

# Urgent Message – Prophetic Imperatives

## Excerpts from Fr. Joseph Kentenich’s Epistola perlonga, 1949

*compiled and translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2002*

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## Introduction

This collection of texts is taken from the *Epistola perlonga*, Father Joseph Kentenich's official response to the episcopal visitation of Schoenstatt conducted in February 1949. This paper, originally formatted as an approximately 200-single-spaced-page report to the Bishop of Trier, Archbishop Franz Rudolf Bornewasser, was by design comprehensive (the name means "very long letter") and provocative, not out of disrespect for the Church, but out of an urgent sense that the Church was at a watershed moment that required him to speak in no uncertain terms.

This collection of texts, with a prelude and appendix from other sources, will explore some of these urgent themes – which are no less urgent today. The urgency is best captured if one first realizes that Father Kentenich did not merely mail this report, but first placed it solemnly on the altar of the new Schoenstatt Shrine in Bellavista, Chile on May 31, 1949. To the group of Schoenstatt Sisters who accompanied him in prayer that night he gave a concise talk which well explains the import which he placed on this text. It is highly recommended that one prepare for this reading by turning to this talk, found in Chapter One of my book *The 31st of May: The Third Milestone* (Waukesha, 1995). Indeed, the import of this moment was to risk his entire life's work: Schoenstatt, and the consequences of this letter were dire, leading ultimately to his own exile from his work to Milwaukee, where he lived from 1952 to 1965. Because of this decisive import, the *Epistola perlonga* is also known to many simply as the "letter of May 31st" and has piqued the interest of many who wonder what he said.

This having been said, I must also note that this collection, while substantial, is not meant to be exhaustive or comprehensive. It is a set of excerpts that shed light on important facets of the letter and serve as a contribution to better grasping the dimensions in which Father Kentenich was moving. It is also highly recommended that this collection be used in conjunction with *The 31st of May*, which provides the needed historical background and a thorough exposition of themes like "mechanistic thinking" and "organic thinking, loving and living."

## Editorial Notes

1. The *Epistola perlonga* was not composed all at once, but in five distinct phases (in May, June and July of 1949). The date at the beginning of each excerpt allows the reader to know to which of the parts it belongs (according to the date it was sent from South America to Trier).

2. Topics are assigned numbers according to where the passage begins, using the index numbers of 1994. These index numbers are inserted in the text using braces { }.

3. Ellipses of three dots are original to Fr. Kentenich's text; ellipses of four dots and in parentheses (....) indicate passages omitted by the editor.

4. Items in brackets [ ] and braces { } originate with the editor, material in parentheses ( ) are part of Fr. Kentenich's text, including page number citations. Page numbers in parentheses without further clarification are from the visitation report.

5. Passages which are especially provocative (and must have been particularly difficult for Bp. Stein to accept) are marked with an exclamation point:



## **Prelude: Why I wrote what I did in the *Epistola perlonga***

(*Studie* 1954, p. 165f)

**The text.** *The following is excerpted from a private study written in the summer of 1954 by Father Kentenich (in Milwaukee) for Father Alexander Menningen (in Germany). Father Kentenich is sharing with his closest collaborator something of the historical background needed to understand why he acted as he did in 1949, actions which eventually led to his exile at the hands of the Holy Office beginning in 1951.*

*Father Kentenich, who always meticulously protected the reputation of the Church and its representatives in the public sphere, did not write this for the general public, but to a confrere with the same love for the Church. To him he portrays the sequence of events leading to the letter of May 31, 1949 and why he wrote it as pointedly he did.*

*Now that the “heat of battle” is long past, these same insights can help us understand the sequence of events leading to May 31, even while we share the same respect as Father Kentenich for those who felt it their duty to oppose him, especially Archbishop Franz Rudolf Bornewasser of Trier and Bishop Bernhard Stein, auxiliary bishop of Trier and visitator of Schoenstatt in 1949. For Father Kentenich this was always a battle about the truth and to overcome a mortal enemy who has arisen to tear down the Church and the Western World – collectivism, supported by mechanistic thinking.*

**Textual context.** *To prepare the following passage, some context is needed. Just before our quote begins, Father Kentenich has explained how he hoped that the Visitator, Bishop Stein, would be able to grasp Schoenstatt on a deeper level and communicate the crucial importance of Schoenstatt to the entire body of German bishops. To help Bishop Stein, Father Kentenich sent numerous letters to him from South America, understanding them as a private help for the bishop to gain clarity about what he saw. However, he misread the level of trust between himself and the bishop, who became irritated and felt that Father Kentenich was trying to interfere in his formulation of the official report. Father Kentenich notes that this led to a “starke Verletzttheit” on the part of the bishop, meaning he was deeply offended by Father Kentenich’s actions.*

{ 165 } [Bp. Stein] told me to wait for the official report, which would express his change of opinion<sup>1</sup>, and which, when completed, would officially be sent to me by the archbishop requesting my response. In response I asked that the completion of the report be delayed until a clarification of the controversial points could be attempted and made privately; any answer I would make to an official report would be official, and if done conscientiously and frankly, I must fear he<sup>2</sup> would be offended. It would be easier to avoid the feeling of being offended if the confrontation could take place in private. Instead of receiving an answer to this, I received the report. Being familiar with it, and also being familiar with the visitator’s concluding talk at the end of the visitation<sup>3</sup>, you can compare them for yourself and see how different his two assessments are. And so the key which the

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, that Bp. Stein now (April 1949) had a much more negative opinion of what he saw in Schoenstatt than at the time of the visitation (February 1949), because of what he felt was Fr. Kentenich’s “interference.”

<sup>2</sup> Bp. Stein.

<sup>3</sup> The visitation report must have been completed in late April 1949. Fr. Kentenich received it while in Uruguay on May 11 (see *The 31<sup>st</sup> of May*, p. 42). It took a notably more negative turn in comparison to the generally positive assessment which the same Bp. Stein voiced in his concluding talk in Schoenstatt at the end of the visitation on February 28 (for main points of this talk, see *The 31<sup>st</sup> of May*, p. 41).

bishop had in his hands, with which he could easily have begun to gain a complete understanding of Schoenstatt, slipped totally from his hands again. From this one can see how out of season my expectation became that he would open the world of Schoenstatt to the other German bishops. For better or worse I had to bite into the sour apple and write an official response. This is how the ball got rolling.

As I wrote I constantly pointed out the danger which the Christian West faces, of being interiorly undermined by a collectivistic mentality, and the mission of the Blessed Mother to save Christianity. I did so with comprehensive detail, with scientific clarity and with conscientious frankness. I did so out of earnest concern for the future of the Church. I asserted that *mechanistic thinking* is the greatest obstacle to [the Church's] effectiveness and the force which paves the way for Christianity's world enemy<sup>1</sup>, noting that this thinking has infiltrated the widest leading circles of Christianity and can and must be overcome by the pedagogy of attachments<sup>2</sup> realized in an *organic way of thinking and living*... You are already familiar with my response<sup>3</sup>. If you have it within reach, I ask you to read it again.

What I wrote at that time was truly no chase after ghosts. Bit by bit the prognosis which I presented has become terrifyingly real. Compare it with the text about the present Marian crisis in the German-speaking countries, and how it is already spreading into Romanic countries<sup>4</sup>. {166} If this dangerous mechanistic mentality – a legitimate child of intellectualism and idealism<sup>5</sup> and Protestant dogmatic theory<sup>6</sup> – is not healed in its root, there will be no holy Marian Germany and the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt will only be able to fulfill her mission to save the Christian West with extraordinary difficulty. The wall which mechanistic thinking creates for her will be too strong and impenetrable. Only when it falters and is brought down will Our Lady be able to unfold her power and save the Western World. To be sure, Mary, the permanent helpmate of the Lord in the entire work of salvation, is the interceding omnipotence<sup>7</sup> at the throne of God. But under normal circumstances she, like God, accomplishes her deeds only with our enlightened and vigorous cooperation.

Here we must hold our breath. There are moments in history in which well-being or woe is decided for generations to come, moments which do not come again in this form and fruitfulness<sup>8</sup>. From the beginning, I was personally aware: what is at stake in Schoenstatt is the fate of the Western World. This is why I was so meticulous in my official answer to the Archbishop of Trier and why on May 31, 1949 I solemnly placed the first part, before it was mailed, on the altar of the MTA in

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<sup>1</sup> Collectivism, mass-mindedness.

<sup>2</sup> See J. Niehaus, *200 Questions about Schoenstatt*, No. 100-104.

<sup>3</sup> Namely, the *Epistola perlonga* or the Letter of May 31, 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Countries like France and Italy and Spain.

<sup>5</sup> See Topic 40 below.

<sup>6</sup> Especially the foundations on an “*aut... aut...*” thinking (either... or...) which pits Scripture against Tradition (*sola scriptura*), grace against works (*sola gratia*), etc. This in contrast to what Fr. Kentenich characterized as the Catholic “*et... et...*” (both... and...) which sees contrasting realities as poles of one phenomenon and need to be seen and appreciated together. See *The 31<sup>st</sup> of May*, p. 141f.

<sup>7</sup> That is, her power of intercession before God knows no limits.

<sup>8</sup> Although the event and letter of May 31, 1949 was primarily focused on the welfare and woe of the Church and Western civilization, Fr. Kentenich also interpreted it as a singular turning point in the history and development of Schoenstatt. See for instance his comment in a letter to his superior general, Fr. Adelbert Turowski, dated August 13, 1949: “It is my personal opinion that without the dared initiative [= May 31, 1949], the movement would have become a child of death” (cited in: Heinrich Hug, *Auf dem Weg zum 31. Mai*, Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1998, p. 449).

Chile and let it remain there for the whole night. This is also why I felt equally obligated to put my own future and fate in the balance. It was an act whose consequences are of similar import as of the act of January 1, 1942, and is of similar significance for the history of the family...

When you know the present situation of our times and compare it with what I feared would happen [and wrote in 1949], you will have to conclude that what I wrote about Marian devotion in the German cultural sphere has become a deadly earnest reality. You can be certain that what I have written about collectivistic thinking and its march to victory in the West and in the entire world will also come true. Already now it is visible in many places. Perhaps you gradually understand if I tell you again: this was the great concern which always guided my hand in this war of words. And if the official text has places which prove to be blunt and sharp-edged – and for the sake of truth *had* to be blunt and sharp-edged – then I always asked pardon in the accompanying correspondence, with a stern reminder of the impending hour of doom for the Western World and of the burden of responsibility for its God-willed conversion<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> At this point Fr. Kentenich quotes the passage from his letter to Archbp. Bornewasser which is found as the appendix at the end of these excerpts.

## 19. Cover Letter to Archbishop Bornewasser

{19}

Santiago, May 31, 1949

His Excellency  
The Most Reverend Archbishop  
Dr. Rudolf Bornewasser

*Trier*

Excellency! Most Reverend Archbishop!

Unfortunately, the report which you so kindly sent me reached my hands at a relatively late date. Only now do my scheduled travels and apostolic activities permit me to send you a first response. Unfortunately, my coming activities will take me from one country to the next, so that with the best of will I am unable to tell you when I will be able to finish the continuation. Not even my exact address is certain.

Because what is at stake, in my estimation, are the most fundamental educational questions of the Western World<sup>1</sup>, I want to answer so comprehensively and clearly that my views become plain.

I regret that I must contradict the Most Reverend Visitor. Because of your personal regard for him, I must fear that I will also offend Your Excellency, but ask that you do not take this as a personal affront, only as an expression of love for the Church. Excellency has been able to accompany Schoenstatt thus far in all its battles. May God grant that you likewise experience the pedagogical confrontation through to its end. Your benevolence will also guarantee that contradictions of {20} a scientific nature will not lead to personal aggravation.

In reverence and gratitude  
to Your Excellency  
yours sincerely  
Josef Kentenich

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<sup>1</sup> German: *Abendland*. In Fr. Kentenich's vocabulary this refers to the cultural reality embodied in Western Europe and, by extension, in the Americas. It is translated here as the Western World or Western civilization, and at times it points more to Western Europe, and at others more to the world assimilation of this same culture. Crucial to his understanding of the *Abendland* is its Christian roots which permeate its life and forms, and which are endangered by the modern separation of faith and life, of God and world.

## 24. What is at Stake

(May 31, 1949)

{24} The “report”<sup>1</sup> says, “The problem with Schoenstatt is not so much dogmatic or doctrinal, but educational and practical” (p. 1).

At last we arrive at the criterion. It is the criterion by which Schoenstatt has always wished to be judged and evaluated. It is the only standpoint from which it can be understood. Herein lies the direction of its mission, the area which will determine whether it becomes a blessing or a curse for the Church... “It was never our intent to be a dogmatic, philosophical or psychological movement, but instead simply an intermediary between knowledge and life. Our spirituality and pedagogy are meant to apply dogmatic theology, philosophy and psychology to life” (*October Letter 1948*).

From the beginning we have understood ourselves to be a movement of educators and education and of apostolate, and wanted to be judged by history as such and only as such.

Those familiar with these questions will not find it difficult, after studying the “report,” to expand the topic and *see Schoenstatt as a symbol for the pedagogical problem of the secular institutes*<sup>2</sup>. If these are to become viable and fruitful, they need both a law proper to their way of life and their own system of education. The latter may even be more urgent than the first. Here we believe that we have a task. We are therefore happy to submit our own system to public discussion. Those with a deeper insight into {25} today’s pedagogical situation and know the inner connections to the catastrophe facing Western civilization, and those familiar with the attempts to save the West, will instinctively search out the broader context and *see Schoenstatt*<sup>3</sup> *as a symbol of the educational dilemma of the entire Western World*. After all, it is from there that Schoenstatt has received its most vigorous impulses, its aims and principles, its weights and measures. Schoenstatt mirrors its questions about survival and life, but is also a compendium of its attempts to answer these questions. Its place of origin and birth must ever be its workplace and workshop. Moreover, anyone with a chance to study the present status of Catholic Action<sup>4</sup> overseas and who has spoken with its leaders knows that Catholic Action faces the same problem *everywhere in the world*: the issue of an education in keeping with our times. (....)

If *Schoenstatt alone* were at stake and nothing more (....) we could [accept the report and] close the books on years of gigantic struggles...

*But the situation is entirely different light if we see Schoenstatt and the pedagogical questions concerning it in the framework of the secular institutes, in the {26} context of the West’s struggle for spiritual survival, and in the light of the situation of Catholicism worldwide, and if we desire to more precisely define our standpoint in the midst of present tumult of the times.*

Indeed, today more than ever before – especially for the crushed nations of Western Europe<sup>5</sup> – the resolution of educational questions has become indispensable for nations to be renewed and

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<sup>1</sup> The visitor’s report written by Bp. Stein, to which Fr. Kentenich is responding in this letter.

<sup>2</sup> The newly constituted form of the consecrated life established by Pope Pius XII just two years earlier in the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (February 2, 1947).

<sup>3</sup> Or in Schoenstatt’s stand in the times.

<sup>4</sup> The broadscale involvement of the laity in the official apostolate of the Church according to the framework set up by Pope Pius XI in the 1920s and which was a powerful motor of lay apostolate in many parts of the Church (such as Italy, Spain, and Latin America) until Vatican II.

<sup>5</sup> This text is written while Western Europe is still struggling to recover from the enormous damage left behind by World War II (ended in 1945).

the reconstruction to take place that the whole world cries out for. Hence, the *solidarity of general helplessness* alluded to by Niemöller at the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam<sup>1</sup> is especially dominant in the areas of pastoral care and education.

The visitation report reminds us of this many-sided helplessness. It traces – consciously or unconsciously – the pedagogical questions back to the blows which have deeply shaken our culture, and *urges one to more closely examine the laws of being and life down to their finest details. Disregard of these laws will cause individuals and communities to break apart, accelerating the demise of the Christian West. However, if they are deliberately cultivated and obeyed they will become a richly flowing fountain of blessings for Church and world, land and nation.*

Of course, one cannot entirely avoid dangers and miscues when applying even the best and most uncontroversial pedagogical principles. So it is that the “report” speaks of aberrations rooted in the “practical application of acceptable dogmatic and pedagogical-pastoral principles” (p. 1). In



the process, [the visitor] creates the impression that his pedagogy and Schoenstatt’s share the same basic pedagogical principles. On the contrary! *Here we find differences and contradictions which are as alike as no and yes, as vice and virtue, as idol and ideal, as aberration and exemplar.* Here is a statement that will give a critical mind no rest. It will seek to clarify the differences and contradictions. It will want to know their root causes and connection to the present situation of the world, including the breakdown of the Western World. It will want to know the influence it may have on {27} the future education of the nations.

Catholic educators *cannot accept that God alone will transform the world. God calls us to cooperate with him in this vast work.* We are neither pessimists nor pie-in-the-sky idealists. As a result, Niemöller’s views, expressed at the World Council of Churches, leave us dissatisfied. In the public assembly of August 26, 1948 he stated:

“We know not how to overcome the difficulties standing before us, indeed, we doubt if they can be overcome at all. This doubt goes even deeper: We already speak of living in a ‘post-Christian era’ and see the approaching decline of the Christian Church... As Christianity we stand with all of humanity in a ‘solidarity of helplessness.’ We are certainly not the ones who will be able to breath new life into a dying world... We no longer want to have any illusions about the situation: This nihilism as a terminal illness is all around us today and we have no cure, for we have neither the possibility to bring this chaotic world back into order, nor the means to restore the dishonored dignity of man.”

Our view, in contrast, builds on the law expressed by Augustine: God created the world without us, but he does not want to redeem it without us<sup>2</sup>. In other words, God asks us to cooperate in an enlightened and resolute manner even in the reordering of today’s world. This cooperation is what is at stake in what the visitor has written and in how we now respond<sup>3</sup>. Both parties – the author and his critic – are carried by the same responsibility, the same love for the Church. Both are concerned for the building up of Western civilization. Hence it is difficult to understand how widely

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Niemöller (1892-1984), Lutheran theologian and survivor of the Nazi concentration camps. Speech to the World Council of Churches, Amsterdam, August 26, 1948.

<sup>2</sup> St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430), *Sermones de Scripturis* 169, cap. 11, no. 13: “*Qui ergo fecit te sine te, non te justificat sine te;*” the one who created you without you, will not justify you without you.

<sup>3</sup> German: “*Um diese Mitwirkung geht es bei der Ausarbeitung und Beurteilung des Visitationsberichtes.*”



they differ in their basic views... This spontaneously raises the question: Are both correct... or wherein lies the error? In any case, a thorough investigation is worthwhile. That such differences in underlying principles must result in a differing view of the [concrete] life processes is obvious.

## 40. Mechanistic Thinking

(May 31, 1949)

{40} In addition to the already-mentioned perils of the mechanistic separation of Primary and secondary causes, blame for this tragic situation must be placed at the feet of philosophical idealism, which, by the law of the pendulum, awakened and promoted in Western culture an intellectual and spiritual reaction – extreme vitalism<sup>1</sup>. *Salvation from both extremes can only come through a healthy organic mentality and understanding of life, a vantage point that sees all things as an integrated whole, and which, in keeping with the law of organic transference and transmission<sup>2</sup>, is able to establish a unity of tensions and order<sup>3</sup> {41} between religion and life, between Primary and secondary causes, between nature and grace, between faith and knowledge.*

One finds the mechanistic splintering of the most delicate organic life-processes everywhere today in Christian thinking and feeling. While that may seem an insignificant point of detail, seen in full light it must be considered a cause with the most devastating consequences. What it means to tear apart the most basic units of life is shown by the horrific effect of the atomic bomb. *One such atomic bomb in the area of intellectual-moral-spiritual life is the denial or negligence of the law of organic transference and transmission.* In spite of an earnest attempt to understand it, the “report” fails to grasp this law. This leads to many *false conclusions*, including – as we will later show by explaining the psychology of religion behind it – a perception of *primitive childlikeness* which we have always rejected as pagan idolatry<sup>4</sup>. Or again, a *mechanistic* approach to the *law of transmission* which fosters supernaturalism, leaving the door wide open, sooner or later, to sexual crises<sup>5</sup>. Hence the anxiety [of the visitor] over the use of *the word “father” in a prayer to mean both God the Father and his transparency on earth...* Hence the misgivings [over one group’s private act] to symbolically write one’s name in the *symbol of the heart of a human father*, then immediately placing that heart into a symbol of Mary’s heart. (...)



Everyone who destroys the unity of interior life processes is, consciously or unconsciously, *a trailblazer of collectivism<sup>6</sup> within Catholicism.* What good are all

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<sup>1</sup> Philosophical idealism refers to the current of thought inspired and carried by such philosophers as Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Georg Wilhelm Hegel (1770-1831) and Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-72). The overemphasis on reason and human intellect, coupled with such traumatic failures of the rationalist ideal as the *Titanic* disaster (1912) and World War I (1914-18), turned many in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century to a blind pursuit of “life” – excitement, thrills, fads, sensations, emotional outlet, existentialism – in Fr. Kentenich’s vocabulary called “vitalism” or “irrationalism.” See J. Niehaus, *The 31<sup>st</sup> of May* (Waukesha, 1995), p. 132-134.

<sup>2</sup> See *The 31<sup>st</sup> of May*, p. 157-167.

<sup>3</sup> That is, a unity which is both dynamic (not suffocating variety and creativity) and ordered (not merely haphazard or left to chance).

<sup>4</sup> Namely, the bone of contention of Bp. Stein: that Schoenstatt would cultivate a personality cult around Fr. Kentenich disconnected from God.

<sup>5</sup> In other words, if one is only allowed to express one’s love supernaturally, without any healthy and appropriate intermediary outlets to show my love on the natural level, it will be in danger of seeking unhealthy and inappropriate outlets, including on the sexual level.

<sup>6</sup> German: *Bolschewismus*. By this Fr. Kentenich means any current which undermines the individuality of the person and creates the mass man. In the 20<sup>th</sup> Century the most blatant example of this was Marxist Communism, which was vehemently opposed by the Church, especially in Western Europe after World War II. But Fr. Kentenich was equally concerned about the collectivism fomented by mechanistic thinking and penetrating the West by force of false

the protests, of what value all the big speeches when in the background we carry the serpent within our own breast! In this regard the German soul seems to be especially prone to a pronounced and dangerous dichotomy. {42} Ivo Zeiger spoke about this in his memorable speech at the Catholic Congress in Mainz:

“We Germans bear a strange dichotomy within ourselves: capable of hard, persistent work when a task is clearly perceived *and* a boundless ability to lose ourselves in grand, utopian theories. Even our pastoral work in the broadest sense of the word – be it the apostolate of the God-ordained priestly minister or of the faithful lay apostle, indeed our own apostolate – is affected by this dichotomy. The pastor, associate pastor and laity all work, each in their own area, with admirable loyalty and devotion, with a stirring spirit of sacrifice, tireless to the point of exhaustion. We cannot sing the praises of these men and women on the front lines highly enough. We demand teaching, ways to see past the narrowness of everyday life to the great vistas, practical inspirations that can be used in life. But when we examine what is written, we find that what it offers is deep speculation, scholarly analysis of the past, wide-ranging plans, but unfortunately much too much that proves to be a mirage when it comes in contact with everyday life. When I page through the programs, the studies of the present situation, the slogans and organizational goals of the last three years, it often leaves me with an impression – one that I have a hard time shaking – that what is being planned are *great bridges to nowhere*. How much valuable, even invaluable strength is committed, used up, even wasted, on these constructs of holy idealism to resolve the irresolvable, while the resolvable, though difficult, is left untouched, namely the *bridge to souls*. Our holy Church seeks, first and foremost, souls. In this regard it is unmodern. For our world, even though it never stops talking about man, primarily seeks and organizes things and energies which are made useful to man. It is therefore not surprising that modern man, instinctively sensing [his need for] conversion, is made uncertain and is anxious for his very existence<sup>1</sup>.”

Much idealism, as it is cultivated in the *liturgical movement*, only reaches its goal to a very unsatisfactory degree because of an ingrained mechanistic mentality. This is probably the reason why {43} *Marian consecration* has remained unfruitful in Germany. Mechanistic thinking has been and remains incapable of grasping the mutual total gift of self, [the value of] entrusting one’s entire self. It has never gone beyond [consecration as] a mere insurance policy. The total gift of self, it is claimed, is only permissible directly to God himself. But one remains blind to the fact of how incredibly mechanistic this is, ripping apart the atoms of life, leveling in [any possibility of personal

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thinking and not merely by force of arms. This passage is one of those which stung Bp. Stein to fury against Fr. Kentenich, for he was totally opposed to Communism and did not appreciate the insinuation that he would be party to the spread of collectivism. See passage in Decree against Fr. Kentenich (by the Apostolic Visitor Fr. Sebastian Tromp), July 31, 1951: “Although the Supreme [Holy Office] does not forget the merits of this Father [Kentenich] for his part in the founding and spread of the work, it nonetheless wishes in the name of the Holy Office to admonish, paternally and yet sternly, that His Paternity, should be conscious of his state and conduct himself more reverently toward the authority of the Church. For the letter which he wrote on April 11 (1949) to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary about the Episcopal Visitation and the quite lengthy letter which he wrote in the months of May, June, July, etc. to the Archbishop of Trier [the *Epistola perlonga*], writing things which could have been clarified in a much easier manner, can under no circumstances be approved, least of all those things against the Episcopal Visitor in the form of an accusation because of mechanistic thinking which necessarily paves the way for Communism.”

<sup>1</sup> Fr. Ivo Zeiger, SJ (1898-1952), German Jesuit named by Pope Pius XII the Vatican liaison to occupied Germany after World War II. He spoke at the German *Katholikentag* in Mainz in 1948. Emphasis added.

attachment], leaving [souls] empty and impoverished, and how this contradicts the entire Christian tradition. It is obvious that if such an attitude will not even allow a total surrender to Mary, who is the most perfect human-only transparency of God, it would also seem to exclude genuine blind obedience to other, lesser, instruments...

(...)

{60} [Mechanistic thinking] unravels life, tears it out of its final, most delicate context. It has on its conscience the breakdown of the Christian West and its weakening health. If not overcome, the future will prove to be disastrous. Because it ignores the organic connections binding each part into an organism, and because it is blind when it comes to seeing the living connection between Primary and secondary causes, between religion and life, it keeps religion from having its full impact on life and consequently paralyzes the ability of the clergy and laity to stand firm against the onslaught of collectivism – the Church’s mortal enemy in this century. As we have already indicated, [religious intellectualism] unwittingly becomes – because of the tendency of one cultural-intellectual extreme to beget another extreme at the other end of the spectrum – collectivism’s best and most terrible ally right in our own camp. In God’s plan this is meant to force the Church to overcome the mechanistic mentality in her own ranks and make her much more {61} open and receptive for Christ’s rebirth and for God and all things divine. But as long as this mentality is not overcome, none of the efforts to counter [collectivism] will be effective. On the contrary! They will only give a false sense of security. They will lull us into ignoring the abyss which threatens Western culture and the fruitfulness and mission of Christianity today.

*For the time being, effective countercurrents can only come from small circles.* It is almost as if Christianity, following the example of its historical origins, must experience a new birth, as if it had to return to Bethlehem, to the catacombs, to the desert, to the hermitages – but in a new way. The disintegration of life has penetrated all circles, including within the Church, with such insidious effectiveness that for the most part we cannot expect a mass countercurrent, a reform of grand style to get off the ground. This is one of the deepest reasons why the said small groups must strive for, even while remaining open to the world and dependent on the Church, an impenetrable wall and hermetic seal to prevent the denial and loss of self when these flying islands, mobile catacombs, traveling hermitages come in contact with the times.

One should not be deceived... Overcoming collectivism is the great task of the century<sup>1</sup>. It cannot be done without a complete transformation of the mechanistic mentality which dominates leading Catholic circles in Germany right up until the present... It will take an enormous effort until it is removed from our seminaries, college faculties and teaching orders, from literature and those who review the literature<sup>2</sup>... One should not be deceived by the transatlantic treaty<sup>3</sup>. The cease fire

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<sup>1</sup> This insight was clear in Fr. Kentenich’s mind practically from very early on in his priestly ministry. See for instance his thoughts in the *America Report* of 1948. Regarding the momentous impact of May 31 on his own mission, see for instance his letter to Schoenstatt co-workers, August 20, 1949: “My battle will last a long, long time. It has only just begun...” (Hug, *Auf dem Weg zum 31. Mai*, p. 442), or to Fr. Menningen, May 5, 1952: “Now that I have seen that overcoming mechanistic thinking is part of my life’s task, I will faithfully pursue it to the end of my life... I consider it my duty. Its fulfillment encompasses an essential component of Schoenstatt’s mission.”

<sup>2</sup> Meant are the official “censor librorum” of each diocese, who in the era before Vatican II wielded an enormous amount of power judging whether anything written or read by Catholics on faith and morals was orthodox or not, and with the power of censorship before publication and to ban from being read by Catholics after publication.

<sup>3</sup> The post-World War II military treaty which created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to defend Western Europe from the Communist threat in Eastern Europe.

it achieves can only be temporary. (...)

{62} Who believes that this cease fire will last? And if, all expectations to the contrary, it does, sparing us from being overrun by the military might of the collectivistic menace, we cannot avoid the spiritual confrontation... We must take it all the more seriously, the more stealthily the enemy tries to win us over, the more irresistibly it infiltrates our own front lines with its mentality... Hence our leading men must not draw back from the battle against it; they must confront and overcome it earnestly in their own hearts and in their own ranks, *even when it means opposing one another face to face, as Paul once did to Peter* (cf. Gal 2,11-14). If both sides keep the advice of St. Augustine: *interficate errores, diligite errantes* [oppose the error, show love to those who err], then the confrontation should not overly tax the mutual trust. On the contrary, respect and benevolence will grow. After all, it is the same great goal which we want to serve with the entire love of our hearts, the entire energy of our wills and the entire keenness of our minds.

*(N.B. Next selection immediately follows this paragraph)*

## 62. Obedience and Authority

(May 31, 1949)

{62} *From the very beginning we have considered it our task in Schoenstatt [to overcome collectivism] and have oriented our entire educational system accordingly. We therefore speak not only of a covenant pedagogy and a pedagogy of ideals, but also of an attachment pedagogy<sup>1</sup>. Its practical application takes into account the receptivity and aptitude of the individual, the personality type and the sex. Naturally, this pedagogy is most poignantly developed in our Sisters of Mary<sup>2</sup>.*

*Their native feminine disposition – integrated, circular thinking, seeing all things as much as possible in an integrated context and expressing it in symbols – has been {63} meticulously fostered for more than 20 years in conscious contrast to the usual masculinized education of women and girls, and may have now reached a degree which for the usual masculine way of thinking – in pyramids and building blocks, in fragments aligned in rows and columns [but not seen in their organic context] – is impossible to understand, especially when it has not yet grown out of philosophical idealism.*



*Such are the diametrically opposed worlds which came together on the occasion of the visitation.*

This explains why the “report” always sees ruins wherever in reality a kind of paradise – of course, on soil burdened by the curse of sin – is developing; that it calls black what we call white. The same is true for all areas without exception, which we will need to demonstrate later on; and one can not expect it to be any different when the perspectives are in such opposition. This is especially true of the *views on obedience*.

*[The report’s] concept of obedience tries but fails to grasp the total organic concept known to Christian tradition.*

*Three sentences demonstrate this:*

*First sentence:*

“Of course the father has a claim to the unconditional obedience of his children in everything which is good and right” (p. 8).

As it stands, this sentence is correct and totally in line with Catholic tradition. But not the practical application. The ways begin to part immediately with the question of *who decides* what is good and right... The answer is clear *in theory*. It is the conscience as God’s voice speaking to us not only through interior illumination and inspiration, but also through laws – both natural law and positive divine and human law – and through the wish and will of one’s legitimate superiors. *But for those pledged to obedience, practical life focuses on the will of the superior as the final concrete norm* speaking on God’s behalf, just as the guidance of Ananias spoke in the name of Christ for St. Paul in Damascus (cf Acts 9,10-19)...

*Fine theories about obedience are of little use if they are not followed up with a courageous yes to the inbreak of God’s authority {64} in one’s everyday life through his representative – God’s transparency.*

The “report” has no problem conceding this point *when it involves the official authority of the bishop*. It states:

“The inner privacy of the community must not be so closed that all theoretical emphasis on

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Niehaus, *200 Questions about Schoenstatt* (Waukesha, 2002), No. 99ff.

<sup>2</sup> At that time the most developed of the Schoenstatt Secular Institutes.

love and reverence for the *Church* is not followed up by a practical recognition of its concrete form [in the bishop] when he makes justified demands” (p. 4).

*With every other authority a different standard is used.* Our constant striving is for total integration, including in this area. We therefore see – as would every religious, especially every Jesuit – high praise in the following difficult sentences, even though in the spirit of the “report” they contain a rejecting censure...

“But their attachment to the fascinating personality of the director of the movement is so strong and close that *for all practical purposes* his decisions and actions are regarded their final norm... But in such situations the vast majority (of the sisters) totally exclude what they themselves think and accept in faith that everything which comes ‘from above’ is desired by Fr. Kentenich and therefore correct” (p. 2).

*These sentences are on the mark inasmuch as they indicate the practical final norm for the actions of the sisters.*

The head of the family represents for them, in keeping with their healthy organic instinct, the Church and God – just as explained above.

*They are off the mark where they attribute this way of acting not to the flourishing of a simple spirit of faith, but to the power of a fascinating leader-personality and to spiritual uncertainty, interior unfreedom and lack of autonomy on the part of the followers.*

The great law of supernatural transparentization<sup>1</sup> – of making all created things, including sexuality, transparent to God – is such a strong part of who we are that we and our actions can only be understood in this context. {65} Anyone who is color blind to this reality will find no bridges to our position. *In this supernatural light we know what is owed to every authority in the family, especially and in first place to its head.*

*All other proposed interpretation attempts are off the mark.*

This begins with the *reference to said leader personality*. Whoever knows that he has been almost constantly absent since 1941 – first in prison, then in Dachau, then overseas; whoever is told that his followers are “on the whole valuable and to a large extent intellectually very capable persons” (p. 2), will at least question the likelihood of such an extraordinary influence from afar. Moreover, if one recalls that the greatness of a true educator always lies in making himself superfluous, if one knows that this was the constantly applied standard; if one observes how autonomous all the institutes are constructed and how numerous the threads are leading unnoticed back to his hand, making it hard to say which his main task really is, one will have to say that the invocation of a “fascinating personality” is not true to reality. Nor is this changed by the fact that he never tries to ask of others what he himself has not tried to realize in a still more demanding way, in order to make obedience easy for his followers. These are all well known principles of education. Holzammer recently spoke on the subject at the Catholic Congress in Mainz, saying things that are familiar to every educator. He said:

“The problem of authority is also a part of the relationship between the generations. Authority means ‘to author.’ In the end, God alone is the author from whom all human authorship is derived, be it as parents, priests or educators. Today it is becoming clear that the youth are authorityless, inasmuch as the authorities [in their life] do not give witness to a genuine authorship. Only a convincing authority has authority; usurped authority has no

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Niehaus, *The 31st of May*, p. 179-181.

authority. Every authority based on presumption deserves {66} no respect.”

From this the speaker concludes, among other things, that educating others to respect authority requires the example of a genuine authority.

Let me point out in this context that the general tone of the “report” – for reasons which in the given situation are easy to understand – *overemphasizes the official authority of the bishop*, either consciously or unconsciously, at the cost of every other authority. I have already noted how *dangerous in principle* such an approach is. If the ultimate metaphysical foundations for obedience are blurred and shifted, sooner or later every authority, including that of the bishops and the Pope will be mercilessly eroded.

(...)

{92} [L]et me add a word about *difficulties* [raised by the visitor] {93} concerning the head of the family and which I have not yet addressed.

*All of them without exception can be traced back to a common feature, culminating in one complaint: The director unduly places himself at the center of attention. It smacks of the highly destructive methods of the most recent past*<sup>1</sup>.

In the text we read:

“Moreover, the person of the father must not be placed so strongly in the foreground, neither through the members of the family nor even less so – as has happened since Dachau in contrast to former practice – by [Fr. Kentenich] himself, which one finds repulsive, recalling the similar methods from the most recent era of German history<sup>2</sup>. The fact does not change even if he is able to speak impersonally of himself and to see his person ‘not in its intrinsic value but in its symbolic value’” (p. 6).

*Again, the answer is twofold: one positive and one negative*<sup>3</sup>.

*The positive answer briefly and concisely sums up the historical facts.*

From the beginning, the director held in his hands all the threads which bound together the family in both its more tight-knit and looser forms, and for years he was in direct personal contact with nearly every member. This generated an unreflected self-understood feeling of being a family, joining in a simple, naive manner all the members around the head without speaking much about it... One was not even aware of this happy circumstance – just like in a healthy natural family. This was the case in part because the director<sup>4</sup>

“took meticulous care that (his) person retreated and was hidden behind ideas, work and Shrine” (p. 6).

Since the family lived in spiritual concord, any other way of acting would have been unnatural. In keeping with the healthy laws of development, everything changed when the family reached such a degree of inner development and maturity and outward expansion {94} that it could take a measure

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<sup>1</sup> Alluding to the methods used by the Nazis, especially their highly manipulative way of focusing the adulation of the masses on the *Führer* (meaning “leader”), Adolf Hitler.

<sup>2</sup> Given the very recent memory of the Nazis in Germany, and the fact that Fr. Kentenich was himself a staunch opponent of the Nazis and a prisoner of Dachau for three years, this statement is one of the most inflammatory in Bp. Stein’s report, and a criticism of the highest magnitude. That Fr. Kentenich responds in a calm and fair manner is a reminder of his own inner balance even while writing on matters of utmost importance to him.

<sup>3</sup> The negative answer is found at {106ff}, not translated here. In it, Fr. Kentenich refutes particular criticisms of Bp. Stein made in the visitation report.

<sup>4</sup> As Bp. Stein points out in his visitation report.



of leadership in its own hands. It immediately became more strongly organized and decentralized. This included and demanded *that, on the one hand, the director step more into the background and, on the other hand, that he step more into the foreground*. His personal contact with each individual retreated more into the background. With the older generation it was consciously diminished and with the younger generation it was cultivated only sparingly. To keep this from precipitating a crisis in the organism of the family, destabilizing it in its healthy ontological laws, the head had to step more strongly into the foreground in the public awareness of the family, and had to be consciously shown and seen and be more clearly acknowledged in a reflective<sup>1</sup> way, just as it is in every religious community such as the Jesuits. This was primarily necessary for the steadily increasing numbers of vocations at home and abroad, with whom the director deliberately did not seek any personal contact.

*This clearly recognized and consciously executed historical change of conditions could [have been] carried out in two ways: through an official decree of [community] government or along the path of “movement” [i.e. organic life-processes]. Out of faithfulness to his principles and in order to use every opportunity to urge the sisters to make personal decisions and to give them reason to take the initiative for their convictions, the movement way was chosen. This resulted in the Father-lifestream or Authority-lifestream, leading to the “Father Acts”<sup>2</sup>. That is their history and purpose. This may not be the preference of every educator. But he will not be unappreciative of a tactic which is consistent in focus and authentic in every circumstance, which consciously makes allowance for tensions and has so much trust in the followers that transitional excesses and not obstructed, but growth is calmly given room to develop, with intervention only when necessary.*

It is on the basis of this same principle of methodology that the director, since January 1949, has agreed to another lifestream which did not originate with him *but in the other institutes – the membership or followership lifestream*<sup>3</sup>.

{95} According to Alban Stolz<sup>4</sup>, education means remaining in living contact [with those being educated]. Hence the task of the educator is to absorb all currents, regardless of who they come from<sup>5</sup>, let them pass through his own heart and lead them into the entire family. Behind these new currents were certain precise driving forces and guiding ideas; they were independent from those within the Sisters’ community. The director had made the individual institutes<sup>6</sup> autonomous so that they were no longer juridically dependent on one another. As advantageous as such an arrangement is for the autonomous development of institutes, one must recognize the danger of fragmentation. Hence the understandable drive [within the institutes] to discuss and come to a decision to acknowledge the person of [the founder as] a common head who holds in the entire family an overarching,

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<sup>1</sup> That is, in a consciously thought-out way.

<sup>2</sup> Concrete ways in which the Sisters community, beginning with specific segments such as the province in Uruguay and Argentina, expressed their desire to both take up the spirit of January 20, 1942 and take a greater spiritual possession of the relationship with their founder as a genuine father. The legitimate value of these various currents or lifestreams in general and of the Father Act in particular was very difficult for Bp. Stein (and later Fr. Tromp) to understand and accept.

<sup>3</sup> Culminating with the *Gefolgschaftsakt* (“Discipleship Act” or “Followership Act”) of January 20, 1949.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Alban Stolz (1808-1883), German theologian and author.

<sup>5</sup> That is, the educator takes seriously the currents and trends of life that develop among those he is educating, regardless of which person or group it may have begun with.

<sup>6</sup> Notably: the Institute of Diocesan Priests, the Ladies of Schoenstatt and the Schoenstatt Brothers of Mary, which Fr. Kentenich had placed on the footing of autonomous and self-governing communities (including juridical autonomy from himself and the Pallottines) after his return from Dachau in 1945.

freely tendered position of trust. Juridically the institutes remain, now as before, autonomous... That they chose the previous director was because he was the founder of all the institutes.

Representatives of the Schoenstatt Priests, Ladies of Schoenstatt and Brothers of Mary made a corresponding act in the form of a consecration... In order to give a reliable insight into the entire lifestream, I insert the consecration of the institute priests and excerpts from the talk given at the consecration.

[NB. Consecration prayer not translated here. JN.]

(...)

{98} *Excerpt from the Talk [by Fr. Mühlbeyer<sup>1</sup>]:*

“...One could perhaps ask whether it is morally permissible to give (ausliefern) oneself to a human being in the way in which we are now doing. To this let me respond: If the word ‘give’ (Auslieferung) is meant in the way we otherwise speak of total surrender and in the way rendered solely to God, then the answer is ‘no.’ If one understands this ‘giving’ as comparable to a tourist when he entrusts himself to a tour guide on a dangerous mountain trail, or to a traveler when he gives himself into the hands of a proven ship’s captain journeying across the chasms of the sea, or to a soldier when in battle he gives himself into the hands of a responsible general, or still better, to a grown, healthy son who entrusts himself to the proven guidance of a wise and faithful father, then one must say that the answer is ‘yes.’

{99} “One would also have to answer no if by ‘giving’ one means abrogating or even merely diminishing one’s personal responsibility for one’s actions. The devastation caused by such an abrogation of responsibility is something we have abundantly experienced during the Nazi years, and the Nuremberg Trials have placed this disturbing reality before our eyes again and again. But our whole attitude and the aims of our education ought to protect us from such a danger. After all, we want to form the new man, and that means not a reduction but the highest possible increase in personal responsibility.

“Moreover, one could question if our subordination to and acknowledgment of the authority of the person and the act [of January 20, 1942] of Father Kentenich, would set above us another authority which might contradict or detract from the authority to which we are already bound, be it by the laws of nature or by the free acceptance [of our state in life]. To this we can answer: the purpose of this act is not to diminish our attitude of obedience, but to animate and perfect it to the highest degree possible. Our free subordination to the person of Father Kentenich will never detract from, but foster in every way the obedience which we Pallottines, for instance, owe our legitimate superiors, or which you as institute priests owe to your bishop and his curia. The same applies to our obedience toward the authority of the Holy Church, and all the more so toward the authority of God. We are therefore very clearly aware of what we are doing and do it, even if taken aback by the magnitude of what we propose, on the foundation of a sound, courageous decision.

“But ‘being taken aback’ is not our only frame of mind; we are also urged on by strong motivations. They come less, at least it seems to me, from our striving for self-sanctification than from our devotion to the great Schoenstatt Work, to our mission. The Schoenstatt Work is what has stolen our hearts. We live, work and fight for it. In spite of our

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Friedrich Mühlbeyer (1889-1959), German Pallottine and close collaborator with Fr. Kentenich in the Schoenstatt Movement.

weaknesses, we are able to admit {100} that we hardly have any personal hardships or concerns. The main concerns that moves each one of us arise from our devotion to the Schoenstatt Work. And at the same time it is our greatest source of joy. – This love for Schoenstatt is what urges us to make this act.

“When we ask ourselves whether Christ had cause before his Ascension to the Father to fear for the future of his work, we could speak on the purely natural level of two causes for concern. One was whether his closest followers, his faithful apostles, would have the courage to follow him and remain loyal to him under all circumstances. We suppose that Thomas spoke forthrightly when he said, ‘Let us go and die with him’ (Jn 11,16). Still more honest were the words spoken by brave Peter: ‘And even if all are shaken in faith, I will not be shaken’ (Mt 26,33). And yet they failed miserably in the hour of danger. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak (cf Mt 26,41). But Christ’s work of redemption could only reach its goal when those chosen to be his instruments took their cross upon themselves and followed him up to the heights of Golgotha. His second concern must have been whether his disciples would remain united among themselves. His final prayer gives eloquent expression to this when he says: ‘I pray you, Father, that they may be one as you, O Father, and I are one, that they may be made perfect in unity’ (Jn 17,20f). And the other words: ‘This is how all shall know you are my disciples: by your love for one another’ (Jn 13,35). If we now look back on the two thousand years of Church history which separate us from Christ, we see a sad story unfold before our eyes. How much cowardice, not only on the side of ordinary Christians, but also among the leaders and the elite! How much flight from the cross! How innumerable those who failed! On the other hand, how much disunity, how much division. How in every age the seamless garment of Christ has been ripped and torn. How different the world would look today if his followers had not refused to follow and had been united with one another and always remained as one. There would hardly be a pagan left in the world {101} and no Bolshevik movement.

“If it is therefore our desire to help the Church in more than a trivial manner, indeed with something essential, then we must secure in our midst both the one and the other for all times – both a love for the cross and a profound mutual unity in the love of Christ. The most profound, defining act in Schoenstatt’s history which radiantly expresses both elements is Father’s act of January 20, 1942. It is both a complete giving of self to the cross and the Crucified, and complete devotion to the work and the members of the work. We therefore see Schoenstatt’s mission secured when the spirit of this day remains alive for all times. Today’s act wants to make a decisive contribution that this would truly be the case. I can then repeat the words which I have already spoken: ‘Let us go and die with him.’ To what end? ‘So that they may have life and have it to the full’ (Jn 10,10). Yes, we want to die to sin and flight from the cross, so that we and all the Schoenstatt children of all times live in, through and for the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, through Mary, our heavenly Mother and Queen. Amen.”

## 117. Different Accents of Catholic Communities

(June 24, 1949)

{117} Looking back on our reflections thus far, we see that while we have portrayed perfect obedience in the context of the Catholic perspective in general, the details have been *decidedly Ignatian<sup>1</sup> in character*. The result was a clear image which guarantees that obedience will have the right place in the ideals and aspirations of Catholics living in community. Because the modern crisis of our culture has shaken the awareness of [and trust in] authority everywhere, a regrounding in such principles is of great importance. And when a clear eye and sure hand are needed for building up Western civilization, it becomes essential... Anyone who shies away from this may think he is building his house on rock, but will notice in the first storm to come that he was wrong – the rock will turn out to be sand.

There is not only an Ignatian spirituality, *but also a Benedictine, Franciscan and Salesian<sup>2</sup> spirituality*... In order to make our investigation comprehensive and well-grounded, we would need to examine all of these in detail, *determine their characteristic features and the place each of them has in realizing perfect obedience*.

(...)

{118} *Every kind [of spirituality] finds a home in Schoenstatt and can share its fruits and receive new fruits in return*. Over the years this has happened in abundance. This is how it must continue to be in the future. *Schoenstatt's wide horizons demand it*, a feature it has in common with the Church herself, sharing with her and in her the goal of an all-encompassing apostolate: the activation, mobilization, and organization of all energies, fields, methods, and approaches to the great work of the apostolate<sup>3</sup>. That we pursue such unbounded dimensions is only safely possible [1] *because our system synthesizes and lifts to a higher level that which has been tested and proven in all other spiritualities, resulting in something so new that its originality and fullness is not immediately apparent to all, and [2] because this new creation has a concrete form, organically one-sided<sup>4</sup> – the {119} “secret of Schoenstatt”<sup>5</sup> – which effectively preserves our universalism from the danger of nihilism<sup>6</sup>*.

(...)

*The Catholic way of living in community* looks different in different traditions. The *Benedictine* approach is different from the Jesuit one. As already mentioned, it is characterized by a pronounced *stabilitas loci et personae* [stability of place and persons]. The imperative of St. Benedict which bore so much fruit calls out to us from an era of restless migration (though not nearly as extensive or perilous as the restlessness of our own times): “Stay and do not move about!” This is how the Benedictine communities came into existence. They were like a great dam, a retaining wall to hold a society which was unable to come to rest. *In times of all-encompassing rootlessness,*

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<sup>1</sup> That is, of St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuit tradition.

<sup>2</sup> That is, of St. Francis de Sales.

<sup>3</sup> A wonderful description of Schoenstatt's “third aim” – to help build a world confederation of all apostolic works in the Church, an aim which Schoenstatt adopted in 1916 from St. Vincent Pallotti. See J. Niehaus, *200 Questions About Schoenstatt* (Waukesha, 2002), No. 36 and *New Vision and Life* (Waukesha, 1986), p.118-120.

<sup>4</sup> That is, with its own identity that is not afraid to express itself differently from other proven spiritualities in the Church.

<sup>5</sup> That is, the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable in the Schoenstatt Shrine.

<sup>6</sup> That is, of pursuing all things only to lose one's identity.

*this sheds {120} bright light on our local and personal attachments, on our family character and on the family character of our obedience.* Through this Benedictine patrimony we feel that we are related and obligated to the lawgiver of Western Monasticism and his sons and daughters. In his study about Benedictine monasticism, the English Abbot Butler describes *the difference between family-like Benedictine and Jesuit obedience.* The latter must be – similar to the military – carried out as perfectly as possible. That is what the essence of a flying formation demands. Because they are in the same situation, we demand a similar obedience of our externs. A Benedictine, on the other hand, reckons from the outset that there will be failings against obedience; but he also knows that a perfect community life and healthy style of community creates a counterbalance to prevent any major damage. We claim the same when it comes to our interns.

The *Franciscan* approach is characterized by a plain, unaffected faith in Divine Providence. It is defined as providential obedience. Every Catholic obedience builds on this foundation. This is especially true of the mendicant orders. They must do so because of their very structure. *We have already stressed how important this feature is to our spirituality.*

The *Salesian* approach [i.e., of St. Francis de Sales] especially emphasizes the importance of animating obedience with love. By definition it stresses love. Here, too, one admits that no obedience – not even an Ignatian one – can exist without love. But it plays a very special role in the definition of obedience of St. Francis de Sales, as we shall see in some detail later. *The same goes for us. (...)*

## 122. St. Francis de Sales and Everyday Sanctity

(June 24, 1949)

{122} *The correspondence between Francis de Sales and ourselves is the broadest imaginable*, whether in general attitude or particular demands. Anyone who wishes to understand us must study him; anyone familiar with his spirit will understand us. Francis' interests are our interests, his difficulties are our difficulties, his battles are our battles.

*A fleeting comparison shows this to be true.*

*First of all, one can state in general:*

What we call the pedagogy of ideals, covenant and attachments, what we teach about the pedagogy of movement [organic growth] and trust and what we declare about everyday sanctity – all of this was not only present in seminal form [with St. Francis de Sales], but even in more developed stages, be it the personal or community ideal, ideals of personality or of a given task, be it the relationship between attitude and action, the tension between spirit and form, between love and moral virtues, between magnanimity and fulfillment of duty, between interior and exterior attachment. *Our entire pedagogical theory and practice* – although it can be clearly shown that it is a new creation of independent origin – *adopts the form of a timely continuation and perfection of his fundamental philosophy*. That may calm those who have neither the time nor the energy, desire nor ability to sort out the final principles in order to come to their own conclusion and gain the certainty of knowing where we stand. Those who read his writings often find themselves thinking that they were first written today and for our times; he might also think they come from Schoenstatt.

In order to *mention a few, but not all, of the details*, let me call to mind our commonalities in the concept of

**everyday sanctity,**

in the teaching about

**the ideal of one's state in life,**

and in

**the personal ideal.**

{123} What we say about

**everyday sanctity**

today is something Francis taught in his own day. It was significantly more difficult then, for today the upheaval of mind and heart has brilliantly prepared the way for it. The movement which he initiated or at least had a strong hand in promoting, attained a crowning climax in the Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*. His genius in religious pedagogy was necessary in a time when public opinion had tunnel vision, seeing the spirituality of the religious orders as practically the only valid one. It took his courageous initiative to *free spirituality from the usual forms of consecrated religious and to lead it to its timeless essential root – perfect love – carefully adapting it to the individuality of each person and state in life*. Because of this, he has earned his place in the history of the West as the pioneer of universal everyday sanctity (for *all* states in life), as doctor of the Church and master of lay spirituality as a distinct type, and as vanguard of the spiritual style of the secular institutes and all related lifestreams. (...)

With unshakable steadfastness he contradicted Port Royal, the cloister at the heart of Jansenism which promoted grim sternness, especially in the formation of youth, clipping the wings of spiritual freedom and advocating the subjection of the will to all kinds of restrictions... *It all shows how extraordinarily independent and creative he was in his thinking and plans.*

Even as someone who was always courteous in spirit and form, the gentleman saint always fused hard-to-find prudence with indomitable bravery, especially after he grasped his mission for the times. Once it was clear to him that the hegemony { 124 } of cloister piety was keeping true devotion from taking hold in the world, he began the battle. Only the well-off could take cloister piety and live it in a secular context. Only they could afford to withdraw enough to pray the Office; only they were able to enter solitude while entrusting their worldly affairs to others; only they had the room to do the usual mortifications, fasting at certain times and compensating for it at others. For the great masses of the people this was not possible. They must conclude: it is impossible to live in the world and also be close to God – only the religious can do that; it is not our call. Why bother? We must live our everyday life out of touch with God. Sunday and official prayer times – that is the most I can manage...

*Whoever desires a precise analysis of the times and examines the causes of the today's widespread secularization and the dichotomy of everyday paganism and Sunday Christianity, must not carelessly ignore this connection. Today we have no choice but to do everything in our power to be thoroughly familiar with collectivism, to ferret it out – even from where it is most entrenched – and to overcome it. Everything which separates private and public life from God can and must be seen and opposed as a plague of laicism<sup>1</sup> and a pandemic source of collectivism.*

Haecker<sup>2</sup> points out that whenever we divorce life from the supernatural order, world and man are left unprotected from the unrestricted influence of the Devil, prowling about like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (cf 1 Pt 5,8). In the end, only divine powers can banish the forces of Satan. This is clearly taught us by the Apocalypse... It doubles the tragedy of secularism... The Catholic Congress in Mainz<sup>3</sup> painted a grim picture of the rapid spread of this disease of our times in the German-speaking world... It must be taken into account by all educational institutions and initiatives, especially those involving the youth and the working class. Westermayr<sup>4</sup> points out correctly that the pressure of [modern] milieu is oppressive to the personal { 125 } identity of the young. He lists such determinant factors as (in the economic-social realm) social impoverishment and demographic shifts, (in the political realm) the still untested experience of democracy, (in the realm of world-view) the total secularization of life.

(....)

{ 126 } Let this teach us to appreciate the school of Francis de Sales, allowing him to introduce us to the essence, meaning and purpose of a modern everyday sanctity for everyone in the world. Let us be their articulate advocates in word and deed. Let us learn to value the importance of the secular institutes and their mission for our times.

Pius XI declares in his encyclical on the teaching and life of this holy doctor of the Church:

[I]t appears that Francis de Sales was given to the Church by God for a very special mission. His task was to give the lie to a prejudice which in his lifetime was deeply rooted and has not been overcome even today, that the ideal of genuine sanctity (....) is so difficult

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<sup>1</sup> Laicism refers to the opposite extreme of clericalism. If clericalism says that only that which is of the clergy is good, laicism says that only that which is of the laity is good. It means basically the same as *secularism*.

<sup>2</sup> Theodor Haecker (1879-1945), German philosopher.

<sup>3</sup> It is the tradition of the Catholic Church in Germany to hold a general congress every two years in a different city. When Fr. Kentenich wrote this in 1949, the most recent Catholic Congress (*Katholikentag*) had been the year before, in Mainz.

<sup>4</sup> Fr. Johann Baptist Westermayr (1884-1950), German Catholic professor of education.

that it surpasses the capabilities of the great majority of the faithful and is, therefore, to be thought of as the exclusive possession of a few great souls, (...) [indeed] that holiness is so beset by annoyances and hardships that it is incompatible with a life lived outside cloister walls<sup>1</sup>.

Francis laid down *three principles* which he tenaciously defended. They are of great importance to all who wish to overcome collectivism and reunite everyday life in the world with God. *They can be called a manifesto for all secular institutes and their friends.*

(...)

{129} The principles are:

*First principle:* Those whose vocation is in the world cannot live the devotion of monks and monasteries.

*Second principle:* True devotion will not ruin one's profession or business. Devotion is false if it harms my profession or ruins my business, if it takes away my respect in the world, makes me gloomy or makes my personality insufferable.

*Third principle:* The highest perfection is as easily attained in the world as in a monastery.

This flies in the face of what is commonly believed today and what, in his time, was taught by pious books and Jansenism. The latter, through Abbé Saint Cyran and like-minded associates, promoted the watchword: Only very few can save themselves while living in the world. One's only choice is to flee the world and submit to a life of rigorous self-denial.

To this Francis declared:

“It is an error, indeed a heresy, to want to banish the spiritual life from the company of soldiers, the workshops of manual laborers, from the courts of princes and the homes of married couples... The evangelical counsels were given for the perfection of all the Christian people, not just the perfection of individuals... God does not wish that everyone follow all the counsels, but that each one follow those befitting his personality traits, his circumstances, life setting and available strength... If your parents really need your help, it would not be the right time to join a convent, even though it fits the counsels, because love commands you in this moment to obey the commandment: Honor, serve, support and help your father and your mother... By virtue of this love one will advise many people to remain in the world, to keep their wealth, to marry, even to take up arms and go to war, even though this state is so dangerous...

“Indeed, even though it is not the most conducive environment, many have lived perfection in the world, {130} and would have lost [perfection] if they had tried to live in solitude, even though it is so desirable for the attainment of perfection... I say to you: it is not the habit that makes the monk, but living as God desires...

“It is my intention to show the people living in cities, families and on the farm... that a strong and stalwart soul can live in the midst of the world without becoming worldly; that the sources of sweet devotion can be found in the midst of the bitter waves of earthly realities; and that one can fly in the flames of earthly desires without burning the wings of holy longing for a spiritual life.”

The idea of a modern everyday sanctity, when clearly grasped, will urge one to put it into

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, encyclical *Rerum omnium perturbationem* (On St. Francis de Sales), Jan. 26, 1923, No. 4.



concrete practice in the

### **perfection of one's state in life.**

The course and content of each workday is shaped in an essential way by the individual tasks of one's profession and state in life. Francis pursued his clearly grasped idea [of everyday sanctity] with dogged persistence. As a result, he *warned against lofty but silly dreams, and against seeking extraordinary gifts and graces, insisting rather that one strive for sanctity in the unromantic obligations of one's state in life.*

The fare he offers is healthy and still has something to say to us today, primarily to those who are influenced by the modern fascination with excitement and the sensational, causing them to flirt with mystical and quasi-mystical trends and to lose the austere ground of proven faith right out from under their feet.

(...)

{ 131 } [He once wrote:]

“In no way do I approve when someone with a clear set of duties or a chosen profession plays with the longing for another way in life... or wants to practice religious exercises not in keeping with his current state in life..., for either his heart will be divided, diminishing his strength to carry out what he must do... [or] he will be wasting his time, gradually letting this longing overwhelm the longing which he should have, namely to fulfill his current duties to the best of his ability.”

“Nothing keeps us as much from perfection in our state in life as the longing to belong to a different one. Then, instead of working where we are, we send our oxen and plow a neighbor's field where we will be unable to harvest anything this season. That is only a waste of time, for it is impossible for our heart to remain focused on acquiring the great virtues needed for our current state in life when we let our thoughts and hopes drift elsewhere...”

(...)

{ 132 } For him the most important thing was always the *key to sanctity: perfect love* realized perfectly in the form of life asked of me by God through my vocation and state in life... (....)

{ 133 } Francis goes still further. His genius was even capable of laying the foundations for the teaching of the

### **personal ideal.**

It is the same teaching which we have expanded into an all-embracing system. First of all, he had the courage to take the individual needs of the soul so seriously *that he, contrary to the theory and practice of his day, rejected all generalized ideals and their false application* [to the lay state].

In the age of martyrs the *ideal of martyrdom* lived in the Church, an ideal which was later reinterpreted to mean other forms of sanctity. Clement of Alexandria declared: “The perfect Christian who always practices mortification is a true martyr.” Jerome stated: “Preserving chastity, too, is martyrdom.” Peter Damian admitted, { 134 } “I want to suffer martyrdom for Christ, but I lack the opportunity... I therefore beat myself with the blows of whips to show at least the willingness of my fervent soul.”

*The ideal of the heremetical life and of virginity* was treated in a similar manner. There were times when both were high in fashion. Countless souls simply chose this ideal without any interior calling. In the process they exposed themselves to many and horrible temptations and difficulties.

At the time of St. Francis de Sales the *cloistered ideal* was so popular that many spiritually

motivated Christians felt they must at least die as members of religious orders. As a result they made their profession on their deathbed and accepted the habit of a religious. For them the most important thing was belonging to a religious order when they appeared before the Eternal Judge.

*Francis was unequivocal in his rejection of this cross-wiring of ideals.*

Instead he proclaimed not only that *each state in life has its own ideal* but also that *each person has his or her own ideal*.

*He proposed the following as the founding principle of personality formation:*

**We must be totally who we are.**

In other words, [we must cultivate] what God places in us as natural gifts and abilities, as supernatural promptings of grace or as the product of extraordinary circumstances. This was his formulation of the central truth around which the teaching of the personal ideal is built. Angelus Silesius<sup>1</sup> put this way:

“Each one has an image  
of what he should become;  
until that image is attained  
his peace cannot be won.”

How deeply this conviction went into Francis’ flesh and blood *can be seen in his own practical life and in countless quotes from his talks and letters*. For instance, like St. Augustine, he wished for us to imitate the example of the saints, but added: only if we totally respect our unique identity. Concern for the authentic originality of each person and for its least distortion seems to have been his constant companion. On one occasion he stated:

“When God created the world, he ordered the { 135 } plants to bear fruit in their own way. In the same way he orders Christians, who are the living plants of his Church, to bear fruit and devotion each according to his identity and vocation.”

He was convinced that no two people are exactly the same in their natural abilities. He held the same conviction regarding the order of grace. Again and again he warned against *wanting to blindly or jealously imitate others*. He did so in the keen awareness of how typical these imperfections and weaknesses are when dealing with women and girls. He therefore stated the following principle:

“One must insist that they do not want to do everything that others do. They must absolutely not allow themselves to be swept along by a *vain* competitive spirit.”

Bishop Camus<sup>2</sup> made an experience along these lines. He recounts:

“I tried to imitate his outward actions, his gestures and way of speaking. During a visit Francis came right to the point: ‘I am told that you are trying to imitate the Bishop of Geneva when you preach.’ ‘It is true,’ I said, ‘is that such a bad example?’ ‘Oh, no, certainly not,’ he responded, ‘in reality he doesn’t preach too badly. But the worst of it is that I hear that you imitate him so badly... If you ruin the Bishop of Belley you will never manage to represent the Bishop of Geneva! But all joking aside... You are ruining yourself!... You are tearing down a beautiful edifice to build a new one in opposition to all the rules of nature and art... If one could trade natural talents, what would I give to be what *you* are!’” Camus then adds: “I was no longer myself, I had ruined my originality to make

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<sup>1</sup> Angelus Silesius (1624-1677), German poet and Catholic theologian.

<sup>2</sup> Bishop Jean Pierre Camus (1583-1652), bishop of Belley, France, Catholic writer and close friend of St. Francis de Sales.

a poor imitation.”

For Francis everything depended on *the will of God which especially shows in our natural God-willed gifts and talents.*

{136} “Of what use is it,” we hear him say, “to be the most exalted creature in heaven but against God’s will? One laughs at a painter who wants to paint a horse but paints instead a most remarkable bull. As beautiful as the work is, it honors the master little if he intended to paint something else... He wants to be what God wants... And we do not want to be what we desire if it is against God’s plan.”

This respect for the uniqueness of each person *made him tolerant in judgment and life.* In return he *expected the same tolerance for his person and opinions.* On one occasion he protested against a critique with the reason:

“It does little good to parade before me the example of other bishops. I am absolutely convinced that they can back up their position with good reasons. I will likewise back up mine.”

Another time he clearly stated:

“This method is good, but it is not mine.”

## 146. The Church and the World Revolution

(June 24, 1949)

Wood going through a plane causes splinters and chips to fly. The same is true of every revolution, doubly and triply true of totalitarian and universal revolutions which, unlike their older siblings, are not interested in reconquering the “golden times” or the “lost paradise” of the past, but look only to the unknown future, dreaming of a never-before-seen ideal state which “promises” heaven on earth with absolute certainty... *This is the nature of the present world revolution.* Its tide crashes over and into every area of life, into every part of the earth, even the remotest villages of Africa and the strictest convents. Raging storms are beating on every form which life assumes – customs, no matter how old, laws, no matter how revered... Whatever is not firmly nailed down is swept away. This is why there is so much restlessness in every country, so much insecurity in human society, so much unshelteredness in human hearts. This is why there is so much searching, seeking and tapping in the dark, even in all the religious communities... It is as if a master mason were tapping on every stone to see which is genuine and able to bear a mighty load, which can be used for the new configuration which the new times demand.

*The shape of Church and society today is being determined not only by outward pressures but by driving forces within modern man.* This increases our uncertainty. One cannot just withdraw to some safe haven and ride out the storm, quietly hoping to find everything the same when it is over. Pius XII tries again and again to free the Church Militant from this error. For instance, he wrote to the Catholic Congress in Mainz:

{ 147 } “Your economic, political, social and religious-ecclesial life is going through profound – and often painful changes. Today’s leaders must be constantly aware of this. They must know the past in order to learn from it. Only beware of clinging over-much to the past. It is duty [of every leader] to also be in touch with reality, in the positive sense of the word<sup>1</sup>.”

*This defines the task which Catholic leadership must face in a turbulent time of transition: we must examine the essential fundamental principles of all existing forms of life—acknowledging and appreciating the history of the Church and grasping the structure of the future order of the world. Catholic leaders must be ready and able to discard that which is merely a product of time and to allow, on the basis of ultimate principles of the natural and supernatural order, the creative development and growth of new forms such as God demands through and for the times.*

We have a model of this in Francis de Sales. His task was difficult; ours is incomparably harder and more complicated. It demands significantly more courage, study and prayer. As we have seen, he had the mission to distill the essential and timeless core of piety – a high degree of love of God – from the forms typical of religious orders and to apply it to a life in the world which, in spite of the great differentiation of individual walks of life, nonetheless formed a certain unity and moved in stormy but, at least measured against today, steady paths. Today it is different. Today every form of life, each without exception, is being shaken to the core and falling into chaos. All are moving toward an unknown destination... *Here the Church needs courageous prophetic leaders who without making cowardly concessions in doctrine or life hold fast to the timeless essentials and yet are so*

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XII to the leaders of the Catholic Congress in Mainz in 1948. See: Generalsekretariat des Zentralkomitees der Katholiken Deutschlands zur Vorbereitung der Katholikentage, “*Der Christ in der Not der Zeit.*” *Der 72. Deutsche Katholikentag vom 1. bis 5. September 1948 in Mainz* (Paderborn, 1949), 5-6.

*flexible and sensitive that they help give the primordial Catholic spirit new forms, forms which anticipate the Church of the future and make her the foundation [of a new culture]...*

*This is the task which Schoenstatt has tried to fulfill with great moral earnestness and a deep sense of responsibility from the very beginning. For us it has {148} never been a parlor game, a dabbling in sensational theories to attract the crowds, demagoguery aimed at arousing the masses' thrills and passions. We have always sought out the final realities. Our desire has been to bring Catholicism as the genuine article – unfalsified, engaging and pathbreaking – into the new times. Hence our meticulous orientation on the past, hence our determined search for metaphysical insight and the security of final principles, hence our flexibility in adapting to constantly changing circumstances, hence our courage in word and lifestyle. History will show whether and to what extent we have gotten it right. The old adage “world history is world judgment” may be applied here in its own way.*

## 152. The Reform Needed Today

(June 24, 1949)

{152} The Pope then reminds the faithful of the serious obligation “to concern ourselves, selflessly and courageously, in keeping with our circumstances and possibilities, with the questions which a tormented and hurried world has to solve in the area of social justice, such as the international order of justice and peace<sup>1</sup>.”

The more we try to follow this admonition of the Holy Father, the more the conviction grows that we must fulfill not one, but two tasks:

*Our times demand both a reform of conditions and of attitudes.*

{153} Both are desperately needed. Less than a year ago a Communist declared at a conversation among Protestant ministers and socialists and communists:

“We reject Christianity *because it only concerns itself with attitudes and not with conditions.*”

Catholics and Protestants are both becoming more aware of how many mistakes they have made in this area over the last decades. We have stressed charity but not given enough importance to justice in general and social justice in particular...

But at the same time, the motto of Pius XI applies: “*We need a reform of attitudes!*” This is where a pronounced religious and moral movement of renewal and education is especially needed. It is here that we believe we have a special task for our times. *To our thinking, religion’s full transforming and creative potential can only be realized when solid religious knowledge inspires and nourishes outstanding love.*

With this we face the core problem and central dilemma posed by a perilous world enemy in league with diabolical powers. Today many circles have forgotten this. Many are wasting time and energy on educational and pastoral questions which, while valuable, miss the most important question of all – inspiring hearts to love. Others seek to effect reform only through a change of social, economic and political conditions, and are too onesided in their concern for external and organizational needs. While this is certainly needed, alone it will not do the job.

[The book] *Everyday Sanctity* describes the interrelationship between a *reform of conditions and a reform of attitudes*. It is this insight which has constantly directed our course of action...

“The world trembles under the gravity and urgency of the unresolved social justice issues. If God would give us more everyday saints in every social class and profession, both in the working class and among business leaders, then the crises which are destabilizing human society could be more easily and quickly overcome. {154} The English say: ‘Christians are the only Bible people still read.’ More than ever before, everyday saints are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. They do not say much but rather act, pray, and work much – in a God-pleasing manner. The first result is a reform of attitudes in themselves and those around them. This slowly prepares and initiates a reform of conditions, and makes it fruitful. They are optimists because they belong to God and know that in the long run God will be the victor. They are like leaven wherever they are. May God in his goodness give us many everyday saints!

“Father Doyle liked to pray: ‘Almighty God, make me a great saint and do not spare my human weakness.’ Do I have the courage to ask of God Almighty...: ‘Almighty God,

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Pius XII, Christmas message of December 24, 1948.

make of me an everyday saint and do not spare my human poverty and weakness! Spare our poor nation and bless and protect our holy Church and my beloved country!?”

“Be that as it may, only *saints*, genuine, living and breathing everyday saints can save the world of today. Like Elijah on Mount Carmel, the Lord now stands before his people and asks: ‘How long will you straddle the issue? If God is the Lord then follow him. If Baal, then follow him!’ (1 Kgs 18,21). All half-heartedness is rejected today. Only a whole-hearted spirit can prevail. And if we lack the courage to reach out for this single-heartedness, for the ideal of the everyday saint, then we want to at least create an atmosphere – through our prayer and sacrifice and struggles – in which great men and women can grow and prosper. We will be grateful to be a stone helping build the platform on which everyday saints will one day stand in the service of our times<sup>1</sup>.”

Our desire has been to leave the reform of conditions to other organizations, seeing our contribution in forming the right spirit... Still, it is foreseen that the Family Work be *directly involved in socio-economical change* {155} ...

A review of past times of crisis shows *that all significant Catholic reformers were geniuses of love* – not always of thinking or ideas – and *that they considered it to be their main task to ignite firebrands of love wherever they went...* Today this is more necessary than ever, in times when Christian life is shaken in all its manifestations and not, as was the case in past crises, in merely some places and some forms of life.

In his *ratio educationis* – his 30-day spiritual exercises – Ignatius placed the main accent on *fostering the growth of love*. He was guided by the insight: *It is not knowledge and learning, but the taste and relish for things of God that nourishes the soul and awakens and increases love*.

Such things *remind us of how dire the helplessness is*. Even fellow Catholics who clearly see the gravity of the situation and who are doing everything in their power to overcome it, face the situation with great helplessness. They honestly ask: How shall it be possible to *help the modern mass man and film man to gain a taste and relish for the things of God and for divine truths?* After all, the mass man<sup>2</sup> – dedivinized, depersonalized, devoid of morals and a soul – only knows how to think in disjointed constantly-changing fragments, rather than in coherent contexts. His emotions have been exhausted. His will only knows how to react to outside stimuli... The *film man* – for this is what he is – lives entirely from external, sensory impressions which, like a film, rapidly change from moment to moment and fail to develop depth or create a lasting attitude in the soul.

“Because the senses, once aroused, demand new nourishment again and again, the hunger for novelties and the sensational grows. But it uproots the human person from his deeper spiritual moorings; he loses his connection to the [objective] order, his shelter in forms, and he gradually becomes an anonymous iron filing that tilts to whatever powerful magnetism comes his way. These are the most ominous consequences of mass-mindedness. They affect one’s aptitude {156} and receptiveness for religion. This is the explanation for

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<sup>1</sup> M.A. Nailis, *Everyday Sanctity*, in the 1937 German edition (cited by Fr. Kentenich in the *Epistola perlonga*), p.190-191; in the current 1974 German edition, p.148-149. Fr. Doyle refers to Fr. William Doyle, SJ (1873-1917), Irish Catholic priest and chaplain in World War I, as known to Fr. Kentenich through such works as Alfred O’Rahilly’s *Verborgenes Heldentum: P. Wilhelm Doyle, SJ* (Freiburg/Br., 1926).

<sup>2</sup> The collectivistic man. See J. Kentenich, *Mary, Our Mother and Educator* (Waukesha, 1987), p. 107-109, texts by Fr. Kentenich quoted in J. Niehaus, *Visit to America* (Waukesha, 1999), p. 199-213.

so many of the riddles which the modern pastor faces.”

*American influence*, carried by its films, will lead to the spread of the shallow, rootless film man in Germany. *We must not be deceived* nor let helplessness cause our attention to drift to peripheral concerns, no matter how valuable or necessary, if it makes us neglect the central issue. This will not lead us to our goal. For us the central issue is and will always be: the transformation of sound knowledge into tender and vigorous love.

*(N.B. Theme continues in next selection)*



## 156. Knowledge and Love: the Secret of the Saints

(June 24, 1949)

{156} *St. Francis de Sales* tried to solve the same problem in his own time. He, like us, was determined to answer just one question: How can sound religious knowledge be transformed into love? His innate and carefully cultivated sense for the realities of life made him aware from early on *that while knowledge is one of love's origins and sources, it is not a reliable measuring stick of love*. Then as now there were men who were vastly knowledgeable about religion, recognized stars in the firmament of theology and intelligent researchers with a passionate love for their specialty, but in whom burned only a feeble spark of God's love. In contrast he saw others with but a little knowledge and yet gifted with an intensely burning love of God. In other words, there are some with little knowledge and great love – and others with great knowledge and very little love.

This led Francis, as it did us, to the question: *What characteristics must religious knowledge have in order to lead into the kingdom of love?*

A glance at Germany's leading intellectual circles [after the end of World War II] shows that they have already reestablished the kinds of university clubs common before the war, discussing deep and difficult issues. This causes Ivo Zeiger to complain:

“When I leaf through the topics they discuss in the course of year, I am often taken aback. One speaks lofty words about the fashionable and yet so superfluous existential philosophy, about the ‘metaphysics {157} of crisis,’ about the theological basis of charity, about the ontological relevance of Christians in the world, about Hölderin's image of man, about the metaphysical basis of the Ninth Symphony.”

At the same time – the speaker continues – this class of intellectual leaders from academia and the working world fail to make the essential truths of the Catholic faith their permanent possession.

What he exposes is an *alarming flaw in modern culture*. It is a terrifying lack of independent judgment and the inability to apply knowledge to life. It goes right past the core problem mentioned above. Many people know many things and know them well, but the main issue remains: What must we do to transform knowledge into love?

*This perspective is alarmingly absent from the modern way of thinking*. This, too, explains the meager fruits of our pastoral and educational efforts. If we are to find a sure way out of the confusing tangle of modern problems, [this perspective] must come much more to the foreground of the public awareness as a guiding idea, as a self-understood task. It is for the same reason that *Catholic Action is in danger of becoming ineffective in many countries*. In many areas it has done commendable formative work. The separation of Church and state in South America is responsible for a shocking religious ignorance. The members of Catholic Action have had success in counteracting this evil. But now they stand helplessly before the same problem that we have in Germany: How does education lead to love and transform life?

*Our<sup>1</sup> modern pedagogy tackles this problem in its own way*. The core problem is always the same, it simply different shows itself in different forms. *Hence the formula: How do we progress from an idea to a life-forming complex of ideas and values?*

Later we want to go into all the addressed questions in more detail, and attempt a scientifically exact and practically useful answer. Here I must repeat my lament at the lack of {158} attention this need has received in the media and in everyday life. I would not doubt that specialized

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<sup>1</sup> Schoenstatt's.

circles talk about it here and there. But it has not yet made a mark on public opinion. The truth remains: we cannot overcome collectivism in ourselves or in our surroundings unless we solve this core dilemma. On the deepest levels of the interior life, all of human nature is frayed and torn. It can only be healed if we bring truth in the spirit of love... *Veritatem autem facientes in charitate, crescimus in illo per omnia, qui est caput Christus.* [“But holding to the truth in love, let us grow into him in all things, that is, into Christ the head”] (Eph 4,15).

In its timely, consistent way, Schoenstatt has brought together the relevant knowledge and experience of the millennia and summed it up in a simple, pedagogically effective formula:

***You are God’s favorite occupation. Therefore, you should make God your favorite occupation***<sup>1</sup>.

*This says exactly the same thing as the idea of the covenant of love between God and mankind...*

Many in the Church have puzzled over the secret of Schoenstatt, wondered about the key to understanding its vitality – a vitality which it has preserved in even the most difficult times and which is still characteristic today. Some fail to find an answer. Others point out the one or the other feature... The only correct answer is:

***The secret of Schoenstatt is the unique covenant of love of which the three founding documents speak; or the quality of having turned into reality the idea of being God’s favorite occupation and making him ours.***

It will be a later task to demonstrate that this simple sentence holds within itself an entire compendium of theology, philosophy, psychology and pedagogy.

At this point I am not even considering the specifically Marian flavor [of our covenant of love]. It has not been put in question. The only point of controversy involves *the time-honored idea of being God’s favorite occupation and its general application to Schoenstatt.*

Given the overwhelming available evidence, experts in the psychology of religion will not find it difficult to show that *with this axiom we have put the secret of the saints {159} into a short, timely and easily remembered form.* The ideas and the reality behind it are the cause and effect of sanctity. The **cause** – in layman’s terms – *All the saints only began to effectively reach out for the heights of sanctity – to become holy – once they realized that they were God’s favorite occupation, the center of His attention, and then made God their favorite occupation*<sup>2</sup>.

We emphatically add: *Unless the Christian West develops a new attitude, unless it consciously and permanently makes this ‘secret of the saints’ deeply and personally its own, it will not withstand the onslaught of collectivism.* If, on the other hand, all Christian educators make this their main task, they will not only have a towering idea which can unite all without exception, but also have reason to expect that they can even master the powers of hell.

*Think of any and all the problems facing the education of peoples and nations, and of the world: to the extent a solution is possible at all, it is to be expressly found in this secret. It bestows light, strength and constancy.* All other attempts, separated from it, will falter and fail. (...)

{ 160} As [the Church] comes to grips with her enemy, she is forced to rely solely on her own

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<sup>1</sup> German: *Der Mensch ist Lieblingsbeschäftigung Gottes. Deshalb soll er Gott zu seiner Lieblingsbeschäftigung machen..*

<sup>2</sup> See also J. Kentenich, *Schoenstatt’s Instrument Spirituality*, p. 134.

strength<sup>1</sup>... The same is true of the Bride of Christ in Germany. Woe to her if her sources of strength totally { 161 } or partially run dry or are buried. Every [source of strength] without exception must be tapped into, fully developed and properly utilized, lest the battle be in vain. Things used to be different: only the one or the other dogma was challenged at a time. The Church did not need to reflect on the very deepest part of who she is and where she comes from... *Today all the truths of the natural and supernatural order are doubted or denied. As a result, the Church has no other choice than to mobilize the entire cosmos of forces within her.* First and foremost is the experience of the ‘secret of the saints.’ Indeed, by light [one sees that] it contains in concentrated form all the other forces without exception.

The primitive and early Church was isolated and had to go her way entirely alone. If she must do the same today, she can nonetheless no longer confine herself to being on the defensive, as we have been in recent years, much less let grumbling and complaining be our only response... She must not be satisfied with maintaining the status quo... She must go on the offensive, must seek new conquests. She must not merely put out the flames thrown at her by her enemies, but must cast her own burning fire on the rooftops of those around her... After all, she has come – like the Lord himself – to cast fire on the earth, and how she wishes to see it burn (cf Lk 12,49)... *Supported by the divine strength dwelling within her, she has a right and obligation to repeat the humble-proud word* which she wrote in the third century through the hand of the author of the letter to Diognetus<sup>2</sup>: “We Christians (the little flock) are the soul the world.”

(...)

{ 163 } Anyone who has worked their way into the thinking of Donoso Cortez<sup>3</sup> and his principles of historical philosophy will expect the Church to undergo the loss of one stronghold after another in the hard and unrelenting battle with her archenemy. He sees in this condition not only an astute chess move on the part of Divine Providence, freeing the Church and her representatives from all reliance on self and driving her totally into God’s arms, but also a nearly unavoidable consequence of the present intellectual atmosphere of the world and the Church... Modern man has lost the ability to think. He is completely delivered up to the irrational drives and passions of his nature and surroundings. As a result, he can only be freed from his confusion of mind and heart through iron blows of fate. Now that Naziism has run its course, millions have turned to collectivism for their salvation. Persuasion and refutation will do little good. Only the most bitter disappointments can change their mind. And so it is *that everyone familiar with our times must reckon with a temporary victory of collectivism in the West.* Pius XII seems to view the intentions of Divine Providence in a similar way. He wrote in his first encyclical:

“Perhaps – God grant it – one may hope that this hour of urgent need may bring a change of outlook and sentiment to those many who, until now, have walked with blind faith along the path of popular modern errors, unconscious of the treacherous and insecure ground on which they trod. Perhaps the many who have not grasped the importance of the educational and pastoral mission of the Church will now understand better her warnings, ignored in the false security of the past. No defense of Christianity could be more effective than the present straits. From the immense vortex of error and anti-Christian movements there has

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<sup>1</sup> That is, on the strength of that which Christ has given her and gives her, as opposed to the earthly resources of earthly knowledge, political power, organization, institutions, etc. – unless they are used with Christ.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient Christian writing from the second or perhaps early third century.

<sup>3</sup> Juan Donoso Cortéz (1809-1853), Spanish Catholic politician, journalist and philosopher.

come forth a crop of such poignant disasters as to constitute a condemnation surpassing in its conclusiveness any merely theoretical refutation<sup>1</sup>.”

{164} Donoso Cortez goes on to say: If the Church, despite superhuman efforts, is completely forced into the background, the Almighty will suddenly appear on the pinnacle of the temple of the times, sound the trumpet and the walls of Jericho will fall... *God wants to show that he is the One who banishes the powers of hell and that the world and Church owe their salvation to him*. But who can survive such apocalyptic times? Who can move God to intervene more quickly? The answer is always the same: Only those who live the ‘secret of the saints.’

[In the meantime] the *attitude of existentialism* – a polite name for acquiescence to a universe without God and blindness to God’s freedom – is successfully gaining a following among Catholic intellectuals... Whoever experiences the secret of the saints is immunized against all such intellectual diseases.

At the Catholic Congress in Mainz<sup>2</sup>, Ivo Zeiger listed a number of important concerns stemming from the crisis of our times, concerns that worry German Catholics and demand urgent attention... Our answer to each of them is always the same: The surest, most effective remedy is and will always be the ‘secret of the saints.’ Here are some examples:

Concern No. 1:

“Our entire population (not even excluding the business class or rural areas) is being swept into an era of mass-thinking and -acting. This is perhaps the most profound change in man today. It determines, more than we care to admit, our pastoral options and the people’s receptivity to religious values. *Thus far we have mostly concerned ourselves with the content of thinking of the modern outlook on life. But what sets the mass man apart is, in reality, not some faddish philosophy, but the structure and attitude of how he responds to external stimuli.*”

Answer: This structure and attitude can only be transformed into a profound and permanently Catholic attitude through the ‘secret of the saints.’

Concern No. 2:

“Something caught my eye about our Catholic soldiers in World War II that I never observed in World War I. {165} They were superb young men, faithful to the ideals of the Catholic Youth organizations. They knew the liturgy forward and backward and in the wink of an eye could put together a fine liturgy for distribution of communion in even the poorest POW-camp. But at the same time they parroted without any qualms or reservations the ideas of the new pagan ethic which had been hammered into them through clever propaganda. They were, if I may say so, sacramental liturgical Christians and, at the same time, puppets of the new pagan ethic. In them the two worlds coexisted but had not been challenged one against the other.”

Answer: In this situation transformation can only come by living the ‘secret of the saints.’

Concern No. 3:

"Everyone laments the widespread lack of knowledge about the Church doctrine and morals.

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XII, encyclical *Summi pontificatus* (On the unity of human society), October 10, 1939, No. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Biennial Catholic Congress (*Katholikentag*), which was held in Mainz in 1948.

And yet: never have so many religion classes, training courses and adult education classes been offered, never has so much been printed, spoken and read. The real lack is not that too little religious knowledge is offered, but that it is not taken in and digested, or calmly and profoundly made one's own. For instance, the papal social encyclicals are mentioned in hundreds of talks. But how many have really studied them, how many can give even a rough outline of what they say or which are the clear theses which the Catholic must uphold? People write and speak about the rights of Christian parents, about human rights, about democracy, but how many have a clear idea of what these terms mean, terms which have become empty with overuse."

Answer: Transformation can only come by experiencing the 'secret of the saints.'

Concern No. 4:

"I recently went to the trouble of studying the new constitutions of all our German states<sup>1</sup>. I thought they would be truly democratic and free. I was disappointed. Even the most basic human rights have been connected to a clause permitting the government to suspend these freedoms. (...) {166} How did such a totalitarian clause slip in? Through negligence? A conspiracy? Some innate totalitarian tendency of the modern state? I do not think this can be the case with such democratic authors. They simply copied words without thinking about them. Worse: words and terms were simply no longer taken seriously. This may very well be the most gruesome effect of the mass man and the film man – to no longer take anything seriously. And does this not have an effect on the spiritual life, too? Is the concept of eternity, which the Middle Ages took so terribly seriously, still treated with the same respect? How about the concept of God's closeness to us in the [Blessed] Sacrament, in the purity of the soul? The problem may not be that our religious reading and hearing is too scant, but rather that it is too much – or at least it just runs off the 'skin' of the soul, made numb and calloused by too much input, and fails to reach the depths of who we are."

Answer: Transformation can only come through the 'secret of the saints.'

Concern No. 5:

"The Christmas liturgy calls Our Lady a meadow which openly received God's gentle dew<sup>2</sup>. Because of the monsoon of words and analysis, man today has encased his soul with a stony crust. Nothing goes in deep any more."

Answer: Transformation can only come by living the 'secret of the saints.'

Concern No. 6:

"Farsighted pastors and lay people have anxiously observed this condition for quite some time. They have tried to overcome it through discussion groups, classes and adult education. They have worked hard and their efforts are to be commended. But even they have not been

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<sup>1</sup> After World War II, Germany was initially under the jurisdiction of the Allied occupation forces. As part of the process of returning the Western Zones (American, British, French) to self-government, the various states established their own local governments based on constitutions drafted by each state.

<sup>2</sup> In the current *Liturgy of the Hours*, see the antiphon to the canticle of Zechariah on December 19: "Like the sun in the morning sky, the Savior of the world will dawn; like rain on the meadows he will descend to rest in the womb of the Virgin, alleluia." See also second antiphon, Octave Day of Christmas (January 1), Evening Prayer II.

able to break through the structure of the film man and mass man. Serious topics find few followers if they require the dry work of real study. I especially {167} refer to those topics which have been especially important in the last 16 years. Our leading Catholics in business and among the working class should be clamoring for the truths of our Christian ethic, in order to clearly and soberly make them their own. I expressly say 'make them their own' and not just 'discuss' them."

Answer: Transformation can only come by experiencing the 'secret of the saints.'

### 230. How God Leads the Modern Era to Himself

(July 25, 1949)

{230} *Since childlikeness, the vigorous root of true Christian masculinity and femininity, is such an unmistakable part of our spirituality and is cultivated in such a deliberate manner, the visitor<sup>1</sup> could not help but see it.* It had to jump out at him from all sides. And so it was.

{231} *He came to two conclusions, one positive and one negative.* The *positive* one referred to the abstract idea, the *negative* to its practical realization.

*The idea of childlikeness* is so unmistakably anchored in the objective order of salvation that it cannot be ignored. *Two facts of salvation* explicitly point out *its timeless importance*. First is the very nature of God, described by John with the words, “God is love” (1 Jn 4,16) and which Francis de Sales and Pallotti clothe in the form, “God is infinite love.” Then comes the incarnation. Theologians and professors see it not only as a historical fact, but also as symbolically significant. They deduce from it a general law and declare, “The way by which God came to us is the way by which we must attain to God. It is the way of becoming a child.”

*So it was that Christ declared as the Kingdom’s law of construction:* “Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the Kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18,3).

The visitor takes this fundamental law into consideration when he declares, “I have nothing against childlikeness. Unless you become like children...”

He goes even farther. He defends *its importance in the world of today*. He draws the connecting line from childlikeness to our modern homeless and uprooted times.

In fact, if we delve into this connection, we will discover *four important facts* about the contemporary situation – the line of historical development, the distressing current state of affairs and the bleak prospects for the future.

**[First fact]** *The first defines the present situation of the world.* The nations as a whole flee from God to an extent never before seen – here openly hating God, there frigid to him or doubting his very existence.

**[Second fact]** *The second fact states the horrific effect this has.* It falls under the rubric “apostasy means decay,” that is, to fall away from God means to expose man and world to the manifold dangers {232} of societal breakdown, confusion and decay. The forces and faculties of man develop without relationship to one another, growing out of control or withering away. Man is impoverished and becomes a machine... The whole order of the world and society is turned on its head and takes the features of a heap of ruins or a den of thieves... This is what the world looks like in which we live or, [at the very least,] we are rapidly approaching it. This is what the “giant factory of the new man”<sup>2</sup> has produced... In both world and man the words of St. Augustine have come true: *Haec est voluntas Dei, ut omnia inordinatus animus sibi ipsi sit poena* [This is the will of God: that every disordered spirit is its own punishment].

**[Third fact]** *The third fact shows why the nations flee from God.* It is the lost sense of childlikeness... Pestalozzi puts it this way, “The greatest misfortune of the world today is the lost sense of childlikeness, because it renders impossible God’s fatherly activity<sup>3</sup>.” Take note of how

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<sup>1</sup> In German: *Berichterstatter*, referring to Bp. Stein in his capacity as author of the visitation report.

<sup>2</sup> Typical saying of the Marxist-Communists (especially in Soviet Russia) of the first half of the twentieth century.

<sup>3</sup> See J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 22-24.

extraordinarily serious this statement is... In speaking of misfortunes today, one is not at a loss for examples – we think of our destroyed cities and churches, of broken human lives and the hatred among nations. One misfortune is greater than the next. But the greatest is the lost sense of childlikeness...

The kind and degree of childlikeness – both in being and attitude – has become the point on which everything hinges for both individuals and nations. It has been this way ever since Christ pointed out his own childhood as the essential way to the Father, revealed to Nicodemus the mystery that we must be reborn of God, and made the remarkable declaration of the fundamental law upon which the Kingdom of God must be constructed here on earth: “Unless you become like children...” “The kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mt 19,14). The nations of the West have forgotten this important lesson for centuries. Today one must suppose that it has totally vanished from the minds of many and in countless areas of society, becoming totally foreign in practical daily life. As a result, the sensitivity for the “politics of the Our Father” has been lost...; it has been replaced by the politics of self-reliance and self-idolatry... The nations are no longer open for what {233} comes from above: for God and the divine. Instead, they are only open for what comes from below: from the life of the drives, from the Devil and from the spirit of the world. They have swept away heaven above and opened up hell at their feet... They wanted to declare earth to be heaven and have, instead, made it into hell. Everywhere the fires of hell are burning hotly; they want to banish the flames of heaven.

The nations are tortured by the pains of hell: *poena damni* and *poena sensus* [the torments of the damned and the torments of the senses]... Thus the many diabolical atrocities in so many places; thus the horrendous unshelteredness and insecurity. It shows in the terrible exposure to the gnawing fears of ill-fortune, to doubts of mind and doubts about God in a time which flees from God and bears hatred of God on its brow like the sign of Cain (Gen 4,15). Whenever childlikeness before God is lost – both in being and attitude – the proud *Non serviam*<sup>1</sup> rears its head. It answers the seductive allures of the dissembling serpent: “You will be like gods!” (Gen 3,5) and is the hallmark response of the nations today. What does God do in his fatherly activity? First, he makes every effort to bend the proud neck of the prodigal son, forced to eat with swine..., until he, in simple childlikeness, returns home to his father’s house and his father’s arms. Then the father can and wishes to lavish blessings upon him.

**[Fourth fact]** *From this we proceed to the fourth statement – the all-encompassing remedy for the contemporary crisis is the reconquest and deliberate cultivation of childlikeness.* To put it in Pestalozzi’s language: The greatest blessing for the world of today is the reconquest of childlikeness because it makes possible God’s fatherly activity. The connection is described this way in *Everyday Sanctity*:

God the Father has a singular “weakness.” He finds his children impossible to resist when they admit and accept their helplessness. Childlikeness means the “powerlessness” of omnipotent God and the “omnipotence” of powerless man. This is the deepest reason for the fruitfulness of humility in the Kingdom of God. This is why Mary sings out with such joy in the *Magnificat* “He has lifted up the lowly!” (Lk 1,52), and why the Divine Savior constantly affirms his Mother’s words by saying, “Whoever {234} humbles himself will be exalted” (Lk 14,11) and “Whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, and

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<sup>1</sup> The “I will not serve” (see Jer 2,20) used to characterize the fall of Satan.



whoever wishes to be the first among you must be the slave of all” (Mt 20,26f).

*God himself is the one who offers to our times the all-encompassing remedy of childlikeness.*

He does so *through the futility and utter failure of all earthly efforts to overthrow the arch-enemy*. This is a clear language. God wants to save his people himself. The condition which he demands of us is that we be children and are genuinely childlike.

*His voice is audible when the forces hostile to God multiply beyond all count and rally for the attack*. Only he can disperse and annihilate powers of such magnitude. But he will only do so only when we become like children.

*The craving for power seems to be a more dangerous foe to God and man than all craving for possessions or pleasure*. How else can we understand the sense and apparent nonsense of the present day? To subjugate whole nations as a dictator or through world power, or to manipulate the forces of nature so simply through technology must produce a thrill which is practically addictive. The addiction leaps all bounds when power allies itself with the craving for possessions and sensual pleasure. This is what the world of today looks like. “You will be like gods!” is the unceasing and beguiling theme resonating in the heads and hearts of the modern potentates. They want to stand on the same plane as God; they want to stand higher than God. They want to challenge him for the first place. They dethrone him and place themselves upon his throne. They not only lay claim to his omnipotence, but also to his omniscience. Hence a *self-centered* [and therefore not God-centered] scientific research and technological experimentation that never lets up. Hence the Gestapo-like efforts to know the most secret thoughts of man and to constantly have surveillance of every action and movement. Hence the impious toying not only with the constructive but also the destructive powers of nature – everything, everything only in the service of removing God from the throne so that man can take his place. *Only the deeply, interiorly, completely childlike person is able to withstand these dangers*. Not sonship, not daughtership. Childlikeness, only childlikeness, only complete childlikeness before God {235} with no excuses, no ifs, ands or buts, without any reductions or concessions will lead to the desired conclusion. (...)

“Unless you become like children...” is the motto which glows radiantly and warmly from the gates of Christianity in its youth – written by God’s own unmistakable master-hand. “Unless you become like children...” is the warning which must be on the brow of every modern movement of renewal if it does not want to lose its resilience and vitality and strengthen the incredible power of our opponents who, in the end, are only living off of our falsely understood powerlessness. But in order not to be overlooked or ignored, God allowed *St. Therese of Lisieux to become popular through an extraordinary shower of roses and entrusted to her the good news of the “little way” and of “little sanctity.”* Popes Benedict XV and Pius XI have understood this mission, have approved and proclaimed it. The echo to this in the broader public already seems to have faded. We moderns live such quick-paced and sensation-starved lives that we have become superficial: constantly in search of something new and different, without perseverance. We try everything, begin everything, but do not have the courage to stick with it and to see it through to the end. But God remains faithful to himself. He holds fast to the law by which he wants to build his Kingdom: “Unless you become like children... Theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.”

**249. Emotions and Love** (with segments from *The Gift of Purity* [\*])

(July 25, 1949)

{249} *Catholic piety truly integrates all aspects of life. It always thinks, loves and lives organically.* Organic thinking alone is capable of totally understanding Catholic piety and effectively teaching it. The mechanistic approach is in constant danger of falsifying and leading astray, of becoming a “heretic of practical life” – to the great detriment of immortal souls, the Church and the nation... In times when a mechanistic image of world, society and man is marching to victory in all parts of life in ways never before imagined, we cannot take it seriously enough... It deprives Catholicism of the vitality and resilience it urgently needs in the battle against the world enemy. If an all-embracing and deep-seated reform does not take place in time, the West will be swept away by the impending catastrophe... The next four to five years will probably show this is true.

*Mechanistic thinking is a sad legacy of philosophical idealism*<sup>1</sup>. Taking on a religious mantle, it has infiltrated many otherwise laudable currents – I think of certain branches of the liturgical movement – and diminished their effectiveness. There are Catholic leaders who think, love and live organically in their personal lives, but whose teaching – in the name of overcoming abuses or {250} for other reasons – is so mechanistic that their followers will soon experience great difficulties. The souls [of their followers] are no longer so down-to-earth and healthy that they can endure a false or doubtful and onesided teaching without troubling side-effects. There are educators who ridicule the Way of the Cross and the Rosary, but still pray them faithfully according to what they learned in their childhood. What their students take home, however, is not their practice – it is their criticism...

*Mechanistic thinking loses its connection to life. If it takes over the formation of life, it destroys it.* In his philosophy, Klages observes the effects of the once-idolized philosophical idealism and concludes that it must be branded the archenemy of life, also triggering [the unhealthy countercurrent of] vitalism<sup>2</sup>. In the same way mechanistic thinking in religious circles has placed itself more and more in opposition to healthy Catholic life, paving the way for religious irrationalism and mind-dulling mysticism, while surrendering to collectivism without any notable resistance. It is worth noting that the “annunciation doctrine”<sup>3</sup> wants to bring about a change. But it does not grasp the evil at its root and overcome it.

[\*] There may be sciences which can harmlessly ignore life. Such scientists are often called “eccentric” and are the butt of many jokes (...). But sciences which mold the human person cannot afford to do this; they must not become dissociated from life. If they do, they will not influence life in the way God intended. Organic thinking does not only see organisms as a whole, *it also takes into account the laws of organic growth.* An organism grows *slowly..., from within..., from one organic whole to another...,* in all parts simultaneously but not at the same rate<sup>4</sup>. (...)

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<sup>1</sup> Fr. Kantenich refers to the philosophical current often associated with Kant, Hegel and others of the German school in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. It raises the idea (idealism) and reason (rationalism) as the ultimate good and supreme judge over all other aspects of life, including religion.

<sup>2</sup> That is, the extreme rationalism of the 19<sup>th</sup> century has bred the opposite extreme in the 20<sup>th</sup> century: looking for life (as opposed to dry reason) in thrills and sensationalism, self-gratification, etc., that is: vitalism.

<sup>3</sup> This seems to have been a group in Germany trying to bring renewal to theological thinking from a more incarnational perspective.

<sup>4</sup> For more on these "laws of organic growth," see Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, *The 31st of May* (Waukesha, 1995), p. 167-171.

{251} *Childlike love*, like every other love, *is carried directly by the will*. This is a plain fact. The difficulty begins when we need to determine how love and the emotions fit together, i.e. how *the love of the will* goes together with *affective love*. Psychology has three issues to deal with here: first, the *nature* of this connection, second, its *significance*, and third, its *limits*.

#### **a. The Nature of the Connection between Love of the Will and Affective Love**

*Francis de Sales takes a clear stand on the first issue*. For him it is *normal* and *self-understood* that the two are interrelated. He declares with a certain edge, “A heart impassive and without emotion is also devoid of love. And the opposite can be said: A heart that has love is not without affection and emotion.”

*How did Francis come to this conclusion?*

As in so many things, his teacher was practical, everyday life. Everywhere he looked he saw that love involves emotion, and nowhere did he find love without emotion, at least in normal circumstances. Based on this he learned to better understand the words of Our Lord, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Mk 12,30f). In this way it became clear to him that Christ is not satisfied with an emotionless love of the will. He demands a love of the highest degree of tenderness in which all the ardor and warmth of our hearts flows together and is directed to God and, in God, to our neighbor. Francis welcomed such insights as a way to gain valuable building stones for his life's work.

Such an insight gave Francis welcome opportunity *to add a valuable building stone to his life's work*. It was his mission to teach and live a piety that does not willfully permit the deformation of anything noble in human nature. For him the elevation of nature is the call to perfect every aspect of our nature, a proposition which is not possible without corresponding sacrifices of our nature.

{252} By tenderly connecting nature and grace he wanted to make nature more receptive to the divine, and by fostering constant interaction between them *create the Christian humanist* – the Christian who is noble to the core of his being. Pius XI also proclaimed this as the great goal for modern education in his encyclical on education<sup>1</sup>.

*[Such Christians] would be the best letter of recommendation for Christian piety in the world around us. They would be the most powerful bulwark against the modern perils of the mass man and the man who only lives what he sees on the screen. (...)*

{253} *Francis did not want will and emotions to be separated, but as intimately and organically connected as possible*. It did not matter to him that others held a different opinion.

*He was undeterred by the usual understanding of scholastic teaching*. It considers only two higher faculties – intellect and will – where love is a function of the will and emotions are a mere side-effect of secondary importance. Francis accepted the theory, but *not the usual interpretation*. For him it was a happy solution in *extraordinary* situations, as in times when the feelings are completely dried out and spiritual distress throws the whole person into turmoil. Such circumstances do not hinder perfect love; on the contrary, they can, at times, make love more perfect than when the feelings are satisfied. *Over time, however, public opinion overgeneralized the extraordinary cases*

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<sup>1</sup> Pius XI, encyclical *Representanti in terra* (Christian Education of Youth), December 31, 1929.

and made them the criterion for judging all cases. Emotions were undervalued and their education was neglected. {254} Even ordinary Catholics were educated this way. When contrition was taught from the pulpit or in catechism class, one was given only a few dry morsels for the will. The life of the emotions was left totally uncultivated.

*This had two consequences: one theoretical, the other practical. A new philosophical theory developed which came to the defense of the neglected and misunderstood emotions. It proposed three [undifferentiated] faculties of the soul – not just the intellect and the will but also the emotions. Hence, the persecuted and despised came back to avenge its neglect. The revenge went even farther in practical life. Ignored and unformed by religion, disconnected from and unshaped by the love of God, the emotions went their own way and respected only the authority of what it could see and feel. They only followed those voices promising the greatest sensual gratification. In this way an irreconcilable chasm gradually opened in many parts of Western civilization – between spiritual-divine love (i.e., *amor spiritualis*) and sentient love (i.e., *amor sensibilis*). This left the gates wide open for the unhindered march of *amor sensualis et carnalis* – of sensual and carnal love. An epic battle broke out between the will and the emotions. Religious life became anemic and largely uninspired, diminished in its boldness and magnanimity. What remains is a consumptive love and an impoverished personality. This explains such feeble progress in the interior life and in the apostolate. [\*]*

#### **b. The Significance of the Connection between the Will and the Emotions**

[\*] Francis assessed the value of emotions in the spiritual life much differently. *He greatly admired the significance of a healthy interaction between love of the will and affective love. He demanded that the emotions be harnessed to the chariot of spiritual love so that they, like fiery steeds, would powerfully draw it to the heights. In this way he lent wings to love, and to human character fullness and balance, noble tenderness and attractiveness.*

*Like the scholastics he remained a believer in two faculties of the soul. But deeper deliberation told him that because of the unity of the human person, strong acts of love will normally lead to a corresponding reaction in the life of the emotions. Times when the soul is under duress – such as in depression – are exceptions {255} which only confirm the rule. His observation of the ordinary life of love in everyday situations led him, as we have already seen, to the same conclusions. For him the applications to divine love were clear.*

*As a result, in education and self-education he greatly emphasized the integration of the emotions and binding them firmly to love, to God. In this way he spared himself and his followers many emotional aberrations and fostered in many people a remarkable harmony of character, resilient religious and moral vitality, a simple unaffectedness of the whole person, and a deep immersion in an all-encompassing supernatural atmosphere.*

#### **c. The Limits of the Connection between the Will and the Emotions**

At the same time, he was aware that *there are certain limits* on the connection between the will and the emotions. This unity is not just a product of will-power and grace. Other factors are in play, most notably temperament and the immediate object of love. Hence one cannot measure the greatness of love by a mere measure of the degree of emotion, but rather *by the degree of surrender of the will*. Moral theology is familiar with this dilemma: There are times when the emotional love one has for parents, spouse, Mary, etc. is greater than for God, the highest good. This happens because the object of love is tangible to our senses, appealing more directly to our emotions. It is further caused by each person's unique temperament. But this does not keep us from holding God

in higher esteem than all creatures, which is the adequate criterion for fulfilling the command to love God. The value of such a distinction for modern pastoral work and education is clear to anyone who is familiar with today's movements of renewal... [\*] Nor is it difficult to estimate its importance for our present topic.

### **The Stages of Childlike Love**

*The third point gives us orientation regarding the levels and stages of growth in childlike love. We speak of three such stages. There is*

*primitive,  
enlightened or {256} perfect  
and heroic childlikeness.*

What all three levels have *in common* without exception, from the lowest to the highest, be it primitive or heroic, *is its general structure*. We do not need to prove this separately. The essential features of a life process will be found in some way in every stage of development. In our case this means: *the connection between the Primary and secondary causes is an indissoluble part of every stage of growth*. God must never be separated from the parents and the parents never be separated from God, unless the parents turn against God. This connection need not be actual or virtual. As already noted, for long stretches of the journey it need only be habitual... But every stage needs the *meticulous cultivation of the heart*. Whether the emotional bond is at times stronger toward the parents or toward God is not something the will decides. *The main thing is that God holds first place in the [objective] scale of values*.

*The difference between the degrees is not determined by love's object<sup>1</sup>, for this remains the same – God and parents, but rather by love's subject<sup>2</sup>, that is, by the degree of one's freedom from self and freedom from self-centeredness.*

*Primitive love* loves – God and parents – for the sake of one's own advantage. This advantage is sought *ut finale* [as the final end desired by the one loving], not *ut consecutivum* [as a condition for love]. Moral theology calls it *amor concupiscentiae* [love of desire]. (...)

{257} *Enlightened or perfect childlike love* loves God for his own sake. The self steps back; God is in the foreground. The same applies to love {258} of one's parents – of course always in and with God. Asceticism uses the term *amor benevolentiae, beneplacientiae, conformitatis* [love of benevolence, love of conformity]... (...)

*Heroic childlike love is the highest level*. On it one loves God exclusively for His own sake and self and all things created only for the sake of God. Augustine demands this degree of all Christians who seek perfection. St. Bernard is of the opinion that only very few attain it here on earth. Francis de Sales [in contrast] has no qualms about setting it up as the ideal at the heart of his entire system:

“By making this supreme demand,” writes Müller<sup>3</sup>, Francis achieves “the synthesis between a piety that towers over the world and a humanity that is joyful and down-to-earth. He severs the nerve of self-centered love to the last fiber, knowing that every direct surrender to earthly creatures shackles man to the world. (...) The personality of our saint shows us how this ideal is translated into

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<sup>1</sup> That is, by *who* is the object of my love.

<sup>2</sup> That is, by *who* is doing the loving.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Müller, in *Frohe Gottesliebe*, a treatise on the religious-moral ideal of St. Francis de Sales (Freiburg, 1933).

reality. 'I think,' he once wrote, 'that outside of God all things are no longer of any value to me; but in Him and for Him I love everything that I love more tenderly than ever before'."

Of course, the word "everything" includes parents, be they our physical parents or spiritual parents.

*This degree is identical with our Inscriptio.* The word is taken from the vocabulary of St. Augustine and refers to a heroic fusion of hearts between man and God (*Inscriptio perfecta, mutua, perpetua cordis in cor*). If heroic childlike love is mechanistically detached from human transparencies, it sooner or later deserves the reproach uttered by Voltaire against Catholic religious: they gather {259} without knowing each other; they live together without loving each other; they part without regret; they die without complaint...

[\*]*The fourth point considers possible useful starting points for educating [others so that they attain a vibrant] childlikeness before God. (...)*

*The normal starting point for divine childlikeness is human childhood.*

This corresponds to the normal course of God's plan. The natural order is patterned after the supernatural. Experiences in the natural order {260} prepare the mind and emotions for supernatural insights and experiences. Pestalozzi's spider analogy points this out nicely<sup>1</sup>. Practical, everyday life supports this observation again and again. We instinctively transfer our human image and experience of our human father to God. A similar relationship exists between the image and experience of our human mother and our image of Mary and the Church. This law of organic transference and transmission therefore gains deeper meaning and a useful field of application.

Consider St. Augustine's view of the motherhood of the Church. His insights are no doubt primarily inspired by what divine revelation teaches. *But the image of his own natural mother played no small part as well in helping weave this remarkable cloth.* [\*]

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<sup>1</sup> Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), Swiss educator. In his keynote work, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children*, he uses the following example (as translated into English: Syracuse, NY, 1915, 5th edition, p. 82f): "Man is bound to his nest, and if he hangs it upon a hundred threads and describes a hundred circles round it, what does he more than the spider, who hangs her nest upon a hundred threads and describes a hundred circles round it? And what is the difference between a somewhat larger or smaller spider? The essence of their doing is: they sit in the centre of the circle they describe..." In other words, each man learns about life from the starting points God has given him in the natural order.

## 278. The Need for a Vision of the Future

(July 31, 1949)

{278} This raises the question: *What role does childlikeness play in our vision of the future?*

(....)

We have often stressed (and Pius XII has confirmed this for us) that every reform movement must orient itself not only on the old, but also the new. We know the old shore because we have experienced it. But what might *the new shore look like?* Who can give us a reliable report?

Not long ago I met a Catholic layman who played a leading role in recent years in the Catholic Church in Germany and Austria. Influential European friends asked him to go abroad and wait there for the terrible storm to pass until there would be a reasonable hope of success in the work of rebuilding. And so he came to Brazil about a year ago. Of course, he keeps a close eye on developments back home. His preliminary cautious conclusion is this: “The German Catholic Church clings too much to the way things were in [and before] 1933<sup>1</sup>... What is universally lacking is a creative view of the dark future. There is no clear vision of the future. (....)” (....)

{279} I will leave it to the experts to decide how correct he is. Let me only stress one thing: Who, today, has such a clear vision of the future? Is such a vision even possible in the present moment? And if so, to what degree can it be described reliably and error-free? Who even has an accepted and valid yardstick for measuring the yet-to-develop image of world, society and man? Who in Germany and who abroad?

*In essence, all of us without exception are helpless in the face of what is to come. We place our trust in God... Any insight and clarity that we have beyond that must be laboriously acquired. Hence, when we speak of a vision of the future, we mean an acquired vision, not an infused one<sup>2</sup>. Two sources of knowledge stand ready to assist our research: metaphysics and the events of the times. We must [1] make the [metaphysical] distinction between the historical forms, now so vulnerable, and their underlying eternal ideas so that we can courageously proclaim the [underlying principles] in the world of today and [2] simultaneously give careful consideration to the wishes of God that reach our ear through the events of the times according to the law of the open door. The weave and warp which therefore come in play must be woven into a unified fabric. That is our vision of the future. It contains parts which are unmistakably clear, while others are dark and cloudy until God makes them and himself understood through the course of life.*

Such a vision may be imperfect. But it should not be underestimated. Consider the opposing camp<sup>3</sup>. That they cause such fear must be attributed, not least of all, to their dynamic confidence, to the storm of momentum which they generate because they have a vision of the world’s future. One need only spy the promised land of the future from afar {280} as Moses did. Even if its conquest and possession are only possible in the next generations, insight and hope awakens incredible strength. (....)

God is the one who reveals to us through the events of today what his plans are for tomorrow

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<sup>1</sup> That is, in the year that Hitler came to power and began to systematically dismantle any official role of the Catholic Church in German society.

<sup>2</sup> That is, a vision based on the ongoing effort to grasp God’s plan through practical faith in Divine Providence (in contrast to “infused vision,” namely apparitions or private revelations).

<sup>3</sup> The political collectivistic movements, such as Marxist-Communism which was in the process of extending its power not only in Eastern Europe (as of 1949 recently subjugated by Soviet Russia) but also into Asia (the Chinese Revolution which was won by the Communists later in 1949).

and the day after, although he does so only slowly and in fragmentary ways. He is the one who stands above all things. He rules the world, even when it seems that he is no longer watching, or, that it has slipped out of his mighty fingers and fallen into other, mightier, hands.

David Strauss<sup>1</sup> said, “God has let himself be driven from the heavens by Kepler<sup>2</sup> and now he cowers in a hidden corner of the earth.” This is not true. *God is everywhere*: in heaven, on earth, everywhere. In him we live and move and have our being. We carefully follow his footprints, like the bride in the Song of Songs, in order to find the Beloved everywhere – not only among the lilies and in the blossoming vineyards, but also in the dove-nested meadows and rock-strewn pastures (cf Song 2,8-16).

He is at work as the *Lord of History* – at times in the tiny whispering sound (cf 1 Kgs 19,12f), at times in the crushing mighty storm, at times in the rubble of a world in decline, {281} at times in the dawn of a new world. *He holds the reins powerfully and victoriously in his hands*. No one can take them from him.

Frederick II was wrong to attribute world government to the one he frivolously called “his sacred Majesty, randomness.” Faith in Divine Providence gives us every reason to believe that behind all the seeming coincidences, meaninglessness and incomprehensibility of life is a great plan of love, wisdom and omnipotence – the schedule of our life and the calendar of world history even to the tiniest details. Some may have an experience something like Saul when he went in search of his father’s donkey and instead became the king (cf 1 Sam 9). Others may be so tormented by a demon that they, like Croesus, hear a voice telling them that the war they begin will destroy a great kingdom, unaware of which kingdom it will be<sup>3</sup>. Some may find that ridiculously unimportant trifles have such a dramatic effect that they must agree with Pascal’s famous words, “If Cleopatra’s nose had been but a bit longer, the course of history would have been totally changed.” Still others may indicate that mankind would have been spared the great World War of 1914-1918 if only the assassin’s bullet in Sarajevo would have gone half a centimeter farther left. They may all be right, but it is wrong to attribute these events and experiences to some Majesty of Coincidence. All of them are found without exception in the book of world destiny which “He who sits on the throne” (Rev 4,2) holds with sovereign strength and entrusts to “the Lamb who lies as slain at His feet” (Rev 5,6) to judge and enact.

To be sure, God’s mysterious plans are not immediately and perfectly clear to the limited eye of man. Not even after the fact, when they have long joined the annals of history, can they be understood in all their detail. They remain a riddle until the end of time, a knot which can only be untangled to a small degree. This is what Goethe means when he says, “World history must be rewritten every ten years.” In other words, individual events only become understandable when seen in the light of a longer context. {282} This is all the more true of everything still enshrouded in the mists of the future. It is and remains dark. Without great daring and much light from above some texts [of God’s plan] are impossible to decipher with any amount of certainty.

World history is not, as Hegel thought, *like a textbook on logic* in which everything unfolds

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<sup>1</sup> David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), German theologian of an extreme Hegelian approach who in essence bordered on atheism in his treatment of Divine Providence.

<sup>2</sup> Johannes Kepler (1571-1630), German astronomer who formulated the modern laws of planetary motion.

<sup>3</sup> Croesus (c. 550 BC), the last king of Lydia and incredibly rich, made alliances with other Mediterranean kings and began a war to defeat the great Cyrus of Persia. In the end it was his kingdom that was defeated.



with absolute precision according to "thesis, antithesis, synthesis." Nor is it like a *clockwork* that, once wound up, puts all its wheels in motion at precise times. That is pantheism, looking on world events a self-realization of God as absolute, objective reason. To view things this way is like the bed of Procrustes, doing violence to the facts, forcing them into preconceived notions. A typical example is Hegel's doctoral thesis. He tried to prove that only seven planets exist, but did not know that Ceres had just been discovered between Mars and Jupiter about half a year earlier. Others pointed out his flaw, saying, "What you say contradicts the facts." His answer was typical: "Then all the worse for the facts."

God's wisdom and love give us occasional insight into his plans for the future. *But it only happens in the darkness of faith, in lumine caliginoso*, that is, in light shrouded by darkness. He passes over us, only letting us touch the hem of his garment. As Bismarck acknowledged, "The statesman can never 'do'; he can only wait and listen until he hears the sound of God's voice rumbling over the events. Then he leaps forward and grasps the trail of his garment, that is all." Nor can we do anything more when we try to elaborate a vision of the future... *We must be satisfied with the hem of his garment...* God has placed enough into our hands so that we can see clearly in certain essential points, but others will only become clear later. What we know is enough to get our bearings and have the peace and certainty that our what we must dare is not done irresponsibly.

{283} In a fashionable salon of 17th century Paris, a group of notables was gathered. A page torn out of a book passed from hand to hand. The lively discussion centered on who the author was. They could not agree. Finally, Bossuet took it in hand, studied it carefully and said with certainty, "How can there be any doubt? Do you not see the lion's claws? Only Pascal can write this way."

*God, too, places a page from the book of world history into our hands. We too can say: Do you not see the lion's claws? Only God can write this way.*

*Two questions spontaneously arise.*

The first is: *How* does God write?

The second: *What* does he write?

How does God write? With lion's claws, that is, with great, powerful letters. He has opened "the scroll with seven seals" (Rev 5,1), not totally, but enough so that we can see something of what is written. He has placed a page into our hands. On it we can see that we are living in decidedly apocalyptic times – not the end of times, but in a time which can be considered a terrible prelude to a horrific final act. The four Riders of the Apocalypse (cf Rev 6,1-8) are already hastening through the Western World, whinnying at the gates of all the world and waiting for the signal which will give them free reign. War, revolution, famine and pestilence are threatening the nations. Anyone who experiences these horrors will say with trembling lips: Truly, God writes with lion's claws. (...)

Catastrophes in the moral order are becoming more and more evident. The world and social order as we have known it is badly shaken. The {284} old image of man rooted in Christianity has been obscured. Satan seems to have been released from hell in order to establish and extend unhindered his kingdom of hatred, injustice and lies on earth. The Realm of Satan is especially embodied in certain individuals. And so we see repeat, to the horror and disgrace of the human race, what has taken place at intervals in the course of the millennia: in Caligula, Nero, Domitian, Vitellius, Ivan the Terrible, etc. Truly, God writes with lion's claws. His handwriting is widely visible. Its meaning should not only be within the grasp and understanding of the West, but of the entire world.

*And what does it say to us? What is the meaning of the text? ...*

God is a God of life... Wherever he permits destruction, breakdown, collapse, death, he

wishes to create new life... Thus the grain of wheat must first die, must perish; then it produces much fruit. If we apply this principle to our age, if we consider the terrible ruin and desolation which confront us everywhere in the physical, moral and spiritual order, we have to hold our breath. *Transitus Domini est* [It is the Passover of the Lord, Ex 12,11]. It must be a wonderful world that he intends to create out of this vast dying, a wonderful order he intends to fashion out of these catastrophes and ruins...

## 284: Capitalism and the Christian Social Order

(July 31, 1949)

Does God want to *destroy the capitalistic economic order in order to replace it with a new one*? Who dares say this with certainty? Capitalism certainly has many shortcomings. It has certainly brought much unhappiness upon the nations. But it is not just darkness; it contains light, much light... It has solved problems and done so to a degree that no other system has. One should remember that in 120 years the world population has grown from 800 million to about 2 billion persons. They have found food and clothing. They have found both in better quality and greater quantity than in other times. We owe this to {285} the capitalistic economic order. And in the process it has at least left [everyone] the freedom to starve to death.

This is not tolerated by even the seemingly anticapitalistic counter-current – Bolshevism. It determines in dictatorial fashion life and death. (....)

So what does the page of book of world history hold when it comes to the economic order? *At present it is impossible to decipher that with certainty.*

Only one thing is certain. With lion's claws God writes an unmistakable message, one that reverberates from the mighty upheaval of the times to the ear and heart of all, including those who do not want to hear or see or pay heed. The message is this: *overcome the enslaving features of capitalism and Bolshevism. Create a new man in a new community with a new work ethic...*

*Do we understand the significance of this powerful, enlightening message?*

The new man [of the Christian new shore] replaces fanatical self-reliance and self-adoration with deliberate naivety and heroic childlikeness; replaces {286} self-centered, uncaring individualism with an interiorly binding and unifying community spirit, the spirit of solidarity; replaces a materialistic understanding of work with the distinctly Catholic ideal of work as a participation in God's creative shaping of the world. In other words, *God wants to impress the countenance of his Son on the cloth of Veronica of our time, a blood-red cloth, with the features of heroic childlikeness, a perfect spirit of community and creativity in shaping the world [in the divine image].*

“Let us create man in our image and likeness...” (Gen 1,26). God’s creative word resounds over the chaos at the dawn of creation. He speaks it three times in succession. No sooner has he said it the first time when he turns it around and says, “In our image and likeness let us create him...” Finally the great event is confirmed with jubilation, “He created him in his image and likeness” (Gen 1,27).

Dun Scotus applies the text directly to Christ..., the middle point..., the first-born of all creation (Cor 1,15). He is simply the ideal of all mankind. How full sound the words of Pilate spoken to the Son of God – crowned with thorns, scourged and clothed with the robe of mockery – “*Ecce homo...*” “Behold the man!” (Jn 19,5). Behold the ideal of total sacrifice on the natural level and total self-surrender to the Father in heroic childlikeness...! Behold the member of human society who vicariously gives his life for his sheep... and laying down the foundations of the order the redemption in an act of [ultimate] creativity.

“Let us create man in our image and likeness...” is what God’s voice resounds to us from the catastrophes of our times. This is the word, this is the sentence, this is the chapter written for all to see with unmistakable clarity by his lion’s claws. He has no rest until heaven and earth call back: “...in his image and likeness he created him.” He goes on and on, writing, if necessary, with blood-red letters, until he hears the echo resound back to him: “*Ecce homo*, behold the man in the new

community with a new work ethic.”

{287} *As a movement of renewal, all three moments<sup>1</sup> must interest us. All three are truly core elements, are essential components of our vision of the future; all three have always absorbed our entire strength and attention.*

Marx’s foundation is his doctrine *about work* – about its value and added value<sup>2</sup>, about its barter value and use value<sup>3</sup> – his theory of the collapse of the existing order and of the establishment of a state of the future. Through this God is suggesting to us that we visit such trains of thought ourselves in order to *establish a metaphysics of work from the Catholic point of view and to let his flow into the Catholic work ethic.*

*Everyday Sanctity* has laid much groundwork already (p. 130-158). It shows in detail that work, as a sharing in the happiness of paradise and heaven, is a genuine and irreplaceable source of happiness. Regarding the metaphysics of work it writes these few but poignant words:

What nobility this bestows on work! After all, it too is activity—not unlike the knowing and loving of the blessed in heaven. Moreover, work itself is—although in an imperfect and often very different way—a participation in the creative and self-giving activity of God.

After all, God as Creator is ever active through his creating, sustaining and governing activity. He creates and sustains the divine life of each graced soul. Everything he does is out of love! Love is the great and fundamental law of the universe. Everything God does is out of love, through love, for love! It is love that motivates him to show his love through tangible signs seeking to lead man into a deep union of love with him.

Is not the deepest meaning of work and all human activity the imitation of and sharing in God’s multifaceted activity? This is why so much of work’s happiness and bliss eludes those who only or mainly see it as “making a living.” The more work allows me to engage my creativity and self-giving, the happier I will be, {288} even in the absence of financial benefits. It quickens the body and soul, preserves us from many temptations and sins and allows us to communicate more easily with God. It helps unfold the core of the personality and fosters a healthy self-esteem.

Suppose I become a teacher, or a housewife given charge of a kitchen. How much creativity this awakens! How many exciting opportunities it provides for giving and receiving love!

Who has not experienced the countless blessings such work can bring, changing one’s whole life! But how different when work is devoid of a soul. One is no longer a “creator” but just an “agent of production” doing mechanical, unskilled labor just to survive. Like unemployment, such work leaves us dissatisfied, easily aroused in our animal drives and makes us receptive for all revolutionary tendencies trying to undermine the family and the state.

Unfortunately, the working conditions of today force millions into tedious jobs in factories and offices. Very few are still able to freely choose their work. It takes a saint to overcome the dangers connected with the mechanization of the work place. “Saints,” says

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<sup>1</sup> 1) The new man, 2) the new community and 3) the new work ethic, that is, the approach to work characterized by everyday sanctity: sharing in God’s creative and self-giving activity.

<sup>2</sup> German: *Wert* and *Mehrwert*.

<sup>3</sup> German: *Tauschwert* and *Gebrauchswert*.

Julius Langbehn<sup>1</sup>, “are more important than steam engines. We need machines, but souls must be their master.”

This brings us to one of the most important problems not only of the religious elite, but of the education of all people: If we do not succeed in restoring the true meaning of work by awakening and unfolding human creativity and self-giving even when one’s work is repetitious and tedious, all other reform efforts will scarcely be able to succeed. We cannot return our modern economies to what they were in the Middle Ages. We must begin with the present economic realities and find small ways to call forth from the rock (cf Ex 17,5f) the clear, refreshing water {289} of life, love and joy from the rock.

There is no lack of ways and means. Theoretically they are all easy to grasp but, practically speaking, require a serious commitment and vigorous spirit of sacrifice to put into constant practice. (p. 134-136).

The *shaken social order* will need to be completely rebuilt from bottom to top.

“*Ecce homo!*” In Christ we see not only how heroic community spirit is embodied, but also how heroic community action is realized. He sacrifices himself for the well-being of *all on the wood of the cross*... “There is no greater love than this: to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” (Jn 15,13). This same love drove him to spend 30 years in the bosom of a healthy family. He wanted to make us aware of the significance of the nucleus of human society and sanctify it through his example.

God writes with lion’s claws. For a long time already, *common interests* have been the only thing holding together the Western World. And now they, too, have collapsed. One spontaneously recalls Rousseau’s social contract<sup>2</sup> or Hobbes’ tacit agreement, ever subject to falling into chaos<sup>3</sup>. The Old World is going through a time of complete atomization. It is like the mediaeval legend of the “crazy” clock of Master Werner. In the clock every spring and every gear decided to go its own way, making it useless. It is reminiscent of when the terminally ill are no longer able to ward off disease... One can easily see that the end is near... The resulting attitude in Western society is this: Every man for himself and if you don’t make it, too bad! The same effect is found in society’s most basic form, the family... It has become a mere community of interests, and not infrequently only a house of ease and pleasure.

If the West is not to fall apart and fall prey to complete anarchy, it needs either a *dictator* who forces it into outward unity, degrading the human person into herd animals and cogs in a machine, or *it must do everything in its power {290} to grow into a community of hearts, attitudes and love, and try to replace all the next-to-one-anotherness and against-one-anotherness with a profound in-, for- and with-one-anotherness of souls.*

*We let this motivate us to doggedly finish the way we have begun. For us it is not enough to meticulously cultivate the in-one-otherness of souls. We go farther and try wherever we are to form ideal families, be it the natural family as in our Family Work, or spiritual families such as we find in our institutes. The third part of Everyday Sanctity describes this in great detail.*

In this context we cannot dwell any longer on the new community.

*We must concentrate on heroic childlikeness before God.*

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<sup>1</sup> Julius Langbehn (1851-1907), German author and educator also known as the "Rembrandt German."

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), French philosopher who strongly influenced the thinking of many of the American founding fathers. His work *The Social Contract* appeared in 1762.

<sup>3</sup> Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), British philosopher with a very pessimistic view of man and society.

By doing that, we know that we are banishing ourselves, hermit-like, to a spiritual wasteland, because we are standing up for a position which the modern, earthly-oriented person can no longer understand. Christ is correct in saying, “Where your treasure lies, there your heart is also” (Lk 12,34). The world only knows the world and worldly values; there alone is where its heart is found. *This is why all modern crises, whether economic, social or political, are at their root a crisis of the soul.* In the long run man cannot live by bread alone – he needs something higher, he needs spirit, he needs God.

### 304. Heroic Childlikeness: ‘The Soul of my Soul’

{304} When his task demands that he defend himself from unjust attacks, St. Paul is not afraid to speak about himself, even in detail. I therefore think it permissible and in the interest of the truth to briefly indicate something about myself.

In a Christmas letter (1941) from prison<sup>1</sup>, I wrote:

“Now more than ever, all passing realities become for me an image of the divine and the eternal. God also wishes to lead you along the same path. Go it courageously. To see its features more precisely, see *Everyday Sanctity*, p. 252-53. When you understand this passage, you have the soul of my soul, as well as the goal which you should constantly keep in mind. It is in this light that you should observe the events and dispositions of your life.”

*This clearly indicates the goal which God signaled to the director and his followers through the circumstances [of the times], and which has unceasingly inspired both through all the years.* Its heroic childlikeness is of the same stripe as that of St. Francis de Sales – be it the ideal or the carefully chosen path [to the ideal] – always careful to let nothing valuable in human nature to fall by the wayside, even while fostering an outstanding intellectual and supernatural spirit.

The text [from *Everyday Sanctity*] reads:

“It was Francis’ ideal to connect perfect indifference with affectionate love. He also gives a {305} negotiable path to that end. One of those who knew him best described it this way:

‘First the soul concentrates all its faculties without exception and without reserve on God, the only aim of its being. It soars unencumbered to the highest peak of perfection where God alone dwells before its eyes in overwhelming greatness. Then the earth disappears from view; earthly goods have no more attraction and the heart becomes indifferent to all things of earth. But in God, man finds the Creator of all that is true, good and beautiful in the world, the Sculptor of his being who inclines the human heart to that which He has created. Then the soul redescends the ‘Jacob’s ladder’ of love. It loves again – home, forests and flowers, family and friends, art and science – but with a new love. They are loved, no longer because the earth-bound self desires them, but for the sake of the most beloved Father in heaven who made all these good things and wants His child to take pleasure in them. Francis once used the image: The soul laid aside all its longings. It stood naked before God. Then He clothed it again, with the ‘former longing for parents, home and friends.’ But now it was a ‘new and different’ longing. For this new love was reborn from the spirit of the prayer in the Our Father, ‘that the name of the Lord be hallowed, his Kingdom come and his will be done to his pleasure.’

“It may not be within everyone’s grasp to join natural love and holy indifference so closely together to such great advantage. Many people, moved by a well-founded fear of dangerous outbursts of the drives, may have to hold the reins more tightly. But, Francis de Sales, for one achieved this combination splendidly. This is why he is also a classic example for us, especially of everyday sanctity in the world. Those who experience how instinctive, natural love is purified and transfigured in God, find that it not only creates the new redeemed

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<sup>1</sup> From the Gestapo prison in Koblenz, where Fr. Kentenich was incarcerated from September 1941 until his transfer to the Dachau concentration camp in March 1942.

person such as our times demand, but that it also protects Christianity from the reproach of being inhuman, unnatural and artificial<sup>1</sup>.”

At the same time this sheds light on the high ideal which shaped the *theoretical teaching and practical application* of the director to his followers. After all, the text does not only say, ‘Here you have the soul of my soul,’ but also ‘Here you have the goal which you should constantly keep in mind.’ In a letter to a priest written February 7, 1942 this thought is expressly mentioned:

“You have all the powers of office. You will also use them tactfully. I am happy that you have been told about the Mariengarten.

“You can tell the sisters whatever you want. Above all make sure that they do not become tired of waiting, that the divine virtues are practiced heroically. Help take advantage of the favorable situation to introduce the sisters in the whole world to the three divine virtues. More I need not write.

“You already know from my letters to you and ... what I myself think about my freedom. But the main thing is always God, not freedom. See *Everyday Sanctity*, p. 77, at the bottom<sup>2</sup>. (....)

{307} “*What God demands of the sisters is found in ‘Everyday Sanctity’, p. 252.*

“Now as before I am of the opinion that my fate was decided on February 2. In fact, I have heard lately that someone from the Gestapo in Berlin was here a week ago.

“When will it [my freedom] happen? When it is best for the family. And when it has grown deeply into the world of grace. And if things turn out differently? The main thing is God and his wish<sup>3</sup>.”

*The text referred to [Everyday Sanctity, p. 252] is the same as above.*

The written proofs of this goal are so numerous – from the prison and Dachau era alone they would form a small library – that it is impossible to even begin to present it in any completeness. Look for yourself. I doubt there is a single writing, long or short, nor a single page which is not expressly shaped by this ideal.

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<sup>1</sup> M.A. Nailis, *Werktagsheiligkeit* (Limburg, 1937), p. 252-53; 1974 edition, p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> The segment where the famous prayer of St. Vincent Pallotti is quoted: “O my God, God my all, God my only! God enkindle me! O my Lord, increase in even the smallest moments my longing for you and that which pleases you!” and “My God! Not the intellect, but God; not the will, but God; not the soul, but God; not hearing, but God; not taste, but God; not language, but God; not breathing, but God; not feeling, but God; not the heart, but God; not the body, but God...”

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Fr. Kentenich to Fr. Alex Menningen, written in the Gestapo prison in Koblenz, February 7, 1942. Fr. Kentenich entrusted the Schoenstatt Movement and especially the Schoenstatt Sisters to Fr. Menningen while Fr. Kentenich was in prison and in Dachau.



## **Appendix: Excerpt from Follow-up Letter to Archbishop Bornewasser**

(August 9, 1949, see *The 31st of May*, p. 67f)

My inner motivation<sup>1</sup> in this entire matter is the thought of the Western World and its confrontation with collectivism. I believe that the fate of the Old and New World will first be decided in Germany... For me, this insight has remained essentially the same since 1912 – the only difference being that observation and comparison have strengthened and rounded out this impression. This may help Your Excellency better understand why I sought out the opportunity to officially present my views to the ecclesiastical authorities. I feel obliged to do so. Having done this, my task is, for now, complete. (....)

Now that the exchange of reports has taken place on the official level, and that I for my part have traced the issues back to their fundamental principles, I must fear that some have taken personal affront at what I wrote. Your Excellency can remain sure, however, that for my part not the slightest questionable motive was in play – least of all a lack of respect – but simply responsibility for the Church, especially in Germany...

I sincerely regret the ill feeling which I suspect has been generated by what I have stated so emphatically. Love for truth and for the Church was the reason I risked these unpleasant side-effects. They are all the more unpleasant because they might easily pass for ungratefulness. In the last years, Your Excellency, together with you and the vicar general, has selflessly and courageously supported Schoenstatt; you therefore have every right to expect reverent accommodation and noble gratefulness. That I risked the danger of seeming tactless and discourteous may convince you of how important I consider the confrontation over the matter at hand.

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<sup>1</sup> Excerpt from letter sent to Archbishop Bornewasser from Santa Maria, Brazil, August 9, 1949. See *Studie 1954*, p. 166f. Emphasis added.