

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

Introductory Course (1921)

Excerpts from

Einführungskursus, August 24-28, 1921

Introduction for New Members to the Federation

translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2008

Introduction

The workshop is preserved in a transcript¹ of written notes made by a participant at the workshop. It is a very incomplete transcript, perhaps accounting for 15-20% of the content. However, at 33 pages in its typewritten form, this course represents one of the first courses of Fr. Kentenich to be preserved in relative detail.

The note-taker focused on writing down the main ideas, but not the flow of entire paragraphs. The result in many places is rather like a collection of aphorisms.

¹ J. Kentenich, Introductory Course, August 24-28, 1921; transcript with the title “Einführungskursus (24.-28.8.21)”, carbon copy, A4, 33 pages.

First Conference

{1} We asked the MTA to erect her throne of grace here.
Our trust in her was great.

I remind you of the founding of the magazine, of the idea of the capital of grace, of the External Organization, of the development of the Apostolic Federation.

The successes speak in favor of the fact that Mary has accepted.
The Shrine was the point of attraction of our soldier-sodalists.

We had to overcome difficulties from the [Pallottines] that seemed nearly insurmountable.

Second Conference

{3} One of the many new things generated by today's times was also the Apostolic Movement.

We don't want anything new; we want to support the existing structures; we want to carry the idea of apostolate into the widest circles.

But if we want to achieve this, then we must have a great sense of responsibility for the great cause of the Church and Christianity.

But we are not an association, we are a *movement*.

[As participants in this workshop,] we do not want to accept things indiscriminately, but ask: *what do we really want?* (....)

This raises the question: What is the purpose of the Federation? What does it want? Are there not already too many organizations? Can the Apostolic Movement justify its existence?

To the last question I answer: Yes and No.

Yes: 1. If there is no other existing organization with the same goal and the same means.

2. If today's times necessarily demand such an organization, and greatly benefit from it. (....)

No: If it does not remain true to the spirit of the founders and its goal.

I. Comparison of the Federation With Other Organizations

The *verbal definition*: As the words say, it is an apostolic federation, that is, a community which fosters self-education in the service of apostolate.

The *essential definition*: Education of formed lay apostles in the spirit of the Church (as was declared in Hoerde).

Our task must therefore be: the *work of pastoral care*.

The priest is called to this by virtue of his office, but it is no less true of the *Volksführer* (leader of the people).

{4} The content of this work must be: to make ourselves and others into formers of Christ and God.

“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Mt 5,48).

St. Paul says: “My children, I suffer birth pangs until Christ is born again in you” (Gal 4,19).

To be an apostle means to be a cooperater in the salvation of the souls of men.

Divinissimum divinissimum est cooperare in salutem animarum [The most divine of all the most divine things is to cooperate in the salvation of souls]².

Pastoral care is a priestly task.

In spite of the many ideals, our hearts inside call out for divinity: “*Inquietum est cor meum...*”³ We are God-seekers.

Apostolate alone could not make us happy unless we shape the image of God in our own hearts beforehand.

Apostolate necessarily demands self-sanctification. An inner organic connection is necessary between self-sanctification and apostolate.

The fruitfulness of apostolate is essentially dependant on the fruitfulness of our self-sanctification because, after all, the aim of our work is the soul.

We must nurture a great reverence for the soul of each one that we must carry upward into the supernatural.

(...)

Our goal is to educate saints – but not {5} stylites, rather apostles.

(...)

² Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (4th/5th Century): “*Omnium divinorum divinissimum est cooperari Deo in salute animarum*” (The most divine of all divine things is to cooperate with God in the salvation of souls).

³ St. Augustine, *Confessions* (1,1), “Restless are our hearts, O Lord, until they rest in you.”

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II. *The Times Demand This Kind of Leaders and Examples*

Our times do not want to be preached to. They demand to see an example of the Gospel lived. They long for the embodied Gospel. “If these redeemed would only act more redeemed, I would be more inclined to believe in their Redeemer,” says Nietzsche.

The people of our time can no longer distinguish between office and person; they only see the personality. This is incorrect, but we must deal with it.

Hence, Christ must be our example, whom we imitate in all things. Christ’s example instills reverence and respect and “Reverence is the turning-point of the world” as Shakespeare says.

Every soul is like a block of marble; it must be so formed that it becomes like an image of Christ.

We must increase in ourselves the sense of responsibility for souls and for our vocation.

If we want to work on the whole personality, self-denial is absolutely necessary for us. We must make increased demands of ourselves, but be mild toward others.

Anyone who works on himself can become a useful instrument in God’s hands for the salvation of souls.

(...)

{7} The main purpose of the Church is to work for the salvation of souls. Therefore, anyone who gets involved for the interests, for the freedom, and for the survival of the Church is an apostle.

Third Conference

(...)

{8} The *lay apostle* is an apostle who permanently engages all natural and supernatural means for the salvation of souls, either in an immediate way through moral-religious influence (prayer and example), or in a mediated way by actively working for the steadfast continuance and unobstructed effectivity of the institutions whose immediate aim is to foster the salvation of souls.

We strive for immediate *and* mediate apostolate. The mediated way alone is wrong, because modern man is a mass-man. We must fight the mass with an animated mass.

The word “permanent” includes the application of natural and supernatural means.

We differentiate two methods of this apostolate:

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1. *Indirect*. It adapts to all conditions, looks at, considers in every situation, studies all the characteristics, etc. E.g., Paul at the Areopagus, Ignatius, Francis Xavier.

2. *Direct*. Going directly towards the goal.

Both have their disadvantages. The indirect method can ruin the character through pride and has the danger that one becomes rascally and leads others around by the nose. The direct more easily makes us rigid, so that we do not take into account the needs of the souls. The happy medium is really important. And we always try to maintain it in our activity.