

Sixth Conference

Priestly Motherliness in the Light of Faith

We still find ourselves dealing with the first point of our general teaching on principles. We gave it the heading: "Direction". There are actually two directions - the one is to be found in the educator, the other in the person being educated. In the educator we call it priestly motherliness. Please note that a very great deal depends on whether we increasingly give expression to this direction in our own lives. More depends on it than if we were to use a whole host of little tricks. We won't achieve much that way. The main thing in education is and remains the personality. To the extent that we exemplify this great direction of priestly motherliness in our whole nature, we will be educated educators.

We now have to deal with two big topics: Priestly motherliness in the light and battle of our times, and priestly motherliness in the light of faith. Yesterday's talk dealt with the first point: Priestly motherliness in the light and battle of our times. There were two starting points from which we developed the whole thought-complex. In the battle of our times we have, first of all, the problem of the leader, the concept of true leadership, of course also in relation to man's leadership. We then applied whatever was useful in that field to womanhood, and adapted it meaningfully to ourselves. The concept of true and genuine leadership has been chiselled out in the other camp as priestly fatherliness. When we apply this to ourselves, we will have to talk about priestly motherliness. So the key thought, the starting point, remains the problem of the leader. At this point I would like to remind you of what we said about two big laws according to which the relationship between educator and person being educated, between the true leader and the led, may and must take place.

You may have discovered from what was said why so many women have become so insecure about their instincts today. In the course of this congress I have given you a number of reasons. This is one of those reasons: If woman's need to be supported and loved, if her need to be secure, is the ultimate root of her inner urge to enter into a fine relationship, to be bonded to a leader, you can conclude how few women and girls have been able to truly satisfy this need for security, because there are so few leaders to be found in either sex - men and women. That is the great tragedy. Now that our women and girls today have increasingly lost their religious nature, a girl is unable to satisfy her need for security either with human beings or with God. If people were thoroughly and naturally religious, it might be possible to find a substitute. Perhaps! However, the normal way to satisfy our need for security in God is to satisfy this need in relation to some person.

Priestly motherliness in the battle of our times.

We found a second starting-point. It is the battle for the core of woman's true being, of woman's true nature. We discussed this yesterday evening. I only described the object of the battle very briefly, and then showed it in positive terms, in that I showed what is the core of woman's true being. We find it again in the eternally memorable words of our Lady: *Ecce ancilla Domini* - or, to put it in more modern terms: simple, God-imbued and strong spirit of service. There we have the eternal in woman. In our Lady everything

that is demonic, everything that involves inordinate human or sub-human passions has been removed from her nature. In her we have the transfigured embodiment, the exclusive embodiment of the eternal in woman. And we differentiate between the eternal in woman's human nature and the eternal in woman's religious nature.

Yesterday evening I suggested that you should meditate today on the thoughts I presented to you. We were given more than sufficient material for our self-activity and self-education. There is also material there by which we can orientate our educational activity with others. We won't so easily be able to grasp the fullness of thoughts for ourselves personally. We will need to pray about it often and meditate on the material more often. If you have carried out my suggestion, which questions did you ask yourselves this morning in your meditation? There were probably three.

Firstly: Am I personally striving to embody true womanliness?

Am I personally trying to bring out the eternal in my nature? Or have I not made, do I not make too many concessions to the demonic, to what draws and has drawn me downwards?

Yesterday I was told about a discussion group formed by a university professor. You probably know that the questions we answered so quickly and surely yesterday are the subject of discussion in academic circles. And the university professor remarked very pessimistically: I no longer believe in the modern woman. What was his reason? Why did the professor doubt in the usefulness and educability of woman's nature today? He himself suffers because of his lack of faith, but stated: I no longer consider it possible to educate women today to make sacrifices. - After all, this is the core of true motherliness. We gave it another name. And that is why we also added: Instead of "motherliness" we want to use the concept "spirit of service" (Magdtum). The professor had a number of reasons for considering it impossible.

Firstly, woman is actively engaged in earning a living, and despite the unnaturalness all around, she enjoys a number of benefits. Now when she should become a mother, what a tremendous life of sacrifice that costs! And the professor considers it impossible to educate modern woman to live such a life of sacrifice.

Let us ask ourselves: Aren't we also infected by a wrongly understood emancipation of woman, even though we look up to the ideal not of physical motherhood and motherliness, but to spiritual motherhood and motherliness, the attitude and reality of spiritual service? When we hear the word "woman" or "girl", it must be synonymous with serious striving for a really heroic life of sacrifice. Let us not ask what is required of man's nature. Think, first of all, of yourselves. So ask yourselves: What is my attitude to making sacrifices?

To start with the professor had also helped the women's movement. Now, however, he is sorry he did so. If he could, he would turn back the wheel of history, because the whole women's movement has disappointed him so much. It is possible that the leaders of that time had wanted something else than what has become of the movement today. At that time people had thought that through a sound women's movement, or women's emancipation, feminine forces would be released and bring soul into the work places in order to make them more human and livable. However, the opposite has happened. Woman has not brought more soul onto the job, she has made the work places more

soulless. The professor now finds it really irritating when he has to be served at a counter by a woman ...

Here, too, we should ask ourselves whether we haven't become too businesslike and whether we haven't remained too un-feminine? Even when we have to work in business, the essence of woman, the feminine element, must come to the fore. In this regard, also, we have to ask ourselves whether we have not become lifeless machines through big business, whether we haven't become business women.

Finally, a third question: I have illustrated a number of times why woman by nature instinctively reaches out to masculine values. It is because of the uncertainty of the present-day scale of values. Consider for a moment whether we do not personally strive in hidden but powerful ways with our whole being for these masculine values. Haven't we made too many concessions to masculine instincts, without even being aware of it? Do we really embody noble and pure womanhood? Is that what we are? Please think about it! Answer these questions for yourselves in some quiet hours.

Today it is like this - whoever wants to take her bearings from true femininity will find very few subjects from which she can learn it. Most women have accepted too much of the present-day zeitgeist(1). So we can say from the start that also we have done so. You can examine your consciences together so that you see clearly where and in how far you have deviated from the idea of true femininity without even being aware of it. Please think about it! We should pray about it today during our meditation.

A second point. We see ourselves as the educators of our girls. Haven't we made too many concessions to the zeitgeist also in this regard? *Do we really see the ideal of genuine and true femininity so clearly, the ideal of a genuine and true girl?*

Unfortunately there is tremendous insecurity today about genuine feminine values and ideals. I am almost inclined to say that it would be a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance if we allowed our Marian ideal to retreat into the background. You will find no substitute for our Marian ideal. Our girls and children should again be able to take their bearings from this ideal, so that they can have an absolutely clear and reliable ideal for a true girl and woman to look up to. This confusion about a scale of values must be replaced by security, and we find this in our Marian ideal.

Please ask yourselves: Have we educated those entrusted to us in this way, or was it just a matter of a medal of Mary, "Holy Mary, Mother of God ..." and that's the end of it? You can't awaken an ideal for girls in this way. You must have soaked up the ideal fully and completely into yourselves. And something which you can't give yourselves must resound in you. Whoever shows and describes this ideal must exemplify it in such a way that, on the one hand, it points to the heights, and, on the other, it must be integrated in every way into practical, everyday life as it really is.

These things are decisively important for education. They are far more essential than if we were to concern ourselves with a lot of trivia, and constantly measure the values and degree of feelings in the sense of a dated psychology. No, you have to take the risk, otherwise we will always remain incompetent in the field of education.

A third question. We closed yesterday's conference with the insight that *the Mother of God is the most perfect and transfigured embodiment of noble femininity, of simple, God-imbued and strong service.*

At the same time we are the recipients of her motherliness. We should recall this in these days. All the great things we suspect, all that we know about true womanliness, about the reality of a true spirit of service, about the transfiguration of this simple, God-imbued and strong service in the Mother of God, may be applied to our relationship to her, the "blessed among women". So in these days we should at least admit how helpless we are - we are helpless in our self education and we are helpless in educating others. This is also part of the formation of a genuine educator. There is no need to do this from the ascetical point of view, but merely from an educational standpoint. We may not forget that, as we believe, our Lady is particularly at work here in the shrine as our educator. Nor may we forget that we find ourselves at present in the season of Pentecost. Therefore, all the childlikeness alive in us should be awakened. And this great woman should pour out on us all the great qualities of genuine motherliness she possesses, because she is the Suppliant Omnipotence(2).

So let us unite ourselves with her in prayer and call out to God with all our hearts: Emitte Spiritum tuum! Let us place our finger on the wound and tell her how helpless we feel.

Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur et renovabis faciem terrae(3). A *new creation*(4) should come about. We want to go out into practical, everyday life afterwards as perfect educators. We want to form the world into Christ. Indeed, I may add: *the Marian formation of the world into Christ.* If we want to reach out to this goal, we must first of all embody it ourselves, Christ must have taken on shape and form in us. The Marian formation of the world of girls and women into Christ.

I think I had to say this briefly in order to catch the emotions that have probably been awakened in us. Now let us return to the subject matter we have started to deal with. In essentials we have completed the first point: Motherliness in the light and battle of our times. You are most probably awaiting a few thoughts about

the eternal in woman's religious nature.

Strictly speaking this does not fit in here. So I will only touch on it briefly. Perhaps we could take it as the subject matter for a whole congress.

Is there something eternal also in woman's religious life?

There has to be. You know the great law: Gratia non destruit sed perficit et elevat naturam - grace does not destroy nature, it perfects and elevates it(5).

So if there is anything eternal in woman's nature, what is eternal in her religious nature must take hold of and ennoble what is eternal in her human nature; what is eternal in our feminine religious nature must therefore have an extraordinary mission to fulfil in the religious trends of our times, as well as towards man.

Where do you find this eternal quality in woman's religious nature expressed in a single formulation? Ecce ancilla Domini; *ancilla Domini.* Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum. Or, to formulate it another way: simple, *God-imbued* and strong service. Here we have chosen the word "God-imbued". So this is not just a divinised service, no, it is a God-imbued service. What resounds here, and it resounds very strongly, is an attitude and action of protest against the present-day de-divinisation of the world.

The present-day world, the people living today, are to some extent completely deprived of God. We have to oppose this de-divinised humanity, the de-divinised woman and girl, with a God-imbued service. Woman's nature has first of all to be God-imbued in relation to God: the reality that we are God's children; then in relation to the God-Man: the reality that we are members of Christ. I know that you can hardly understand what I am trying to say with these few expressions.

You see, the original character of woman's religious nature has to be seen and evaluated from two points of view. We will be able to show more clearly that she possesses *an original childhood and childlike attitude towards God, and an original membership in relation to the only begotten Son of God.*

What is this original character? Here too you have to see that also in this regard your sex is much more gifted and graced than is man. I may say that if man does not achieve at the end of his life through slow striving and struggling what is present with you at the beginning of your striving for holiness, he cannot become holy. It is a great pity that we reach out towards masculine values, when the values we possess by nature are much greater than those of man's religious nature. Of course, in the course of time we have also to acquire a masculine religious life. There must always be a balance.

The original quality of her childhood before God

How does this show? I shall make just one statement: *hers is a naive and personal bonding with God.* It is natural to woman.

And what is man's nature, man's way, at least where it is strongly expressed? It can be characterised as an intellectual, theoretical bonding with God. It is very imperfect. Unless man finally reaches what woman possesses by nature, he will never become holy. Why, then, do we reach out towards values which in the end mean a devaluation of our whole personality and religious life?

Consider what is meant when we speak of a naive, not an intellectual bonding with God. There you can see all the spontaneity, the childlike quality, the integrity, the purity in a noble woman's nature. This is the bonding of a person, in this case of woman, with God as a Person. A naive, personal bonding with God. When you see a noble-minded representative of your sex, what an attraction such a person exercises! There is nothing bigoted about it. I can imagine nothing more natural and beautiful than this naive, personal bonding with God. There you have both to perfection: the harmony between nature and supernature. Only when a woman has attained this degree of simple religiousness can she work as a ferment, as a leaven for her whole surrounding.

Please consider for a moment: Have I striven for this simple form of religiousness? Have I educated girls in this way? Or have I led them zig-zag ways? It is actually a crime against woman's nature if we lead them masculine ways. Of course, we often don't know better. And who can tell us this in such a way that we can grasp it reflexively? Woman isn't inclined by nature to do this. For that man has to be there. But when we have taken in these things, we must also go our way consistently and build "trenches": men should go their way, and women should go the way mapped out for them by God. Please discuss this among yourselves.

Membership in the Mystical Body, being God-imbued in the God-Man

The reality of our membership in the Mystical Body takes on a very original form in woman's nature, an original form which man has to conquer at the cost of long striving. Also here I would like to choose a formulation. I think it would be best to say: *because we are filled with Christ we wash the feet of Christ's members*(6). Because we are filled with Christ! Look at what this includes! This being filled with Christ: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. You see, the noble and pure nature of a young woman, how it glows through and through, it is completely penetrated and filled by Christ, it is filled to overflowing by Christ, "*gratia plena*"(7). Look at the quiet way it becomes saturated with Christ, filled to overflowing by Christ(8). Because we are filled to overflowing by Christ we wash the feet of Christ's members.

Do you know what *man's character* is like in this regard? By nature he is inclined *to be motivated by the idea of Christ's kingdom to sacrifice himself for God's kingdom*. He is motivated by ideas. What he lacks is the personal dimension, this simple, spontaneous and personal contact and bonding. It is here that we find a genuine woman's bonding with nature. It is merely lifted up into supernature. Woman's bonding with nature is what has to redeem man from his one-sided religiousness. Of course, the opposite is also true. The eternal in woman's religious nature has to some extent to become sound through the eternal in man's religious nature, so that the river flowing through us does not break its banks. We have to allow ourselves to be given banks by man's objective and reflexive way.

Please take this thought home with you: By virtue of our feminine nature God has given us something great, and we want to hold onto it. If only you will allow yourselves to be inspired to search once again and to discover yourselves. Discover God and the Blessed Mother in yourself.

If you are interested, please study how *this original feminine character of being God-imbued* came to perfection, showed to perfection *in the life of our Lady*. Observe this naive, personal bonding with God in her life.

You can study this in the annunciation scene. You can study it in her prayer life, indeed in her whole life. Please do this! You will time and again find that she is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, because she is the smallest, the most naive, the most childlike(9). These are tremendous values, but today they are not highly regarded. However, they are the highest values. And because we have thrown them away and hence no longer belong to the chosen people, but rather to the rejected people, we carry out our mission so badly.

Please go on to study the life of our Lady to see how this state of being filled with Christ motivated her to wash the feet of Christ's members.

I only wanted to present these thoughts as an inspiration. In essentials they do not fit into this context. Please remember above all - we have now arrived at the end of the first point - priestly motherliness in the battle of our times, and secondly:

Priestly motherliness in the light of faith

Before we go into this, before we get down to the core of the matter, I would like to make a number of *introductory remarks*.

Firstly, priestly motherliness, and on the other hand priestly fatherliness. These ideals have naturally also been ventilated in the Catholic camp as the qualities of a leader, but priestly motherliness is mentioned relatively rarely, because, as I have already indicated, people have until now tailored the leadership problem in essentials to man. Nevertheless we may uphold: When a sound analysis of the concept has been started,

you will in every instance have to come to a halt before the *concept of leadership as fatherliness and motherliness*, not as friendship. At the time when they tried in the Catholic camp to come to grips with present-day psychology with reference to people today, they made a mistake when they accepted the opinion that leadership includes friendship. It isn't friendship, it is motherliness and fatherliness.

Let us take hold of the concept and consider it: fatherliness and motherliness, on the one hand, and friendship on the other. If fatherliness and motherliness are at work as the fundamental attitude of true leaders, we have both distance and closeness at the same time. And that is essential - *spiritual distance and spiritual closeness*. This does not exclude my behaving like a fatherly or motherly friend to my grown-up spiritual children. But the emphasis must in essentials be placed on the words fatherly or motherly. What does that mean? When I may feel that I am a child and may behave accordingly, for example, towards my confessor, friendship should be consciously excluded. When friendship is too strongly emphasised, distance is too much excluded. And in this instance there must always be spiritual distance, although also spiritual closeness. This is always sufficiently included in the two concepts - motherliness and fatherliness. Vice versa, when we may develop spiritual motherhood, we must consciously be aware that the fundamental note in my soul life is motherliness, not friendship. If I only concentrate on friendship, many intrigues will develop as time goes by(10). However this does not mean that towards adults this motherliness may not be mixed with friendship. It is the same at home. The grown up children are treated according to their age by their mother. The mother behaves like a motherly friend towards them. This is an essentially different thing to merely fostering friendship.

So please follow this up sometime. I cannot dwell on this point any longer. However today, when our values have disintegrated so much, we have to follow up these things much more energetically. We have to see, live and strive more clearly for the ultimate values. That is one introductory remark.

Now for a second *introductory remark*.

We should actually look more deeply and penetrate more deeply into the depths of dogma. This would tell us that *every form of leadership is ultimately in the light of faith a way of sharing in Christ's leadership*.

What does that mean? To start with we have to recall that because we are baptised, because we have God's life in us, we are members of Christ. The reality of our membership in Christ! Seen supernaturally, the reality of our motherhood and motherliness is rooted in the reality of our membership in Christ. Since we are members of Christ, since as members of Christ we have been born into an organism, since we have been drawn into an organism, we have a vital task, a vital responsibility in relation to the neighbouring members of Christ(11). Just as one member of the body has a vital responsibility for the other members, so do we. In this way, the reality of our membership in Christ becomes the foundation for the reality of our motherhood.

These are all very succinct statements. They have to be lived and experienced. Let us please hold onto these thoughts. I want to repeat: *the reality of our motherhood in Christ's kingdom is based on the reality of our membership in Christ*. So everything we have heard about the Mystical Body of Christ fits in here(12). And we should keep this in mind in its extreme form. However, it does not touch the ultimate reality. We need to

talk not just in general terms about the reality of our membership in Christ, and hence of the foundation for the reality of our motherhood.

If we penetrate still more deeply, dogma tells us that all who have been baptised and confirmed are not just members of Christ in a general sense, they have been incorporated into the priesthood of the eternal High Priest, the God-Man(13). So all of us, who have been marked with an indelible sign by baptism and confirmation, share in the leadership of the eternal High Priest, the God-Man.

Also these truths have been lost to us in the course of the centuries(14). Even if we hear them as words, it does not mean that they influence us as values. We should attend a retreat on the subject one day, so that we may experience and live the reality of those words: we share ontologically, not just ethically, in the high priesthood and eternal leadership of Christ. I think that if we can understand this, we will have a standpoint from which we can analyse our leadership and educational activity in the light of faith.

Whatever applies in to light of faith to a priest, also applies in essentials to me as a leader. What in the light of faith has to be the fundamental attitude of a priest, must in essentials also be my fundamental attitude as a lay priest, because I have not merely been incorporated ontologically into Christ, I have also been given the task to work as educator and teacher through outstanding motherliness and motherhood as a result of this incorporation.

This gives us the metaphysical standpoint we need. Now I need only show you how, in the light of faith, the fundamental attitude of a priest is that of true fatherliness. I will then know that my fundamental attitude as educator must be that of true motherliness. From this vantage point we can now illustrate three thoughts briefly. We base ourselves on the ground of faith. I shall cast light on our fundamental attitude, on the great direction for our own lives, in three ways:

1. theological,
2. psychological,
3. pedagogical.

Of course we are again faced with a fullness of thoughts, with a whole world of thoughts. So let us at least hold onto the idea.

1. In the light of theology

It must be stated that the priesthood really is spiritual fatherliness. To develop fatherliness, to be a father, means awakening and begetting life, spiritual life, helping to deepen and perfect life. Administering the sacraments - what does that mean? Doesn't it mean awakening spiritual life, begetting spiritual life? Think of baptism, of the Eucharist, of confession. That is the fundamental tone of the opinion about true leadership, about priestly fatherliness in the light of faith.

You will find this fundamental attitude expressed extremely clearly and in a classic form by St Paul. I want to quote the passages. Please reflect on them yourselves afterwards.

In the first letter to the Corinthians, 4,14-15: "I am not writing this to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children." Notice how he takes the way he regards those entrusted to his care totally for granted. They are his beloved children. His basic attitude: spiritual fatherhood. I became your father in Christ, so you are my children! "For though you might have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. Indeed, in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel." What does Paul mean? To proclaim the Word of God means begetting spiritual children, feeding spiritual children. It is simply his fundamental attitude; he takes it for granted, it is well known.

Or, take the fine and classic passage in the letter to the Galatians, 4,17-18. The apostle even becomes tender. Usually he is an old warhorse. In this case he is not satisfied with regarding himself as a father, he sees himself as a mother. "They make much of you, but for no good purpose; they want to exclude you, so that you may make much of them. It is good to be made much of for a good purpose at all times, and not only when I am present with you. My little children, for whom I am again in the pain of childbirth ..." Look at how clearly and classically he has the courage to make use of such comparisons. "I am again in the pain of childbirth until Christ is formed in you." What is the purpose of our fatherliness and motherliness? The formation of Christ. Christ should take on shape and form. And every action we undertake should be seen as the pangs of childbirth. "I wish I were present with you now and could change my tone, for I am perplexed about you" (Gal.4,20). What tone would he choose? The tender tone of a mother. He doesn't want to scold, he wants to say something really tender and fine.

So if that is the meaning of priestly leadership, and if we Catholic women leaders share in the priesthood and leadership of the God-Man, we are provided with a direction which also we have to hold onto. This gives us the fundamental note that should sound when we meet the concept "priestly motherliness"(16).

We now have a very clear analysis, based on a theological foundation, and a clear and firm standpoint: Our faith tells us that if we want to be true educators, we must strive to bring out this great tendency in ourselves, we must strive to chisel out priestly motherliness, genuine motherhood, in ourselves. Here too, please ask yourselves: Have we done this until now?

2. In the light of psychology

I want to cast light on the same thought *from the psychological standpoint*. I have then to ask myself: Why is it that in natural life true motherliness and motherhood can almost bring about miracles of transformation? Take a look at a girl. She may have been very happy-go-lucky in the past. Now she becomes a mother. And suddenly she is completely changed. Why? Because a sense of responsibility for a new life has grown in her.

You see, if we really are educators, if our whole lives are directed towards true motherliness, do you know what will be formed and embodied in our nature - seen naturally and supernaturally? In my opinion, three things:

1. the holy dignity of a mother,
2. the wisdom of a mother,
3. the care and concern of a mother(17).

That is, seen psychologically, the effect of this very deep sense of responsibility for another person's life, for the developing life in another person, for the developing mental-spiritual and divine life, as well as natural life, of another person.

A mother's dignity

You may never say, for example: Well, now I have to play the educator! I have to stand before the children and show a pious face and make pious gestures. This would prove that I am not a person of integrity. If I bear responsibility for someone, I must constantly be aware of it. Then these birth pangs and anxieties will give my whole being a special character.

A mother's dignity! It doesn't matter where I am, whether I am going up to Communion or on my way to school, I am constantly accompanied by the content of my life: I am responsible for another person's life. We may never wear a mask. If a girl senses that something is unnatural, artificial, education immediately ceases. The educational influence of a personality comes from what is spontaneous. No matter whether I am going up to Communion, or to the dining room or to school, or on the playing fields, the same natural, unspoilt quality should characterise my whole being. This doesn't mean that I should not behave differently when I am receiving Communion, or eating or doing something else. What remains the same is simply my spontaneous naturalness. A young person realises instinctively if my behaviour is put on. A girl finds out very quickly and instinctively whether something is natural or just an "act".

A mother's wisdom

Of course, this is not natural wisdom, it is supernatural wisdom. We are often far too young to be able to wield the sceptre of wisdom as a fruit of the experience of a lifetime. A mother's wisdom is the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit. So we have to pray for it. We are talking here of spiritual motherhood or fatherhood.

How does this mother's wisdom show? First of all in reward and punishment. We should never want to belong to that class of people who always only punish and never praise and reward. Noble-minded people feel how forces are awakened within them when they receive recognition. You don't always have to make a long speech of praise. It can be given just by a look, by one's whole bearing. A true mother in her wisdom knows how to find the right note here. A true mother in her wisdom also knows how to find the happy balance, she knows how to take hold or feel her way, she knows when she can grasp the root of something or let it be.

A true mother in her wisdom also knows how to offer advice in case of doubt. Here we can take Vincent de Paul as an example(18). He was a man who was totally committed to educating people to be independent. When he was asked for advice, he did not immediately behave like a "judge of the living and the dead". He listened to everything

calmly, made one or the other comment, but in essentials he let the person concerned bear the responsibility for his or her actions. I know that by nature a girl or woman would far prefer the opposite. They would much rather be told: Left, right, turn! But this is absolutely wrong. You can't educate a person to independence in this way. You have to leave them as much freedom and independence as possible. So a mother in her wisdom educates for independence. However, Vincent de Paul went even further. If someone insisted that he had to decide something, he first asked for the case to be restated, then he prayed silently, weighed up the pros and cons, and in the end said calmly and objectively: In this instance it seems to me that it would be best to do this or that. We should do the same and not react immediately in a draconian way. This can happen from time to time if we are superiors, but it should happen rarely. Otherwise we are not mothers, we are superiors. And the concept "superior" is not held in very high repute.

A mother's care and concern

Once again, seen psychologically, the dignity and wisdom of a mother becomes the concern of a mother as a result of this deep sense of responsibility for the life of another person. The genuine concern of a mother - that is what also a spiritual child is looking for. He or she wants to know: "There is someone there who cares for me!" We may not do it in such a way that as soon as the door is closed I think only of myself and my enjoyments. No, that is when the concern of a true mother begins.

I am concerned about everything. This does not mean that I have to go around with a worried look on my face all the time. That is off-putting. A noble-minded person cannot bear it if you are obtrusive. Our concern as mothers should show in constantly praying and sacrificing for those entrusted to our care, but also in that we intervene when the opportunity offers. If necessary we could also help someone to find a job, or write to find out how one or the other is faring. In some way or other we have to show our concern as mothers in every way.

That is motherliness, seen psychologically.

3. In the light of pedagogy

Motherliness, seen pedagogically, means: How can we educate ourselves to become true mothers?

First of all, let us look at the context. What is the root of motherliness, seen psychologically? It is a strong sense of responsibility for developing life in another person, first of all the divine life, and above all the whole natural life of those entrusted to my care. So if I educate myself to have this deep sense of responsibility, I will have learnt to regard divine life as the greatest value in my life. Now this leads to very serious *consequences*. If I personally regard the divine life as the greatest value in my life, nothing else remains for me than to strive for the *spirit of the vows*(19). This is an expression of the high regard we have for God's life in ourselves. So what should I do?

Practice the spirit of the vows - the spirit of poverty, the spirit of humility and the spirit of purity. To the extent that I do this, I will grow into the circle of responsible people.

So if I want to be a mother through and through, I may not be satisfied with saying: I have my pay and can do what I like. *Spirit of poverty!* Or, to put it in another way: It is so essential today to live a simple way of life if we want to and should have an influence on others.

A simple way of life. How is it with me in this regard? Look - what will our children feel if we live off the fat of the land? We can be sure that we will lose any positive influence. If I really value God's life in myself and others, I will give all that I possess to serve others, that is, I will have a simple lifestyle. Do I do this? Do I regard this self-education as pedagogically effective? Or do I merely think: I must become holy, so I shall do it? I shouldn't do it because of an apostolic motivation, it is something we should take for granted. I must be an integrated person. I am an educator, it can't be different. That is why I live so simply.

Secondly, *the spirit of humility.*

If God has made me an educator, or a superior, or whatever you may want to call it, what follows? I must constantly be aware of my own helplessness. Spirit of humility! Others are much better. Others may have much better qualities. You may not on this account say: I may not "hurt"(20). I am worse than the others. No, I must do everything through an attitude of humility: God has given me this tremendous responsibility, so in deep humility, in profound dependence on our great God, the actual Educator, I will carry out my task and help to redeem others.

Thirdly, *the spirit of purity.*

You see, if it is true that *the* educator who best satisfies a person's need for security, who gives them a sense of security, is the one who is most at home in the supernatural world, then I will have to say: If we are pure people, we are at home in the supernatural world. Of course this purity should not be prudish, it must be a spontaneous purity. If a woman is by nature pure, it is natural that a whole host of children will feel secure in her. There are so many people who can only satisfy their need to feel secure in other people who are as firm as rocks. And this mysterious influence is best secured when the soul is immersed in purity.

These are essential things for our educational wisdom and praxis, seen here in purely ascetical terms. That is why all this is of such fundamental importance to our whole education - let me put it very simply - what I do when I am in bed, when I am eating or drinking, when I am alone, what I do in quiet hours in order to become a fully mature personality. This is when I create this naturalness, this unspoilt quality, this spontaneity in my whole being. Whatever I do merely as a resolution in front of my class is not worth much. But everything that creates this unspoilt quality in my nature, whatever forms it, will have an influence on those we are educating in a way you have most probably undervalued until now.

Let us close the subject. What is the great direction for the educator? What is it? As far as I am concerned you can forget everything except this one thing: I must bring out this one, great direction in my life, and this direction is called priestly motherliness. To the

extent that I educate myself in this direction, I will be able and mature enough to educate God's children. To the extent that I educate myself in this way, I will be natural, naive in a positive sense, supernatural, and will have an influence that is second to none.

Notes

1. The general intellectual, moral and cultural climate of an era (Websters).
2. See: J. Kentenich: Mary, Mother and Educator.
3. Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth - from the liturgy of Pentecost.
4. See 2 Cor. 5,17.
5. A Thomistic principle often quoted by Fr Kentenich: The gifts of grace are added to us in order to enhance the gifts of nature, not to take them away (de Trinitate ii,3); (From St. Thomas Aquinas - Theological Texts: selected and translated by T. Gilby, p.7, OUP 1955); Grace does not scrap nature, but improves it (ST 1a,i 8,ad2) (ibid p.23); Grace is nature's perfection, and therefore impairs nothing natural (Contra Impugnantes Dei, 6) (ibid 155); Now the grace granted in the sacraments does not lessen nature, but rather increases it (IV Contra Gentes, 71) (ibid 377)
6. See: John 13, 1-16.
7. Full of grace. See Lk. 1,28.
8. See 2 Cor. 5,14 and Gal. 2,20.
9. See Mt. 18,4.
10. This is because friendship is primarily based on liking, fatherliness and motherliness as the fundamental attitude in a pedagogical dialogue are independent of such feelings.
11. See 1 Cor. 12,12ff.
12. Encyclical of Pope Pius XII of 29.6.1943.
13. See 1 Peter 2,5.
14. See the decree of the Second Vatican Council on the Apostolate of the Laity.
15. See 1950 Pedagogical Congress
16. Compare this with what Father Kentenich has to say about fatherhood.
17. Vincent de Paul (1581-1660) Born of a peasant family in SW France, he devoted his life to works of charity. He did much to relieve the sufferings of prisoners held on the

galleys. He founded confraternities of charity for men and women. The Congregation of the Mission was founded to preach missions especially in the countryside, and to help form the clergy; the Sisters of Charity was the first congregation of women without enclosure. The suffering caused by the wars of the time inspired him to greater efforts. He was also uncompromising in his opposition to Jansenism (The Weekday Missal, Collins, 1979).

18. The *spirit* of the vows, that is, Father Kentenich did not ask for or lead to the obligatory tie of the three vows traditionally taken by Religious: poverty, chastity and obedience. In his foundation, including the Family Branch, he promoted a *secular* application of the vows also for the laity. Note, for instance, that he speaks of humility rather than obedience, but sees it as an expression of our dependence on God - which is obedience.

19. Father Kentenich was against corporal punishment of any kind, but saw the need for sanctions that serve to discipline one's nature. Educators can make very painful demands at times, they can also reprimand. An educator is not a "softie".