

1950 Pedagogical Congress

Outline of a modern pedagogics for the Catholic Educator

Twelfth Conference

An ethos of the family determined by the father's and mother's authority

It is our task to incorporate our pedagogical system into the pedagogical situation of our times, first of all in the educational field, both the official and the private or free educational fields. We showed in outline this morning how this task could be carried out in the official educational field, both in the Church schools and in the teaching colleges. We have already moved on to look more closely at the private educational fields - the catacombs of the family, the catacombs of groups and group work, and the catacombs of the family prayer corner, or the Schoenstatt corner in our home. We can most probably remember the most important points about the ark of the family, about the present situation and the task for the future. We remained with the one imperative: *See to a marked ethos of the family!*

This ethos of family life can be subdivided into three essential points, depending on whom we have in mind - the father, the mother or the child. The imperative changes with each person: Take great care to foster the awareness of being a father, the awareness of being a mother, the awareness of being a child!

What should we say about each of these imperatives? Unfortunately time is so limited that I cannot say much. Please look upon what follows as an incentive, which you can take home with you. It is like a seed that should be planted in the field of our souls, and which should then germinate and bring forth fruit thirty, sixty, ninety-fold(1).

The first imperative: *Take great care to foster the awareness of being a father!*

Two questions present themselves: What is the root of this awareness, and how does it find expression as the dignity of a father and the activity of a father?

First question: What is the root of this awareness of being a father?

You will gradually have got used to the fact that we never make a statement without first trying to trace it back to its ultimate root. There is always the same thought process: *Agere sequitur esse*(2). *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*(3). What is the root of this awareness of being a father? Seen metaphysically, it is to be found in the wonderful fact that the father, as the image and likeness of the heavenly Father, begets the child.

In the Blessed Trinity, God the Father's most proper activity, the activity original to himself, is that of begetting. Therefore, speaking in human terms, God the Father is the First Person in the Blessed Trinity(4). For this reason, also the father here on earth shares in this attribute (*proprietas*) of God, the eternal Father, and is the ultimate earthly authority. God's fatherly authority is the prototype of earthly, human authority. Every other authority, including that of the mother, is secondary, it is derived, it is complementary.

We should actually stop here for a long time, because this statement is extremely profound. Our world today knows desperately little about fatherliness, about fatherhood and

fatherliness. The awareness of being a father has disappeared everywhere.

The awareness of being a father is therefore rooted in this activity of begetting, which is an imitation of the activity proper to God the Father. It finds expression mainly in educating the child to be obedient and courageous, whereas the mother's authority - it is rooted in her nature, as we will later see - is derived. It is her task to educate the child to bear and forbear(5).

Let us reflect on these thoughts. You will find the root, which I have just exposed, described by Leo XIII. His encyclicals are based on the great law we have always upheld(6). And Leo XIII usually bases himself on St Thomas. This means that we find ourselves and our way of thinking in extremely good company. There is no need to fear that we are exposing ourselves to error and hence blunders.

The second question: *How does this awareness of being a father find expression?*

We already know the answer: In a unique fatherly dignity and vigorous fatherly action.

The father's dignity

constantly measures itself against the dignity of God, the eternal Father. How great, how wonderful is that saying of our Lord when applied to a genuinely Christian father: 'You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect' (Mt 5,48). If those words are addressed to anyone special, then it is to the father who knows and shares in the task of begetting with God, the eternal Father.

'You should be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect!' A father, therefore, is the wonderful, indeed the most wonderful, transparency(7) of God, the eternal Father, and this directly(8). So it suggests itself that we should examine the tremendous qualities of the eternal Father and then reflect on how these can be applied to the earthly father.

We see God the Father in his absolute *immutability*. You can read this in Revelations: "A throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne!" (Rev.4,2). God the Father is the only one who is not in motion. The whole of heaven is constantly on the move. He who is seated on the throne remains there in unchangeable calm.

The Jesuits apply a philosophical principle to their Superior General: *Primus motor non movetur*, that is: The first cause should not be moved. - God's immutability! So the one who bears the father's authority in the family, and wherever derived fatherly authority is sought and felt, should display a sort of immutability in his principles and decisions.

How few fathers today are aware of this metaphysical orientation! How inconsistent they are! They are the playthings of fashion! They are the playthings of the wishes and passions of their own hearts! Where do we find that they are the image and likeness of God, the eternal Father?

As the eternal, immutable Father, God is *omnipresent*. So, the earthly father should also be "omnipresent" to his children, either physically or at least spiritually. He keeps them constantly in mind, they are the centre of his interest, of his heart. Other interests retreat into the background. He sacrifices himself for his children, to whom he is omnipresent and who are constantly present to him.

God the Father is *omniscient*. So the earthly father should also know everything that affects

his children any way. This is not an oppressive knowledge, it is kind, it is an exceedingly uplifting knowledge. His knowledge becomes uplifting when he always believes in the good in his children, even if they have disappointed him thousands of times. He believes in the good. He also believes in the original mission of his child.

God the Father is *all-wise*. Similarly, his image and likeness should also be all-wise. He wisely assesses what his child can bear, he wisely weighs the burdens he places on his child, he is wise in making demands on his child, and he is also wise in choosing the presents he gives his child.

Holy, God the Father is infinitely holy. - You fathers should be holy, as your Father in heaven is holy! And who is holy? Whoever centres constantly on God, the eternal Father, and on his wish and will.

God the Father is *infinitely merciful and just*. That is also the ideal of the earthly father - to be inexorably just, truthful, upright! He isn't dishonest in his family. He doesn't allow himself or his law to be bent, instead he is justice in person, he is truthfulness in person.

However, God the eternal Father is at the same time infinite mercy and can forgive when the prodigal son returns, even if he has shared the pigs' food elsewhere, even if he has aimed his lance at his own father's heart ...(9). He welcomes the prodigal son again and again with mercy, kindness and forgiveness, and he restores all the rights of his child to his son.

That is the wonderful ideal of the father! That is the dignity of the father, which is rooted in his ability to beget life, and in his procreative activity as the earthly image and likeness of the eternal, infinite Begetter in the Trinity.

From this follows the *father's influence and function*.

We have already touched upon it briefly: Fatherliness, paternitas(10), is the original and most basic form of authority. Hence, when authority appears in family life, the father is the *incarnation of the most basic form of authority*. It follows that the father must also appear as the incarnation of divine authority to his child. It is not enough for the child simply to obey a law. The father is the incarnation of the law, its vital expression. The father's will and the law should ultimately be identical for the child.

We have no idea how much we damage the child's soul, and hence the soul of our people, when we require obedience to a law which is not the expression of a Person, of God the Father's will. It will give rise to an inner disharmony, a dreadful dissonance: The child does not see the law-giver in the law and behind the law. Love for the law must always be the expression of love for the law-giver(11).

The child has to encounter fatherly authority. What we modern people say is not true - that there is only good in the child(12). A child's inordinate drives also make themselves felt. ... Children have to feel that there is an authority over them, who can also punish them. Of course, everything depends on whether a child is touched by authority in the right way. Nietzsche, who had such a clear insight into the soul life of people today, and who could express this insight so forcefully, pointed out that today there are no longer any "childrenlands", because there are no fatherlands and motherlands any more(13). Since we no longer have genuine and sound fathers, we no longer have genuine children. We can even

take this further and say: Because there are no longer genuine fathers, there are desperately few religious children. Children instinctively transfer their picture of their earthly father to God the Father. And if humankind today is ill, if we no longer gather around and centre on God, the Eternal, it is to a great extent because the earthly father is insufficiently the image and likeness of God the eternal Father.

So everything depends on whether the earthly father makes his child aware of fatherly authority in the right way, and hence ultimately of God's authority.

We know about the profound influence, almost determination, exercised by the laws of heredity and the milieu. In the same way there are processes in education which experience shows are determined by the way the child encounters authority. So many people, not just women and girls, also strong men, suffer throughout their lives because their sense of authority was damaged in their childhood, because the father misused his authority brutally. 'I will show you ...' 'I will break your will ...' We all know these expressions and know the attitude behind them. We know how many fathers are brutal and cruel to their children, especially while the children are still small. Who has not experienced this?

We are told that in essentials a child of four or five is complete, because by then the basic character has been formed. There is a lot of truth in this. - What is meant is that by this age the child's feelings and emotions have been given a definite direction. The emotions formed in the child by then will accompany that child to the end of his or her life. You see, all the shocks given to a child's emotions by the brutality and cruelty of us fathers, sink deeply into the child's emotions and have a devastating effect for the rest of that child's life.

Agere sequitur esse!. Through my whole being I should be the origin of the child's behaviour(14). I should manage to generate a certain willingness in my child. However, this by no means requires me to behave like a "grandfather"! Behind what I do as father, there may and must also be strength. Children expect this of their fathers, just as they will later expect it of God the Father. Strength, firmness, invariability must be part of the hands, the head, the whole being of a father.

All this needs to be combined with profound reverence. This is the reverence and respect which serves the child(15), it is the reverence which should entice a child to give expression to all the creative forces within. It is said: Children owe their existence to their fathers. How often, however, must it not also be said: Children have good cause to curse their fathers! Children owe their existence, their natural lives, to their fathers. And in addition, to whom do they owe their hang-ups, all that is diseased in their souls? - To the cruelty of their fathers, the misuse of fatherly authority. Should not we, who are the physical or spiritual fathers of children, not pause for a moment and call to mind the tremendous suffering to be found in the souls of children? It constantly reappears, usually until the end of their lives - and all this because we misused our authority when they were young. It could happen, although it is seldom the case today, that children of both sexes later have the opportunity to experience genuine childhood in relation to a "surrogate father". This is seldom possible. However, if the opportunity arises, it should be taken.

We, who are privileged to be educators, should correct the mistakes and faults of our physical fathers and personally embody the ideal: to be the image and likeness of the eternal Father. In this way much can be compensated for later.

It could also happen that according to the law of contrasts, God could give the child what the physical father forfeited. I have said: According to the law of contrasts. However, this also usually does not happen without a bitter, inner struggle. The child tastes and savours: This is what my physical father is! - and then compares this with what the Bible has to say about God the Father. Through this contrast the child can discover another picture of the father on the level of the intellect. However, since a human being is made up of body and soul, a certain hang-up usually remains behind in the soul.

Disappointments in other human beings - both the father and mother - can in individual instances lead the soul ever more deeply (bypassing human beings) into God the Father's heart, so that in the end a very profound picture of God arises. But this is rare.

A true father can say nothing greater or more beautiful about himself than: my picture has become my child's ideal picture of God. I have been allowed through my efforts, through all that I am and do, to impress God's image as Father on my child. As a result my child has a genuine and true concept of God. I can give my child nothing more beautiful for life.

In addition, the father should form in himself the ability to master life at work. Even if he cannot give his child much money, the best gift he can and may give is the ability to master life.

Let me repeat: There are so few "childrenlands" today - I think I may add - so few "Godlands", because there are so few fatherlands. What a tremendous incentive this is to me, the physical or spiritual father of children, to pray constantly for the grace of transformation, to work constantly for the formative power not to give in to the wishes of my heart - even if I have been disappointed in my wife and children. The father should be an image and likeness of the original image, God the Father!

Life offers still another possibility to correct a false experience of fatherhood. It is possible for people, who have never received genuine, fatherly love, to experience sound growth and childlike and fatherly love later if God gives them spiritual children when they are older and more mature. It could then happen that when they experience this spiritual childlikeness, they themselves develop strong and vigorous fatherliness. However, this presupposes that such people are wholly receptive to all the values hidden in the person before them, and this is very rare. They are either one-sided intellectuals, or else inwardly unsound, so that it is impossible for them to accept the alien values in another person(16).

There are so few childrenlands and so few Godlands, because there are so few fatherlands. What follows from this? There is hardly anything else that can so inspire us to work constantly on ourselves than the importance of true education! How happy the person who may educate, who possesses the passion of the true educator, and who understands the saying: 'An educator loves and never gives us this love!' The more I love those I may educate, the more I will personally grow into the world of love(17). The more I may form others, the more I am personally formed.

Whoever is open to all the values in others, may give their followers great things, but in quiet hours they will tell themselves: I have been more enriched by my followers than I have enriched them. You see, if this basic relationship of give and take does not arise, I can be a commander or a dictator, I will never be a true father to my congregation or community.

Educators love and never relinquish this love! Unless we become such passionately loving educators today, you will see how the world around us will simply take hold of us. We will then be technical advisers, we will never be creators. Being an educator means being a creator, it means begetting life. My whole passion accompanying me day and night centres on one thought only: How can I serve my followers? And when it is opportune, I withdraw, I allow my followers to go their way independently.

It is the greatest glory of genuine educators if their children grow far beyond them(18). However, we all lack this comprehensive and profound fatherliness in every respect.

That is the one, big function of the educator. He stands for authority and must educate the child to be obedient.

The father has a second, big task: *He must educate the child to be courageous.*

Through his whole being and way of life he must tackle this task, even when it is difficult and most difficult for him to do so. How often a father has the opportunity to do this, especially with regard to religious matters! Look at our middle class in society - how helpless people are financially! Now when the father dares to take the "death leap into God's heart" also when in financial need, this requires courage. He must also educate his child to be equally courageous in tackling outward tasks, no matter whether this child is a boy or a girl. A genuine father always points to the heights, he challenges and leads his children to practice true obedience, but also to be courageous in tackling tasks.

And the *mother's authority*?

May I recall what has been said in this connection? The mother's authority is always secondary. Seen historically it is the first, because the child first comes into contact with the mother. But in essence it depends on the father's authority. We may never forget that the father is the ultimate focal point of the family! Fatherly authority is the final authority! In the end one person must have the reins in hand. It is a similar situation within the Triune God.

It is possible, because the disintegration is constantly growing, that in the future many religious communities for women will recall these truths and realise that they do not merely need a Director, but someone who has a certain fatherly authority. Actually it is not possible to keep a community strong and stable without a fatherly authority, especially today when the tendencies to disintegrate have become so crass that they cry to heaven.

In relation to the father, the mother's authority leans against or is supported(19) by the father's authority.

If the child is to be ruined in every way, the parents must oppose each other; parents need only contradict each other before the children. That is all that is needed.

Even if masculine authority degenerates to become brutality and arbitrariness, if a noble-minded mother knows how to educate their children to submit (in the sense of obedience), it will still accompany these children throughout their lives. Girls who have the picture of such a mother ever before them will become well-balanced beings. They will not become "witches" or "bitches". How quickly this happens when a woman is unable to find support somewhere, when hers is not a supported authority. It is as though she needs a tree trunk

against which she can lean.

You notice that we are dealing with truths that cannot be regarded as trifles. If we want to build a new world - and that is what we want to do - if we want to take over what is great and valuable from the 'old shore' to the 'new' one(20), we will have to search for the ancient ontological principles. The world around us can 'sing' whatever 'songs' it likes, we have only one song: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi!* All that the Lord God has placed into human nature when he created it, all that he placed into the nature of father and mother, is not just an incarnation of God's thoughts, it is also an incarnation of God's wishes. Therefore: *Ecce ancilla Domini!* (Behold the handmaid of the Lord!). The mother should be the person in the family who balances things out. The more she places the father in the foreground, the more the father will later see to it in his turn that the mother becomes the focal point. It is the task of the mother to see to it that the girls learn the art of bearing and forbearing, of bearing with the father's misuse of his authority should this arise(21).

You fathers should be holy as your Father in heaven is holy! This applies to all who beget physical life. It also applies to all spiritual fathers, to all "surrogate fathers", who share in some way in God the Father's authority.

Can you now understand what is meant when we say: Foster a family ethos! Foster the awareness that you are a father! How happy the father who is the focal point of his family in this way! How happy the father who may share in this way in the creative activity of God, the eternal Father. The creative forces within him are then hardly in danger of finding an outlet at a lower level. Man must be a creator, he cannot just be a "manufacturer". The less opportunity he has to be creative, for example, at work, the more he must become creative within his family. If a man, if a father, wants to preserve his marital purity, he must become a creator! As far as possible he must become the living image and likeness of God the Father!

Once we are all embedded in the objective organism of being, how easy it will then be to observe God's laws of life! Please apply what we said this morning about the laws of compensation and about repression to the life process we now have before us. Let me repeat: You fathers should be holy! And if we are grateful that God's Providence has brought us to this place, to this holy place, to hear about these great, Catholic truths about genuine fatherliness, then let us recall that one of the most essential graces of pilgrimage we may expect to receive here is the grace of spiritual transformation. The "beast of prey" in us must die, the father must awaken to life! The "wild Indian" in us must be destroyed, the image and likeness of God, the eternal Father, must be developed in us(22)

Notes

1. See Mt. 13,1ff
2. A Thomistic principle: Action follows upon being, i.e. a thing has to exist before it can do anything.
3. The order of being is the order of action, that is, the way God created things and human beings indicates how they should behave.
4. See in particular St John's teaching on the Blessed Trinity, John 1,1ff; 3,31ff; 5,19f, 31ff;

8,42ff; 14,28

5. In a study of emergent leadership in leaderless groups, two types of leadership appeared: first the person with the best ideas, who could help the group towards its goal. This person was called the "task specialist". However, this type of leadership gave rise to frictions and dissatisfaction, and then the "social-emotional specialist" appeared. From what Father Kentenich has said, the father's leadership can be compared with that of the "task specialist", the mother's with that of the "social-emotional specialist".

6. Ordo essendi est ordo agendi - the order of being is the order of action.

7. Since Father Kentenich is coining a new word also in German, I have felt free to transliterate it. It should be possible to "see through" the earthly father and discover the eternal Father, that is, the earthly father becomes transparent.

8. "Directly" in as far as fatherhood in all its dimensions points towards God the Father, even when such fatherhood is a caricature, because, according to the psychological principle, this caricature is also applied to God.

9. See Lk. 15,11ff

10. Father Kentenich very consciously used the Latin (Roman) concept in order to make sure that he could not be misinterpreted. He wanted to save the Roman understanding of the position of the father as head of the family in every respect. His concern was to save the *principle*. How the father should exercise his authority is another chapter. Father Kentenich expressed his concept as: Authoritative in principle, democratic in application.

11. Love for the law-giver has to be seen as two-dimensional: the love of the father, which is expressed in the law that safeguards the child, and the love of the child for his or her father, which is a response to the father's love.

12. Rousseau's theory.

13. "Alas, whither shall I climb now with my longing? I look out from every mountain for *fatherlands and motherlands*.

But nowhere have I found a home; I am unsettled in every city and I depart from every gate. The men of the present, to whom my heart once drove me, are strange to me and a mockery; and I have been driven from fatherlands and motherlands.

So now I love only *my children's land*, the undiscovered land in the furthest sea: I bid my sails seek it and seek it.

I will make amends to my children for being the child of my fathers: and to all the future - for this present!

Thus spoke Zarathustra."

(F. Nietzsche: Thus spoke Zarathustra, Penguin, 1977, p.144.)

14. See, Gabriel Marcel, Homo Viator

15. Father Kentenich defined education as the selfless service offered to another person with all his or her originality and specific character.

16. In 1961 Father Kentenich enlarged on this passage in a written discussion on questions of

governing a community, as follows:

"We are concerned here with a complementary experience. The following life process takes place: Let us suppose that from childhood there has been a scarcity or absence of experiences of being a child or having a father. Life later offers the opportunity - no matter how this happens - to awaken and foster the awareness of being a father and the feelings of a father through another's awareness of being a child and having the feelings of a child. If a person has a normal disposition, this is quite possible and probable despite a lack of associated experiences in the past. The awareness of being a father, which has been awakened in this way, awakens and deepens the awareness of being a child and the feelings of a child in the other person, which in their turn strengthen one's awareness of being a father, while at the same time teaching the surrogate father what refined childlikeness is like ..."

In the same text Father Kentenich made the following comment:

"Please take note of the different expressions that were used. In 1950 mention was made of the *awareness* of being a father, in 1961 of the *feeling* that one is a father. The latter presupposes that the awareness has penetrated and determines a person's feelings (Lebensgefühl) right down to the sub-conscious. The same applies to the difference between the awareness of being a child and the feelings of a child."

Commenting on the passage above, he wrote:

"In order to do justice to the text ("Life offers still another possibility ...), one should keep in mind that the educational process - if it is to be creative - always includes a spiritual give and take, or an alertness and openness for each other. If this is not there, the two (educator and educand) gradually become blunted and unreceptive for each other, and hence unfruitful. They become a burden to each other and increasingly grow apart.

The riches, which in our case the child gives to the father - this is the main point - are, let me repeat, inexhaustible in two ways. A genuine child, by his or her very being, breaks open the slumbering forces of fatherly love in the educator. In addition, through the child's ingeniousness, touching simplicity and engaging naturalness the father is taught - unintentionally - the mystery of childlikeness, which has until then been a totally closed world to him, even if he has been able to talk brilliantly about it. His enthusiasm was and is more an expression of longing than of possession. Only now does he begin to understand the admonition of our Lord correctly: 'Unless you become like little children ...'(Mt 18,3)."

17. In the discussion on questions concerning the government of communities mentioned above, Father Kentenich added the following to the quotation he made of this passage: "(the world of fatherly love and childlike love)".

18. In the above-mentioned discussion in 1961, Father Kentenich commented on this passage as follows:

"The thoughts on fatherliness as the perennial basic attitude of the educator were complemented by the retreat for superiors (of the Sisters of Mary) from 15 June - 1 July 1951. One could call the whole retreat course a comprehensive commentary on inner authority as the root for outward authority or 'potestas'. In wave after wave it centres constantly on the essence of inner authority, as we have described it, that is, on selfless service to another life.

A description of St Paul's ideal of authority provides a certain climax. We have had it in mind from the first and striven unswervingly to attain it. We still do so today. It shows us a strange

combination of fatherliness and motherliness as the expression of the most perfect possible desire to serve. The many and varied ways in which people today and in the times to come are uprooted, and the probable degeneration of future generations, should present modern educators with a tremendous challenge to bring about this harmony in themselves. - The text of the (retreat) course quotes Paul's description of himself in the first letter to the Thessalonians (1 Thes.2,1-12, and to the Galatians (Gal.4,12-19). It is done in such a way that one can notice Paul's embarrassment when he has to give expression to his fundamental attitude as educator and pastor in an understandable form. At times he characterises his educational function as motherly service, at other times as fatherly service. If we want to do justice to both functions, no other course remains open to us than to speak of the most perfect possible combination of fatherliness and motherliness in Paul."

19. There seems to be no English equivalent that really expresses what the German concept says. "Anlehnend" literally means "leans against", that is, it is supported by the father's authority, which does not mean it is 'weak'. After working many years with women, Father Kentenich spoke from experience. A woman who bears the ultimate authority over a long period easily becomes hard.

20. An image Father Kentenich constantly used to describe the transition from one era to the next.

21. In the study already mentioned above, Father Kentenich comments as follows on this passage:

"The retreat course for superiors tried to work out more clearly the dogmatic basis for both functions in one person. It emphasised that fatherliness is rooted in our character because we are the image and likeness of God and Christ; motherliness because we are members and replicas of the Church. I quote: 'There we see the Church as the Mother of the faithful. In this context I share in her motherhood, and hence in God's motherhood, which is symbolised by the Church. Ultimately, therefore, the priest must be Christ's and the heavenly Father's representative; but as a member of the Church ... he must also call an all-comprising motherliness his own. ... Since the Church is symbolised in the Blessed Mother, we should be replicas of Mary in our motherliness.' The conclusion is then drawn: We are therefore justified in saying: sacerdotus alter Christus and sacerdotus altera Maria (the priest is another, or second, Christ, and the priest is another Mary). ... Mutatis mutandis - it follows that every Christian educator should be able to say this of themselves. Everyone, therefore, can apply those words of St Augustine to themselves: Audemus nos dicere matres Christi (Sermon 25) - we dare to call ourselves the mothers of Christ. - It is as though Christ is calling for a mother, his mother, in his members ..."

22. Expressions such as "beast of prey", "wild Indians", "witches" or "the blond beast" are references to well-known publications of that time. Father Kentenich uses them to illustrate a fundamental anthropological insight, which Hettinger expressed in the words: Humanity without religion becomes brutality. See, Franz Seraph Hettinger: Apologie des Christentums, 1863-67, 2 Vol.; and: Lehrbuch der Fundamental-Theologie oder Apologetik, Freiburg 1879, 1913/3. See also 'What is my philosophy of education'.