

Original text: *Seelenführerkurs über das Sexualproblem* (1928)
As cited in Heinrich Hug (ed.), *Das Katholische Eheideal*
(Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1989), p. 60-127.

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

Spiritual Direction and Modern Sexual Questions

Excerpts from the

Seelenführerkurs über das Sexualproblem

Schoenstatt, April and August 1928

translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2008

Preliminary and incomplete translation for the private use of the
reader. Subject to later revision.

English translation copyright © 2008 by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 7839
Wheel Rim Circle, Austin, TX USA.

Introduction

The following text is a substantial portion of Fr. Joseph Kentenich's 1928 course on spiritual direction. The topic of the workshop was sexual problems in the modern context. The basis for this translation is the transcript synthesis found in J. Kentenich, *Das Katholische Eheideal* (The Catholic Ideal of Marriage), edited by Fr. Heinrich Hug, Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1989, pages 60-127.

Although this version primarily follows the August 1928 transcript as directed to priests, Fr. Hug notes in his preliminary remarks:

"The following text comes from two courses given by Fr. Kentenich in 1928: at Easter for teachers and in August for priests. As the surviving transcript from the workshop for priests is more extensive, it is used here as the main text, with applicable supplements taken from the workshop for teachers. The result is a readable text which relates the main themes of the course, although the extent of material is no more than 1/3 of the verbatim text."

The text has been somewhat reworked with additional emphasis for greater clarity, subtitles, additional paragraph breaks, and footnotes. Numbers in braces { } are the page numbers as found in *Das Katholische Eheideal*.

Notable is how Fr. Kentenich approaches the theme. He does not launch directly into the sexual questions, but uses the first conference to mark the atmosphere with a deep spirit of reverence for those in the pastoral setting. By seeing with Marian eyes and loving with a Marian heart, the pastor of souls is better able to truly serve the gift and mystery of each person, including in the area of sexuality. The purpose of the gathering is therefore not a "technical discussion" but to learn how best to serve the life of each person God sends our way.

First Conference (Introduction)

{60} We have been brought here together by the fifth course on spiritual direction. In 1924 we tried to gain clarity about the meaning and purpose of spiritual direction. In 1925 we determined the fundamental attitude on which spiritual direction must be built: the attitude of fatherliness. In the following two years we applied this fatherly attitude to two different groups of people: youth and those striving for special perfection. A third group still needs to be considered: sick souls. They were supposed to be the focus of this workshop.

But I think that I act in your interest and mine if I postpone the discussion on sick souls. First, because it is too soon, and you and I do well to first thoroughly work our way into serving the life of healthy souls so that we later have a solid norm to work with. Second, because in recent years the wish has been expressed that I discuss problems of sexuality.

The Purpose of This Workshop

I would like to respond to this wish in this workshop. The context is readily understood: {61} Problems of sexuality cause various degrees of suffering in all the groups we have previously discussed. It is applicable to all. But in order to stay in our framework¹, I will not be focusing on our own spiritual life, but on the spiritual life of those entrusted to our care.

Said differently, this course will be a

sexual pedagogical course.

This is a general standpoint. If we want to make our standpoint even more solid, then it can only be if we place ourselves on the firm ground of faith.

Tonight I do not want to make the connection between faith and sexuality, but between faith and those who grapple with their sexuality. We can see and consider them in the light of faith. Then it will

¹ Of the courses on spiritual direction.

be easier for us to let this light fall on sexuality as such.

In this the Blessed Mother can be a model for us, for of her it was said, “Blessed are you who believed!” (Lk 1,45). I think that if we, in keeping with the example of our dear Lady, see and consider our spiritual children¹ with Marian eyes and love them with a Marian heart, then we have the standpoint we need. Hence there are two thoughts to which we need to open ourselves more deeply tonight.

1. Seeing Our Spiritual Children with Marian Eyes

What does it mean: *to see and consider our spiritual children with Marian eyes*? Marian, supernatural eyes as opposed to natural eyes. Marian eyes are eyes with which Mary looked at her Child. She saw in him the Child of God

! as the object of her education and

! as the aim of her self-education.

Here you have two sub-points which apply to us in a very practical way. We, too, must see our pastoral children as the object of our education, but also see the child as the aim or our [self-]education.

This seems to be a contradiction. But if we penetrate it more deeply, it will open a new world to us.

a. As the Object of Our Education

What, therefore, is the *object* of our education or pastoral activity? It is the child of God. With these words I have actually sufficiently answered the question at hand. But because we are of the world, where we are affected to some extent by the world’s dust, I will probably do you a service if I take some time to fill the word *child of God* with meaning.

{62} Perhaps I can best dwell on this point by continuing in a pedagogical mode. It allows us to discover the outline points ourselves. I will therefore give you a few thoughts from Christ’s “School Law of the Kingdom” with its negative and positive sanctions. What do I mean by a great “School Law”?

¹ German: *Seelsorgskinder*.

“Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Mt 19,14).

“Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven!” This is another way of saying, “They are children of God!” The people entrusted to our care need to be considered children of God inasmuch as they truly are or at the very least are capable of becoming such.

“Theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven” can first of all mean the beatific vision. Whoever wants to enter the other-worldly Kingdom of Heaven must have first found a home in the this-worldly Kingdom of Heaven. This is true of everyone, but it has special meaning for those who are literally children. When the child receives a seed, it has fewer enemies and obstacles to overcome, and so the child will probably preserve the divine life in a much more authentic and secure way than an adult. “Because the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs, let the children come to me!” Christ is the great educator of children. Here we could insert an important examination of conscience. Don’t we all build too much on our own activity? Our real task is given to us here: “Let the children come to me” [– to Christ].

Some time ago a doctor told me that he already let his son go to Holy Communion at the age of five. Why? “We doctors know the situation of youth quite well. If a child’s heart is corrupted in earliest years, the Lord will later find it occupied when he comes.” I know the response which practical pastors of souls must give. Nor is frequent Communion held in high enough esteem. But it is exactly our task [as priests] to think about how we can improve that. What might be the reasons we have so little success? The “School Law of the Kingdom” might be an answer. We have done too little to lead people to Jesus.

(...)¹

{63} This is the first part of our first thought: Considering with Marian eyes, we see in our pastoral children the *object* of our education.

¹ Fr. Kentenich now speaks about the negative and positive sanction, which can also be found in J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 54-56.

b. *As the Aim of Our [Self-]Education*

Considering with Marian eyes, we see in our pastoral children the *aim* of our [self-]education. This seems to be a contradiction. But let us penetrate more deeply. In a first glance we see how childish children are. But we all sense that there is something in children which we once had and lost, something worth striving for in our mature adulthood. When we look into the eyes of an innocent child, we get an inkling of this world of ideas. Listen to Alban Stolz: There are three things which remind us of paradise: the flowers, the stars, {64} and the eyes of a child¹.

A school counselor from Southern Germany who had experienced everything life had to offer once said, “Father, the older I get, the more I sense that what a child has naturally, we adults must reconquer at the cost of a long process of self-education.” There must be something in the child which we need to reconquer. Anyone familiar with classical asceticism will be reminded of [the topic of] spiritual childhood. Turning to words from the mouth of Eternal Wisdom, “Unless you become like children, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” (Mt 18,3). The sentence is expressed with a negative. It is therefore a law which must be fulfilled at any cost.

(...)

Childhood means having a deep, heartfelt spirit of faith. Do we not want to pause and consider how things stand with our own spirit of faith? We have used two sayings:

*See a greeting of God in everything that happens and affects us, and greet him in return*². It might happen through interior difficulties, outward failures, temptations, calumny from the faithful or confreres. They are greetings from God. Have we greeted him in return? For us modern priests {65} the value most worthy of our striving is this: “For those who love God, all things work together unto good” (Rom 8,28). Here we have the dogmatic underpinning for

¹ Fr. Alban Stolz (1808-1883), German theologian and author.

² This is a theme which later found concise expression in the section “Prophetic attachment to things” in *Everyday Sanctity*. See J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt’s Everyday Spirituality* (Waukesha, 2003), p. 61f.

what the Saints joyfully enduring in spite of all obstacles.

The second word goes in the same direction: *Switchpoint of God*¹. In all the blows of fate that life sends our way we must see a switchpoint of God. The express train is racing cross the open plains. Suddenly a jerk. The train is sent onto another track. If the switch had not been thrown, there would have been a train wreck. This is how it would have been many times in my life. Suddenly a jerk. It almost seemed as if I were being thrown onto another track. It hurt, but was it not the start of a new phase of growth? Being a child means having a strong, childlike faith. The child believes the Father at his word.

Being a child also means something else. The apostles were worried about what would become of them. They were concerned for their future, their material well-being. And Our Lord’s answer: “Unless you become like children, I cannot use you.” On another occasion he pointed to the birds of the sky (cf Mt 6,26). Here is the same thought applied to the child. Unless you have the spirit of trust, I cannot use you...! A child must undergo an operation: When the father is the surgeon, the child may flinch, but does not worry and enters the dark room. The child knows that the father is with him. The child is calm. Here we have a word which we have heard so often: Our trust must be foolish, careless. We can give that a strong accent. We are too focused on ourselves. Therefore not only trust, but foolish trust. He we can ask ourselves if we are on the path of spiritual childlikeness, whether we live in the present moment. I am deliberately expressing everything in an extreme manner.

Being a child has a third meaning. A man arrives at the market in Vienna. A girl is carrying a little boy on her back. “But the child is heavy!” “No, Bobby isn’t heavy, Bobby’s my brother!” This is the logic of children. Children have a pronounced compassion for their peers, in spite of all childish selfishness. Being a child means to possess an unselfish, unquestioning love of neighbor.

Is it true that the child is not only the object, but also the aim of

¹ German: *Weichenstellung Gottes*. Cf. M.A. Nailis, *Werktagsheiligkeit* (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1989), p. 112.

our {66} [self-]education? I must tell you that the older you get, the more you become a child. The degree that we strip away everything is the degree to which we open up to God's grace. It is only then that God can use us, unafraid that our own myopic aims will detract from the honor due to him.

Pay attention to what I want to tell you in this talk: We must learn to see the child again with supernatural, Marian eyes!

2. *Loving our Spiritual Children with a Marian Heart*

{66} I mentioned a second thought, too. We not only want to see the child with Marian eyes, but also to *love the child with a Marian heart*. Here I could construct an entire pedagogy. But the one or the other point will have to suffice. What does a Marian heart look like? Mary's heart was

- ! a humble heart,
- ! a kind heart, and
- ! a strong heart.

a. *Loving with a Humble Heart*

It is a *humble* heart. If you want to penetrate this thought, ask yourself each time: Did Mary's heart really look like this? And: What should my heart look like? What should a humble heart look like for me?

We know Mary's personal ideal: "*Ecce ancilla Domini* – Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1,38). Mary considered herself an instrument, a handmaid of God. Expressed philosophically, we would have to say that she always knew that she was a secondary cause. If we are truly humble as pastors of souls, I will be aware that it is God who is ultimately the great Educator and that I only provide a limited assistance, and that I must always remain in ontological contact with the Primary Cause.

I remain an instrument. A humble educator-heart is always aware that I am only an instrument. This word contains an entire spirituality. Whether I meet with success or failure I will remain inwardly calm and collected. It will urge me to use means which promise success according to the standards of the ontological order of being.

The science of education reminds us here of the importance of Marian devotion: Lead the children to Mary!

b. *Loving with a Kind Heart*

A Marian heart is a *kind* heart. Was Mary's heart kind? Of course! After all, we touch here on the greatness of the mother principle which God has built into his order of salvation. What a world of values! With it everything is simpler, swifter, more certain.

Must the heart of an educator also be kind? We don't want to confuse kindness with softness. But true kindness seems to be a powerful force in education. Even discipline must ultimately flow from kindness.

It seems to me that we need to stress kindness in a special way since people today {67} have too little opportunity, or none at all, to be just children. As a result they lack a natural starting point for the supernatural world. It is said that difficulties of faith are less in the mind and more in the heart. Put in practical terms: Many can no longer love God as Father because they never loved a natural father. If we would see it as our task to reflect the kindness of God the Father to those we serve, then it would be easy for them to address the heavenly Father as "Father" and to find their way to a childlike relationship with him.

I stress again, kindness is not the same as softness. Kindness! Look at the Good Shepherd, at the Blessed Mother, how they take care at the wedding feast in Cana! We ought to become shepherds who show fatherly concern for our people.

Allow me to add a second thought. One often complains at how wild and rebellious modern youth have become. They bear a portion of the guilt, to be sure, but we must not forget that parents must earn the childlike love of their children. Thomas discussed the sources from which filial love flows. Is it birth? Not solely, for it only gives one the inclination¹. The actual love must be *earned* by the parents. They must give their children the sunshine of kindness. The same

¹ The predisposition of the child to love one's parents as a son or daughter.

applies to us priests. Nowadays we cannot simply insist on claims of authority. If we want to be respected and revered, we must earn it at the cost of great sacrifices and total surrender to those entrusted to our care.

c. Loving with a Strong Heart

Finally, the third point: a Marian heart is a *strong* heart. Think of how strong Mary is at the foot of the cross. Must not our heart be this strong too?

How necessary it is for us, since we are dealt so many failures. Unless we are strong and anchored in God we will too easily throw in the towel and not muster the courage to sacrifice ourselves for our vocation.

Conclusion

These are a few thoughts which can prepare the soil of our soul a little. We experience so many failures, but we must not lose faith. We are in such need of this great spirit of faith; we need it so that we do not become pessimists. The task I have been given is to help the child of God to grow to maturity in those God has entrusted to me. For, “Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Second Conference

{68} Yesterday we said that this will be a sexual pedagogical course. We want to gain clarity on how we can educate those entrusted to our care in the area of sexuality or, put differently, how we can make them able and ready to correctly judge and value their sexual powers in the light of faith.

This involves more than just giving information; it involves a *transfiguration* of the sexual processes. It can be spoken of as the mature fruit of a comprehensive religious and moral formation, as the mature fruit of a healthy spirituality. But if we would conduct the course on such a broad level, we would never reach our goal. We must choose a more focused topic from the vast field of sexual education and from there let a ray of light fall on the comprehensive formation of the person.

Let me therefore suggest that we focus on sexual transfiguration¹. We will not go into the questions of sexual information. I will presuppose that you know the physiological processes. Of course from this transfiguration we will draw a few connecting lines so that sexual education as a whole can be raised to a higher level.

An Example From Life

In order to bring all the ideas and feelings we have into focus and not start too metaphysically, I want to read to you an example of sexual transfiguration. This is how one of our teachers² did it in a girls school. The main content is more or less this:

“I don’t know how I really did it. The Blessed Mother did every-

¹ At the root of the topic is a wordplay in German: not just *aufklären*, but *verklären*, that is, sex education is not just a matter of “giving information” but of “transfiguration.” In a talk for families Fr. Kantenich once described it this way: “We must know the difference between information and transfiguration. What does it mean to ‘present the sex drive in a transfigured way’? It means to present the human person in the way it is meant to be seen, and then to connect the sex drive and sexuality with the supernatural world.” (February 17, 1964, unpublished transcript).

² A member of the Women’s Federation.

thing, when I explained it all to the girls and showed them everything in a transfiguring light. The girls, who only had very incomplete information about these things, were making nonsense and being very inappropriate with it. The result was a general chaos. The matter came to the principal's attention. Several girls were going to be expelled. I took the girls' side: they didn't really know what they wanted and what they were doing. To prohibit them from talking about such things was not going to help them. I asked the girls and they told me more than I had thought. I then told them that they should talk about this with their mothers, but they couldn't. They wanted to talk about it with me. I now wanted to do some act of reparation with them. First the girls would have to wait and keep quiet because I had to leave them for a time.

"Then I returned from the hospital. The girls were different. I waited eight more days. Then I chose an hour in the late afternoon, between about 4 and 5. The whole thing was prepared by a novena for December 8. {69} I made my presentation to the whole class. We were all in a certain atmosphere of consecration. I don't remember the details any more. I pointed out how great and holy the moment is when a new person is created, and that we all must fall to our knees that man and woman are allowed to participate in this act of creation. I then explained to them the whole process of how a child develops. How much meaning is contained in the word mother! You, too, are called to be mothers some day. And so you must prepare yourselves well for it...!"

The girls shared some of their difficulties with their teacher on slips of paper. I have these slips here. These slips of paper form the material which we must examine in a scientific way.

Three Critical Questions

Three questions could occupy us [regarding this example]:

1. What are we to think of the connection between the sexual sphere and the Immaculata atmosphere?
2. How do we evaluate the precise form of presentation [used by this teacher]?

3. How are we to view making a presentation to a whole class?¹

We do not have enough time to discuss all three questions. We will limit ourselves to examining only the first one. The other two will be left for the discussion times.

Connecting the Sexual Sphere with Immaculata Atmosphere

To the first question, that is, the connection between the sexual sphere and the Immaculata atmosphere². This point can be subdivided into three points which we need discuss in more detail. It is a comparison, so we must first look at the two items being compared. We will first let the air of the sexual sphere pass over us and then consider the Immaculata atmosphere. In the third point, the sexual sphere and the Immaculata atmosphere must permeate each other. We will give more time to this point. And our approach to the whole topic seeks to be both scientific and popular.

I. The Sexual Sphere

As announced, we must first consider the *sexual sphere*. We should perhaps let the air of the sexual sphere pass over us for a brief moment. You will counter, with justification: This is quite unnecessary; we don't live in a convent but the world. Everything {70} is sexually laden. The sexual sphere is all around us. I will admit: You are substantially correct. Still, I don't think such a discussion is pointless, for it removes the blindfold from our eyes. After all, in the course of the years we have not been able to break this topic down to the final principles. Let us take a moment to look at the overall

¹ Given the personal nature of the sexual mystery, it is much more fitting that the presentation be given in a one-on-one setting, not a classroom. See J. Kentenich, talk for couples, Milwaukee, February 17, 1964.

² Play on words. *Sphere* connotes a sphere of influence, a reality; but the context implies that Fr. Kentenich sees it as an influence blind to the finer and deeper realities of the person. *Atmosphere*, especially *Immaculata atmosphere*, also connotes a reality with real influence, but one which respects and even uplifts the finer and deeper dimensions of the human person. Another way to look at it is: the sexual sphere appeals to the lower drives (appetites), while the Immaculata atmosphere appeals to the higher drives (ideals, nobility, freedom).

situation from an elevated standpoint. With just a few strokes I would like to give you a sketch of the sexual situation of the times today.

Who created the sexual sphere? It was the sex drive. We must therefore look more closely at the sex drive. If we look backwards or forwards, so that we have human nature in view, then we will soon arrive at this clear assessment:

1. Humanity has suffered much at the hands of the sex drive *from time immemorial*.

2. The sex drive has become so strong *today* that one can properly speak of a sexual crisis not only in youth, but in all mankind. You can verify this in your own life. I only want to point out the philosophical and theological underpinnings for this claim.

1. *The Suffering Caused by the Sex Drive in All Times*

To the first point. Some poets say that two powerful drives keep humanity in constant motion, that all of life can be tied to two drives – the drive for nourishment and the drive for love.

God be praised that he has planted this twofold drive deep in the human soul, otherwise humanity would scarcely make the sacrifices needed to sustain itself. Because a special pleasure is connected with these two drives, we can see how strong an accent God has placed on them.

Through original sin these two drives became stronger, stronger than needed to fulfill their purpose. All of us who have remained noble can sense this. We can all sense it, especially with regard to the sex drive. Original sin seems to have most wounded the sex drive. This is why many theologians identify the unleashing of the sex drive as the essence of original sin.

At all times and in essentially all people, including seminarians and priests, the struggle with sexuality is a hard one. For seminarians and priests the sexual question is also a determining factor in their vocation. Therefore the question: How do things look {71} with my sexual purity? Will I be able to live the commitment to celibacy my whole life long? (...)

2. *The Suffering Caused by the Sex Drive Today*

To the second point. Nowadays the sex drive has become so strong that one can properly speak of sexual distress¹. One can speak of sexual distress in two senses. It can mean that the distress caused by the sex drive is so strong that I can only master it with much effort, with growing difficulty. The other view is that the sexual distress is a form of inner duress² inhibiting the *voluntarium* [free will]; that is, the drive is so strong that I cannot master it.

We all gladly admit that one can properly speak of sexual distress in the sense of a growing difficulty [in mastering it]. We stand too much in life, have been through the war and the post-war years, for it to be any different.

We know [that one form of] this distress is related to housing³. It is obvious that if a family has so and so many children packed together in a small room this poses great dangers for purity. Then come moral forms of distress. In recent decades our people has been too little educated in the religious and moral sense. One did not pay attention to mortification, grace, and the attachment to God. These are two essential reasons for the sexual distress. If we want to give relief, then it cannot just be giving in to nudity and immodest dress, to just letting the drive run wild. The advocates of this method can be likened to [carriers of] “water sickness⁴” – where the more one drinks, the thirstier one gets. Methods which give real relief are: a robust moral formation and creating better living conditions.

But the world of today is determined to understand “sexual distress” differently: That the sex drive has become so strong in the sense of inner duress that one can no longer speak of sin. Then one can conclude: I can do whatever I want.

¹ German: *sexuelle Not*, sexual distress or crisis.

² German: *Nötigung*, which implies the inner experience of being forced by some external factor, as opposed to *Zwang* (compulsion) where the source of inhibition is internal to the personality.

³ Here Fr. Kentenich is discussing two sources of sexual distress typical of the pastoral situation of Germany in the 1920s. An application today would need to consider other sources, and especially consider the role of the media.

⁴ German: *Wassersucht*, or dropsy.

We must devote a little time to the question of inner duress. But only to the extent that our topic requires.

Let me give you a few examples of sexuality. They are taken from the book, *The Revolt of Modern Youth*¹. It describes the situation in America. It speaks of boys and girls from educated families... Even if we do not yet see all the same phenomena yet in Germany, we are headed in this direction. It will {72} come to us, too.

My first task would be to show you what the trend looks like. Let me do that by giving you a few examples. (You yourselves should not study such books!) And after we have gained a fundamental direction, I want to elaborate the individual characteristics and answer the question: Can one really speak of inner duress? ...²

¹ Ben B. Lindsey and Wainwright Evans, *The Revolt of Modern Youth* (New York, 1925), translated in German as *Revolution der modernen Jugend* (Stuttgart, 1927). Fr. Kentenich's contact with the book was from a report in the monthly journal *Thorus*, February 1928. In the book, Judge Lindsey of Denver, Colorado, examines many of the cases of juvenile delinquency he has seen in the court and tries to trace them back to their cause. His understanding of society and morals deviates significantly from that of the Catholic Church (hence Fr. Kentenich's warning to not read such books).

² The transcriber did not take notes of the actual examples from the book cited by Fr. Kentenich.

Third Conference

The task we have set for our sexual pedagogical course is to correctly illumine sexual pedagogy; said differently, we want to permeate the sexual sphere with Immaculata atmosphere. This morning we looked at examples of delinquent sexual behavior and how this impacts modern life. We recall that the sex drive has always been a strong force, but [it has grown so strong] today that one must speak of a sexual distress. One can then ask if one this sexual distress can be spoken of as duress. I used the examples from the book to show the direction of our course.

Four Characteristics of Modern Sexual Life

I would now like to examine the individual cases that I read this morning¹ to see if the sexual life of youth today has certain common features. What characteristic features are especially prominent? Are there certain features which are in common? Yes, and they are four:

1. The lack of all or nearly all eroticism.
2. The lack of any moral inhibition.
3. The total confusion of the roles of the sexes, something which especially affects the feminine sex.
4. A substantial shift in the world of young men.

1. The lack of all or nearly all eroticism

Here we must deal with two things: a) We must clarify the meaning of eroticism in relation to sexuality. b) We must mediate on why modern life has lost all or nearly all sense of eroticism².

¹ From *The Revolt of Modern Youth*.

² Fr. Kentenich follows the classical understanding of the erotic as the attraction of the soul to the goodness, truth, and beauty in the other. Psychologically speaking, it is the soul's attraction to its God-given ideal made visible and embodied in the other; hence the alternate translation "ideal-centered love." Everyday usage has degraded the meaning of the terms erotic and eroticism to the point where many only associate them with the basest gratification of the sex drive. This is contrary to the true meaning of the words. For a clear discussion of *eros* and *agape*, see Pope Benedict XVI's encyclical, *Deus caritas est (God is love)*, Decem-

a. *Eroticism and Sexuality*

Two years ago in the course about youth psychology we spoke at length about eroticism and sexuality¹. {73} Perhaps I can remind you of the one or the other thought relevant to today's topic. We will then need to ask ourselves: What is sexuality and what is eroticism, and how do they relate to one another?

Today's literature has revived the old terminology. In this time of transition we must clearly understand the difference between the two expressions. In adults, especially married adults, both are present simultaneously; they are two aspects of the same phenomenon. But in the natural development they remain separated for a longer period of time. First eroticism develops. Then sexuality.

To summarize, we can differentiate it this way: Sexuality is what stimulates sexual pleasure; it is the drive for physical intimacy and union. Eroticism is the drive for *spiritual* intimacy². [A third factor,] the drive to have children, derives from the drive to be a father [or mother]. These three elements constitute the marital union in the God-willed order.

i. *Eroticism*

Eroticism is probably the most difficult to grasp. Let me attempt a definition. What one finds when looking for a definition is often so broad that one needs a definition of the definition. Let me give you the following definition:

Eroticism is contemplative devotion to the idea of the good and the beautiful which is found embodied in a transfigured way in another human being.

We are plainly dealing here with a psychological act. Like every

ber 25, 2005, Part I.

¹ J. Kentenich, *Seelenführerkurs Jugendpsychologie*, course on spiritual direction, August 30-September 3, 1926; manuscript: J. Schmiedl (ed.), *Die Psychologie der Jugend* (Münster, 1982), p. 73-78. The preliminary partial translation, *Perspectives on the Spiritual Direction of Youth* (Austin, 2007), does not include this section.

² German: *seelische Berührung*, literally "the soul's touching."

psychological act it can be looked at from the perspective of *ratione actus* and *ratione objecti*.

a) *ratione actus*: As soon as love ceases to be purely contemplative, it begins to enter the sexual sphere. If the devotion is no longer purely contemplative, then the urge for physical intimacy begins to stir. This is the beginning of sexuality.

b) *ratione objecti*: Erotic love is not devotion to an idea, but to an idea which has taken on flesh. Hence the devotion is to the idea of the good and beautiful *embodied in a person*. The nature of youth and women is to be a child¹. As a result, women need a lifelong attachment to the idea embodied in the person. How many crises do young people go through when they discover: What I am looking for in the person is not really there. What crises, when the idea conflicts with reality! Young men find their way to a differentiation of idea and reality. Women generally cannot {74} do this their whole lifetime. Hence, one must not show too much of one's humanness² to women. She immediately transfers it to the idea, for instance of the priest and the priesthood.

But it is still not enough [to understand] erotic love as making present the idea in embodied form to a youthful soul. The soul does not see the objective person [i.e., the person as he or she is], but the subjective ideals projected into it by the lover. Hence Grillparzer³ says: the one who is loved is like a coat rack on which the lover hangs his ideals. As a result, one can also say that eroticism is more or less the effusion or upwelling of one's own idealism.

Eroticism is often described as having two stages: physical and spiritual eroticism. The focus of physical eroticism is the body and its beauty. One might conclude that the primary focus of the soul of

¹ That is, to have a pronounced degree of childlikeness.

² Fr. Kentenich is especially speaking to priests here: one should not show one's human weaknesses lightly or in order to make a pedagogical point. The woman needs to see the ideal. (Not meant is that a priest must always show himself as perfect or "superhuman.")

³ Presumably Franz Grillparzer (1791-1872), Austrian poet.

youth is the body. The vital values¹ are the ones in the foreground. From the outside it seems as if the young person were only seeking physical [beauty]. This is not the whole picture. The lover seeks in the body [of the person loved] his embodied idea. Endless shyness, endless hesitation! You notice that even physical eroticism has a spiritual component.

This physical eroticism soon develops into a spiritual one. Plato experienced it in his own self. He noticed that physical beauty is not always the expression of the true, spiritual beauty. When one becomes more mature, one notices that a beautiful soul can be hidden beneath an ugly face. Then one detects in the beauty of the eyes the depths of the soul. Here we have the eroticism of the soul which more and more overcomes the eroticism of the body.

Because of spiritual and physical eroticism, something develops in the young person akin to sympathy which must develop into friendship or married love. Both [friendship and married love] pass through eroticism, while being different from it – because one now sees the real person. In friendship and true married love one sees the other person as he or she really is.

A Few Words About Friendship

Peer friendships among young people are generally erotic in nature. The enthusiasm for the friend is not based on the friend's real characteristics, but on imagined ones. As a result, all friendships of youth must go through a crisis. {75} It starts when reality begins to dawn and eroticism is unmasked to reality. Endless discussions follow. Either the youthful friendship breaks up or erotic love gives way to true friendship. It gains a new foundation – genuine mutual understanding, or true love. But if it breaks up, the persons still never come free from each other (cf. Goethe and Jacobi²).

¹ Cf. J. Kantenich, *Perspectives on the Spiritual Direction of Youth*, p. 23.

² Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), preeminent German author and playwright, and Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi (1743-1819), German Enlightenment philosopher. The two met in the 1770s; the ensuing friendship was extremely tempestuous, alternating between periods of closeness and alienation before it

Opposite-Sex Friendships Among Peers

The principle is exactly the same here. A few things must simply be stressed differently. In normal stages of development, a certain attraction to the other sex is always present, accompanied by the soul's enamoredness with what it sees. There are three stages:

– [As children,] boys and girls play peacefully together.

– A mutual antagonism and segregation develops, typically after the age of ten, although the two still don't really get away from each other.

– The two are attracted to each other again, in ways that differ from person to person. Some show off, others are shy and awkward. This latter is the more ideal friendship; a great deal of creativity is stirred in such cases.

Relationships Between Adults and Adolescents of the Same Sex

Such relationships normally start out with a strong erotic dimension. Older ones are attracted to younger ones, younger ones to older ones, children to adolescents. An adult is often motivated by the desire to shield the youngster from life's hardships. Going the other way, boys will feel: I want to climb higher and need support.

For the educator, the pedagogical foundation in the initial phase is the erotic love which later becomes more supernatural, but still remains naturally anchored. But if the relationship between adults and boys remains only erotic, then the danger is very great that eroticism will turn into sexuality¹.

finally broke up in the time before Jacobi's death.

¹ The adult must see things in their right proportion. On the one hand, he knows the "coat rack" function he plays, embodying the youngster's ideals. On the other hand, the adult is responsible for applying the laws of organic transference and transmission (see J. Niehaus, *The 31st of Mary*, Chapter Eight), passing on the received love and admiration to God as final source and destination. See also Fr. Kantenich's discussion of "priestly fatherliness" and "priestly motherliness," where "priestly" means fulfilling a bridge function by being firmly anchoring in the supernatural (see J. Kantenich, Educational Conference 1931: *Ethos und Ideal in der Erziehung*, Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1972, p. 111-124).

ii. *Sexuality*

We do not need to speak much about *sexuality*, since it is covered in moral theology. Sexuality is the drive for physical intimacy and union.

iii. *Interrelationship of Eroticism and Sexuality*

Now the other question: What function does eroticism have in relationship to sexuality? It has two. First, eroticism protects the person from too rapid an onset of sexuality. This fact is very important. Do you remember {76} how sexuality broke into your own soul? It was something dark and difficult. Woe, when the sex drive directly emerges without the mediation of a longer preparation by the drive of the soul. Hence, eroticism is a protection. Second, still later, when we are adults, eroticism helps us to keep the sex drive in its proper bounds. It does so, of course, in conjunction with a moral-religious value-complex.

Knowing these two functions will probably help you understand how incredibly damaging it is that modern life no longer knows eroticism, because nothing is left to restrain the [sex] drive.

b. Why is Modern Life No Longer Familiar with Eroticism?

We must investigate why eroticism is totally or almost totally unknown to modern life. Why does sexuality emerge today so directly, without any mediation from eroticism? Answer: Because young people no longer grow up with any distance between them, either spiritual or physical. Because eroticism is ultimately nothing other than the transference of one's own idealism onto another person, eroticism can only thrive when there is some kind of distance.

How were things in the past? Recall how girls were raised, sheltered in the shrine of the family. The girl was a castle which had to be conquered. How easily could the high values growing in a boy find an embodiment in the girl! How easily could the girl be a "coat rack" [for deep and powerful ideals]. The girl was a mystery. This is how we see it; precisely those who have remained pure can see it this way. The first reason: the distances have been removed.

In what proximity to the sexes grow up today! In keeping with

nature, schools should restore the [right] distance at puberty. If you see how today the young girls grow up in organizations with boys and are exposed again and again to their failings, you see that the necessary distance is lacking and eroticism cannot develop. The sexes are even constantly together in the workplace. The thought becomes clearer when you hear how frequent mutual company keeps the soul from finding the needed distance. If you finally add as a third moment how today's literature, movies, etc. present everything in the crassest way, you see that spiritual distance is no longer possible.

{77} This is the first point, the first characteristic feature of the examples which we looked at this morning. Try to apply what you have heard. Perhaps you will also find ideas for the reform of friendship.

2. The Lack of any Moral Inhibition

*** In the examples one notices a second characteristic feature which is not at all pleasant. It is the new the lack of any moral and religious inhibition. Temptation calls, and both boys and girls immediately give in to temptation.

Thanks be to God that we still have confessional schools. We know that the sex drive without moral and religious inhibition cannot be tamed. But when we no longer have confessional schools, this too will be missing.

3. The Total Confusion of the Roles of the Sexes

A third characteristic feature is the total confusion of the roles of the sexes. In the past it was the young man who took the initiative to court the young woman. Today it is the other way around. Where does this come from? There seem to be two reasons:

The first derives from women's growing independence and the equalization of men and women. It certainly did not start this way. [It started when] economic necessity drove women from isolation to financial independence, and from there to social and political independence. It is understandable that the woman now wants to take the reins into her hands and be the man's equal in all areas of life. But

because she is at a disadvantage vis-a-vis the man in so many areas, she tends to overcompensate. She feels inferior to the man. Hence the drive not only to be his equal, but to act like the man in clothing, hair style (short hair), etc.

Because of the modern trend toward autonomy, the woman tries to drive the wagon of love, but to her own harm. You see, attachment¹ serves her better than permissive social mores. If she tries to drive the wagon of love, the most attractive part of the relationship between the sexes is lost. A man feels happiest when the woman clings to him in search of help. A {78} woman feels happy when she finds the stronger man's protection. The reason is the polarity of the sexes. If the altitude of the relationship is undermined, what will remain to hold man and woman together? In the end it will only be the crassest self-centeredness. This is the first reason.

The second reason is more one of economics. Because of today's great surplus of women², the pressure is great to find a man at any price. Many women think: I won't find a husband if I don't look for one myself. Here we face a cultural problem of the first degree. We will come back to this in a different context. What will happen to the surplus women? There only seems one possibility – to help them appreciate the value of virginity.

Because this change is so massive, the disadvantage to the personality of the woman is very strong. The present change has led to a total undermining of respect for woman's unique personality. And if woman is affected in her ability to love, it affects her whole personality. When the woman cannot unfold her drives in a healthy manner, it causes her great suffering. [One result is that] she no longer looks on children as a longed-for gift from heaven, but as something that gets in her way. When women disregard their own children and no longer pay attention to the life of the child, then "women turn into hyenas" (Schiller).

¹ German: *Gebundenheit*.

² Because so many young men were killed in World War I, many parts of Europe, including Germany, experienced a surplus of women of marriageable age.

4. *A Substantial Shift in the World of Young Men*

You have probably sensed that, although I didn't read much about it from the book, there has also been a substantial shift among young men toward the sex drive.

What might be the reason for this? Let me to point out a law of biology and ethics: when it comes to maintaining an ordered sex life, one cannot overestimate woman's importance! We [men] speak of ourselves the crown and lords of creation. That is proper. But for man to unfold his masculine-spiritual strengths he needs the woman. See that law quite clearly. For those of us who are celibate, this may help you understand the importance of Marian devotion.

If we recognize this law and, on the other hand, recall how today's woman has been defeminized and the feminine is presented to the man today, then it is clear that it must stoke and fire the sex drive in a young man. Consider {79} for a moment if it is true that it is not so much the man who bears the main guilt, but the woman. [On the other hand,] if the man would tell the woman that he only finds her attractive in such and such a way, then she would dress and conduct herself differently. But the devaluation of woman is what is in the foreground.

So you can see how the sex drive works in the world of today. And you can see the reason for speaking of sexual distress.

How Are We to Judge Inner Duress?

Now comes the second main point. Can one, in this situation, speak of an inner duress as modern moralists do? How are we to judge particular cases? We all gladly admit that it is significantly more difficult to live a morally pure life today than in the past. The sexual attractions are greater, the inhibitions fewer.

The attractions are greater, first of all because of the moral displacement in the world of woman. The tendency to bare more skin is visible everywhere in literature, theater, window displays, etc.

But the interior inhibitions have also become fewer. [Why?] Because we have become more nervous, because we have become too soft and indulgent with regard to the mastery of our own drives.

In most cases one cannot speak of an inner duress. Still, I readily

admit that each day there are more and more individual cases where one must say that the *voluntarium* [free will] is no longer free. The reason is a deep, psychological one. Our poor human nature has been so weakened by original sin and by the chain mail¹ of our personal sins that it absolutely needs the complementation of grace. You see, our nature cannot live without grace. Like a fish without water and a bird without the air, our soul cannot exist without grace. The scholars of the Middle Ages tried to make a precise elaboration of this doctrine. Just as the soul is the *entelechia*, the *forma substantialis*² of the body, so is grace the *forma substantialis* of the soul. When you see how today's times deny grace and God, then you have the *voluntarium in causa*³. I don't want to say that all of this is conscious, but we want to see all of this in a scientific way.

How Are We to Approach the Modern "Moral Swamp"

Can today's times still be saved from the moral swamp in which it is suffocating?

a) Today many classes of persons are so caught in the swamp that we must expect them to suffocate. {80} By this I do not mean: Forget about them! But there will be a great number that we cannot reach.

b) Secondly, to the extent that our educational arm reaches, we must actively work to save as many as we can from this swamp. And it seems to me that the main method of battle is ultimately not the battle against the excesses of the sex drive, sports, and fashion. It ultimately depends on educating people so that they again know how to master their drives with their mind and will.

This is only a very general outline.

¹ German: *Kettenring*, literally: ring of chains.

² The formal substance, that is, the substrate or foundation which informs the entire person with life.

³ Latin for a free will "in cause" (in dilemma). Although the responsibility of the free will was present at the start of a process, the unfolding of events has "boxed in" the free will with fewer and fewer real options, a circumstance which mitigates its freedom and to a certain degree its responsibility.

Conclusion

With that I conclude our section on the sources.

We must close by especially setting the accent on what I said about the excesses affecting the world of women. We must not say: We abandon the women to their own means. Today we must give more attention than ever to the formation of women and girls. Girls must again learn to hold themselves in high esteem. Here you sense how important Marian devotion must become in the formation of women and girls. In her they can see how much greatness they are capable of; in her they see their ideal.

These thoughts about the sexual sphere will have to suffice. We now come to the beautiful and ideal reality of *Immaculata atmosphere*. Because it is so familiar to us, I will only need to present it in a certain light.

Fourth Conference

II. Immaculata Atmosphere

We have covered the part of our topic which is less pleasant. The part that we now cover will fill both you and me with great joy. May you and I succeed in holding totally fast to this wonderful world about which we will now hear! After all, [in the previous talk] we heard that we cannot overestimate the importance of woman for us as men. If we have thus far considered the degenerate woman, our focus now turns to woman in [the radiance of] the ideal. The atmosphere of the Immaculata should surround us. It is an atmosphere which is most easily grasped under the image of [Mary as] the Immaculata. Oh, that we would manage not only to discuss this image with ardent love and inmost enthusiasm, but to see in it our life's task that we ourselves be or become an Immaculata in miniature! These are the ideas around which the following thoughts shall be organized.

{81} I will make the following assertion: The Immaculata touches the deepest dimensions of our soul. This assertion has two parts. The first tries to probe the deepest longing of our hearts. The second gives an answer to it. The two parts of the talk will go together like question and answer, like drive and satisfaction of the drive.

1. The Deepest Longing of Our Hearts

In quiet hours, have we ever clearly asked ourselves: In what direction does the deepest longing of my heart go? One answer we might have given is: The deepest longing of my heart is to be free from all sins against holy purity, indeed to be free from all sin.

But this is not yet the entire or deepest longing. When we kneel before the image of Our Lady, we become aware that we owe everything to her. No one can say that he owes her nothing. Perhaps it is the way you have remained faithful to a virtue, or could reconquer one. Then there is the grace of your vocation. But that is not all. When we silently kneel before her, then her image points to still higher heights. We see her as the Pure, the Spotless, the Immaculate One. And as the Immaculata she tries to awaken the deepest longing of our hearts. And the deepest longing is, to some degree, to be free

from all sin. Not to the point where I am no longer capable of sin – for that is not possible to man – but in the sense that temptation gradually loses its appeal.

To be free from all sin! Does not the image of the Immaculata speak this language? She stands before us like a remnant of paradise. She possesses the *gift of integrity*¹ exactly the way our first parents possessed it. Here we want to call out: *trahe nos* – draw us after you, we follow the fragrance of the oil of your sinlessness² (cf. Song 1,4)! Might this not be why she stands before us next to Christ in the brilliance of sinlessness, so that she can call out to us day after day, “*Sursum corda* – lift up your hearts!”³ If we study the longing of the nations and ask what their deepest longing is, the psychologists of nations will answer: It is the longing for original paradise. But is not the essence of original paradise what we call the gift of integrity?

Let us ask our own hearts. When we stand before an innocent child, what do we find so appealing?

“Child’s eyes, diamonds
in earth’s desert sands,
Worlds of long-lost happiness
radiate from your loveliness⁴.”

The child’s eyes have not yet been clouded by the life of the drives. They remind us of the longing of the nations for paradise, for sinlessness.

{82} If you, surrounded by this atmosphere, now ask the sober question whether this longing also has any meaning in my life, whether I can expect to find its fulfillment some day, what shall we answer? Does the image of the Immaculata only have the task of

¹ Latin: *donum integritatis*. Technical term for the gift of a total inward and outward harmony person such as Adam and Eve had before the first sin.

² German: *Unsündlichkeit*. Fr. Kentenich uses this word to describe not just being free from all sin, but a precise attitude of soul: I do not merely try to avoid committing any sin, but strive to live out my life totally given to God and always trying to please him.

³ Invocation from the preface dialog at Mass.

⁴ Alban Stolz. Also cited by Fr. Kentenich in *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 63.

reminding us of long-lost times, or does it have a deeper and more far-reaching meaning? Does not the Immaculata show us that we, through heated battles here on earth can – and may and must – achieve what is already hers as secure possession? Does she not show that to some extent the *gift of grace*¹ is ordered to the gift of integrity? Let us see what clues Sacred Scripture can give us.

Let us ask how theologians reason it. The beatific vision is the perfection and mature fruit of *sanctifying grace*. But as long as we are on earth, only the seed of it is planted. The beatific vision returns us to the state of freedom from sin; it returns to us the original state of paradise. Must we not therefore conclude that the beatific vision grows to the extent that we grow in the *gift of grace*? Such is the view of the spiritual life from the vantage point of the beatific vision.

But now look once more from the vantage point of the gift of grace. How did God see the soul; how does it stand before the divine intellect? In paradise the gift of grace was not only ordered to the gift of integrity, but the two were also linked. Then came original sin. We lost not only the gift of integrity, but also the gift of grace. Then comes our Savior. He won back for us the gift of grace, but not the gift of integrity. Instead, it is our task to win back a certain degree of the gift of integrity. This seems to be what St. John wants to say with the words, “Whoever is born of God no longer sins, because the seed of God is at work in him” (1 Jn 3,9). He wants to say that the gift of grace excludes sin, because both God and I are now connected. To the extent that the gift of grace grows in us, it makes it difficult for us to give in to our drives. The passions lose something of their poison.

Let’s verify these thoughts in practical life. Look at your own life. The more deeply we are rooted in the heart of God, the harder it is for us to yield to our drives. You will find the same thing in the lives of the saints. As the saints became holy, in like measure their battle subsided. But this needs to be understood in the right sense.

{83} We can distinguish between two battles: a peripheral battle and a central battle. The peripheral battle develops in the beginning

¹ Latin: *donum gratiae*. Technical term for the gift of God’s life in us that makes us children of God.

stage of the spiritual life. In this stage the soul struggles against outward and difficult temptations. Apply that to ourselves. As long as we are in the beginning stage of the spiritual life, sensual attractions cause us much trouble. We struggle to keep saying ‘yes’ to God. Who of us can keep up such a battle for a long time without breaking down?

Thanks be to God that the battle is not always a matter of negation, or we would be forced to struggle our whole life. This is not how it was with the saints. For them the struggle was always at the center of the spiritual life. In this sense they had to struggle their whole life. I think we need to clearly separate the two battle fronts from one another. Normally, to the degree that we become holy, the peripheral battle stops. This is also true of the saints who have strong mystical gifts. For such souls, when they are in “the dark night of the senses,” where the emotions dry out, the temptations, even the strongest, are no longer anything more than psychological attractions. We must reach the point that the outside influences which want to enter the soul no longer arouse us or cause in us great turmoil. Unfortunately it is often exactly the opposite. How much should we as diocesan priests strive for the gift of integrity! Otherwise we will no longer be able to cope in everyday life.

I repeat: In the normal trajectory of the spiritual life, growth of the gift of grace results in the cessation or diminishment of temptations and attractions. And when we face them, they no longer make us so nervous; they remain only psychological attractions. We ought to bring it so far that gradually the poison will be removed from our nature, so that we are not bothered even into our dreams.

On one occasion St. Ignatius says in a chapter he wrote to his order about holy purity: “It makes no sense to write much on purity.” For his followers it was a matter of course that they should live pure lives, like the angels. Take that word literally. The angels do not have a body. We cannot totally remove ourselves from the boundaries given to us by our body. But we should strive to be free from the consequences of the soul burdened by original sin. As modern priests who live in the large cities, who become calloused to all kinds of things, who so easily accept a negative standard, we ought to free

ourselves from {84} the thought: I didn't do it on purpose, therefore it was not a sin. We ought to set our ideal higher and say: *Trahe nos!* Don't just get stuck in the striving to not commit any mortal or venial sins. Our goal ought to be a spirit of sinlessness. In the other courses have we not learned about the stages of "love of suffering"¹? What do the fourth and fifth stages, and even the third stage say, if not the call to "sinlessness"!

If we ourselves want to be joyful and happy in our priestly life, if everything in and outside of us should become a "*Sursum corda*," then we must set our aim so high, must strive for sinlessness until the poisonous fang of the passions no longer harm us. And I think that the more our modern times master subtler and subtler ways to increase sensuality (French kissing, etc.), we ought to do all the more to create a counterweight and strive and struggle not only for freedom from sin, but also against temptation.

Am I not correct in tracing back the deepest longing of the heart to the longing for sinlessness? How much we suffer today when we ponder the errors of our nature. It does not have to take the form of personal sins (*peccata personae*), but can be in the form of the sins of nature (*peccata naturae*)². It is humiliating for a noble soul to realize it is being tempted.

2. *The Immaculata Answers the Deepest Longing of our Hearts*

Now the second assertion: *The question's answer points us to the image of Mary Immaculate*. When I say that the Immaculata touches our deepest longing, what I mean to say is that the image of Mary touches this longing, increases it, and satisfies it.

¹ German: *Stufen der Passio*.

² Fr. Kentenich is distinguishing between objective evils which have been caused by the willing and acting of the person (*peccata personae*) and those which happen through no fault of our own (*peccata naturae*). The latter is not really a sin, but can leave a strong sense of guilt. A "sin of nature" could be the accidental infliction of an injury on someone, or a mistake which leads to the loss of a game; I had no intent to cause harm, but live with the reality that I was the cause of this evil, perhaps even through some feature of my nature (blind spot, clumsiness, arrogance, ignorance of the rules, etc.).

a. *She Touches our Deepest Longing*

The Immaculata touches the deepest longing of our soul. After all, it is defined that from the first moment of her conception Mary was free from the poison of original sin. She retained both gifts: the gift of grace and the gift of integrity. She was therefore sinless in the way I mean it here. It was, of course, a different sinlessness than with Christ. With Mary one must speak of a relative sinlessness, such as our first parents originally had.

In this way the image of the Immaculata touches the longing of our hearts. This presupposes that we let the dogmatic train of thought penetrate the picture of Mary¹. If we do this, the picture will speak to us in this way when we look at it. It would therefore be our task {85} tonight, when we go to the Shrine, to consciously let her picture be penetrated by the things that dogmatic theology teaches us about the Immaculate Conception. When we strive for sinlessness, we will feel an affinity with our dear Blessed Mother, at least on the level of our longing. She is pure, unstained by the least trace of sin. How is it with me? Draw me after you! Let the longing grow in me for this deep, pure, holy sinlessness. Or do you want to tell me that the picture does not have this effect on you, but only serves as an external stimulus²? There was probably a time when this was the case for many of us.

In the past I often heard the complaint, "I need a saint who fought through all the battles, who had to struggle with the same difficulties I do, such as a St. Augustine." Do you still think that today? I don't think so. We no longer see greatness so much in struggle as in acceptance of the objective order of being. And this was perfectly realized in Mary Immaculate. How does it go for you when you are interiorly under pressure, when we are filled with concupiscence, and when we are sexually charged not only for hours, but for days at a time? In

¹ In this paragraph Fr. Kentenich is not merely speaking of the abstract image of Mary, but the concrete picture of Mary in the Shrine as Mother Thrice Admirable.

² In other words, I only look at it as a work of art, not an icon or window that helps us see and love Mary.

such distress, what brings us more inner peace? The presence of someone who is also struggling sexually, or the presence of a person who is sovereign and mature? I suppose the latter. This is also the effect of the image of the Immaculata on me when I am in inner turmoil, when I am filled with sexual difficulties.

If this answer is not enough for you, here is a second. If what is important for you is the battle, then I answer you: Even Our Lady had to fight. It was of course a different battle than the one we must often fight.

What is the purpose of striving for sanctity? Before original sin there was a two-fold harmony in man: the harmony between flesh and spirit and the harmony between spirit and God. Then came original sin. Through original sin man severed the harmony between spirit and God, and as punishment God severed the harmony between spirit and flesh. The harmony of those of us who labor under the burden of original sin therefore suffers from a two-fold destruction. It is our task to restore the harmony. We must therefore fight against the flesh and the natural inclinations so that God again is Lord and master.

How was it for Our Lady? For her neither the one nor the other harmony was destroyed. She did not need to restore either of them. But {86} the harmony between spirit and God is unlimited. The Blessed Mother could grow more deeply into God, and this process of growth took a fight. Did Our Lady have to fight? She did not need to fight against the negative, but she had to fight her way into the life of faith and love. Dogmatic theologians like to study Mary's need to fight. We can well understand how she had to fight her way into the life of faith when she saw the child lying before her in the manger. She did not have the proofs that we have today. You can conclude from this how important it is for us that we try to study this [side of the] image of the Immaculata and awaken in our striving the longing for sinlessness.

b. She Increases our Deepest Longing

The image of Mary Immaculate increases our longing for sinlessness. This thought is closely tied to the one we just discussed. When a drive is satisfied and can unite with its formal object, it increases.

To the degree that I meditate on the image of the Immaculata from this standpoint, the longing in me will become more intense.

c. She Satisfies our Deepest Longing

The image of Mary Immaculate satisfies the longing for sinlessness. We would need to dwell on this point for a longer time, but I do not want to do so. I want to say more about this at our retreat. But *does* the Blessed Mother want to satisfy this longing in me? Do I have a secure right to her help and protection? I think we can answer the question with a resounding "Yes." In the Federation we have and believe that, with the grace of our vocation, we have received the grace to attain what the Federation demands of us. The Federation demands of us the greatest possible striving for the perfection of our state in life. Therefore we will also have the strength to attain it. This also applies to the priestly vocation: after all, the vocation to the priesthood is a vocation to sanctity.

We modern priests often think that only the men in orders must become holy. But the deepest reason for striving for sanctity is not the vow, but the *character sacerdotale*, as *signum configurativum cum Christo*¹. We must tell ourselves this more than once. For religious, striving for sanctity takes on a new obligatory reason and a distinct form. But it belongs to the essence of sanctity to strive for and to attain the gift of integrity. Therefore: If Our Lady has called us to be a member of the Federation, then she is also obligated {87} to help us attain this gift of integrity. We can therefore expect from the Blessed Mother that she, as the great Mediatrix of all graces, will not only impress upon us the ideal, but also fold her hands for us in the Family Council of the Most Blessed Trinity until God has given us so many graces that we can say: I have, to a certain degree, attained the gift of integrity.

But we do not forget: We cannot become an Immaculata in miniature unless we have first become a *Mater dolorosa* [Mother of Sorrows] in miniature. The way to sanctity passes through passive

¹ The priestly character, that is, the indelible mark or sign by which the priest is made one (configured) with Christ, the Eternal High Priest.

purification. Hence, in addition to active purification we must also pass through passive purification¹.

As men I suppose taking the initiative is easy, but it is difficult for us to let ourselves be purified. If you consider the spiritual life for a moment from the top, then you will grasp the purpose of our current difficulties. Then you will also grasp the purpose of the temptations. Why so many temptations against holy purity? I must be purified. Only in this way can I become sinless. Why so many failures? Looked at from above one sees that it is a means to sinlessness. I must be purified, for only a soul which has had its fangs broken can become holy. God has, so to speak, placed me on the operating table. I must let him operate. But as men we can't stand that. This makes it all the more necessary that we see the spiritual life again from above. Try to understand your interior and exterior difficulties in this context. It makes us free, strong, and calm. We do not need to fear that the first years after ordination were a deviation from the ideal. Of course, our spiritual life must now have a different attitude than in the past. Our stubborn will must be broken, for we cannot break our own fangs; God must do it. We must rather enter into the school of suffering; we must let God purify us. Hence, if we want to become an *anima Immaculata* [a soul like the Immaculata] in miniature, then we must become a *Mater dolorosa* in miniature.

¹ A topic discussed at the previous year's course on spiritual direction. Active purification includes prayer, meditation, and penance. Passive purification includes letting God form us to a greater sanctity through all forms of loss, failure, disappointment, calumny, and any other kind of trial or temptation. See J. Ken-tenich *Seelenführerkurs 1928 Mystik*, fourth conference.

Fifth Conference

III. Interpenetration of the Sexual Sphere and the Immaculata Atmosphere

{88} Text (...)

Sixth Conference

(....)

{97} When speaking of the sex drive, we know that it is one of the physical and sentient drives. It is worthwhile for us to first clarify a few questions which arise in the atmosphere of life today.

A. Preliminary Questions

If the sex drive is a physical-sentient drive, it makes sense to ask:

1. How are we to judge the human body?

{99} 2. How are we to judge the drives?

What applies to the drives in general also applies to the sex drive. If I spend some time on these questions, it is because it touches on problems that we all face.

1. How are we to Judge the Human Body?

If we would ask what the world today thinks of the human body, we would find two kinds of opinions. The first group sees the body as something completely pure and holy. Disorder does not exist in the body. It has only been introduced into the body because of a prudish education. You know where my critique is aimed: at the view of those who deny original sin. This view has spread to many parts of our Catholic people.

The other view sees the body, especially sexuality, as the source of all evil. Because of the World War, the first error gained momentum. The second is less widespread, but one finds it in Catholic circles, inasmuch as an unreasonable fear of the body and of sexuality is found in many places. This view sees in the sex act something more or less shameful or undignified.

The true Catholic view finds the middle ground between these two positions. Man was originally endowed with a twofold harmony¹. Then came original sin which led to the rebellion of the

¹ The harmony between flesh and spirit and the harmony between spirit and God (see page {85} above).

drives [of the flesh against the higher gifts]. Our task is to restore the true nobility of our drives. These are the general trends.

If we ask ourselves how the body is to be treated according to the Catholic viewpoint, then the answer is quite easy. We must treat the body with reverent love and wise strictness. This is nothing new. Anyone who is involved in sports will know how this works.

a. Reverent Love

We must treat the body with reverent *love*. The reason for this lies in the way man was created.

Recall how God created the body, the world, and then man. All the levels of being are embodied in man; this explains why God was so meticulous when he created man. The Trinity {100} deliberates the matter in council: "Let us make man after our image and likeness" (Gen 1,27). The statement is affirmed several times over: "After his image and likeness God created them." When we see the sum total of Scripture, we see and sense how [deliberately] God shapes and forms the body and how carefully he breathes the soul into the body. Why is it described in such detail? So that we are deeply convinced of how precious the whole human person is, soul and body.

There have been heresies which taught that the body was organized differently before original sin. This teaching was condemned. Everything which God created was pure. All the parts of the body are also pure and must be treated accordingly. Don't you sense how we all have good reason to love the body as God's creation?

But when we consider ourselves as Christians, we see still more reasons which clearly instill in us a loving devotion to our body. As Christians we are children of God. As a result, our body, too, is a branch of the vine of Christ, a member of Christ's body. The body, too, is meant to bear fruit for God as part of Christianity. We know St. Paul's words that we are a temple of the Holy Spirit (cf 1 Cor 6,19), that we have been purchased at a great price (cf 1 Cor 6,20), and that through Holy Communion our body touches Christ and is and wants to be consecrated and sanctified in a special way (cf 1 Cor 11, 27-32). All of these motivations must be brought together so that we see still more clearly that we must treat our body with love.

But I add to this, with *reverent* love, because the body belongs to God, to Christ. You no longer belong to yourselves, but are members of Christ. You are for Christ and Christ is there for you. Do you want to make your bodies part of a prostitute (cf 1 Cor 6)? The body belongs to God and to Christ. We must bow to this law. As a result we cannot just do with our bodies whatever we like. Hence: reverent love for our body! (...)

b. Wise Strictness

{101} But we must also treat our body with *wise strictness*. Why with *strictness*? It is no longer in the control of our nature as it ought. The original twofold harmony is lost. The danger is always there that the flesh will rebel against the spirit. Anyone familiar with original sin will understand the importance of this strictness. We must treat our body with strictness because otherwise we will offend against the ontological laws, turning everything on their head. Then the knight will be walking and the knave will be riding the steed! (...)

But I also add: It is a *prudent and wise* strictness that we must apply to our body. I point out the example of St. Francis. He calls his body “Brother Donkey” and [his soul] “Sister Soul.” The donkey is shiftily and impish. If it is not guided with a wise hand, we do not make any progress. These are the two ways we must treat our body.

2. How are we to Judge the Drives?

I said that the sex drive is one of the drives of the body. We know how to judge the body. What can we say in general about the drives? We know why the body has become so enslaved to the drives. As St. Augustine put it, “Disobedience must be punished with disobedience.” The soul became disobedient to God, and the body to the soul.

More difficult – and fruitful – is the question: How is one to explain that the wise and merciful God did not make the grace of redemption strong enough so that at least the baptized would experience a restored harmony in the life of the drives? Why must the children of God also struggle with the rebellion of concupiscence? We must follow the thoughts {102} of God. There I think we will find a generally applicable answer.

a. God wants to Educate us to Humility

The first reason is that God wants to educate us to humility. God left us with our inordinate drives in order to free us from our drives *through* our drives. “For those who love God, all things work together unto good” (Rom 8,28). God has ordained all things with infinite wisdom. If the soul which is sick because of original sin wants to become healthy, it needs humility like a fish needs water and a bird needs the air. It is therefore a great law in the kingdom of God that only the humble can experience the full grace of redemption.

St. Augustine takes this thought even farther, expressing it in his picturesque way: Because before original sin man did not want what he could, afterwards he no longer can what he wants. This is a profound statement. Before original sin Adam and Eve could have mastered their drives. We want to, but no longer can. Don’t we experience on a daily basis how many drives disquiet our soul? Maybe they are blustery storms. Here a passion, there a stirring. When will they all fall silent! How often we experience so bitterly the thorn of concupiscence. Why must this be? God wants to make us humble. We can no longer do what we want. We want to disable these stirrings. Why? The deepest root of every sin is pride. God must therefore make the soul that he loves humble.

How are we made humble? By having to experience day after day for our whole lives the constant stirrings of the life of the drives. All other knowledge of our dependence on God isn’t nearly as effective as the constant struggle with our drives. Don’t we want to accept this ontological fact in our lives? I know how we men are. We take everything so much for granted. All the more so the life of our drives. We don’t pay it any attention. If I follow the ideas of God and if I want to become holy, I must accept all of this with a conscious act of humility, otherwise God will not make us perfect, or he will let us fall very hard. It is true: serious sin can be one of the greatest of God’s gifts of grace. Because he loves me, he lets me fall very hard. That’s why we want to pay attention to the voice of God which manifests itself in our inner weaknesses, temptations, and drives. That is the purpose which God has when he leaves us to struggle with our drives.

b. God Wants to Educate us to Trust

{103} The second reason is that God wants to educate us to *trust*. St. Paul may have felt this dichotomy more strongly than anyone else. He knows as well as we how to cry out, “Who will deliver us from this mortal body? The grace of God through Christ Jesus the Lord!” (cf Rom 7,24f). If we could just make this thought our own! God wants to make us small so that we break the shackles of self and give ourselves to another bond called God. To the abyss of humility must come an equal abyss of trust. Pay attention to how quickly you grow in knowledge of self and God’s boundless omnipotence in such struggles. Look at your spiritual life from God’s perspective!

c. God Wants us to Make Sacrifices

The third reason is that God wants us to *make sacrifices*.

“Who will deliver us from this mortal body!” The modern answer is sports and athletics. Sports may help us in some ways to master our drives if they have remained healthy. According to St. Augustine, sports can only have their full effect on the religious athlete. His reasoning is that the mind can only rule when it serves. It must serve God in order to rule the body. In our words: Even the athlete will only be freed from his drives to the extent he is religious. History offers proof of this. Rome, Athens, etc. are frequently held up as models because of their sports, baths, and entertainment. But what about their morality? “There are bad men, but worst of all are the Athenians,” was a proverb in Attica.

It is most likely true that God has left to us the struggle with the drives so that we are freed from the drives through the drives themselves. He left them alone so that we might become humble and learn trust. But he also left them to us so that we might make serious sacrifices in the life of the drives. That applies to us children of God, too, to those of us who have been baptized. St. Paul knows how to argue this so beautifully. In the Old Testament there were many sacrifices, sin-offerings, holocausts, etc. In the New Testament it is our bodies that God wants as a living sacrifice (cf Rom 12,1). I think we ought to meditate on these supernatural trains of thought more often. Let us do penance! I sacrifice my body by asking it to do its

duty and more! I certainly don’t need to tell it, “It would be better to take it easy...”

Seventh Conference

2. The purpose of the sex drive

{111} Now that we have recognized the protective wall around the sex drive, I must tell you something about the sex drive itself. The purpose of the sex drive, both when I abstain and when I use it, is the *bonum prolis* [the well-being of the child]. The whole sex drive can only have meaning as a reproductive drive in connection with the *bonum prolis*.

You must keep this thought clearly in mind. This is perhaps what is novel about this insight. In everything concerning the sex drive, in all the laws of the procreation of the coming generation, we see shining forth the wisdom, kindness and mercy of the Heavenly Father.

Eighth Conference

[I. The law of procreation¹:

Children come into the world through the sexual union of man and woman.]

{115} II. The laws established around procreation. These are the *laws that protect procreation*, namely

1. *marriage* and
2. *the sixth and ninth commandments*.

In order to properly grasp sex and reproduction in the light of faith, one must bear two things in mind: First, {116} our constant source of strength (*Kraftquelle*), whether one is celibate or makes lawful use of one's sexual power, must always be our tender love for the God-man.

Secondly, the purpose of the sex drive. I spoke about this source of strength yesterday. My main concern both yesterday and today is to clarify what purpose the sex drive has. And the purpose of the laws governing procreation is the well-being of the child, or, more generally speaking, is the wisdom, goodness and mercy of the Heavenly Father toward the child.

Yesterday we applied this standard to the law of human procreation. This law is protected by two other laws:

the first is called marriage,

which is itself protected by the sixth and ninth commandments.

You can conclude from this multiple protection how great the Heavenly Father's concern is for the well-being of the child!

[II-1] Let us take a look at the first law that protects procreation: *marriage*. It is difficult to say much more on this point. But I want to try to extend yesterday's train of thought and show how this protective law reveals the Heavenly Father's love, wisdom and

¹ The outline at this point in the workshop was prepared in the Seventh Conference. The German word being used for the concept of procreation here is *Werdegsetze*.

kindness. Yesterday we said that the law of procreation is this: The child comes into the world through the sexual union of man and woman. Today, when we speak about the laws protecting this reality, we must add: **The child comes into the world through the marital union of husband and wife.** The child must only come to earth in the context of God-willed marriage. This is natural law. It is therefore binding not only for Christians, but also for pagans, because it is part of the reality of creation. Looking more closely at marriage as a protective law, three thoughts would need to be considered:

- marriage as a covenant of life,
- marriage as a covenant of love,
- marriage as a covenant of fates. (....)

Ninth Conference

{ 122 } We have gotten to know [I] the law of procreation and [II-1] the law [of marriage] that protects it, both in a supernatural light. But so great is God's concern for the coming generation that this is not enough for him. He erects a defense even around this protective law. Hence, there is a protective law which protects the protective law protecting the law of human procreation.

[II-2] *The sixth and ninth commandment*

Every commandment was ultimately established for man's well-being. It would make a worthwhile study to look into how God gave all the commandments out of love for man. "If you do this, you will prosper like your ancestors before you" (cf Dt 8,1; 30,15-20). This is true of all his laws. God desires the well-being of man. The first three commandments were given by God to bind us to himself. In the other commandments – except the sixth and ninth – he exerts his concern for our fellow men who already exist. Then he gave two further commandments whose concern is the coming generation. The sixth and ninth commandments want to protect the law of procreation.

Indeed, the matter is so grave that this protective law must bind under pain of mortal sin. In the end the issue is not the existence of the coming generation but the way they will exist. This is extremely important. After all, we are { 123 } dealing with the creation of beings which have practically infinite value in God's eyes. After all, everything which God has done in his Providence revolves around the well-being of man. The God-man died and the Trinity uses its power so that man can become the children of God and praise and glorify him in eternity. When something of practically infinite value is at stake, then the law which safeguards these beings must bind under pain of mortal sin. You can see that confirmed in the letters from the apostles.

We want to discuss two thoughts. We want to learn to gain a moral and cultural appreciation for the sixth and ninth commandments.

1. Moral Implications

I don't know if we really need to discuss this, since you deal with these things daily in the confessional. On the other hand, the theology of the sixth commandment is [too often] left to personal study. We understand words, but fail to see how it fits into the bigger picture. This causes great uncertainty in how we deal with ourselves and others. Hence, let us first take a look at the moral implications.

Let me introduce two axioms:

- 1) Any voluntary unchaste act is always a serious sin.
- 2) Not every voluntary immodest act is a serious sin.

[Axiom 1] We therefore speak not only of sinful actions, but also of [lust in the heart] – meaning that it is also a grave sin when I desire the object with full will and purpose, or when I delight in a transgression. In the sixth commandment there is no parvity of matter¹. But here we must be extremely careful. Many educated people suffer sexual distress because they were not taught clear concepts. To say that there are no venial sins in the area of the sixth commandment is also incorrect! As long as we are seriously striving [for sanctity] we can assume that all our sins are venial². *Ratione materiae*³ there is no parvity, but *ratione actus*⁴ [things can look different].

Let us consider this commandment in more detail. “Any voluntary unchaste act is always a serious sin.” This means, first of all, any voluntary squandering of the sexual powers outside of marriage. This can happen through adultery, fornication and masturbation. Secondly, any voluntary sexual pleasure outside the God-willed context of marriage [is a grave sin].

{124} Why is any voluntary sexual pleasure outside of marriage

¹ A classical norm of moral theology. When it comes to sexual sins the objective matter is always grave (“parvity” means smallness or triviality).

² Another classical axiom. If one is striving to lead a life of total union with God, one can ordinarily assume that one's sins are venial. Of course, such a one is still capable of mortal sin and must be vigilant, but generally the abhorrence of sin and the love of God will act as a deterrent against the total break from God.

³ With regard to the matter.

⁴ With regard to the act.

a grave sin? This pleasure outside the God-willed context is also called wrongful pleasure or lust. One could compare it to the abuse of the pleasure we derive from eating. But there is an essential difference. In the latter we are dealing with the self-preservation drive, but in the former with the reproductive drive. It is not a great catastrophe if one oversteps drive for self-preservation here and there. But if one plays with the reproductive drive, then the common good is in danger, not just my private good. *Bonum communi praevalet bono privato*¹. Let us examine this more closely! I speak of sexual pleasure. St. Augustine defines sexual pleasure as the pleasure one feels when the genitals are aroused. Sexual pleasure is therefore not like the relief I feel when I stretch, or when I scratch an itch.

Moreover, my claim is that *every* freely willed sexual pleasure outside of marriage is grave sin. It does not need to reach the farthest point. Each part, even the smallest, of sexual pleasure is always grave sin. Our moral theologians may be accommodating to life too much. It is always grave sin, even the slightest sexual pleasure. This must not make you nervous, for we must still make the application of the law *ratione objecti*². The pleasure must be completely voluntary. What is the reason why even the slightest sexual pleasure is always grave sin? No doubt because the sex drive is so cunning. All it needs is the slightest rip in the fabric and it finds a way to take over the whole house. If you give in, even in the slightest way, then all the dikes will surely break. Here we must be idealists. Every lust – even if it is aroused without my willing it – that I take pleasure in is grave sin. Of course, we must always add: if this happens with my totally free consent.

A few practical examples:

It is normal for young men in young years to suddenly wake up at night because of a semen release. This raises the question: Must

¹ A principle of moral theology: “The common good has precedence over the private good.”

² With regard to the object, that is, the act itself, where mitigating circumstances can apply, most notably the lack of full knowledge or total deliberate consent. Cf. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 1857-1860.

I suppress the pleasure? In this case one is not obligated – it can even be dangerous. The only obligation is that we do not give our consent to it, something easily done by redirecting our thoughts elsewhere, to prayer or whatever. But one is not obliged to suppress it. Moreover, whatever happens in a dream is not a grave sin.

{125} I further claim that *any* voluntary sexual pleasure *outside of the way permitted in marriage* is grave sin. Even in marriage one cannot enjoy every sexual pleasure in every imaginable way. Forbidden even in marriage are fornication, adultery and [practice of] sexual pleasure that makes impossible the conception of a child. Thirdly, everything which occurs as a result of *lust*, even if it is not sexual, is always a grave sin if the intention is to arouse sexual pleasure in me and others, for instance, through the way I dress...

[Axiom 2] The second law: Not every voluntary immodest act is a serious sin, but generally only a venial sin¹.

2. Cultural Implications

The *cultural* significance [of the sixth and ninth commandments]: If we had time, I would have to show you the horrendous shipwreck of the sex drive. But we already know that day after day from the confessional. Read what our bishops wrote about this in 1923. The shipwreck is visible all around us. There is hardly any other sin which has such devastating consequences as sins against chastity. Why is that? We have already heard the answer. Because we are dealing here with things of the highest social value. Imagine a big house. I can remove all the parts I want. But if I remove the supporting columns, it will collapse. God's commandments are constructed in a similar way. The sixth and ninth commandments are the supporting pillars, for they deal with things of the utmost social importance... In our mind's eye we must see the scourged and suffering Savior. This is what broken chastity has done.

Sins against chastity are also the universal source of unhappiness of society. They affect things of utmost social importance. Do we

¹ This point is not developed in detail.

hold marriage in such high esteem? If I marry only to make myself happy, do I have the right understanding of marriage? Selfishness is at its root. Every act within marriage which is directed by selfishness is a failing against the purpose of marriage and the sixth commandment. The purpose [of marriage] is directed to the well-being of the whole human race. If we want to save modern society, then we must recognize and stand up to this error. Has the purpose of chastity been correctly grasped by those who strive for purity only for fear of punishment, or for the sake of purity as something beautiful? Of course, [fear and beauty] are effective motives, but they do not correspond to the purpose of the sex drive. {126} Here everything is ordered to the well-being of the coming generation. The sixth and ninth commandments want to be viewed as the fountain from which the coming young life is fed. This is why every failing against the sixth commandment is a drop of poison in the well of life of the coming human race. We have totally lost track of this thought [in society today].

Even when committed in total privacy, sins against chastity not only poison the well of life of the coming generation because they have an incredible drive to repeat themselves or because every sin tends to breed new sin. No, if we think supernaturally, we find that all of us are part of the great mystical body of Christ. If one member suffers, all suffer. Hence, if I am not pure, this is a disadvantage to the whole body of Christ. Nor is this only through my bad example, but because the stream of grace now misses an unhealthy member. We would really have to stress that much more, including for ourselves. The sex drive is in the service of the coming generation; this is why I should remain pure. But not only for that reason. Take a look at the sixth and ninth commandments. The commandments are meant to be motivated by love of the coming generation, love of God and love of neighbor. We must see to it that the next generation turns out to be naturally and supernaturally healthy. It must be our task to contribute to the building up of the body of Christ! The body of Christ must be built up again, better and more perfect than we see it now. Does this not resonate in the words of Christ, "Let the children come to me!" (Mt 19,14)? Is this not an invitation to parents to bring

children into the world so that the kingdom of God can be made whole? Before us is the kingdom of Christ and the coming generation. Hence, I live a pure life so that the body of Christ is immaculate, without wrinkles, here and in eternity.

I think that if this perspective would make headway in us and in our people, it could help transform and improve general morals. But we would have to begin at an early age. To educate children in unselfishness is already sexual education. To point out to them the missions, the diaspora or the children in poverty. This education would need to be consciously followed up in the parish organizations. Perhaps you have already experienced how the one or the other young man suddenly finds his purity when he is reminded of the future [and to prepare himself for] marriage. In such a case { 127 } the purpose of the sex drive has been grasped: You must remain pure for the sake of marriage. If we could awaken more interest in the male world for the entire work of Christ, what a strength we would be setting in motion! What I admire in the general director of the Catholic youth is how he systematically directs all his thoughts in this direction. In fact, I think we really need to be more idea-oriented today. This is how I would capture the greatness of the Holy Father [Pius XI] – that he frees the ideas from their former [outdated] context and gives them new reason to be discussed by the Catholic faithful.

As a result, we must put the accent more on final principles, discussing them and waiting for the ideas to shape new life. This is how we must do it with our youth. I then think our young men will remain pure, will not dally about. To the extent I know the modern situation, I think that this is even more necessary because the work of young men today is very narrow, and they can no longer engage their creativity. A man who is not able to engage his creativity is at risk of becoming a slave of his passions¹. Then one must seek an alternate form of creativity and put it at the service of family. In other words: to work and earn money to give my future family a good head-start. These ideas need to be brought to our people so that they see the big

¹ See the practical example which Fr. Kentenich gives in *Schoenstatt's Everyday Sanctity* (Waukesha, 2003), p. 146f.

picture.

What is true of the young man must also be said of the young woman. It is good, especially when she discovers that she is bearing a child beneath their heart, to remind her to keep her thoughts pure so as not to pass on anything undesirable to the child. Then the young mother will be motivated to make better use of her influence on the coming generation.

You will find everything in most beautiful form in the Holy Family: the purpose of childbearing, the glory of God, the relationship between husband and wife. A family spirit must be as it was in the family of Jesus.