catholic educators are proud to say: Away with feelings! The intellect should be in control! In the process they forget that as a result women's emotions are crassly uprooted.

In the education of boys, as well as girls, we have to set great store by the emotional life. We have to emphasize it more, because the brutality of everyday life automatically destroys too much in girls at too early a stage while they are still

² The emphasis in education is on what the educator is in himself or herself, because this is what influences others. Although an educator needs to know the subject-matter and how to pass on this knowledge in a vital way, what really forms the pupils is whether he or she is a person with convictions and principles.

being educated. Please do not expect me to go into details. I only want to draw your attention to it.

Consider for yourselves: How can we educate the emotions, how can we take hold of the emotions in a Catholic sense? That is why it is such a tragedy if our teachers gradually lose an inner feeling of warmth for the supernatural world. How should we then pass on a warm heart to others, if we ourselves are inwardly empty?

[83] So the serious demand is this: ***A strong character is only set on fire by someone with a genuine and strong character that is oriented to the supernatural world.*** If I am personally very naturalistic in outlook, if the supernatural fire of love of God does not burn and glow in me, how can I expect to enkindle this fire in those entrusted to my care?

Pedagogical Course on Youth (1931) 128-129:

An educator has to challenge the pupils

Do you know what *authority* means? It comes from *Auctor esse* – to be the author or originator. That is its profound meaning – to be the author or originator of another, independent being. In this connection we all too often confuse inner authority with outer authority. Outer authority without inner authority will never educate. It can perhaps bring about military drill in a community; it will never create a community.

Please do not misunderstand me. You will probably be thinking: For heaven's sake, how can I do that? I may no longer punish my children. A big mistake! Does true motherhood and fatherhood consist in caressing a child all the time? You need only remember one thing: *an honest boy or girl demands punishment if they deserve it.* However, you have to remember that [before you correct them, you must] wait until you have bonded inwardly with them. To the extent that the inner bonding is there, you can punish them, you can really cause pain³. I would even dare to say that the more you cause them pain – but it must be justified – the deeper your relationship will become. So it is quite possible that I am the person in authority and may hurt the pupils as much as any other educator.

³ Fr Kentenich was not thinking of physical chastisement. Causing pain can happen in many ways: making radical and harsh demands, demanding more disciplined behaviour, opening someone's eyes through correction, and, if necessary, also punishing them. All these things cause pain and a person can feel really hurt by them. At times Fr Kentenich spoke about the Father "operating" on them like a doctor, who has to heal or save life. So "causing pain" always serves the education of the character; its aim is inner growth.

[129] There is only one thing a noble-minded person cannot bear, and that is when scorn is included in the punishment. We would also not have been able to bear it.

So, first of all, let us remember that priestly motherliness and fatherhood require us to be strong and vigorous, we must be able to cause pain at the right moment. If this does not happen, inner bonding will gradually cease. The young person will not be able to feel that the educator represents a strong, supernatural world. This supernatural world has to be alive in the educator, otherwise the young person's need to be sheltered is not satisfied.

Marian Education (ME) (1934) 33:

The Importance of Youth Work

We are only too well aware that our young people are the builders of the future. It is the factor that gives us, as ideal educators, no rest. The children, *the young people of today, are the men and women, the citizens who bear responsibility, tomorrow and the next day.*

Brazilian Tertianship (BrT) III, 29f.

Looking back on July 1913 I first of all showed how I regarded all the boys as my co-workers; not just as stones for the building, but as master builders and architects. Do you understand the psychological importance of this fundamental attitude? It is the expression of a tremendously strong *respect for my followers as my co-workers.*

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 92-93:

The Helplessness experienced by young people leads to love for Mary

Suppose you have set yourselves the following goal: I want to see to it that my young people learn to love the Mother of God in a childlike way! Of course, this will not be difficult if you are only dealing with boys who love their own mothers deeply. However, you cannot always presuppose this. I even think that you can presuppose that this childlike relationship will have been severely damaged.

In purely pedagogical terms, what can I do to help my young people to learn to love our Lady? I will have to ensure [93] that the young people see our Lady as the ideal of a great, almost almighty woman, so that they will feel their own helplessness. If you do it in the right way, it will have a powerful effect on young people.

Of course, this takes five or six years; you won't manage it in one year. The true educator is one who does not say one thing today, and another thing tomorrow. An educator is a man with one, great thought. The nervy people of today are no longer capable of this. One thought chases the next. That is why they are unable to bring about anything solid.

If you manage to convey a deep love for the Blessed Mother to our young people, you will see how the image of their own mothers is transfigured by the light coming from our Lady. Love for the Blessed Mother will be transferred to the image of their own mothers. [...] The Blessed Mother awakens childlikeness wherever she is. So you should be grateful that devotion to Mary is extremely strongly anchored in your community.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 130:

130: Educate young people in such away that their “inner cloister walls” protect them

You may not overlook that when there are so few obligations, and there is so much freedom, both for the individual and for the community, the cultivation of the spirit has to be all the stronger. It is obvious that if you love your community, you have to hang onto the fundamental freedoms. God is behind this. However, you have to protect and treasure your Institute by educating yourselves and your young members all the more. You have to make the “inner cloister walls” (of inner conviction) are so solid and impregnable that worldliness cannot invade heart and mind. What does that mean? We [in Schoenstatt] would talk instead about the cultivation of the spirit. So it is most important that we are unshakably loyal in holding onto the means given to us by the community, and not so easily

give a dispensation from them. You would also need to foster a greater appreciation of these means in your (religious) family.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 135:

Emphasize central truths – don't get sidetracked

Whoever wants to build central truths into his religious life ... must constantly highlight them. We may not get stuck with peripheral matters. *Quantum potes, tantum aude*, that is, to the extent that the person being educated is able to assimilate these great, central truths. Our present times destroy all that is peripheral; instead they require us to move far more quickly and strongly to what is central, to God, than we did or could do in the past when we were young.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 189-192:

Educating young people to live a life of sacrifice in view of society's tendency to stress enjoyment

Now the word "childlikeness" has again taken on a new meaning. This new content is actually a strong protest against a very superficial outlook. Today there are any number of people who are crying out to be sheltered. Later on I will show you [190] how justified this cry is. One day you will see, if you are working in religious communities, how tremendously strong this *cry to be sheltered* really is.

We must be careful not to equate childlikeness primarily with being sheltered. *You should equate it far more with self-surrender.* The secondary effect, or, if you like, the effect of self-surrender, is the sense of being sheltered. Can you now feel that childlikeness has to be equated with the most masculine masculinity? Without the most masculine masculinity we will never be able to attain this peak of self-surrender, which we see as the highest achievement of childlikeness. [...] At any rate, childlikeness is always something great for us; it has to be proved by this wonderful self-surrender, which we discover pre-eminently in our Lord's life.

I have briefly described how the members of religious communities, and indeed the people of today as such, are crying out strongly for the family. Can you not see how a quite considerable measure of hedonism is included in this cry? I am not saying that hedonism is totally unjustified; I am also not saying that at the beginning of a person's development it is not desirable; I am also not saying that as leaders of a little family we have to banish this justified desire for enjoyment – but *we may not see the family table primarily as a source of pleasure; instead we need to see it as a sacrificial table.*

Please do not just listen to such harsh statements, but also proclaim them to our present times, and await the echo.

[191] It is the tragedy of our present times, it is also the tragedy of the natural family: the family wants to enjoy. If I see the family primarily as a table of enjoyment, we can pack and go. We will not have the means to become something great. I know something about these things. I know communities where the young generation is constantly crying out for the family. Do you know how they see the family? Not just as a table of enjoyment, but also as a beer table and a smoking table. Can you understand what I am getting at? I am not saying that such things do not help to make life more attractive, or that they are not meaningful as a change, but we may not turn things upside down.

These are such important statements; you have to take them very seriously! As children of the family, we have to see the family table primarily as a sacrificial table. [...]

Look at how strongly your community emphasizes that our young people are not educated for just any high school; they are educated for a life of sacrifice later on. You should keep this in mind. There is no need to make sacrifice sound so austere all the time; we can adapt ourselves to the age and feeling for life in our young people. However, we may not hide or blur the matter, or we will be deceiving ourselves.

When I continue developing these thoughts, I would like to stress, on the one hand, how childlikeness includes a great deal of austerity. Of course, on the other hand, childlikeness is so attractive, because love is primary in the child. If love enkindles this sacrificial power within me, and helps me to make the family table a sacrificial table, the dreadfully harsh element in sacrifice will often be lost. We will then feel that we have hit the right note.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 193:

Direct young people's urge to be great towards fulfilling the heavenly Father's wish and will

I will limit myself to our Lord's self-surrender to the Father's will.

If we look for a starting-point, we will have to say that our Lord had to strive to achieve something really great in his life, because he wanted to be an example to all people of all times and all zones, including the geniuses. That is why he had to make the greatest thing in heaven and on earth the goal of his life. In what did this greatness consist? In that all he did was constantly sheltered in God. In

our Lord we do not find merely human greatness. Instead, as a result of his immediate connection with God, every act in his life was great, because he only said yes to what the Father wanted. *Ita, Pater!* That is the greatest greatness of his life.

The young people we have to educate often have an inflexible urge to be great. Where should we direct this urge? To the wish and will of the heavenly Father. That is why those words are written above our Lord's life – as St Paul tells us, they were his morning prayer: "Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body you have prepared for me; in burnt offering and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'See, God, I have come to do your will!'" (Heb 10,5-7). Here you have the ideal of our Lord's life, we would call it his personal ideal. Later he compressed it into the form: Yes, Father! *Ita, Pater!*

[194] Study it to see how true it is! Throughout his life, what did our Lord hold onto as his great leading idea? I speak the words the Father has given me to speak, I do the works the Father wants me to do (cf Jn 14,10). I am going to suffer and die, so that the world can see that I carry out the Father's will (cf Jn 14,31). That should be your specific asceticism.

Look at how our Lord revealed this childlike self-surrender to the wish and will of the Father in the way he prayed, worked and suffered. That is our great, common understanding of life.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 212-213

**Educate primarily to gratitude for God's loving gifts,
only then draw attention to faults**

Let me ask you again to see to it that noble-mindedness is awakened in us, so that we swim almost day and night in the ocean of God's loving gifts. That is so important, because we become children to the extent that we realize that we are loved. So, when you are educating young people, tell them this joyful truth, although not too one-sidedly. This is because these joyful truths only have a formative and educational effect if we are at home in a joyful world. Hence, you need to shift the emphasis very strongly.

That is also the reason why we first recalled all the great things [God has done for us], and only then took a look at the faults and failures in our lives. It is always the case that the faults and failures in my life will depress me all the more, the more I have previously experienced all the great things offered and given to me by our great God. Why are we so often so dreadfully ungrateful? Because we recall God's loving gifts too rarely. This is a result of a profound lack of childlikeness.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 300-302

**Pass on the awareness that they are personally highly valued.
That is the way to educate young people to greatness.**

It is obvious that God doesn't have to exert himself to do what he does; but look at it from an anthropomorphic point of view. You will immediately understand what I want to say when I quote those words from the Bible: God loved the world so much that he allowed his only begotten Son to become man and to be nailed most gruesomely to the cross (cf 1 Jn 3,16; 4,9f.). What can we conclude from his suffering and death? It proves how much the heavenly Father loves me. He loved also me so much that he gave up his only begotten Son for me.

We need to pause here and spend more time examining what has been said. These are such well-known passages from the Scriptures. Their aim is to open up the context more fully. I have been purchased at a great price⁴. I want to study and find out how much I am worth. If we want to become children, we have to experience that we are personally highly valued. You may not allow yourselves to become one of the crowd. ... We have turned everything on its head: we always talked about how good God is, and only mentioned by the way that we are poor and weak human beings. People today have to be told: Be conscious, O man, of your dignity!⁵ A child has to know that he or she is surrounded by love, believe it, and if possible also feel it.

These are arguments that offer you reasons for strongly changing the emphasis in your thinking. *People today must experience with every possible means that they are personally highly valued in and because of God.* Therefore, to give you an example, we should not be so quick to say today – although it is correct: O little human being, how small you are when compared with the huge universe! We must always see this truth from the other side: Look at how small the whole universe is when compared with a graced human being! Is that true? Without doubt! What is the beauty of the mountains, etc., when compared with a graced human being?

Today we need to be convinced that we are personally highly valued. You will see how you will grow in reverence towards yourselves, and how a really deep,

⁴ Cf 1 Cor 6,20; 7,23; 1 Pet 1,18f.

⁵ Be conscious, O Christian, of your dignity! You have been made partaker of the divine nature; do not fall again by a corrupt manner of life into the beggarly elements above which you are lifted. Remember whose body it is of which you are a member, and who is its Head. Remember that it is He who has delivered you from the power of darkness and has transferred you into God's light and god's kingdom. (Sermon of Pope St Leo, Lesson vi, Breviary readings for Nativity of our Lord, Liturgical Press 1963)

childlike love is awakened in you. “You were bought with a price!” (1 Cor 6,20; 7,23). I look at our Lord’s life not merely to say that I am a poor and sinful human being, but also to recognize my worth. By looking at the life and suffering of our Lord, I can educate and uplift myself to experience the Father’s love: This is how much the Father loved me, that he gave up his only begotten Son in that butchered figure! I don’t need many truths; I need only live from this truth.

How little we understand the context, how little we understand St Paul’s thought: “dilexit me! – He loved me!” (Gal 2,20).

It is obvious that if you know the psychology of love, you will be convinced that *the most essential basic drive in human nature is the drive of love*, not of fear. Fear is also a basic drive, but when you take hold of people through fear, you will never possess them totally, and only as long as the whip is there.

In addition, *in education everything depends on our winning the drive of love*. The drive of love is most quickly won when a person knows that he or she is loved. That is the wonderful pedagogy of Don Bosco: God loves me! Human beings need to know that they are loved, because this awakens their drive to love. Now I know what I have to do if I have to educate others.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937)

**Prepare young people to expect difficulties. Educate heroes.
Don’t play down difficulties.**

[322] It is a masterpiece if we can govern a community in such a way that, on the one hand, we are inexorable in demanding the fulfilment of duty, and, on the other, we can awaken heroism by appealing to people’s generosity. Whoever finds the golden mean is a master of education.

[Heroism as proclaimed by the Nazis]

[323] Christianity demands heroism, but normally it is a heroism that makes maximum demands on our generosity, it is not a duty or obligation. Of course, there are circumstances when nothing else is possible⁶; each Christian has to be a hero, otherwise they cannot be Christians any longer. We are gradually approaching such circumstances. In normal circumstances a hero also becomes an everyday saint, if he or she is motivated by great love to form life even in very simple, everyday circumstances. However, when these circumstances change, our Lord – and hence also Christianity – simply demands that we should be

⁶ Fr Kentenich is referring here to the Nazi persecution of Christians, and of all who opposed their ideology.

heroic in professing our faith and in making sacrifices. A heroic religion also demands outward heroism.

[Missionary work requires heroic people]

By the way, you would need to educate yourselves constantly in this way, because your task requires such heroism. You know better than I do that unless you go out as a hero, you will be a slave; anything in between is impossible. You have more freedom, and unless you want the ultimate out of inner conviction, the life of a missionary will have a levelling effect. After a few years 50% will be morally inferior.

[Prepare young people for great challenges]

However, human beings, heroes, grow when faced with higher goals. So, when we talk to our young people about the missions, we should not so easily play down the difficulties. We can say: That's how it is! I have also to educate a number of people for all sorts of things; if I exaggerate, I exaggerate by making things look really black: This and that await you! Of course, I try to tell the truth. But if I exaggerate, I exaggerate in that way. If you play down the difficulties, you will create creatures ... A person who does not manage to remain true to his goals when great difficulties arise, will break down. Suppose for a moment that you know that you will have an easy time in the missions, and so you want to go there. My advice would be: Rather stay here!

[324] I think we should *awaken the hero in people in every respect*. Human beings, especially if they are noble-minded, naturally look for genuine heroism.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937): 396-397

**[Young people have to learn to exert themselves.
Don't begin right away with the expectation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.]**

Is the Holy Spirit so effective in our lives at present that we can say he is the focal point, God's activity is the main thing, not mine? In practice this should be the case, but very often it is not so, because we have not exerted ourselves sufficiently to acquire the moral and theological virtues with the help of actual grace. We have to lead our young people. When I am dealing with boys, I may not immediately tell them that they Holy Spirit will blow into their souls and move them powerfully along. No, the moral virtues have to be practised prosaically, the virtues of faith, hope and love, the cardinal virtues, have to be practiced in very down-to-earth ways! Young people have to be educated to exert themselves!

In the main, there are three groups of actions we can undertake in order to be correctly disposed for the greater activity of the Holy Spirit through his gifts. We can educate ourselves and others:

firstly to be *recollected*. That is to say, I have to exert myself personally – of course, with the help of grace – to try to be recollected. The forces of the soul need to be re-collected in God. What matters is that it is a God-pleasing recollection and loneliness, it may not be a morbid concentration on self – that would not be the disposition needed for a more powerful intervention of the Holy Spirit. So we have to educate people and become people who are able to be alone with God. This sometimes costs exertion, but we will not attain our goal without a corresponding exertion.

The second preparatory act is education to *live [and walk] constantly in the presence of God*. The word “constantly” is a relative concept. Please recall all that we have said about living [and walking] in the presence of God. We cannot live constantly in God’s presence unless the Holy Spirit helps us. When we refer to the first period of our religious lives, it must definitely be seen relatively. So we have to try - for our part we have also to exert ourselves to repeatedly look up to God with faith; secondly, to talk to God very often; and thirdly, repeatedly make sacrifices for God. What are these sacrifices? They have to be found in the sphere of the virtues, either the theological or the moral virtues. Young people have to be educated to be pure, to be humble, etc. We have to be realistic; we may not think that God can bring this about in our young people all by himself. Our education has to be realistic. What you have heard about the Jesuits’ educational methods, which seem to be Molinistic – we are not speaking about a system, but merely of a way of doing things, as though we were Molinists – is definitely justified in the sound development of human beings. [...] If we apply this personally, we would have to ask: In my personal efforts, which moral virtue would I have to stress more strongly? To be more undemanding? To practice fraternal love more? I may not expect the Holy Spirit to come just like that. I have first to create the correct disposition in my own soul.

Finally I have to prepare for the Holy Spirit to work more strongly in my soul by fostering very *deep feelings of longing*. Please do not forget that we have to become men of longing for the Holy Spirit. “Send forth your Spirit and everything will be recreated!” (Ps 104).

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 401

**Mary and the Holy Spirit. Pray for the Holy Spirit for our young people.
Lead them to the Mother of God.**

It is impossible to lead a community to holiness unless the Holy Spirit is present in it to an extraordinary extent. So, let me repeat: We hold onto the Blessed Mother, not just for psychological reasons. They [such psychological reasons] can also be at work. [For example:] Since we grow up only with members of our own sex, we need the Blessed Mother to be constantly with us as the purest woman. However, this is not the ultimate reason. The ultimate reason is her position in relation to grace, and her relationship to God. One of the profoundest reasons is her relationship to the Holy Spirit. The picture of the Cenacle must be repeated in our midst.

Also when we lead our young people to the Blessed Mother, we educators need to keep her position in relation to the Holy Spirit in mind. We don't need to talk to the young people about the Holy Spirit, but give the boys to our Lady, so that she can intercede for the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 435

Awaken the interest of young people in generous purity

The fundamental note of your whole being has to be generosity. This generosity needs to be applied also in the sexual field. You need to awaken your own interest and that of your young people in this fine purity, the highest degree of purity. So we have to see to it, firstly, that we use all the means at our disposal to preserve obligatory purity, and secondly, as far as possible also to secure a fine degree of purity.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 440-441

From the first introduce our young people deeply to the Marian world. Then they will see a mysterious Marian crown on the brow of every woman.

You have to be really sensible in this matter. You have to live in the world and spend a lot of time dealing with women. Our Lord died for everyone, also for women. We have to educate ourselves to be profoundly and inwardly free⁷ in dealing with the opposite sex, just as with every human being. This naturalness and inner freedom is an effective protection. So we cannot do enough to flee time

⁷ German: "eine tiefe innere Unbefangenheit" – a deep, inner spontaneity and naturalness

and again into the supernatural world. We have to see *every human being as a child of God and member of Christ*. We have also to see the body and soul of the opposite sex as bearers and homes of the Triune God, or, as “Everyday Sanctity” puts it, as “little churches of the Trinity”.

Also, in order to be natural and inwardly free in relation to the opposite sex, we need to make *profound love for our Lady our own*. Experience shows that if we love the Blessed Mother soundly, we will discover a mysterious Marian crown on the head of every woman and girl. There you have the psychology! For this reason I should educate myself and my followers to love Mary deeply. As future missionaries who are exposed to special dangers, you should lead your young people purposefully and very deeply into the Marian world.

All this is true; but it is just as true to say that we need to be *careful not to act out of fear, but out of love*. That is the reason for the law we have already mentioned: inner naturalness and freedom, but outward physical integrity. This physical integrity must be in keeping with our state, and we need to adapt it to ourselves personally until it becomes, in a certain sense, absolute physical integrity. We could also say: We touch others only to the extent required by politeness, in the generally accepted forms, and we do so resolutely and without any caresses.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 445:

[445] Lead young people more through ideas than through organization.

To freely want the highest ideals – that is the right way. Don’t feel pressured into wanting too much. That is why we want only as many obligations as necessary, but also as many as necessary!

This is what you should always tell your young people. I could well imagine that when young people reach the age of say 15-20, if they are striving, they will be confused and ask: Why don’t you have vows? If you read ascetical books, you begin to think that vows are necessary. You must always be prepared for this and say with conviction: We want to reach the same goals as highly striving religious, we want to do exactly as much as they do for the Church, but we want to do it in a different way. That will take the wind out of their sails. You must lead your Institute and your young people more through ideas than through organization. Of course, both have to be there.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 449:

Foster Joy. Educate young people to be hardworking

If you want to see the inner connection between purity and being hardworking, let me tell you that if I have work to do in which I can be creative, it will give me so much joy – psychologically, humanly speaking – that dangerous and poisonous joys will not seem so attractive, at least they won't be a permanent attraction. What can we conclude from this? We need to foster enjoyment in our work, even if only because this serves sexual-pedagogical goals.

On the whole we need to consciously foster enjoyment, also in every little moral progress, especially in our young people. We may not so easily be killjoys and say: You must mortify yourselves! We need to talk about mortification, but afterwards we must also enkindle joy over every little victory. Whoever does not enjoy being noble-minded and good, will reach out towards joys that are bad.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 452

Educate young people to be hardworking (have a hobby)

Many apostolic communities have laid down in their Constitutions that their priests must always be kept busy with the tasks involved in their service. I think we should hold onto such things. So consider what you can do. Of course, it is true that there are many people who have first to be woken up. So, when you are educating your young people, see to it that they are woken up by hard work. I would not consider it wise to aim at a principle which states: No one may have a *hobby*. Consider what happens when we are older – we still cling to a hobby. Of course, we may not cultivate such a hobby in an extreme way.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937), 457

See to it that young people have a sound sense of modesty

If we want to be generous, if we want to exemplify our way of life as purely as possible, we need to be even more careful than others about cultivating a sense of modesty⁸ – also when we are alone! Others try to avoid serious sin. Whatever we do in this regard through cultivating our sense of modesty is at the same time a strong safeguard of our sexual lives.

⁸ German: "gesundes Schamgefuehl"

Of course, let me immediately add that our sense of modest is a very great protection if it is sound. There is such a thing as *unsound modesty*. I think that we must here return to one of my favourite thoughts, which you have probably made your own. If we want to be a sound community, if we want to be a new type of human being who is able to answer the needs of our present times, we will have to see to it that our sexual lives are really sound, as far as this is possible for our nature burdened with original sin. So see to it that young people have a sound sense of modesty.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 463:

Don't talk a great deal to young people about purity, but show them positive goals, and create a climate of generosity

We want to strive for generosity, among other things, in order that our purity is automatically secured.

When you are educating young people, do not talk a great deal about purity. I was also working in the educational field in the past. It was at the time of the First World War. I never talked about purity except when the young men were leaving for the army. I merely showed them positive goals. It is obvious that this will secure purity. Talking a great deal about purity doesn't make much sense. In private it may be necessary to do so every now and again, but when you create a climate of generosity, the difficulties are not so great. The more I try to give God all my powers of love, the more I will be on a very high [moral and spiritual] plane. This is obvious from a sexual-pedagogical point of view.

Childlike purity is extremely fruitful. Why? First of all, because of the influence of its riches. What is extremely important is to see to the **education of the imagination** of young people. If we could cultivate this more, also in our boarding schools, purity would be more secured. If a young person's imagination has been dirtied, you will see that the fruitfulness of purity will also cease.

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 476:

**Mary is Mother and Queen:
Satisfying the need to be sheltered, and education to be chivalrous**

When we were young, we most probably never learnt to speak about these things, but childlikeness simply grew. In particular this was a childlike attitude to our Mother and Queen. So I think we should continue to present devotion to

Mary to our young peoples, and to allow our Lady to satisfy their need to be sheltered.

However, genuine childlikeness may not merely look for shelter; genuine childlikeness has to grow to find expression in chivalry. Look at the simple way children are often educated in this regard. Their need for human contact and their sense of being sheltered are transferred to the Mother of God, and they learn from her to fight for God's kingdom. They learn to give themselves selflessly to serve our Lord's and the Triune God's interests. Notice how those simple titles, Mother of God, or our Mother and Queen, contain everything I have said to you in these days?

Bethlehem Retreat (1937) 483f:

Our father's experience: bond young people to the Mother of God

"Lord, help me to bond; yes, help me to bond to the blessed among women, Mary!"

I don't know whether you will allow me to tell you that wherever I bore greater responsibility as a priest, I was always happy and satisfied once I knew that those whom God had led to me at some stage on their way through life had given themselves to the Blessed Mother.

This was also the case in the past, when I was a young priest engaged in education. Once I had understood the great context of the economy of salvation, my greatest joy was to lead my young people to our Lady. The thought behind it was this: I am unable to be with them all the time. Even if I could be with them, this depth of fatherly-priestly relationship has to cease at some stage. However, if I have entrusted my young people to the Blessed Mother, I know she will always hold a hand over them. She is omnipotent in supplication, she remains faithful.

I don't know whether you may and should pray for this for yourselves, or whether I may pray for this grace for you: Lord, bond us to the Blessed Mother, then you will have had mercy on us!