

Fifth Conference

THE ETERNAL IN WOMAN`S NATURE

A general teaching on the principles of an asceticism for young people today has to be grouped around three main points: firstly, the direction; secondly, tactics; thirdly, consistency.

The direction is twofold: one in the educator, the other in the person being educated. In the educator we call it motherliness, in the pupil the ideal, either as the personal ideal or as the community (group) ideal. To start with we want to discuss the direction for the educator. We have announced two thought processes. We have spent much time with the first. The first line of thought was motherliness in the battle of our times. The second is motherliness in the light of and battle of faith.

To start with we examined the tendencies in our times to try to discover a firm foothold from which we can arrive at a concept of genuine, true motherliness. The line of thought we have deduced so far has to be seen as something that is dependent or borrowed. The focal point of our considerations was the true educator, the true leader. And what we have worked out so far in more scientific terms was seen in dependence on the leadership of man, although it was very easy to adapt this to the leadership of woman, to woman as educator. What I have said contains a whole host of most sensitive observations of life. We have seen the mutual relationship, the fine, inner bonding, spiritual bonding, inner authority traced back to laws or principles. *Priestly motherliness functions in practice* both at the start and through the development of the pupil *according to the laws of transference and detachment*.

We focussed on the change of emphasis in young people today. Against this background we shed new light on the true and deep meaning of genuine and profound *motherliness* as the courage to serve, *as selfless service to another's originality and character*. The more our young people today, in particular the girls, struggle to be more strongly bonded, the more we want to see it as our task to make those entrusted to our care independent.

Everything we have discussed is grouped around the one thought: *genuine, priestly motherliness as the expression of profound leadership*.

Motherliness in the light and battle of our times

Let us start with another ray of light. We do not want to make a comparison with the leadership of man, but for once shed the light of innate, spiritual principles on the true and profound concept of genuine and true motherliness.

You may possibly not have noticed how true and genuine motherliness has been drawn into the crossfire of public opinion today. You can deduce this from the fact that we are involved in a tremendous cultural change in the world of woman, and hence also in the structure of woman's ^{soul}.

Once woman had been torn out of her actual domain and tumbled into public life, once she had to take the lead in the battle for survival out in the world, it naturally followed that people reflected on what is the character proper to man and woman. This is because woman is confronted in this battle for survival with her opponent - man - who is also battling for

survival. There is not just an outward struggle, there is a very profound battle going on in the depths of their souls. The relationship between man and woman has to be re-examined, it has once again to be traced back to ultimate principles. And in the conflict of opinions today we meet up with expressions which people reject today: On the one hand, "the spirit of service"², on the other "overlordship"³; and as a fine coda the prominent discussion: Why is woman unable to be ordained to the priesthood and exercise ordained leadership? What is the reason? This question is ultimately based on the battle raging around the ultimate and deepest nature of man and woman. So, once again: true motherliness, a true spirit of service, as the basic, spiritual attitude in the controversy today.

Now we do not want to go into these trains of thought in detail, but rather describe briefly and systematically what seems to be to be outflow of the right thing in this regard. Our discussion is the outflow of very profound reverence for genuine and true womanhood. I will only attempt to offer a solution by highlighting your (woman's) essential character and enthroning it. What is often rejected by women is the greatest and most beautiful quality that God has built into woman's nature as the reflection of his own essential nature. Yes, you can be sure that God, the great Triune God, has embodied one of the most beautiful rays of his nature in woman.

In other contexts we hear ever and again in various forms those words: "The eternally feminine attracts!" You know how this saying is misinterpreted. What is sensual is shown as the eternal in woman, so that it seems that the sensual, the passionate in woman attracts man. This is not how we understand the saying.

The eternally feminine is the eternal in woman.

And the eternal in woman always attracts, it always uplifts. The eternal in woman is what I have called the most beautiful ray God has incorporated in your nature.

Of course, we may not overlook that there is not just something eternal in woman, but also something demonic. To be honest, we have to say the same of man. He, too, has something eternal and something demonic about him. Our task consists in increasingly overcoming the demonic and in bringing the eternal, the divine, in ourselves to full maturity. That is the meaning of feminine education, also of our own education if we want to be truly great educators.

The eternal in woman has always been the foundation for a matriarchate. If you are somewhat au fait with what is going on today in the women's movement, you will know such expressions as: Woman is like the proletariat, the prisoner of history! It is the task of our present times to liberate both prisoners, to break their chains. If in the past there has been a patriarchate, then the time must come when we can talk of a matriarchate, of the dominance of true motherliness, of the overflow of the eternal in woman onto the whole of our culture, so that motherliness rules and sets the tone for a whole cultural epoch.

The eternal in woman has always been the foundation for a matriarchate, and - at least in all Christian eras - has governed in an outstanding way, it has shared in the government of public life in an outstanding way, but also in private life.

So what is this eternal quality in woman?

It is what we call motherliness, what we have called priestly motherliness. You will find the eternal in woman embodied in the most perfect way in our Lady, in the greatest member of our sex, the Mother of God. The demonic has withdrawn from her totally. Only what is eternal is at work. So let us, the members of her sex, bow in deepest reverence before the eternally feminine in her. And if the eternal in our womanhood is to be developed, where can we find a better means than a fine, personal bonding with her, the "blessed among women".

The eternal in woman

Do you know how *the Mother of God* expressed this eternal quality in an eternally valid form, how she jubilantly proclaimed it down the centuries? "Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum"⁴. There you have the great theme, the great theme for our educator, the great theme that has also to be applied in some way in the education of woman. Ecce ancilla Domini! Do you know who was the cause of this "Ecce ancilla Domini"? Please take a look at the tremendous annunciation scene. The Archangel appeared on behalf of God before the "blessed among women". He bowed low. Yes, he and the whole of heaven, the Triune God, all bowed before the eternal in woman. And that is why the Blessed Mother said: "Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." When we ponder on the picture of the Blessed Mother, let us copy these features of the eternal in woman more and more, let us follow after and search for these features more and more!

Ecce ancilla Domini! If you want a more modern expression for this, I could just as well say: What the Mother of God has said to us in her eternally memorable way can also be formulated as: a *simple, God-imbued and strong spirit of service*. There you have the eternal in woman. Isn't it worth our while to spend some moments considering this eternal in woman?

In these days we are struggling to bring about an all-embracing culture of eternity⁵, that is, we want to become what God has foreseen for us from all eternity. We want to do this not just for our own sakes, not just for God's sake, but also for the sake of those whom God has entrusted to our care, or whom he will entrust to our care. To the extent that we bring this eternal quality in ourselves to full maturity, to the extent that we are able to develop it fully, we will also be able to educate others and bond them inwardly with ourselves.

Listen to those words once again: Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum; or, to the other formulation: a simple, God-imbued spirit of service. What do we hear echoing in the background? The eternal in woman.

What this means in detail - *the eternal in woman's nature and the eternal in woman's religious life*.

I am well aware that I have now touched upon such a complexity of thoughts and values that we would have more than enough material for another conference. I have shown you with a few, short strokes what we recently worked out with the Sisters during their four weeks' retreat⁶. You will say: That must have been an amazing retreat! Well, it isn't necessary to have a retreat in the old style...

Let me very briefly sketch for you what I thought, and what we worked out together, on the subject of the eternal in woman's nature, and the eternal in woman's religious life. However, please see what I have to say in the whole context of our deliberations. You will then

discover that what we are discussing together is nothing else than a constant circumscription of the one, great thought: "priestly motherliness". This priestly motherliness is the sun, it is the eternal in woman.

When we now speak about *the eternal in woman's nature*, we mean what is purely natural, separated from the supernatural and the religious spheres. Of course, we know that the religious dimension must of necessity form woman's nature, otherwise it is impossible to secure the eternal in woman's nature. However, we want to differentiate between the two, and first of all look at woman's nature from a purely natural point of view, setting aside what is specific to woman's religious nature.

You will conclude from this that there is also something eternal in woman's religious nature. Without doubt! Indeed, it is something really great. We may even say: Unless man acquires this eternal quality in woman's nature and religious life, he is incomplete. Everything depends on whether he acquires this eternal quality in woman. This applies to the priest, the married man, indeed to men as a whole, including young men. This is the great mission of the "eternal in woman", this is the great task we have been given: to chisel, bit by bit, this eternal, original and divine quality in woman out of our own personality and that of those entrusted to our care.

The eternal in woman's nature

Indeed, I could perhaps say quite simply: *Ecce ancilla*. That is the *concept of service, it is the reality of the spirit of service*. *Ecce ancilla*. Or, would you prefer to express it differently? A simple, strong spirit of service. That is the eternal in woman's nature. I purposely replaced the word "motherly" with the other concept: "spirit of service or caring for others". It sounds more austere, stronger. Motherliness has become a slogan today. People try to cover up and hide all that is mysterious with the concept "motherliness". So it is probably better to substitute the word "motherliness" at times with the clear concept: "ancilla" "spirit of service". This is how the Mother of God described herself.

Simple, strong spirit of service

With the concept *simple* I mean all that we will later on highlight as the original quality of woman's nature to be close to nature and part of nature; or - if you want to see it in another context - it includes all that I have described in other courses as simple, childlike naivety, this state of being untouched, this purity, this virginity. All this is included in the word "simple". There is something so tremendous included in the concept: "the eternal in woman"! *Strong spirit of service!* The spirit of service is always strong. Being a handmaid includes selfless service, the tremendous, selfless courage to be of service.

With that we have sketched the eternal in woman's nature very briefly. Now we know that the present-day woman's movement is up in arms against this fundamental attitude, against this deep and most profound fundamental attitude in woman.

If we think philosophically, if we try to summarise and deduce the eternal in woman's nature to ultimate principles, we will see this quiet, strong spirit of service as a reflection of the eternally motherly nature of Almighty God. Try to trace back this train of thoughts, this ray of woman's nature, in essentials to our eternal, almighty, Triune God. God's eternal motherliness, God's eternal spirit of service is the ideal of our simple, strong spirit of service.

Our present-day woman's movement, both inside and outside the Church, is in danger of undermining this essential quality, this eternal quality in woman. In the course of time it will push it into the background. Of course, the motive - at least in the Catholic women's movement - is extremely noble. Woman is struggling in public life to be on a par with man. However, it is only too easy to confuse two things: the same *value* and the same *nature*. The good intention is definitely there. We also have to admit that inarticulate masculinity often develops into a proud and rigid overlordship to the detriment of woman's spirit of service. It is one thing to regard this quiet, strong spirit of service as calm and selfless caring, and quite another to regard woman as the plaything, the slave of man. Woman is quite right to defend herself against the latter. The only thing is that she may then not (as the saying goes) "throw the baby out with the bathwater".

If, for a moment, you want to look at great philosophical trains of thought, I would have to say that there are attempts in our culture to bring about an ontological revolution, and attempts to bring about a revolution in activities.

An ontological revolution

will never attain its aim. An ontological revolution is a revolution against the eternal in human beings. And the eternal in human beings is as eternal as God, because humankind is made in the image and likeness of God. If the women's movement wants to bury what is deepest, the deepest natural characteristic of woman, if it wants to ban this strong, powerful, quiet spirit of service from the essential nature of woman, we can be sure that it will be condemned to uselessness. These would be attempts to bring about an ontological revolution.

Attempts to revolutionize activities

will always be made. We could, for example, consider the degree and extent to which the spirit of service needs to be exercised out of consideration for a culture. Such discussions are always in place.

Ancilla Domini. Quiet, strong spirit of service.

If you want to see ultimate realities in this regard, I ask you to meditate on the life of our Lady. Please do so! Perhaps you are looking for a subject for your meditation tomorrow. Consider for a moment: how did our Lady exercise her quiet, strong spirit of service in her life? What did she say? How did her life follow her words? Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.

You can realise that I am merely concerned with offering you an outline sketch of the subject, because there are far too many thoughts to be able to enlarge on them all in such a short course. Perhaps we could remain with this train of thoughts, because it offers you an essential method for your own education. Even the man cannot manage without the eternal in woman.

Where do we find the eternal in our pastoral method?

In a quiet and strong spirit of service. If the proud, austere dominance of man is not mitigated, education is absolutely impossible. Someone may be a ringleader, but true leadership is unthinkable without this eternal in woman, without this selfless service.

If you want to follow up these thoughts, climb up to the Triune God. All that the Triune God

does, his creative activity, his redemptive activity, his healing activity, is nothing else than selfless service. God created us because he wanted to serve us. He holds us in existence. Why? So that he can serve us. God governs and guides the world, he directs the little and great destinies of people and the world. Why? There is always the same spirit: the eternal in woman, the quiet and strong spirit of service.

Think of God's redemptive actions. What is the essence of Christian redemption, the representative redemptive activity of Christ? Our Lord incorporates us in himself: He wants to redeem us. What are we dealing with here? Once again this quiet and strong spirit of service on the part of our great Redeemer, the Son of God made man.

It simply cannot be different. If a person, if a man, wants to work fruitfully and successfully, he must make the eternal in woman his own. You see, St Paul said: "I want to be all things to all people"⁷, and we are told that our Lord washed the feet of his disciples⁸. That is always an aureole of the eternal in woman, "Ecce ancilla Domini!", this quiet, strong spirit of service. With that I have amplified the one great thought: the theme of our lives must be priestly motherliness, or a quiet and strong spirit of service. Only when this unseen, quiet and strong spirit of service is at work will it be possible for someone we are educating to bond with us, and for this bond to be transferred to the Triune God according to the laws governing this bonding⁹. With that I have shown you the eternal in woman's nature.

However, if we want to cover the whole complex of thoughts and values, at least to some extent, we must draw the conclusions from this eternal quality in woman's nature to the mission of the eternal in woman.

The mission of woman

includes a mission to redeem man and a mission to redeem our present-day culture. From this you can repeatedly conclude: to the extent that we develop the eternal in ourselves, we have exercised the greatest apostolate a woman is capable of.

A mission to redeem man

Please do not misunderstand this. Listen carefully and notice how I follow up a line between the various opinions in the battle going on today. I am not saying that woman has been born in order to be bound to a man. This is the great thing, the tremendous breakthrough in the personality of our Blessed Lady. She embodies only the eternal in woman, the demonic is completely excluded. She does not say: Ecce ancilla viri, but: Ecce ancilla Domini. That is to say, woman is not bound in the deepest roots of her being to man, at least she is not necessarily bound to man. However, what is necessary is the spirit of service. And that is the great thing - our Lady is not bound to a man¹⁰. She transferred her spirit of service directly to God. Thus we see that motherliness is not merely physical, it is essentially a spiritual motherliness. And this spiritual motherliness is the metaphysical, it is the immutable, the absolute, the eternal in woman's nature. As the great prophet, the Mother of God initiated a movement of sinlessness, of virginity that was to progress through the centuries and millennia. Thanks be to God! That should also be our pride: We are not absolutely dependent on man. In the deepest depths of our being there is an urge, a drive to serve. However, this does not have to be directed only to man.

To put it more clearly: Even when this quiet and strong spirit of service is concentrated on the

man in marriage, we may not confuse the word "service" with "being waited upon". There is a great difference. The victory of genuine womanhood does not consist in slavery - in that woman is depicted either as the slave or the pretty plaything of man. We have to see things very clearly today, and we have to show clearly where the deepest and ultimate reality in woman is to be found. And as women we should be proud of being what we are. We do not want man's nature, we want our own. God has created us this way, because he has embodied a ray of his glory, a ray of his being in us.

The dangerous tendency today is that, because woman today is undervalued, people try make her more masculine, while on the other hand bringing her feminine appeal into play in a one-sided way. This is only possible because we do not have a strong awareness of our mission, we lack a strong awareness of our status, a strong awareness of our own sex. If you could understand these thoughts, which I am just touching upon, in their ultimate context, if you could take them with you into your own education and formation, as well as into the education and formation of girls, you will see how you will promote a sound, holy pride in being a woman, and this will have a redemptive effect on the alarming situation of our culture today.

However, let me remain with our topic. I have said that the eternal in woman has a twofold mission - first of all, to redeem man. Can you understand what I am trying to say? You redeem man through what you are, not through bonding directly with a man. If you want to have clarity on the whole subject, you must allow philosophy and psychology to tell you which essential elements have made history in the course of the centuries. There are two elements - the one is static, the other dynamic.

Static and dynamic

These are the two elements that have always created tension in the history of the world and that in essentials have made history in every age.

Now, where do you find the static and the dynamic elements most characteristically expressed? The static or bonded element is typical to woman's nature, the dynamic to man's nature. To use an image - woman's nature can be depicted by a circle, which constantly focuses on its centre. In man's nature you find the straight line that aims constantly towards eternity. These are the two elements that have always created history. If you prefer another expression, in woman you find the soul, in man the intellect. This gives us the essential nature and the mission of woman, of the eternally feminine, in relation to human nature as such. Perhaps I should express more clearly what we understand by

the static or bonded character of woman's nature.

We might do better to say - please understand the expression correctly - this bonding is a bonding with nature, both *an animal*¹¹ and *an intellectual-spiritual bonding with nature*. This is the tremendous greatness of woman's nature, which can naturally also become her weakness, because the divine and the demonic are often so closely related. This is why man looks at woman either as an "angel", or as an object for the satisfaction of his desires. It therefore depends on us (i.e. on woman) what effect we want to have on the world around us - whether we want to be seen as close to nature and spiritualised, or as beings who are merely driven by their instincts. At any rate, this is the essential nature of every true woman: bonded to nature, animal and spiritual bonding.

Have you understood that correctly - *an animal bonding with nature*? The way a true woman is by nature bonded to an place, to people, is a most attractive quality in her nature. Here is real greatness. This is the circular movement. The circle revolves constantly on the same fixed central point. This is a reflection of the eternal circulation of love, of the bonding within the Triune God. The love of the Father and Son is so great that it brings forth another Person, the Holy Spirit. If I see things correctly, you can instinctively feel how bolshevism actually creates the de-humanised person when it separates woman from the family, from the clan, from possessions. Satan is at work there, because the ultimate and deepest depths of woman's nature are damaged and taken from her. Vice versa, notice how strongly we have to work towards considering this animal bonding with nature!

There was a time when I could not understand why Sisters fell ill when they were transferred. Also, when the decrees from Rome arrived which laid down that superiors might only remain in office (at the same place) for a certain number of years - until then it was from twenty to twenty-five years - I could not understand why they were necessary. I had not yet had much contact with woman's soul. How many superiors at the time died immediately after they were deprived of their office! Why? Because the personal core of woman's nature had been hit - this animal bonding with nature. This is the explanation of the deepest root of woman's feeling of being at home, but also of the mission of woman's nature in relation to man's nature.

Now, please do not think that *woman's bonding with nature* is merely animal. It is also *intellectual and spiritual*. Once a woman has grasped a truth, she holds onto it with every fibre of her being. Hence, when the sublimation of human nature is as work as feminine religious devotion, when woman has grasped God with every fibre of her being, you will find the same sound and passionate self-surrender of woman to God and Christ. A thought, a tremendous personality, lives in her and woman is bonded with every fibre of her being to this person. If you want to see the apotheosis of this love, look at the Woman under the cross. Can you see the strength behind her stance? The men run away, the woman is bonded to the Person. And she would have been quite prepared to give her life for this tremendous Person she loved.

What about *man's nature*?

I have thought for a long time about this to find the right expression. - It is not my task today to provide you with an analysis of man's nature. But the essential nature of man is not to be found in his bonding with the spirit - that would say too much - but in his being *moved by the intellect*. A true man is always moved by the intellect. That is why he will always be called a vagrant, a vagabond in life who is eternally on the go. He has to be given a home by the eternal in woman.

Of course, to be honest I would have to say that the eternal in woman is not simply embodied in woman's nature, but also in man's. I am generalising. There are men who are more feminine than women, and there are women who are more masculine than men. You know the expressions: sissies or pansies and their opposites. So you should think about what is most strongly expressed in yourselves. If we want to educate, form and understand ourselves as the image and likeness of the Triune God, we will have to try to find out where our bonding with nature has been developed, our animal and intellectual bonding with nature. With it we redeem man from his one-sidedness. You see, the eternal in woman should redeem and resolve the dynamism in man, and the eternal in man should gradually redeem

and resolve the static qualities in woman.

Can you feel from what has been said which task and mission has been given to us because of our nature? It again confronts us with our method of education, which is based on the order of being. What do we want to do?

Ensoul(12)

Woman's nature is the 'ensouling' element, man's nature is dynamically moved by the intellect, it seeks action. If the two don't exist together, there can be no cultural progress. So what does man have to acquire from the eternal in woman? This ability to give expression to the soul - or to put it very simply - this ability to love personally. This is so essential. If a woman is only motivated by ideas, if she only backs ideas, she is merely a commander. A true leader has to embody both elements. They are mixed and divided, but both have to be present simultaneously - a great idea, which one wants to serve, and personal love for people, the followers. That is essential. We can see this in the Triune God, in the God-Man, in all the great apostles and saints. Where this personal love is not present, you can be a commander, but there will not be a personal relationship. So we have to show a heart-felt, personal commitment to the people we are leading.

Can you feel from what has been said that this eternal quality in human nature is something wonderfully great? And isn't it worth all the efforts of a man, of a human being, to release this eternal quality in woman's nature more and more? It is here that we find the greatness of our task - to save the eternal in woman and bear it into a new cultural epoch. That is why there is so much chaos in the world today - the eternal in woman is no longer recognised and acknowledged. Our entire education of women, whether of mothers or girls, must ultimately be directed towards saving woman's nature and bearing it into a new epoch. We have to do this wherever we may work in an educational sense.

You can feel that this is not an easy subject, but it is not as complicated as it may seem. Actually sound womanly instincts should immediately find the right tone. But we have become so terribly insecure, because our whole culture has rejected everything and we are faced with completely new circumstances. This causes tremendous uncertainty and insecurity. How great, therefore, is our task as educators of girls! If we manage to educate just one girl to be a true girl, what a wonderful contribution we will have made to our culture. You may be sure that the devil knows what he is up to when he causes socialism and bolshevism to denigrate the eternal in woman.

To repeat: What have we analysed and characterised in our method? *Reverent service and heart-felt love.*

This is how a woman redeems man, the eternal vagrant, through her being. To the extent that we exemplify true and genuine womanhood, we redeem the people living today, in particular man. However, this does not mean that we have to be dependent on man. By no means! But if I am married, this must remain my characteristic quality - reverent service and heart-felt love. If the two descend to the level of the animal drives, the eternal in woman has become demonic. From this you can feel how the eternal in woman - no matter whether this is the expression of a personal attachment to a man, or whether it is has developed more generally - how this eternal in woman always presupposes great loneliness for the woman: loneliness in God and with God. Of course, with that we have already reached into the field of woman's religious life.

I can feel that this train of thoughts is strange to all of us. Nevertheless, it may be enough if

we are given a push in this direction.

Perhaps I should add another thought. When I spoke about woman's mission to redeem man, I should have added another point -

the mission of the eternal in woman to redeem woman in our culture

This is a great mission. Our present culture has become so soulless. If you understand and value the saying about woman: "Where a woman is at work, there you must find the soul!" you will realise that woman has an absolutely indispensable task. Here, too, unfortunately, because woman wants to copy man, because she tries to become masculine, she drags our present culture constantly downwards, she co-operates in the dehumanisation of present-day humankind, of our present-day culture.

Ensoul! Wherever a woman is at work, she must want to give expression to her soul. This, again, is our great method: we don't just want to govern, lead and command, we want to serve reverently, to give ourselves to others out of love, to be the soul everywhere, to imbue everywhere with soul, even when we have sewn great thoughts. That is the ideal of the educator. That is the ideal of man as leader and educator. It is the ideal of woman as educator and leader.

Were you ever aware of what great things are laid down in your nature? Let us learn to be proud of it! Let us personally learn to be proud of it and to pass on this pride to those entrusted to our care!

Please do not forget that we are talking about the eternal in woman. If you want to summarise it all and look into *the ideal as it has been realized by the Blessed Mother*, you will find that she embodied everything I have spoken about in principle. She is our Mother. She has exercised her quiet and strong spirit of service (Magdtum) not just in relation to her only begotten Son, but also in relation to us. Quiet and strong service! *We* are the recipients of her quiet and strong service. Notice what is included in this eternal quality in woman's humanity! Reverent, feminine, selfless service. She is our Mother, our priestly Mother. With what reverence she has served our life, our task in life! Please try to find out: How has she loved us with all her heart? How does she still live us today with all her heart? She is suppliant omnipotence, after all. Notice how she imbued with soul all that our great God placed in us like a seed!

I don't want to enlarge on these thoughts. Please let them sink into you. You will then see how hidden and fine fibres of your soul connect us and unite with the Blessed among women. How wrong it is for us women and educators to think: Not too much devotion to Mary! Otherwise our Lord will be forced into the background. That is wrong. If you do without our Lady, you do without what will bring out the eternal in woman's nature. If you try to do without our Lady, I ask you: How are we to restore a vital awareness of what is genuine womanly greatness to women today? And if you want to show the connection between our Lady and our Lord, you have her before you as the feminine expression of our Lord. Whoever knows life and leads a religious life will not find any conflict here. Such a person is not so stupid as to say: Because the sexes are so different, we will leave devotion to Mary to the men. That is absolutely wrong. We, too, must be proud and not rest until we have acquired an extraordinary love for the Mother of God.

In our Lady we have an example to genuine and true motherliness. And we want to enter her school. We are the recipients of this genuine motherliness. And we are proud of it! So let us make use of these few days in Schoenstatt to feel how much we are children of our Blessed

Mother. Let us say to her: If all that we have heard is true, how secure I feel in you! This is the advantage of childlike bonding to a true mother. We then look at the world through the personality of our Blessed Mother. Ultimately we also find our whole need for security satisfied for all time - in her, the "blessed among women", in her, the strong woman.

These are just a few, fleeting thoughts about the eternal in woman. My intention was merely to attempt a breakthrough. You can also see that we have to follow up the trends in our present-day culture.

Now please do not forget to pray for the grace to understand all these great truths. We will have achieved a lot if we have managed to see these thoughts in the context we have discussed, but even more if we are allowed to chisel out the eternal in our feminine nature.

Notes

1. See Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster: The cultural task of woman, p.20ff. (I don't know whether his books are available in English.) Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster (1869-1966), philosopher, educationist and politician, professor in Munich from 1914-18, emigrated 1933 to Switzerland, and in 1940 to New York. Returned to Switzerland in 1963. He was a protagonist of Christian politics and openly opposed the Prussian and Nazi idea of all power being vested in the state.

2. Magdtum: There is just no English equivalent. Fr Kentenich is referring to our Lady's response to the angel: Behold, the handmaid (Magd) of the Lord! I have interpreted it as the spirit of service, or caring. It could well be interpreted as woman's nurturing role.

3. Herrentum: "Herr" being understood as lord and master, so the term indicates the dominance of man.

4. "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Lk 1,38, CTS Version, 1989).

5. "Ewigkeitskultur" - a word created by Fr Kentenich. It could be translated literally as "eternity culture". Fr Kentenich explains it in what follows.

6. The Novitiate of the Sisters of Mary ends with four weeks' retreat and their first temporary incorporation into the community.

7. see 1 Cor. 9, 22 and 10,33

8. see John 13, 1-11

9. i.e. the laws of transference and detachment enlarged on in the previous conference.

10. see Lk 1,34

11. "Animal" does not mean "bestial", nor is Fr Kentenich using it in a negative sense. What he is aiming at here is what scientists like Konrad Lorenz, Alfred Portmann, Jakob Uexküll and others described in the image of the nest. Woman is not merely a "nest-bound" being, she is herself a nest. As such she has an affinity to nature and the forces of nature which is more rare in man.

12. Again we have a German concept which defies translation. *Beseelen* means to fill with soul. An example: The way a woman places a vase of flowers or serves a meal shows whether she has put her whole soul, her whole self, into what she has done. We talk of something being soulless. Beseelen is the opposite - filled with 'soul'.