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*Pilot translation by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2001
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Sexual Pedagogical Concerns and Marian Devotion (1928)

The following excerpts are from a workshop which Father Kentenich gave for young men and young priests belonging to the movement in 1928¹. He dealt with the question of sexuality in a way that addressed problems especially typical of youth and the first part of adulthood. His categories can help us get a clearer grip of God's plan in this part of how we are made.

A key term introduced by Father is "erotische Liebe." He did not mean "erotic" the way we usually do today, but rather as "ideal-centered" or "ideal-projecting." I will therefore translate "Erotik" here as "ideal-centered" and its counterpart "Sexualitas" as "sexual-centered" or "physical love." Subtitles have been added to aid the grasp of the text:

Day 1, Conference 1 (Introduction)

{1} Although the large number of participants at this meeting is a sign of vibrant life, it also raises some concerns. How shall we do justice to all the different needs? Most are probably here for the topic, but the leaders may be thinking: Shouldn't this meeting focus more on the newcomers? Best of all would be to do justice to both the old and the new. And, as usual, the two types of personalities are also here—the more systematic and the more emotional and life-oriented. The first group wants to know the exact meaning and purpose of such things as community, while the more life-oriented group is only interested in experiencing community and its meaning and purpose. These two tendencies have always been present in our movement.

This is reflected in the MTA [Magazine]. The strong demarcation between the thinking types in the north and the life-centered types in the south has weakened of late, with Münster [in the North] giving the signal in its MTA. The two tendencies complement one another. This meeting, too, should be characterized by mutual complementation. The talks will pick up a theme of the South Germans, who are the majority this time. As participants it is up to us to complement [the more life-centered focus] by thinking through the topic and considering its deeper ramifications. The hallmark of the Federation is our apostolic, Marian community spirit. We must cultivate this every time we gather. The task of this meeting is therefore the deepening of community and apostolic spirit. We ought to experience the community spirit during these days, propagating the right atmosphere. The spirit of apostolate ought to be active in the way we solve serious problems in mutual dialogue. It is a division of labor. The characteristic of this meeting ought to lie more in work and less in play. The task of this meeting: *Marian devotion*.

Two types have found their way into the Federation. It is a seed which has been placed into the ground, and a tree is growing from it. In the Federation, what is the seed from which all else has grown? Marian devotion.

a. [The first approach: to grow from love of Mary to love for her work.] If this seed is planted in the earth, we can be sure that, as a psychological necessity, this love of the MTA will grow

¹ J. Kentenich, *Tagung: Das Sexualproblem im Lichte der Marienverehrung* (Easter 1928), photocopy of manuscript from participant notes, 20 pp.

into love for her work, the Federation. Both must be there. We must not expect, of course, that the seed will germinate and bear fruit from one day to the next. For this reason we must not separate what we do at our gatherings from what we do during the semester. These large meetings are only a jump start, a beginning and signpost.

b. The second approach is from the work to love for Mary. This way is more complicated. When the Federation was founded we went the other way. Now that we have a new generation, must we not found the Federation in a new way? Must we still use the old way? What we lack is a fire burning in our hearts. Hence the accents of this gathering. Bold and brash accents should be left in the background; this meeting must be more like a pilgrimage. The atmosphere of a place of pilgrimage is determined by the spirit of prayer. Is it not better for us to pray than to study our way into this world? The aspect of community which we want to stress more this time is the community of prayer. Does this not apply to everyone, especially the leaders and the veterans? We can only discover the treasure by way of grace.

Our Topic: Dealing with a Feature of Our Life

We therefore wish to penetrate more deeply into Marian devotion by considering challenges of a sexual nature. Marian Devotion is important for practical life. And where else in practical daily life do I sense a deeper connection, a greater need, than when I consider Marian devotion and [how she must help with] sexual problems? We wish to tangibly experience the Mother Thrice Admirable. We are even so bold in these days as to show her which direction to give her graces. She should help us to cherish purity more, teach us how to preserve, or, in some cases, to reconquer it. If the Blessed Mother does not work this miracle in us, we do not believe our task will be complete—if we go home from this gathering with great ideas but cold hearts.

Part One: Ratione Objecti – The Challenge of Sexuality Today

We must therefore begin by seeing the whole problem: the Blessed Mother and our purity. When we hear the word purity, all kinds of sexual problems come to mind. In the first part of our meeting we want to at least give a brief teaching about the sex drive. We make two assertions:

1. Sexuality has agitated humanity in every age.
2. In our own times this is true to a heightened degree.

{2} The reasons for this should open our eyes to see our little lives as part of a larger picture.

1. The Sexual Reality in Every Age

A well-known poet once noted that two fundamental drives shape the life of individuals and humankind: hunger and love. Both have been placed into human nature by God's wise Father-hand. Hunger serves the preservation of the individual, love the preservation of the community. In the wake of original sin, both drives draw more attention to themselves than their actual purpose requires. Under the influence of original sin, humanity suffers from the strong violence these drives do to us. Our delight [in earthly pleasures] is more than is necessary for our preservation. This lack of moderation is especially evident with the sex drive. This is so true that for centuries certain theologians have tried to see the sex drive as the essence of original sin. Every age has suffered from the sex drive's tendency to take up too much room, and every age has had a hard time mastering and

directing this drive. This is true in a particular way of souls striving for the heights, and of seminarians...

2. *The Heightened Sexual Duress of Today*

All of this is even more true today. Sexual duress². This word has taken on distinct meanings in the modern situation, especially for the youth of today. The word can say:

This drive is difficult to regulate; it is difficult to remain pure.

But it is also used to mean:

Because of [because it causes] interior compulsion, one must abandon [the traditional ways of] regulating the sex drive.

If we concede this second point, we eventually absolve youth from all responsibility. Interior compulsion implies there is no sin³. Today's tendency is to say that young people are no longer accountable for the things that they do and feel in this area. This may be true in individual cases; there may even be entire classes of people who are so feeble in mind and soul that they seem like animals. But such people are herded into institutions to protect the rest of society. Today one tends to already speak of compulsion when a person has a harder time than usual mastering the life of the drives. It is true that our modern times are more defenseless against the sex drive than in the past. Social duress, abject poverty, loss of physical and moral vigor caused by the misery of the war, and all of us went through some part of the starvation years. Our souls are strongly affected by nerves which were pushed to the edge; the education of our times is infected with softness, superficiality and sensuality; the will's resilience has been reduced. Then add the sexual stimuli in the public forum and the way women dress and act. The sexual difficulties have piled up; it is in this sense that we speak of sexual duress.

How shall one seek healing today from this duress? Some circles say that the answer is to allow the sex drive to wildly do whatever it wants. Through counseling offices, governments are expected to offer ways and means of protecting against the fruit of this activity. Uninhibited nudism [spreads]. But these approaches actually cause the sexual duress to spiral out of control. The only correct answer can be: find and address the root causes. [We must:]

1. Heal the social misery and injustice. We must think about how we can give the capitalistic world order God-willed forms.

2. Educate to greater self-control and self-denial. The main accent really ought to be on the increase of spiritual backbone and the strengthening of the spiritual faculties vis-a-vis our purely material ones. This especially applies in the realm of the drives which need a spiritual-ethical and supernatural compass. We will learn how precisely this approach allows us to master the sex drive even in these more agitated times.

² German: *Sexualnot*.

³ If one acts under compulsion, this means one is not truly free, thereby eliminating one of the necessary criteria for mortal sin.

Day 1, Conference 2 (Ideal-Centered Love)

How do our modern times view sexual duress [when they reduce it to] interior compulsion?

The starting point for my considerations is a book by an American on this topic. He reports about cases which are really the culmination of a long development. His cases come from the best circles of American society, though they take place in the non-religious schools.

I will first mention the cases and work out their general features.

Then, secondly, I will draw conclusions about the cases.

You will find the cases described in *Pharus*, February 1928. We may now have an inkling of how close our culture is, literally, to collapse. We are dealing with the culmination of a {3} trend which affects the entire cultural reality.

1. *The Phenomenon of Ideal-Centered Love*

The features which all the cases have in common: How the children fall so uninhibitedly to temptation. The natural inhibitions rooted in ideal-centered love⁴ are gone. It only takes a moment to explain the healthy laws of nature concerning ideal-centered and sexual-centered love⁵. More recent thinking likes to clearly distinguish the two again. What is the object of sexual-centered love and what is the object of ideal-centered love? In adults, especially married couples, the two coexist simultaneously and are two sides of the same coin. In the natural development [of youth], however, the two begin as separate realities and remain so for a long time. Ideal-centered love develops and unfolds first. Physical love comes later. Physical love is what sexual pleasure promotes.

So what is ideal-centered love? It is the soul's side of love. Marriage is meant to unite both dimensions. Sexual-centered love is the drive for physical union and touching; ideal-centered love is the drive for the souls to touch. The drive to have children comes from the parental drive. In the God-willed order, these three factors make up the marriage relationship.

What is ideal-centered love in contrast to sexual-centered love? *It is contemplative devotion to the idea of goodness and beauty idealized in a concrete person.* In contrast, sexual-centered love always involves the passion to touch, hence it is not an act of giving which just contemplates [the other]. As soon as the passion to touch is aroused, the relationship turns sexual. The narcotic effect of sexual-centered love takes hold. This is self-giving *ratione actus* [for the sake of the act], not *ratione objecti* [for the sake of the object, i.e. person]. But we need embodiments of the idea of goodness and beauty. Such self-giving is of the soul. In the image [the person I love] the soul grasps the ideal of what beauty and goodness is. However, the person loved in this way will always fall short of the idea of goodness and beauty perceived by a youth. The youth projects his own ideal into the one he loves. As one poet puts it, "The person loved by ideal-centered love is a coat-rack for one's own ego." Still, this process of projection needs a personal embodiment.

2. *Two Different Kinds of Ideal-Centered Love*

There are different kinds of ideal-centered, or erotic, love. One is *vitality-centered*, the other *soul-centered*. The predominant focus of ideal-centered love can therefore be on the beauty and

⁴ *Erotik.*

⁵ *Erotik und Sexualität.*

goodness found

- a. in the vitality and physical features of the other or
- b. in the features of the person's soul.

If the exterior beauty predominates, one speaks of vitality-centered eroticism. Every teenage love begins here. One stands in awestruck reverence before the mysteries of one's body. However, the object is not always the body so much as the [qualities of my] soul found projected, indeed symbolized in the other. Soul-centered eroticism, in contrast, does not need physical beauty to find its way to the beauty of the soul. See Alcibiades-Socrates⁶. Ideal-centered love is able to see through physical deformities to find its way to a contemplative devotion of the beautiful soul. The soul responds to vitality-centered eroticism with longing, to soul-centered eroticism with understanding. Understanding is the foundation for liking, which is in turn the foundation for true love and genuine friendship.

3. Ideal-Centered Love in Different Kinds of Relationship

a. Between young people of the same age and sex

A few words about friendship: teenage friendship among peers is usually ideal-centered. Enthusiasm for a friend is therefore not on the basis of the friend's real traits, but on what I want to see. All such friendships must go through a crisis. It begins when the young person begins to see reality, when the perceived ideals [of beauty, goodness, etc.] yield to reality. It leads to endless discussions. The friendship will then break up or ideal-centered love will be transformed into genuine friendship. The result is a new foundation—mutual, genuine understanding, or, true and genuine love. But if it breaks apart, the former friends never completely separate. See Goethe and Jakobi. (For this entire question see Spranger, *Psychologie des Jugendalters*.)

b. Between young people of the same age and opposite sex

Friendships between boys and girls of the same age: In principle the same things apply, but must be given stronger contours. In normal development, the attraction to the other sex always comes with a spiritual shyness rooted in ideal-centered love⁷. Example: F. Dahn. One can distinguish 3 stages in the relationship between boys and girls. 1. There is no difference: boys and girls play together harmoniously. 2. A characteristic affectation sets in, although they cannot totally reject each other, from about age ten. 3. Boys and girls are more strongly attracted to each other again, only the way they are attracted differs. Some lose their respect (flirt). Others stiffly hold back. The latter is more ideal for friendship; it awakens an incredible amount of creativity. One must admit, however, that there is very little respect today for the mysteries taking place here.

c. Between adults and youth of the same sex

{4} The relationship between adults and youth of the same sex: At first such relationships are usually very ideal-centered. The adult is attracted to youth, the youth to adult manhood, the child

⁶ Alcibiades (c. 450-404 BC), Athenian general and statesman, pupil of Socrates (c. 470-399 BC), the great Greek philosopher.

⁷ *Seelische Scheu-Erotik*.

to adolescence. An adult may also be influenced by the desire to preserve the young man from the hardships of life. But the deepest factor [in the adult] is the longing for the lost paradise of childhood. Meanwhile, the boy's instinct is to stretch and grow; he seeks a lattice to climb.

d. Between adults and youth of the opposite sex

In the early stages, the educator's efforts to form the soul must take this ideal-centered love into account. It later becomes more supernatural, even though its anchoring on the natural level is always present, too. Now we must not think that all of us will feel attracted to the other sex. Gender and principle [the principle of complementarity] are two different things. We will always feel a certain attraction to the underlying complementarity, though not always to the opposite sex.

e. A caution

If the relationship between an adult and a youth only remains ideal-centered, the danger is very great that ideal-centered love will turn sexual⁸.

4. The God-willed Relationship Between Ideal- and Sexual-centered Love

Now what is sexual-centered love⁹? When the young person experiences it for the first time, he is taken aback by the chasm [of its power] suddenly opening up before him. A truly noble soul could not even endure the awakening of the sex drive if ideal-centered love did not soften the landing. Ideal-centered love regulates the sex drive and helps it find its proper balance. The sex drive finds its natural equilibrium with the help of ideal-centered love and modesty. Physically centered love needs this regulation. Healthy, normal sexual love must therefore also integrate soul-to-soul love, including idealized, idealizing soul-to-soul love...

5. Our Times Adversely Affect Ideal-Centered Love

The cases [referred to from America] all rest on the dismantling of ideal-centered love. What shows in exaggerated form [in these examples] is what one finds in the entire cultural situation around us. The distance between the sexes is being abolished—both the physical distance and the soul-to-soul distance. Girls are no longer a mystery to teenage boys and vice versa. Co-education, shared workspace, going to the same parties, all of this rips away the veil of mystery. All that one is left with today is sobering, unidealized reality. Ideal-centered love is lacking and what takes its place is sexual-centered love. After all, sensual love is what is preached everywhere in our culture today—at the movies, in the theater, on the radio. The laws of nature are being broken in the most vulgar ways. The result of all this is the disappearance of ideal-centered love. And it brings with it the disappearance of all reverence, all modesty. Which brings us to what we experience in the world of today.

⁸ In other words, if *both* adult and youth are caught up in the ideal projected by the other, and the adult does not stay firmly rooted in reality and his responsibility to selflessly serve the life of the other as an educator (vs. serving his own need for an ideal-centered love), the relationship will lack a guarantor of inner restraint and will more easily fall prey to turning sexual.

⁹ *Sexualitas*, literally: sexuality.

Day 1, Conference 3 (The Dilemma of Woman Today)

What characterizes these cases [from America] is the lack of any healthy natural restraint, any religious or supernatural “Thou shalt” or “Thou shalt not...” Another characteristic: the “attack” was always initiated by the girl; the woman sought out and conquered the sexual object. This is a sign of our times, also for Germany. Normally it is the man who should be “winning over” and courting the woman.

1. *Woman is Robbed of the Value Which is Deepest in Her Personality*

Where is the psychological root for this inversion of the true order? Modern culture has freed woman and made her independent, in part because she has no choice.

1st Cause. Economic necessity. Woman is left to fight for her own existence, a necessity imposed by the capitalistic world order. It robs woman of the value deepest in her personality¹⁰. The effect: the provisional becomes the norm and is considered an alternate world view. She begins to demand independence, even independence in her sexual dealings with man. Seeing and sensing her permanent disadvantage in the economic struggle, she tries to compensate by a kind of hegemony in the realm of love. Hence her masculine behavior; she wants to attract the man and be his master. But our nation cannot be restored to full health if the woman is not restored to a greater sense of attachment. The moral life of a nation rises and falls with the values of its women. Indeed, [part of] woman’s appeal to man lies precisely in the fact that he must conquer and be a support to her.

2nd Cause. The drive to be loved and protected at any price. She no longer waits for the man to approach and court her. She goes out to win him over herself. Woman is being shaken in the deepest value of her personality. The effect: She wants to be man’s equal, but at the cost of [her uniqueness] being of equal value¹¹. God’s desire is not equality of being but equality of value. {5} It leaves woman’s soul totally gutted. Marriages built on this foundation are in constant turmoil and the woman suffers much more than the man. Why? Because love’s vitality is much more important to her than to him. It infects the most vital processes of what it means to be a woman. Children become a problem [instead of a blessing]. But if the child cannot command center stage in a woman’s married life, she becomes totally unnerved.

2. *The Effect on the Man*

Then, if the woman thinks she must go out and get the man, the clear effect is a level of male sexual arousal previously unheard-of. Without the woman the man cannot master his sex drive; she does this through the very way she does things. This is why we men, including celibates, cannot ignore the importance of the woman in our lives. For instance, the presence of a pure woman makes everyone feel at ease; her presence radiates purity. But loose women awaken the male sex drive in horrendous ways. For instance, one case tells how the drive to bear children—in itself nothing more

¹⁰ *Die tiefste Persönlichkeitswert [der Frau].* Considering the sum of Fr. Kentenich’s teaching on the image of woman, this “deepest value of her personality” would seem to be her drive to love and be loved in *empfangendes Hingebensein*, i.e. receiving self-giving.

¹¹ *Sie will dem Manne gleichartig gegenüber, verliert aber damit ihre Gleichwertigkeit.* In other words: the struggle for equal rights threatens to cost woman a society which equally values the truly feminine (by forcing her to shape life in ways that are too little person-oriented).

than the strong drive for motherhood—lost all sense of restraint and totally undermined natural law. In all our desire to understand and be understanding, we subvert the divine order. We bend the rules. Can we really speak of interior compulsion in *all* these cases?

We must admit that it is much harder to lead a pure life today than in the past. For the man, loving is the *conditio sine qua non*¹² for his happiness, at least in the broad sweep of peoples and nations. If the woman has become so gutted of her inner values, it is clear that the sex drive of the man will be greater danger of becoming unhinged, making it truly very difficult to live and stay pure. Do these difficulties constitute interior compulsion? We must distinguish individual cases from the general cultural situation. In individual cases compulsion may be at work, but we must not raise this to a general rule. I also say this against Catholic moral theologians who are too quick to follow such trends of thought. In cases like these we generally reject [the claim of] compulsion because guilt is present, be it conscious or unconscious.

3. *Steps to Healing our Society*

How can we make our generation healthy again? Many who have been infected by the times must simply be left alone; we leave it for time to erase them from the earth. There is nothing more we can do. But to the extent our educational influence and that of the Church is effective, we must salvage what we can. This includes [reaching out to] those who are more on the sidelines and especially those so far preserved from this trend. We must make them interiorly immune and strengthen them to withstand the infections of our times. That won't be done by complaining about fashions. We must get to the root of the problem. Today's generation was no longer educated with the necessary vigor to master the life of the drives, to master their flesh; to subject their minds to the laws of God. Our human passions must be learn total obedience to our reason enlightened by faith. This is the task of every asceticism, every self-education, every education of others. No least of all, we as priests must do what we can to make sure women are educated differently. [It must include] education to a pride and self-esteem which may even strike others as exaggerated! This includes educating women to an extremely strong sense of responsibility, etc., especially toward the other sex.

Part Two: Ratione Subjecti – The Connection to our Lives

We now let the light from the image of our dear Blessed Mother penetrate our lives. It lets us deal with the entire sexual reality in a positive way. Let us reach out for the highest conceivable purity. Do we not know that all disordered drives have been extinguished in her? We want to intertwine all our thoughts with the image of the Immaculata. Let us also make room in silent hours for the deepest part of our soul to be stirred. The Immaculata touches the deepest longing of our youthful lives and hearts, whether we have maintained our purity perfectly or not.

What is this deepest longing? Is it only for freedom from temptations against holy purity? No! Freedom from transgressions? No! From every disordered drive? We long not only for freedom from sin but for a certain impeccability¹³. Have not our transgressions covered over this

¹² The condition for which there is no substitute.

¹³ *Unsündlichkeit* (impeccability or immunity to sin), as opposed to *Sündenlosigkeit* (freedom from sin).

deepest longing of our soul? {6} Our Lady rises to protest! She points beyond herself to the beatific vision. She wants to awaken in us the longing for the *donum integritatis*¹⁴, for impeccability. Christ won this gift back for us, though as a task more than a gift. Its seed is found in the gift of grace which he won for us with his precious blood. The full flower of this seed as the *donum integritatis* waits for the beatific vision. But man still has a free will, and to the extent we let grace work in us, a certain degree of impeccability must also be possible [already here on earth].

Let us dare to formulate these thoughts more concisely. “Whoever is born of God cannot sin, for God’s grace is at work in him” (cf 1 Jn 3,9; 5,18). The inner tendency of the seed of grace is to extinguish sin and its effect in me. The more we grow into the supernatural order, the more the life of our drives submits to the true order. How was it with the saints? We like to stress how, even in advanced stages of perfection, they endured God only knows how difficult temptations and struggles, but these are the exceptions. The struggles were for short times and are only found in the lives of certain saints. As grace advances and develops in us, the gift of impeccability must also grow. Struggles always remain, but struggles can be interpreted so or so. Can we really withstand our times without a certain impeccability [immunity to sin]? How can we survive if every suggestive image and situation sets us on fire? And we are so exposed to these things nowadays. We must gradually acquire a knack for going through our times without them touching us. This is the ideal. We look at our spiritual lives so much from below; we really ought to look at it once from above, that is from the [viewpoint of the] beatific vision¹⁵.

When St. Augustine says, “I do not need to tell my companions much about purity, for here on earth we already share in the impeccability of the angels,” does this not match the deepest longing of our hearts? The Immaculata leads us more deeply to this longing. Do I need to prove this? She stands before us endowed with the gift of impeccability. When we see Mary’s image correctly, we see her as the Immaculata. When we raise our eyes to her as the Immaculate One, should we not try to integrate such thoughts into her image, we who must admit our many difficulties, and should we not fold our hands humbly in prayer, asking for this grace? “Pray for us, that we may be made worthy of the promises of Christ.” We pray these words so often. But these promises are all rooted in grace. If we had the gift of impeccability, our sex drive would be extinguished. We must not expect, of course, that this happens from one day to the next. We give up much too easily in this area because we are infected with the false ideas of our day. We must set a high goal, but not want to reach it by our own might, rather by the grace of God.

¹⁴ The gift of integrity, the all-encompassing harmony and vitality of the human person before the fall into original sin.

¹⁵ In other words, not just from the viewpoint of sin and its avoidance (sanctity as freedom from sin), but from the viewpoint of the ideal and the cultivation of grace (sanctity as the greatness to which I am called).

Day 2, Conference 1 (The Immaculate Conception, Mary's Dignity and Impeccability)

In this conference we want to discuss two thoughts:

1. The Immaculate Conception presages and follows from Mary's dignity.
2. Our dignity is presaged and follows from our reflection of the Immaculate Conception, dim and perfect though this may be.

1. *The Immaculate Conception and Mary's Dignity*

Where does Our Lady's dignity come from? We so cherish the Immaculate Conception because [of Mary's salvific position:] she is the Mother of God. Our understanding of her follows the thinking developed by theologians over the course of the centuries. Mary's divine motherhood is not just about her being the channel God used in coming to earth. Her physical motherhood is the foundation and measuring rod of her spiritual unity with the God-man. In other words: she is the Mother of the Savior because she is united with him in an intimate community of love, life and work. This is the source of her dignity. The Immaculate Conception then flows from and is the prerequisite of her dignity. Expressed theologically: Because Mary is the Mother of God in the specifically Catholic sense, she *had* to be immaculately conceived. Otherwise she could not have been the Mother of God. This privilege was dictated by the honor of the Son.

Here is where the Catholic idea and {7} understanding of motherhood shines through. On the other hand, we know how medieval theologians, including Thomas, did not feel they could ascribe this dignity to her for fear of casting a shadow on the honor of Christ. Redemption and original sin are universal foundations of our theology. There is no doubt that Thomas would have accepted the Immaculate Conception if these difficulties had been resolved for him, but these difficulties were resolved later. Not only *redemptio reparativa*, but also *redemptio praeservativa* is true redemption. The blood of Christ is so strong that it can not only free those already caught in sin's flood but can even preserve those not yet affected, through his Saving Blood. Some theologians assert of Mary a *debitum remotum* to take on original sin, others a *debitum proximum*. Be that as it may, one can clearly deduce that the Blessed Mother's privileges of grace are her possession *propter honorem Domini* [for the sake of the honor of (Christ) the Lord].

We now place the same thoughts in a more philosophical-theological light, [outlining] four laws in the economy of salvation.

First Law: The middle-point of all the world and history of salvation is the God-man. We are accustomed to thinking of Adam as the original image of all creation. But this is not totally true. Adam, too, is created in the pattern of the original image, Jesus Christ. (...)

Second Law: The God-man wished to take on his human nature not as Adam had, directly from the hand of God, but like every other member of the human family. He wanted to be integrated in the great human family. Because of this he was "born of a woman" (Gal 4,4). He wanted to take on his human nature from the Mother of God. A member of our members, a member of our family.

Third Law: Philosophy does not yet clearly know the extent and ultimate source of parental influence. It is one of the greatest mysteries of the natural order. We are still at a loss to determine the deepest source of the soul's influence on the body or how the influence of the parents is passed on to their children. We know that this influence is immense. But our times overemphasize the impact of heredity. [Still,] this [parental] influence on body and soul is clearly of great importance.

Applied to our question: We ordinary mortals depend on two parents. What we inherit is primarily from father and mother. But Christ had only one earthly parent. What a powerful influence therefore falls to this parent! If only we would grasp and acknowledge that more deeply!

*Fourth law: According to the laws of generation, a lower creature cannot give birth to a higher one. Generatio est origo viventis vivente principio conjuncto in similitudinem naturae*¹⁶.

{8} These principles already indicate the proof I wish to give you. If Mary had not been conceived without original sin, by the laws of heredity the God-man would have had to be born with original sin; he, too, could not have been free from sin. However, *atqui falsa consequens...ergo falsa antecedens...* [Because the conclusion is false, the premise on which it is built must be false as well.] But then the parents of Mary would also have had to be free from original sin, etc. Somewhere there must be a break. In reality, the break was made with Mary. But then the break could also have been made with Christ. It could have happened that way. But this difficulty very likely has its root in the Protestant view that Mary was *only* a channel. [But she is much more:] in her dignity Mary has been elevated to be next to Christ.

All of these proofs have their root in the [ancient] Catholic awareness, the Catholic sensitivity to the parallel: ADAM-CHRIST, EVE-MARY. Eve had the gift of impeccability; for Mary, too, and for her impeccability, Eve was the likeness of the original image¹⁷. It therefore follows from Mary's dignity as Mother of God that she must be conceived without original sin, and in turn her Immaculate Conception is the prerequisite for the dignity of her divine motherhood.

2. *The Immaculate Conception and our Dignity*

We, too, reflect the Immaculate Conception, though in a dim and imperfect way. For us, too, it flows from and presages our dignity. Of course, the gift of impeccability can not be restored to us as it was before original sin. Hence, our growth is in stages.

a. *General Striving for Impeccability*

We are clearly setting our sights on a high goal. And there are many intermediate stages along the way. One of the most excellent is the grace of virginity. Sinlessness in the area of purity does not yet constitute impeccability, but it is a step along the way. This sinlessness can develop into a certain impeccability. But when we speak of the gift of integrity, we are not only speaking of impeccability in the area of purity alone, but in all areas of life. The way necessarily passes through sinlessness in the most general sense of the word. But where is the wellspring which makes this goal possible? For the Blessed Mother and for [her] impeccability it is a most intimate connection to Christ. Hence for us the wellspring must also be a most intimate connection to Christ.

b. *Cultivation of Closeness to Christ in the Eucharist*

Only a few thoughts in this direction: We can hope that the life of our drives has already attained a certain freedom from sins against the sixth commandment through the frequent reception

¹⁶ The point of this four-step argument is this: it was not enough for Christ alone to be kept free from original sin, rather, the one from whom he was born also needed to be free from sin to adequately accomplish the mission of bringing Christ into the world and raising him from infancy to adulthood.

¹⁷ That is, Eve was the original feminine likeness of Christ, the original image of all mankind. This includes her original freedom from sin, which was recaptured in Mary in the Immaculate Conception.

of the Eucharist.

c. Cultivation of Closeness to Christ through Consecrated Virginity

We can hope that we have assimilated the idea of virginity into our flesh and bone and that it constant shapes us: virginity as an intermediate step to impeccability.

What is virginity and where does it come from?

Before Christ, virginity was not valued, either by the pagans or the Jews. Every real Jewish girl sought motherhood in order to share in the coming of the Redeemer. In word and deed, Christ elevated virginity above all else. He chose a virgin Mother and a virgin foster-father. The “disciple whom he loved” was a virgin. He praised virginity as an outstanding gift. “Not everyone can understand it, only those to whom it is given to do so...” (Mt 19,12). How much he values this state in life, even higher than marriage! Not as a commandment, but a counsel (cf 1 Cor 7,25). [As St. Paul teaches:] “Whoever does not give his daughter in marriage does the better thing” (1 Cor 7, 36-38). We absolutely want to preserve this high esteem. The Council of Trent even goes so far as to say: The state of virginity is better than the state of marriage.

This is only true, however, of genuine Christian virginity. It has four essential elements:

1. This virginity must be permanent; it must be lived for life.
2. This virginity must be freely chosen, not under any kind of force or compulsion (such as not being able to marry).

3. (Main point) This purity must be lived for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. There has been some controversy recently on what exactly “for the sake of the kingdom of heaven” (cf Mt 19,12) means. Hillebrandt (Munich) takes the word in a very strict sense: Christian virginity demands that the renunciation of sexual pleasure be directly for love of Christ and in Christian brideship. Others take the word in a broader sense; I think they are closer to being right. Paul lends support to this view. One gives up sexual pleasure for the sake of Christ and his cause [i.e. his work]. Of course, this renunciation for the sake of Christ’s cause must ultimately flow from the bridal relationship with Christ. Everything is strongly dependant on a tender, intimate love of Christ: everything *propter honorem Dei* [for the honor of God]. Virginity would not be correct [i.e. for the sake of the kingdom] if one did not marry out of aversion to marriage and sex, or from a scientific interest to be totally free for one’s research. To serve Christ alone and immortal souls – this is the motivation of Christian virginity.

We must learn to renounce for love of {9} Christ; this is the soul of Christian virginity. We belong to him and to his cause. This is the spiritual side of virginity which is often incorrectly understood. There has been a drop in public appreciation for virginity. It is therefore good that we impress this guiding idea on our soul again and again. We must learn to think about these things as God does. The ultimate source of our renunciation is this intimate love of Christ. St. Augustine calls virginity a marriage between God and man. St. Thomas takes up this thought, comparing this marriage with the usual one and stating: Just as marriage requires a promise, [virginity] too requires a promise. Virginity must be secured by a vow. According to him this is an essential part of the state of virginity...

With this we have shown the way to impeccability. [1] Renunciation of all sexual pleasure. [2] Then passionate love for the God-man which we must always increase in ourselves. This is the only way for us. Let us take great pains to not be infected by the spirit of the world. How afraid we

are to claim that we are totally given to the God-man and to let it show! How we fight the battle against sin as if we were tilting at windmills! The God-man does not occupy the central place in the sum total of our spiritual life. Let us not be such total intellectuals! The God-man must be at the center of all my spiritual life if I want to really become pure and free from sin.

Our times no longer appreciate virginity. It may still be appreciated here and there as a blossom, but not as a tree which bears much fruit¹⁸. What fruits does this tree bear? Where is the fruitfulness of a teacher or nurse who sacrifices all for love of God? It is not only an exterior, but an interior, spiritual, intellectual, supernatural fruitfulness. Just as physical life goes forth from the joining of man and woman, so too does the union of the virginal soul with God bring forth spiritual, supernatural life. This is where the entire fruitfulness of our priesthood lies: in our spiritual fatherhood and our virginity. We beget children through our virginity. When we administer the sacraments, proclaim the Word to the poor and abandoned. But it also applies to those who are not priests, to women religious. Their life of sacrifice, including in the contemplative orders, is fruitful to an eminent degree. If there is no fruitfulness, there is no real virginity. Where would the Church be without these souls?

This is *one* kind of fruitfulness. But wouldn't it be more ideal to be both spiritually and physically fruitful and also beget children physically? This was the ideal before original sin. We can suppose that virginity was not part of this order. Rather, the law was: spiritual begetting means physical begetting and vice versa. After original sin things changed. For all to permanently do both is not possible, or, it is difficult to accomplish without one or the other being shortchanged. But more than a few priests think this way. Because of the severe limitations of our nature caused by original sin, our total giving to God [as priests] would be greatly handicapped [if we tried to do both]. Then the concern for one's wife and children could significantly reduce our self-giving to Christ, or even suffocate it. Even if this did not happen, we would be of divided heart. "Whoever is married must be concerned with the things of his wife. Whoever is unmarried must only concern himself with the things of God and Christ" (cf 1 Cor 7, 32f).

The reasons for all this are deeply rooted in the supernatural order, this law of the celibate priesthood. And neither can the physical fruitfulness of virginity be held in high enough esteem. I am speaking of indirect fruitfulness. When virginity is upheld as an ideal, this ideal view has a strong impact on the perception of married life and the growing child. We live, after all, in a time which flees from children and murders children. But in this Christian view the dimension of marriage which one cherishes as the most quintessential is the spiritual dimension, the dimension of the soul. This helps keep the life of the drives in proper check.

As priests we must see to it that we live totally virginal lives and radiate an atmosphere of purity wherever we go. This is of great benefit to the social formation of our cultural life¹⁹, assuming that we have a deep understanding for God gift of *grace and providence*. Only God can plant this grace in human hearts, and this grace can only be attained from God through ardent prayer. [But the fact is:] Many are not able to marry because of social circumstances. Is this not a hint from Divine

¹⁸ That is, it may still appreciate the virginity of unmarried youth, but not as a life commitment.

¹⁹ Fr. Kentenich seems to be thinking of one of the grave social dilemmas of post-World-War-I Germany: the many women who were not able to marry because of the death of so many men in the war. He may also be thinking of the dilemma of many men and women who for other reasons, were not able to find spouses in the social turmoil of that era.

Providence for them to devote themselves to apostolic tasks, attaining spiritual fruitfulness {10} in the face of no opportunity to be physically fruitful? Spiritual fruitfulness in most intimate self-surrender to the God-man!

(...)

Day 2, Conference 2 (Excerpt on the Divine Pedagogy)

{12} Which brings us to the heart of the matter: How should we judge the stimuli and excitability of certain organs? Original sin is the source of the agitation and rebellion in the life of the drives. Even those on the way to the *donum integritatis* still have [to contend with] the life of the drives and the agitation they bring. What is God's reason for leaving us so long in the hands of our drives? He wants to educate us for our task. He gives the drives a long leash in us in order to educate us

to utmost humility,
to infinite trust,
to heroic self-surrender,
and to constant self-denial.

Utmost humility: Sin is ultimately rebellion against God. God, however, can only use instruments which give all the honor to him. He can only use totally humble souls for his tasks. This is why he wants to make us humble. There is no way around it. The greatest humiliation for someone with a noble soul, however, is to see himself totally delivered up to his agitated drives. The more we try to overcome it, the more agitated the sex drive often gets. (...) [God] wants to give us the gift [of the *donum integritatis*] but he demands that we acknowledge that everything comes from his hand. He wants to make us free from ourselves.