

# **THE GAME OF LOVE**

Sermons preached by Father Joseph Kentenich  
at St. Michael's Church, Milwaukee,  
between May 23, 1965 and September 12, 1965

Trs.: M. Jane Hoehne, 1973  
Slightly revised: MJH, 1996

Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary  
W 284 N 404 Cherry Lane  
Waukesha, Wisconsin/USA 53188-9416  
Tele: 414-542-4384  
Fax: 414-542-5730

All rights reserved 1998.

## CONTENTS

May 23, 1965	--Fifth Sunday after Easter	1
May 30, 1965	--Sixth Sunday after Easter	13
June 6, 1965	--Pentecost	27
June 13, 1965	--Blessed Trinity	35
June 20, 1965	--Second Sunday after Pentecost	47
June 27, 1965	--Third Sunday after Pentecost	59
July 18, 1965	--Sixth Sunday after Pentecost	71
July 25, 1965	--Seventh Sunday after Pentecost	83
August 1, 1965	--Eighth Sunday after Pentecost	97
August 15, 1965	--Feast of the Assumption of Our Lady	109
August 22, 1965	--Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost	
	Feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary	119
August 29, 1965	--Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost	131
Sept. 5, 1965	--Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost	141
Sept. 12, 1965	--Feast of the Holy Name of Mary	153

## FOREWORD

For thousands of years, actually as long as they have been walking this earth, people have tried to reason out the meaning of life. Even in our own day, in the age of all-around progress, we still puzzle over why we are on earth, who put us here, and whether or not there will be an after-life.

A divinely inspired man of God in our century, Father Joseph Kentenich, founded the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt to answer the needs of our time. His goal was to form a "new person" in a "new society" for the "Church at the new shore." When the Second Vatican Council pronounced its guiding statements on the modern person in a changed world, Father Kentenich found confirmed what he had spiritually anticipated and already begun to actualize.

At his death in 1968, our founder left to us, beside the example of his own holy life, a spiritual legacy of inexhaustible riches. These talks on life addressed to the parishioners at St. Michael's Church in Milwaukee in 1965 as a "game of love" acquaint you with Father Kentenich's interpretation of life based on the Old Testament, the New Testament, on literary masterpieces such as Dante's Divine Comedy, and specifically coined to answer our perpetual question: What is life all about?

Psychologists tell us that human beings are fully human only if they know how to play well. "Play" here must be understood not as a superficial pastime but in all the seriousness and wonder the term may suggest. Our life on earth may be compared to a game. It is a holy game of love, a game of hide-and-seek, between the heavenly Father and us. This game is conducted in the spirit of mutual love: God with divine love seeks and finds us; and we earnestly seek and find the Creator-God. Sometimes, too, we flee away from God as did Jonah when he considered God's will burdensome (Jon 1:3). The God of the Old Testament was a "hidden God" (Is 45:15), but people were admonished "to seek him humbly" (Zep 2:3) and "with all their heart" (Ps 118:10).

Our task in the daily game of love is to learn to discover God in ourselves, in others, in all personal and universal happenings, and above all in sufferings. God is by no means dead. Unfortunately, however, many of us may have lost that keen sense for God with which our souls originally were imbued at Baptism.

The Church traditionally has applied this paragraph of the Book of Proverbs to Our Lady: "From of old I was poured forth, at the first, before the earth. Before the mountains were settled into place... I was brought forth..., and I was his delight day by day, playing before him all the while..." (Pry 8:23-30). No human being acted out the divine play in

such perfect manner as did Our Lady in her day. If we strive after holiness, i.e. the most perfect seeking and finding of God, we do well imitating her and the saints. This is not a once in a lifetime task or happening; we are engaged in it every day either as very good actors, average actors, or unskilled people. In any case, our daily game of love is full of dramatic excitement and tension. Our degree of spiritual competence will determine whether ultimately our life turns out to be a play with a happy ending (union with God) or a tragedy of failure.

It may be wise to read Father Kentenich's rather condensed talks in small portions. To learn to play the divine play well, we need prolonged training. Every day we will make a small step toward greater mastery on the stage.

May Our Lord who presented himself as "the Way" to the Father guide us in our seeking and finding and keep us from ever fleeing away from God.

Wisconsin, 1973

## FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

May 23, 1965

On April 23 of this year [1965] in St. Peter's Basilica, the Holy Father re-crowned the picture of the Mother of Grace of Pompeii after it had been restored. As we expected on this occasion, he preached a warm and profound sermon about Mary. He drew her picture anew and re-crowned it. At the same time, he asked the faithful to also restore the image of Mary in their hearts, to examine it, to deepen it, to embellish it, and to form their practical lives accordingly.

I am certain that, as we are here together with the Blessed Mother deep in our hearts, we are open to this stimulation from the Holy Father and gladly seek to actualize it. It seems to me that there are two reasons for doing so.

We all know that the picture of the Blessed Mother is deeply engraved in our hearts, that her picture is alive in us. What the singer sings is true:

"A picture is engraved in my head,  
a picture which symbolizes everything that's good and beautiful:  
It is the picture of the Blessed Mother.  
I want to cherish this picture in my heart in good and in bad days."

We cherish this picture in our hearts. It is true, the Blessed Mother has a place of honor in our hearts, especially in the heads of the older parishioners. However, it seems to me that we could repeat these words and that the situation which existed in Pompeii with the picture of grace exists in our own heads too: The colors have slowly faded and the picture has to be restored.

There are plenty of reasons for this. The world as such, especially as we experience it here in America, is attractive and alluring. Many

images enter our hearts from our surroundings, images which captivate our hearts. Therefore, it is really easy to understand that Mary's image is slowly distorted and disappears step by step into the background. It is truly worth the effort to restore this image. Moreover, we have the painful experience of seeing the fight about Mary's image at Vatican II and the fight for the objective picture of Mary even in our own Catholic circles. Doubts arise, now about this feature, then about that feature of the picture; doubts which do not seem to be overcome. All this forces us to admit that a shadow lies on the picture and that the colors are no longer bright and radiant. The picture needs to be restored. It is,

therefore, a matter of course that we gladly follow the Holy Father's wish.

But, having heard a cycle of sermons, we know yet another reason. We let ourselves be drawn into the school of the Blessed Mother so that she will reveal and represent for us, in its entire depth, the ideal of the markedly resurrected person, the paschal person, as embodied in her own features.

It is actually understood (we stressed this idea a few times before) that, when we go to school, we are especially interested in the instructor. Who, then, instructs us concerning the ideal of the resurrected person, the paschal person? We said it before. We know that our instructor is and always will be the Blessed Mother. As in each school, we like to know what this instructor looks like.

Last Sunday we asked: What does the Blessed Mother look like in the plans of God? We do not want to repeat the answer; we will just summarize it in the following considerations. She lives in God's plans as the masterpiece of divine wisdom. Divine wisdom made a plan, divine wisdom designed a plan describing how Eternal Wisdom envisioned the Blessed Mother from all eternity and how she was to become and did become a reality at the predestined time.

Today we will supplement this picture a little and let its color shine forth as we look from above, from God, down to the picture of the Blessed Mother. We recall that, as we began our reflections, we

emphasized that we also would like to know how the Blessed Mother lives in the heart of God, not only in his thoughts and in his plans but in his heart.

We can give the answer now already. It complies with and supplements what we said before. She is the unique masterpiece of infinite divine Love. What does this mean? From all eternity God has looked upon the Blessed Mother, upon the picture of the Blessed Mother with great warmth, with the warmth of his head. From all eternity Eternal Love planned to draw the heart of the Blessed Mother inseparably to himself. He intended to enter into a very tender and deep unity of hearts with this being, the Blessed Mother.

We have heard similar thoughts before. As is the case whenever we deal with religious truths which are totally abstract, we hear the words and we are even able to form some idea in our minds. Yet we do not really know what to do with these truths. It is, therefore, worth the effort to better explain what it means that from all eternity, Eternal Love planned this deep fusion of hearts, this exchange of heads, with the Blessed Mother.

Since we are sensory beings, neither greatly inclined nor used to

abstract thinking, we should, it seems to me, proceed from the natural level to the supernatural and not vice versa. What does this mean? First we will look for a criterion, a generally valid criterion, a criterion which we understand, a criterion which we experience in ourselves. First we will look for it, determine it, define it and then apply this criterion to the picture of the Blessed Mother; that is, to the fusion of heads, the exchange of her heart with the heart of the eternal God and Father<sup>1</sup>.

When we hear about a fusion of heads, an exchange of heads, our souls are stirred up. Generally speaking, this is where we suffer. We cannot surrender our heads, we cannot exchange our heads with any-

<sup>1</sup> The translator used the Pauline expression God and Father to render the German Vatergott.

Father Kentenich uses this term to indicate that the Trinity is in essence father-centered; he also uses it to refer to the first person of the Trinity.

one. Where are people who would accept our hearts and would treat them with a noble and high-minded attitude? Yet our hearts are and remain unhappy until they are totally given away and totally accepted.

Well, what does the criterion look like? I said that we would look for it here on earth. I believe, I am justified in saying that we, too, are unique masterpieces of God's infinite love. If I also know what I look like as a masterpiece of God's love, I have a criterion, an intelligible criterion which I have only to apply to the relationship of love between the eternal God and Father and the Blessed Mother. Once we begin to think, to seek and to search, we might arrive at results which were not known to us before, at results which give us an answer to many questions which we asked ourselves in quiet moments but could not solve.

First we look for a starting point from which to proceed so that we understand each other, so that I can explain what I mean. It is, I will call it that way, a theological axiom, a theological principle and, since it is a principle, we have to expect its formulation to be very abstract.

What does this axiom express? It has a very deep meaning. We ascend from our own selves into the heart or, if you wish, into the head of the eternal God. According to this axiom, God the Father conceived all of us when he spoke his Eternal Word and loved all of us in the Holy Spirit. How does this sound? I do not think that we understand this when we hear it the first time. We have to ascend to the Blessed Trinity. We have learned in school that from all eternity the only begotten Son of God was conceived by the Father. The axiom which I just mentioned reads: In this Eternal Word we, too, were conceived. When God conceived his only begotten Son, that is, from all eternity, he also con-

ceived me with my unique individuality. What does this mean? What was I to be? Perhaps we understand this a little better since the Council brings articles of faith a little closer to us. We may almost say that we are conceived as part of the eternal Son of God, we are to be members of his Mystical Body. Thus we can understand it. Let us look at it very concretely. I personally, I as I am here, have a place in God's thoughts from all eternity. Yes, I am conceived, I am in his thinking, in his

creative thinking, if we want to say so, with the eternal Son of God. From all eternity I exist in the plans of the eternal God as a member of the eternal Son of God.

This is not yet sufficient. I think we should go a step further. What I emphasized so far is all part of the plan, of the divine plan. Going further: I am also loved in the Holy Spirit. How should we picture this? From all eternity there is an unending movement of love between the Father and the Son and between the Son and the Father, one immense stream of love. This stream of love within the Trinity is so infinitely great that love becomes a person. This is the Holy Spirit, the bond between the Father and the Son. And I, I also am loved in the Holy Spirit. From all eternity I am conceived by God (we have only a very faint idea of this now and then) and I am drawn into this infinite stream of love, this movement of love between the Father and the Son. I am included in this love.

I think we should first try to clarify and explain this formulation which is a little difficult to understand. Once we have grasped the explanation a little, we will understand much better what I said at the beginning, namely that each one of us is an original masterpiece of God's infinite love. I even have to add, we are perfect masterpieces of perfect love.

This makes us prick up our ears, doesn't it? It is the same formulation which we applied to the Blessed Mother. She is a perfect masterpiece of divine Love, and so am I. When we compare ourselves with her, we find an obvious and a great dissimilarity between the Blessed Mother and ourselves. Yet we use the same formulation. However, I had added, a unique masterpiece, a uniquely perfect masterpiece. Therefore, I say that we all are addressed here. This is I; this is each one of us; this is each human being, each one who has a human nature. What is the meaning of my life? I should be totally drawn into the infinite stream of love flowing between the Father and the Son. It does not matter whether or not I studied, whether I am a man or a woman, whether I am sick or healthy, whether I am in a high or low position: We

all are perfect, indeed uniquely perfect masterpieces of God's infinite love.

In order to better understand this we could say that when we look at all world events, when we look at our own life history and the life histories of the people around us, we represent an unusual drama and we are all co-actors in this drama. When is an individual actor or actress perfect, or when does an actor play perfectly? When he plays his role perfectly. When kings and villains were prevalent, the role of the farmer on stage was a favorite presentation in all plays. When did I play well? When I embodied a farmer, then I acted well. I am to be a farmer, not a king, in this great world theater.

From all eternity, all of us without exception are included in God's thoughts and (I do not have to discuss that now) we are included in his love as well. How may we picture this? As I said before, this stream of love between the Father and the Son is so very powerful, that it, as it were, sets aside all limits and it overflows. Love is simply urged to give. Thus it is with the Blessed Trinity. In order to be able to give, to impart this stream of love, God created special beings--us. What should we do? What is the meaning of our lives according to God's plan? He created us so that he could love us. What, however, does this really mean to us? We hear it, we accept it, and yet, we do not fully understand it. What a great mission we have!

I must try to express all this so naturally because it is difficult to understand with our modern thinking. Who are we? We are creatures of God's love; God created us with the intention of loving us and kindling our hearts through this love so that we also could and would love him.

This holds true for each one of us. It is true, I cannot recognize a person unless I see him or her. [In God] it is the other way around: God knows us because we are in him. First, God carried us within his heart and created us; therefore he could then see us as creatures because he created us. It is the same with love. We love God---or rather vice versa--God does not primarily love us because we love him, but we love him because he loves us, because he lets us share in this infinite,

mysterious stream of love. It is God who loved us first. It is God who directed into our hearts the stream of love which so powerfully flows between the Father and the Son. Does this touch our hearts?

In his simple way, St. John expressed it beautifully: "He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19). Again, why do we love him? Because he first loved us. And how he loved us! How he demonstrated that he carries us in his heart!

Or, we consult St. Paul: "Dilexit me, et tradidit semetipsum pro me" (Gal 2:20) -- he loved me; he so loved me that he even gave his life for

me. Dilexit me! It is always the same proof: The eternal God and Father directs into my heart the stream of love flowing between himself and the Son. Why all this? He wants to be loved. A strange reality--the infinite God wants to be loved!

When I now use expressions which are actually somewhat exaggerated, note that I use them to make myself understood because these things are very difficult to explain. It is almost as though God could not be happy if I did not exist, if I did not love him. He wants to be loved. In their objective way of thinking the old Romans said, "Si vis amari, ama!" If you want to be loved – and the eternal God does want to be loved – "si vis amari, ama!" If you want to be loved, then you have to love first, you have to overflow with love. Then it is understood that the fire of love will be kindled in your partner. And then, well, then God achieved his purpose.

To express the very same truth St. Francis de Sales coined a beautiful expression. He spoke of the fundamental law of the world which is love. With that he wanted to explain the cause of all causes for the creation of the world, for my creation. This cause is love! God wants to be loved. Thus he is dependent on love. Of course, this is wrong. But we understand what is meant. He wants to be loved unconditionally, he wants to be loved deeply and perfectly. Therefore, what did he do? He exhausted himself, as it were, in deeds of love, in manifestations of love. God so loved the world, the Father so loved the world that he even gave his only Son for us (cf. Jn 3:16). Why all this? "Si vis amari, ama!"

If you want to be loved--and he does want to be loved--then you must love! It is for this reason that he shows his love superabundantly.

Recalling some sermons which we heard while yet at home, we will now understand three phases of his love: crib, cross, altar. What are these? These are steps, phases of his beckoning love, of his deeds of love. He wants to have my heart and he wants it completely. This does not mean that I may not give my heart to other creatures too. But they are, as it were, channels directing my drive of love ultimately into the heart of the eternal God and Father.

Now I may add a term which sounds still more mysterious, a term that is opposed to our practical everyday experience. You see, he loves me perfectly. Perfectly, what does that mean? He loves me totally. You will immediately reply: How can it be that he loves me totally, that he encloses me wholly in his heart? I see my friends, my neighbors, my co-sisters [they are much better, much holier]. I think of the saints. They all differ greatly from me. And yet, he loves me perfectly; so perfectly as if I alone existed and he wanted to direct the whole stream of his love into my little heart. How is this to be understood?

Let me answer with an image, or rather let me first acquaint you with a law: Opera Dei perfecta. Everything that God does is perfect. If he wants to give love, then he does it to the last (cf. Jn 13:1). Since Christ loved us, he loved us to the end. The entire stream of love should flow into my heart, into the heart of my neighbor, into the hearts of saints, into the hearts of mystics. Again, how is this possible? Let us use a picture. If I have a large water basin and pour its water into another basin, into a container, the amount will depend on the size of the container. If it is a small container, it will be filled quickly. But if the container is large, it will take more to fill it.

What am I saying with this? It is the mystery of divine election, of divine love. If God gives his love, as we think, in different degrees, then he is limited in his action in two ways. God has a different plan for each individual person. Each person has an original individuality. Since each one is an individual, God is limited in two ways. On the one hand, there

is the individual's mission or, going back to the picture just used, this is actually the role which the individual has to play in the theater of the world. I pointed it out before: A person plays perfectly, absolutely perfectly, if he/she plays a given role, the role assigned to that person. If someone is meant to be a farmer, he has to play the role of a farmer and not the role of a king. One limitation, then, is my personal mission. On the other hand? The second limitation is my receptivity. Both receptivity and mission, according to God's wise plan, are coordinated. Certainly, God gives his entire love to each one in a perfect way. But what is the criterion? The mission! What mission do I have? What mission does my neighbor have? The second criterion is a person's receptivity. How receptive am I?

If we reflect on this, I think, we really cannot blame God if one person, as it appears to us, is given more love than another. Then I will not become jealous when obviously or apparently one person receives more love from the heart of God than another. Each person receives God's entire love; God's entire love, depending on that person's receptivity and mission. Therefore, I must never become jealous; I must never become envious. I always have to say a wholehearted, "Yes, Father." If there is someone around me who is noble, someone who strives, someone who gives every ounce of strength to God, I should not copy this but rather tell myself: Just as this person cooperates with God's grace in order to fulfill a personal mission, I will do so to fulfill my mission. Therefore, there should be no copying. I should not say: Well, God really seems to favor, for example, this saint, a canonized saint or a friend, a fellow worker, a co-sister or whoever it might be, even my own sister or brother. It seems that God has a special affection for him or

her. What does it mean, a special affection? God has the same special affection for me—depending, to be sure, on the mission and the role which he has given me and on the receptivity which in turn corresponds to my role. God loves me totally but only as far as my vessel is receptive.

Yet, I cannot really say that he has the same special affection for me because this does not fully express it. We human beings often believe that to have or to apparently have a special affection for one person is detrimental to another. This is not the case in the Kingdom of God, in the light of faith. God does not injure anyone. Isn't it up to him? Out of his goodness he freely gave me a role and receptivity. Am I entitled to it? I cannot be grateful enough that God looks upon me with benevolence at all. I have to be deeply grateful that he draws me into a union of love with himself, into a fusion of love.

These are great truths. Once more: I am not entitled to it. God may treat his instrument as it pleases him. He is Almighty God. As we said at the beginning, it is not as though God loved us because we love him. No, no, we love him because he first loved us. It is up to him to determine the size of the vessel of love which he gave to us, and the greatness of the role which we are to play.

Once more, it is not detrimental to one person if another is apparently more endowed with graces and is the object of God's love to a greater extent. Why? There is a second reason. The individual gift of love, the individual election for love, should become a common one. Through my vessel (perhaps larger and consequently more filled with the Father's love than that of others), or through my greater role God's love should be passed on to others. I receive love not only to return love but also to transmit it to other people. Therefore, the individual mission, the individual endowment is given on behalf of others.

You see that all we actually did so far was to define the criterion. The question what the mission of the Blessed Mother looks like and what her receptivity for everything that God connected with her role looks like, is answered by applying this criterion to the life and mission of the Blessed Mother. Now we would have to reflect on and apply this criterion to the Blessed Mother's life. A glorious picture would unfold its beauty before our eyes and we would marvel at the picture of the Blessed Mother as it has been planned from all eternity.

Above all, however, we would draw the conclusion that we feel at home in the heart of the Blessed Mother. Her heart is, as it were, an

ocean of love which God placed into her heart. And if I love her, if the stream of love which flows through her heart, draws me into its stream of love--this is a profound conclusion--we, being at home in the heart of the Blessed Mother, having made the covenant with her, having found a unity of love with her, a fusion of our hearts with her heart; we modern people, always living in profane situations, we would indeed have a sacred space. It is often so that, living in an atmosphere which is thoroughly profane, we feel at ease when we come to a church penetrated with a good, religious spirit. Then we have a place where we are made immune and become more and more indifferent toward all profanity in the world. The heart of the Blessed Mother is this sacrosanct space. The more my heart beats in the heart of the Blessed Mother, the more my heart will beat in the heart of Christ and the eternal God and Father, the Blessed Trinity; the more my heart will be immune to the atmosphere which surrounds me in my daily life. If we speak today of a pluralistic society, a hodgepodge of peoples who are totally enslaved to worldly goods, I know that if my heart beats in the heart of the Blessed Mother, I will always have a sacred space in which I live and which makes me interiorly immune to all evil powers against which I have to fight throughout the day. We will have to draw the ensuing consequences ourselves.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

May 30, 1965

It is our wish to be more deeply introduced into the school of the Blessed Mother, into the art of being a true Father child who is characterized by openness to the Father, availability to the Father, rejoicing in the Father, even in the midst of greatest sorrow, and the paschal person's faithfulness to the Father. In order to better understand the wisdom of our teacher we would like to first warm our hearts a little for her person. This we all well understand. The more our hearts beat in warm love for our teachers, the more we will be open for their message.

We raised two questions: First, how does the Blessed Mother live in the eternal plans of the eternal God and Father? We know the answer. We studied her basic features as they are drawn in Holy Scripture and at the same time we looked at two or three additional theological pictures. The second question: How does the Blessed Mother as our teacher live in the heart of the eternal God and Father; in other words, what does this fusion of hearts look like, this exchange of hearts between the eternal Father and the unique Father child, the Blessed Mother? We consider this question so important that we have not yet had the courage to answer it. We thought it advisable to discuss two preliminary questions first.

First, we looked for some criteria of this union of love between the two. We found two criteria, the greatness of her mission and the greatness of her receptivity. By now we should actually be able to apply those criteria to her person, to the greatness of her union of love, to the greatness, the heroism of her openness to the Father, of her availability to the Father, of a continuous and permanent joy in the Father and faithfulness to the Father.

13

And yet, when we look more closely, we will soon find out that there is another preliminary question which we have to answer. We have to ask for the condition, for the presupposition which we must fulfill if we are to be able to understand the life and mission of the Blessed Mother at all. What are these preconditions? I wonder whether we understand the truth of the statement that I am about to explain. We need a living faith and a warm love. Otherwise we will understand little or nothing of the position of the Blessed Mother and her greatness: the greatness of her character, the greatness of her mission, and the greatness of her

union of love with the living God.

Today we will try to occupy ourselves with the living faith which is absolutely necessary so that we may be open for her person and her greatness.

Living faith! Two questions arise and demand an answer. The first question: Why is a living faith absolutely necessary? Secondly: What are its functions? What effects does it bring about? Why is this faith, this living faith, necessary to understand the Blessed Mother at all?

I will give a brief condensed answer which you should be able to understand immediately. Nevertheless, I would like to explain it a little. In two or three concise statements I will give an answer to the question raised and then explain some of the expressions as much as is necessary. What are the three statements?

1. From beginning to end, the Blessed Mother's entire greatness is rooted in her position in the supernatural world, in the supernatural reality, in the supernatural order.
2. This supernatural world and reality can be grasped only in the light of faith. The conclusion is clear. We are unable to enter into a relationship, a meaningful relationship with the Blessed Mother without faith, without a living faith. Without a living faith we are not capable at all of understanding her greatness, her mission, especially the greatness of her union of love with the Father.

14

This conclusion is in a way re-affirmed through the third statement:

3. Even the Blessed Mother needed faith in order to understand and to assume her own specific position in the world of the supernatural order.

Those of you who are used to think independently have enough food for thought with these three statements. Nevertheless, it is worth the effort to explain them a little. Here we touch essential processes. What, for instance, do we mean by the expression supernatural order?. Or, what does the property of faith look like which we so absolutely need? Or, what does the Blessed Mother's attitude look like in regard to her faith?

It seems to me that once we give a condensed answer to these three questions, we will begin to live more deeply in this supernatural world, to swim in it like a fish in the water or to fly like a bird in the air. This, of course, is absolutely necessary if we want to understand to some extent

how deeply the Blessed Mother is rooted in the supernatural world and how she grew with her whole person and mission into the supernatural reality. I have the impression that we understand this. Now we also have to swim with her; we, too, have to feel somewhat at home in this world. Otherwise it is impossible to have an organ for sensing her greatness, her mission, especially her union of love with God.

I don't know what I should discuss in greater detail. Do we know what is meant by supernatural order?.

I think it is better for us to first consider the opposite process a little. We differentiate between a natural and a supernatural world. To be brief, in the natural order the living God stands before us as the Creator, as the Creator of all things, also as our Creator. This is the natural order, and we perceive this natural order with our purely natural sense of perception and vision.

As we know, we have three senses of vision through which we perceive the world around us. Thus we speak of our senses as the eyes of a fly. The eyes of a fly do not see far; they only perceive the material

world. But we also know the eyes of an angel, so to speak. What eyes are these? These are our intellectual and spiritual eyes with which we look beyond the material world and perceive certain principles, a certain order.

The last organ could be called a divine organ of vision, and that is our faith. Now we ask what we understand by supernatural order. In that order God does not stand before us merely as the Creator but as our Father. We do not stand before him so much (at least not exclusively) as creatures but as Father children, Father children who share in divine life, who in a mysterious way are drawn into the suffering, crucified, resurrected and transfigured life of Christ. We are drawn into the divine life of the Blessed Trinity. The living triune God is dwelling within us in a mysterious, supernatural way.

I think that what we mean by supernatural order is clearer now. Gradually we get some idea as to what constitutes the Blessed Mother's greatness. She is at home in the supernatural world in an unparalleled degree. And this being at home in the supernatural reality constitutes her singular greatness.

With that we have also prepared the answer to the second question. The question is: What does the property of faith look like? The answer is prepared. I will give a variety of answers, perhaps three or four, because people today have so little understanding for the significance of faith. Well, we grasp this now. What does the property of faith consist

in?

The first answer: It is a supernatural organ of vision. We mentioned this before, an organ of vision. We need it to look into the supernatural world--a supernatural organ of vision. People who do not possess this organ are unable to look into this world. We call it the organ of divine vision. Now we see only in the light of faith. We perceive this strange supernatural world and reality only and exclusively in the light of faith. One day the light of faith will be the perfect vision of eternity. This is the great world in which God created the Blessed Mother as an exceedingly great being; the world in which she is deeply rooted.

16

We have to remember that theologians call this organ of vision a theological virtue. What does this mean? This organ of vision is a singular and extraordinary gift from God. It is from God; it is in a special way from the Blessed Trinity. It is a divine organ of vision because it is a divine virtue. The object of this sense organ is God, the Eternal, the Infinite. It is the divine You, the divine You in his own self, the divine You in his attributes and the divine You in his effects and in his manner of operation. This virtue is divine and God alone can give it to us. We cannot reason like this: Let us use the other two organs of vision appropriately and perfectly, and then one day, we will realize that the third organ of vision is growing out of these two all by itself. No, no! As theologians express it, the third organ of vision has to be infused into our nature.

Do you understand a little what faith means? It is a divine sense organ. I am sure that you now grasp much better why people who do not possess this sense organ cannot see the Blessed Mother. At the most, they can recognize her noble exterior being but not her supernatural greatness; they cannot understand her relationship to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and what her supernatural mission is in regard to us. Therefore, what do we need? Faith! A sense of faith! A supernatural sense of faith!

Now we can understand that people today (and frequently also Catholics) lost their relationship to the Blessed Mother. What is the reason? Their organ of vision is defective. There is no living faith; it is a consumptive faith instead, a sick faith. When we ask ourselves what our relationship to the Blessed Mother looks like, we might have to answer and admit, well, once upon a time... But how is it today? Let us ask ourselves honestly whether this trained and developed sense of vision is not defective? We ought to pray and beg, "Lord, let me see" (cf. Mk 10:51). Let me see the entire supernatural world with a new sense of vision. Lord, let me see. I do have faith. Help the little faith I have! (Mk

9:23) It is no genuine faith, no warm faith, no deep faith, no victorious faith, no faith that conquers the world. I think that this is one answer.

Second answer. You will soon understand why we talk so long about the same thought. Well, what do we have to say? St. Paul gave us the answer. Faith--argumentum non apparentium (Heb 11:1: the conviction about things we do not see.) What does this mean? It is the proof for the genuineness and the reality of things which we cannot see, neither with our dull natural eyes, with the eyes of a fly nor even with our spiritual and intellectual eyes. It is the proof for reality, for truth. Actually what we mean is clear. We know quite well that we cannot see this world without this organ. We just cannot see it. Therefore the proof for it, the power to see the reality of the supernatural world which we carry within us as children of the Father, as members of Christ, as dwelling places and temples of the Trinity, the power to see all this comes from faith. We do not see it. We neither know nor realize it. Why? The argumentum non apparentium, the proof for this reality, for the reality of the world beyond is not present within us to a sufficient degree.

It seems to me that we should approach and enlighten the process from yet another aspect. A great German poet once remarked that the struggle of world history (and indeed we know how many struggles there are in world history) is ultimately nothing more than the struggle between belief and unbelief. This is indeed so. What are we confronted with when it is a question of belief and unbelief? Ultimately this is the greatest and deepest riddle of the universe, the deepest and most profound problem of the universe.

Believing nations fulfill their mission here on earth and fulfill their mission for eternity. Unbelieving nations, nations that are guilty of having lost their faith, frequently fail to fulfill their mission on earth and even more so for eternity. There are nations, individuals, and communities that laid down their lives for this faith, for this sense organ and for everything they perceive through it; these are the martyrs. They firmly stood on the ground of the reality of this invisible world, of the development of this sense organ. There are nations and individuals who blasphemed God while others sang their hymns of praise, their hymns of faith, "We are ready" [to die for it]. How often we ourselves may have

18

sung and heard the words: "It is for this faith that Christians are willing to die."

It seems as though we as Christians were presupposed to possess this particular sense organ the subtle development of which is needed to rediscover the entire supernatural world time and again. If we then ask what the attitude of today's world toward faith is, we have to admit that there is more consumptive, defective faith than original, living faith. The originality and character of people today accounts for this. We often say that people today want to be autonomous, separated from God, independent from God. Their reason no longer wants to be dependent on a reality which cannot be seen with a natural sense organ. It simply does not exist for them. Away with it! We constantly hear this of dialectic materialism or whatever name you want to give it, practical materialism. We might believe yet, but our belief in the supernatural world is very weak; it has no influence upon us anymore. It is clear, of course, that if this is our inner attitude, our thinking, our mentality, then we are unable to do much with the person of the Blessed Mother or with her mission. How could we have an understanding of her greatness, of the manifold aspects of her union of love with the eternal God and Father, of her fusion of hearts [with God]?

Furthermore, the hearts of people today, i.e. our hearts, wish to be gripped by sense impressions. There are so many sensual goods for which our hearts crave time and again. Are we longing for the eternal goods, supernatural goods? The organ, our heart, is simply dried up in this respect. Then – thinking of our will--the human will wishes to be independent of a divine power. The will itself is its own God. Away with heteronomy! Long live autonomy, independence! Look at all that humanity accomplished, not seldom even unbelievers. Just think of the progress in modern industry and technology. The people in the front lines are by no means always religious-minded people.

May I present a third descriptive definition. It reads thus: Faith gives us courage, it gives us the strength to make leap after leap, even a death leap into the heart of the eternal, living, triune God. You

understand what I am trying to express. Faith is the bridge leading to this living God.

As believers we may think of ourselves as--should I say--swimmers. We swim. We have the courage to jump from a high diving-board into the ocean which actually is unknown to us. The ocean is the Trinity. We swim and jump into this ocean, even if we do not understand it. And why do we do this? Because through faith we are deeply convinced--how should I express it--that the eternal Father's arms surround us in a loving embrace. We do not fear the storms of the

ocean. In and through the storms the eternal God and Father embraces us and draws us to his heart. We perceive all this only through the organ of faith.

Or, may I recall another picture, a favorite picture? As true, believing Christians we may think of ourselves as young eagles. We frequently used the symbolism of an eagle. We know what follows. An eagle is thrown from its nest. What nest? The purely natural nest in which the modern person likes to rest and yet is and remains discontent. First, there is the startling experience that the purely natural world is not the world that makes us interiorly free and happy; it is not the world for which we are exclusively created. When a young eagle is thrown from its nest, it experiences a sudden shock; then it soars in the air, in the atmosphere. The eagle finds itself in its own world; the air currents carry it, the atmosphere carries it.

It is the same with the living God. God carries us. Ultimately he alone carries us in the right way. If storms surround us, come what may, the air carries us because God carries us. God carries us. And should we ever drop from his protecting, guiding, loving hands and fall into an abyss, as it were, the Father's hands still wait for us and hold us up.

May I look for a final answer, an answer which at least has some meaning for us? It is a twofold answer: Faith spreads an atmosphere of light in contrast to unbelief which spreads a poisonous atmosphere. An atmosphere of light! Through faith I continuously look into light. Even if

20

there were ever so much darkness in the background, there is an atmosphere of light.

In other words, in clearer terms, if I call a deep faith in God my own, if I am gripped by God, then something strange happens within my soul: As a matter of course, I am always predisposed for God. Truly, if God wants our minds to say yes to him, then he knows ways and means to confirm himself somehow. He confirms himself somehow, but this confirmation is not always so clear or so strong as to be absolutely perceptible, as to demand an absolute yes. Oh no! You see, faith enables us to instinctively point toward God and to side with him, to say no when we are moved by purely natural things, when purely natural forces are effective. I will always have a positive predisposition. I perceive God everywhere. I am so attuned to him that I instinctively perceive him everywhere through the smallest and tiniest hints, signs, or confirmations given by God; I perceive him through the smallest signs.

We pray, "Lord, help the little faith I have." Relatively few of us have

a really deep faith, a deep spirit of faith, a living faith.

What is its counterpart? A poisonous atmosphere. As belief creates a continuous inward predisposition of seeking and finding God in all situations of life, unbelief creates a predisposition against God, a predisposition for nature. I think I may ultimately call it a predisposition for a different supernatural power, the devil. Lord, help the little faith I have.

Once more, if we continuously take in this atmosphere of light, if we radiate it, if we use it to recognize the divine, the supernatural world, to what greatness might the stature of the Blessed Mother rise before us then! People who do not believe, who do not have a deep spirit of faith are absolutely, or at least, to a large extent incapable of perceiving the personal character of the Blessed Mother, the greatness of her mission, the greatness of her person, the greatness of her unity with God.

I may add another thought. I like to do this because I believe that we must learn to understand ourselves again. You see, belief always, in all

21

situations, sides with God with greatest ease. You might now ask, well, do I have to depend on God for this or can my nature do it alone? Of course, I know, my nature can accomplish a great deal, it has succeeded in a great many things. But in all cases of doubt when I might want to judge in a different way, when I might overlook the intervention of the living triune God, faith urges me to side with the living eternal, infinite God. Do we understand this?

Now let me pose a final question to explain the three statements. What about the Blessed Mother's faith? The same holds true. She would not have found her way into supernature, into the supernatural reality without faith. Without faith she would never have been able to understand herself, her position in the supernatural reality.

Well, what does this mean? I'll quote three statements. At this point we need not elaborate on each one. We just consider them in general.

The first statement is the Holy Spirit's congratulation to her, "Blest are you who trusted that the Lord's words would be fulfilled" (Lk 1:45). Blest! What does he mean to say? Blessed are you because you fulfilled the absolute prerequisite so that the second person of the Blessed Trinity could assume human nature, the prerequisite that your mission in the supernatural reality could be realized. Faith, the spirit of faith, was essential even for the soul of the Blessed Mother, for her life and her position.

The second statement which we owe to St. Augustine is easily understood. It can be expressed like this: Before the Blessed Mother

gave birth to the only-begotten Son, before she conceived him in her womb, she had conceived him in faith. First she had to believe that the supernatural reality would grip humanity in its innermost being. Blessed, yes, blessed are we who believe. Who is able to say, "I believe in such a way that I am blessed in my belief?" How happy are those of us who are not only children of faith but little or great heroes of faith, who sense God everywhere, seek him everywhere, find him everywhere, and, as it were, have a continuous wedding feast. In other sermons we said instead that the life of a paschal person is permeated by a continuous

22

openness to the Father-- we are slowly learning what this means--by a continuous availability to the Father, rejoicing in the Father and faithfulness to the Father.

We all know the third statement. We read in Holy Scripture: *Stabat mater juxta crucem*. She stood under the cross. It would seem that she should have broken down, that the dreadful sorrow which she experienced, the torture which she suffered interiorly should have broken her; that she should have been unable to endure it. The Fathers interpreted the *Stabat* this way: She stood and nothing could shake her belief in Christ's mission and her own even at this sorrowful moment. We understand a little what the mission of the Blessed Mother, what faith in the life of the Blessed Mother, means. I only hint at it; I will not elaborate on it.

If we used her faith as a mirror for our faith, we would discover countless great, beautiful truths. It is a pity that we know so little about the supernatural world. And because we know so little, we do not feel safe in the natural world either. However, we clearly read in Holy Scripture that it is impossible to please God without faith (cf. Heb 11:6). Why? It is faith which opens our hearts, minds and wills, and unless these are open, God cannot enter. Unless faith opens our minds to the Persons of the Blessed Trinity, for their operation, for their gifts and graces, God cannot enter. The closed door needs to be opened. The gates of faith need to be unlocked. Of course, our hearts need to be unlocked, too, because a living faith is faith crowned by love. *Fides caritate formata*, is the theological expression for it. Holy Scripture so emphasizes the importance of faith that we are told that people who have faith will be blessed (cf. Mk 16:16), blessed even on earth by being permeated with the living God, by being aware of the presence of the living God, by being espoused to God in an exchange of hearts. People who believe will be blessed, blessed above all in eternity through the everlasting beatific vision. Conversely, they who do not believe will be

condemned. Now you realize the eminent importance of faith in our lives. But it must not be a consumptive faith, a dead faith!

23

Now we understand the answer to the simple question we had posed: Why is faith necessary? It is necessary in order to grasp the greatness of the Blessed Mother, our teacher.

Now we should discuss the most important point. What does this faith effect in us"? I will give a quick answer which should be easily understood by now. I merely summarize: Faith makes us feel at home in the supernatural world in which the Blessed Mother is at home like a fish in the water, like a bird in the air. This is, indeed, an effect. In other words, and now I touch upon an entirely new great thought which we will contemplate more closely later on. In the light of faith we learn to conceive, to interpret and to live our Christian task in life as a game of love, not simply as just any game of love, but as an exceedingly suspenseful and interesting game of love between the Father and the Father child. Only when we experience and understand our lives as such a game, a game of love, that is, a game of hide-and-seek between the eternal God and Father and his child, will we be able to understand the character of the Blessed Mother's greatness too.

Here we touch upon three great thoughts:

1. The risen Christ practiced this game of love with his followers, but he did not only practice it; rather, he made it the fundamental principle of Christian life.
2. The Blessed Mother was an expert in living and playing this game of love in a heroic way.
3. It is our great mission to imitate her here on earth by playing this game of love in our lives as much as possible.

These are three great truths which we should make our own by forming our lives out of faith, out of a living faith.

24

I have nothing more to say. I said what is to be said. If we look at our

lives in this light, we should feel impelled to repeat two prayers. One we have heard before: Lord, I want to see. Make me see. The second: Lord, I do believe. Help my lack of trust. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## PENTECOST SUNDAY

June 6, 1965

This year I would like to begin my Pentecostal sermon with a maxim by the deceased Cardinal Mercier of Mecheln: "Let me reveal to you an important secret of holiness and happiness..."

Holiness and happiness are identical. The person who is holy will enjoy eternal happiness. The person who does not strive for holiness will not enjoy true happiness on earth or in eternity.

Once more, "Let me reveal to you an important secret of holiness and happiness..." Make it your life-long resolution to withdraw for at least five minutes each day. During this time veil the images of your imagination and close the gates of your soul, especially the gates of your eyes and ears. Then look more deeply into your own heart and inner life, and recall anew that our hearts and souls are a temple of the Holy Spirit in the true sense of the word. Aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit, try to have a dialogue with him saying:

Holy Spirit,  
you are the soul of my soul.  
I humbly adore you.  
Enlighten me, strengthen me,  
guide me, comfort me.  
Reveal your wishes to me  
as far as this is in accordance  
with the plan of the eternal God and Father.  
Let me recognize what Eternal Love wants of me.  
Let me recognize what I should do.  
Let me recognize what I should suffer.  
Let me recognize what I should quietly, humbly and thoughtfully  
accept, bear and endure.

27

Holy Spirit, let me recognize your will and the will of the Father because my whole life should be nothing but a continuous, an everlasting yes to the wishes, to the will of the eternal God and Father.

The maxim then adds: If you make an effort to do this, you will not only remain content and cheerful but also happy even in the most difficult situations and moments of suffering. Rest assured that the measure of your trials also determines the measure of grace which the

Holy Spirit will bestow on you. If you so stand one test after another in your life, one day you will stand before the gates of eternity, filled with innumerable merits. You see, surrender to the Holy Spirit is the way to true holiness.

Why do I quote this prayer and maxim just today? We understand why. I hardly dare advise you to withdraw for five minutes each day and have a conversation with the Holy Spirit, a dialogue with the Holy Spirit, with the Father, and the Son. But I think I may ask you to follow this advice at least today on Pentecost.

Come, Holy Spirit, come  
And from your celestial home  
Shed a ray of light divine!...

We should do two things today. Perhaps I ought first to explain what this maxim implies and then ask ourselves how we should apply it in practice. Let us reflect on two statements. What are they?

1. Our soul is a temple of the Holy Spirit.
2. The Holy Spirit is the soul of my soul.

My soul is a temple of the Holy Spirit; that is to say, my soul and with my soul the whole person is consecrated to the Holy Spirit who dwells within. This is intelligible only in the light of faith.

Let us ask St. Paul who is our interpreter of old. He says: "Do not stifle the Spirit... and avoid any semblance of evil" (1 Thes 5:19-22). And a second quotation: "Do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit" (Eph 4:30). What does this mean? When do we sadden him? We sadden him when we forget him and do not think of him, when we fail to seek him.

In a little booklet there is a Jewish story, a characterization of a little boy. This boy plays hide-and-seek with his friend. Crouching in his hiding place, he waits and waits for his friend to find him. First he is happy that he has found such a good place. But when hour after hour passes and nothing happens, he leaves his place and looks for his friend. Not finding him, he realizes that his friend never looked for him. Now the little boy starts crying. He runs to his grandfather and with tears tells him what happened.

The grandfather applies this to the living God. He points out how God desires to be sought by us, but how little we seek him. People seek money and material goods but they do not seek God. St. Augustine expresses it this way, "O God, you are within me but I keep looking for satisfaction and goods outside. O God, O Holy Spirit, O Blessed Trinity, you dwell and reign within me but I am always outside of myself, outside of myself with heart and mind."

In the same booklet there is a simple poem written in 1809 with the title Dude/e. It is a hymn of praise about selfless love for the you. Dude/e is a person who in selfless love never uses the word /, who knows only the word you, ultimately the you of the eternal, living God.

Wherever I am--you;  
Wherever I go--you.

There is no revolving around myself; no, you; only you; once more you, you, you, you. The second stanza: "When I feel well--you. When I don't feel well--you. Only you, you, you." We understand what this means.

29

Who of us can say, "This is my inner attitude?" If we are honest, we must admit that we always say/. And yet, it should ultimately be you, you, only you.

Therefore, do nothing to sadden the Holy Spirit. Just as the Holy Spirit lives and acts within us, so does the Father, so does the Son. How often we saddened the Holy Spirit in our lives. The existence of the Holy Spirit hardly impresses us. Unfortunately his existence and presence touch us very little. Yet, we should feel at home in this truth like a fish in the water. But what do we do? We live and eat and drink only in this world.

A third reminder: "Since we live by the spirit, let us follow the spirit's lead" (Gal 5:25). Whenever we speak of the Holy Spirit we include the Father and the Son.

"Since we live by the spirit..."--what life is meant here? It is the participation in the life of the eternal God and Father, the trinitarian life. Our participation in divine life includes a sharing in divine light and confidence; we also share in divine strength, in divine love. What does the Apostle intend to tell us with this? After having become children of the Trinity, we should live in the Spirit of God, in the light of God. We must see things as the Holy Spirit sees them; we must live everyday life in and out of divine confidence and divine light and lastly out of divine strength, divine love.

"I adore you, Spirit of God! Give me light! Give me light, give me security, give me guidance and give me consolation?"

St. Paul stresses that above all we should live out of divine love. God's love is poured forth, is infused; it is a supernatural faculty infused into our hearts. We should allow this power to become life. In this connection we now understand St. Paul's beautiful words, "It is the

Spirit himself who makes us cry out, 'Abba, Father?' (Rom 8:15).

Ask yourself what significance the eternal God and Father has in your life? Do these words touch your heart? "Abba, Filia--yes, my child," the Father addresses you in your life. Does this touch your

heart? This everlasting game of life and love is ultimately the purpose of our lives.

The second statement, "The Holy Spirit is the soul of my soul? That's how it has to be if I am a Christian and see my entire person as a dwelling place of the Blessed Trinity. A cardinal once said, "the ordinary person consists of body and soul; a Christian consists of body and soul and the Holy Spirit." This means that the Holy Spirit is the soul of my soul. He lifts my soul beyond itself into life, into the trinitarian life of the Blessed Trinity.

The Cure of Ars once said in his simple way that one could compare a human person with a pebble and with a sponge. The person compared with a pebble does not have the Holy Spirit and has no life within self. It is different with a sponge. Water flows out of it, eternal life gushes forth. A person without the Holy Spirit is like a stone, like a pebble; a person with the Holy Spirit is like a sponge. The Holy Spirit is living, weaving, operating.

Christ himself used the picture, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life..., the water I give shall become a fountain within you, leaping up to provide eternal life" (Jn 3:36 and 4:14). Christ said this of the Spirit whom they were to receive. Another statement by the Cur~ of Ars reads, "The person in whom the Blessed Trinity dwells and reigns, pays no attention to the world. The world has no influence!" The world at large, the world in which we live, knows no God. Precisely this is our mission, in such a world we should constantly revolve around the eternal God, around the living God.

With that we are confronted with the second question: How should we apply this maxim in practice? First answer: We need to take the cardinal's advice seriously. And we want to do it; at least occasionally we want to withdraw from the world for at least a few minutes in order to meditate on the Holy Spirit, on the Blessed Trinity, and to converse with God.

A second answer is essentially the same. It summarizes in a more condensed way what has been said before. By begging, obtain from the

Holy Spirit the art of understanding the entire Christian life as a continuous, exceedingly suspenseful and decisive game of love

between the eternal God and Father and the Father child. By begging, obtain from the Holy Spirit the grace to participate in this game of love in a perfect way until the end.

First question: What do we understand by this game of love?

Second question: According to which principles of life is this game enacted? First question: What do we understand by it? I will now explain this sentence in detail. What do we understand by a continuous, exceedingly suspenseful and decisive game of love between the eternal God and Father and the Father child?

The expression game should not surprise us. "How many hard and difficult hours I experienced in my life..." some of you might now say. "From all eternity, Eternal Wisdom plays God's game before him." The words Eternal Wisdom are also applied to the Blessed Mother. She played her life before the Father. Later on the words were applied to every person's life. Every person's life, especially every Christian's life, is a game before the eternal God and Father. Of course, as in every game, we need two partners. Now, who is the main partner in every life? The eternal God. The co-actors and subordinate actors – that's us. Yes, Christian life especially is a game. We also find this term in literature. How is it frequently expressed here? As ninepins or a ball game; sometimes as a game of chess applied to a person's life.

A Greek philosopher once said that the one who governs the world must be an intelligent person, a logos, but certainly not a logical logos because sometimes this person appears to be rather arbitrary and plays like a moody child overturning every rule of the game. It must be an illogical logos.

Yes, it is an unintelligible game that the eternal God often plays with human life. Everything appears absurd, mysterious. We cannot understand God any more. Even if we knew the rules of his game in detail, we would have to expect him to suddenly knock down all the pins

32

in one blow. Yes, God the Father is a ninepins player who, however, does not observe the rules of the game.

Secondly, life is compared with a ball game. Again, who is in the foreground? God is the main person and we may think of ourselves as a ball in the hands of the living God. The Father may play with the ball, he may put it in his pocket, he may step on it. Life is a ball game before God.

We spontaneously recall the poem, the Dudele. You, you, you, always only you. We may say instead, "Yes, Father, yes, your will be done whether it includes joy, sorrow or woe." Always only you!

St. Teresa of Avila compared her own life to a game of chess. When do we win this game? When we checkmate the king. Who is the king? God! How can we checkmate him? Only through the queen. When do we feel as queens--no matter whether we are crippled children or have a good posture? If we take divine life in us seriously, we are all little queens able to checkmate the king. In a certain sense I force the living God down to me, into my life when I am simple and humble, when I acknowledge his power and experience myself as a little nothing. The nothing lives by the love and mercy of the infinite God and Father.

Philosophically seen, we, therefore, call the relationship between the Father and the child a game, a ball game, a chess game. Before we called it a game of love. We might think here of the word love story.

Recalling your own life, was not your whole life before your wedding a game of love, a game of hide-and-see, a continual seeking each other? Two partners seek each other and have no rest until they find each other. And then it starts all over.

When we read a novel we are always tempted to glance at the end first in order to see whether or not the two will be united. In the Song of Songs we therefore read, "The life and history of the chosen people is the story of a marriage while the life of those who are not chosen is the story of a divorce."

I am sorry that we have to break off here. But we prepared what we will hear later. The question really is how we can, under the guidance of

33

the Holy Spirit, acquire a new concept of our life; how we can understand the principles that govern life and apply them better so that we become able to form our lives according to these principles.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

34

for time and eternity. It is not important whether I play the first fiddle here or there. No, we have to play this game, we have to play it with skill. Therefore, we have to be interested in knowing the individual rules of the game and then we have to observe them. Today we will be satisfied with considering the first word.

Christian life should be a game. What does it mean and what follows from it? What rule of life, what rule of the game can be gathered from the character of this game? These are the two particular questions

which need to be answered. Once more: What do we understand by this game when speaking of our life, of our Christian life as a game of love? We certainly would object with every fiber of our being, if we or if anyone maintained that the Christian way of life is something playful, easy, superficial, and frivolous. We would protest by pointing out our own experiences and observations of life. We only have to recall how much we endured as refugees, how hard our struggle for existence in the New World has been. Now, if someone said that our life is something superficial, playful, easy, and frivolous - who would agree with that?

Our attitude will change if we search a little deeper and recall a statement which is very familiar to us, "World history can be likened to a world theater." In this case we may say that the eternal, living God is the stage director of this world theater, that he even designed the plan for this play and that he sees to it that in the course of world history, this play will be acted out down to the smallest detail in the most perfect way possible. Then we see with our spiritual eye that in this world theater each individual has a certain role to play. A role is determined by the wisdom of the eternal God. The greatness of a person's life consists in acting out the given role as perfectly as possible.

If we state that Christian life is a game, we intend to say more yet. You see, if we picture world history as a world theater, then the living God has, of course, something to say too; even a great deal. But by and large the actors' basic relationship, the human partners' basic relationship to one other and among one another will be in the foreground.

36

## HOLY TRINITY SUNDAY

June 13, 1965

As a Pentecostal gift of grace from the Holy Spirit, we hope and beg for a deeper insight into the truth that our Christian life is a continuous, suspenseful, decisive game of love between the eternal God and Father and Father children. We beg for the strength to play along with skill in this unique game of love. We immediately realize why I add that both the one as well as the other presupposes that we know a little about the rules of the game which we have to observe. Now we have to discover these rules of the game. In as far as possible, we will try to discover them independently, to investigate them and hope to finally find them. How should we go about this?

We will study what the individual life processes which are part of the

game of love look like. After having considered them, after having traced them to ultimate principles, we will possibly have the basis for the rules of life relative to the game of love. What are the processes which we have to consider here? All we have to do is reflect for a moment on the complete statement and we will know that we deal

1. with a game,
2. with a game of love,
3. with a game of love between our God and Father and the Father child.

You might guess what I want to say. We will take each word and consider it. What is a game? What is a game of love? What is a game of love between our God and Father and the Father child? Considering these words, we will discover a number of rules, rules which we have to observe. After all, we even follow the rules of a game which has less importance than this one. Here we throw the dice for our own salvation,

35

However, if we say that our Christian life is a game, the living God does not want to be seen as the stage manager only; he is the main actor in this grand, significant game for the salvation of humanity. The main actor! We may see ourselves as subordinate actors who have the mission to be drawn into this moving, significant drama of the eternal God for our salvation.

The deepest and ultimate meaning of our lives is the manner in which we play this game with the eternal God. It is actually of little importance what happens to us here on earth; it does not matter whether we are happy in the usual sense of the word or unhappy, poor or rich. All that counts is that we play this drama as perfectly as possible with the eternal God, with the main actor of the play for our eternal salvation.

Since playing along with the main actor is extremely important, in fact decisive over life and death, over happiness and misfortune, over time and eternity, God made it easier for us to play along by planting an indestructible, basic drive, the drive to play, into our hearts. Philosophers base this on last principles. One of our great poets, our great German poet Schiller, explains that a human person plays only if he or she is human in the full sense of the word. In as far as a person is truly human, an integrated human being, he or she continuously plays.

What does this mean? This drive to play is one of the basic drives in human nature. It is not only a drive reigning in a child. This urge to play

will be in us as long as we are human, as long as we are striving to become fully human. While studying this game in detail, we first of all stress once more that this is nothing playful. We are dealing with a very serious reality. After all, there are also serious games on which much depends.

St. Thomas, learning from his great teacher, the pagan Aristotle, tells us that a true human being, a fully integrated human being, (we hear what is implied, not a dilettante of human nature), an ideal human being, an integrated human being, a genuine human being is that person who is interiorly detached, always happy, a person who plays

37

cheerfully, animatedly and therefore seriously. A sincere, far-reaching, and significant statement! We have someone before us who represents an integrated human being, not a clown or an eternally gloomy character, for such a person is not a truly human being. It is a person of strong character; we would say, a person of the sun who always revolves around the eternal Sun. This eternal Sun is the main actor in the great drama in our salvation history. A person of the sun revolves - around this main actor, around the eternal Sun; such a person kindles the light of the mind with this Sun's light and kindles the warmth of the heart with this eternal, infinite Love.

This is a person – we may say – who is a paradisal person. As did Adam and Eve [at first], a paradisal person always revolves around the eternal God, the main actor in this great drama, as if playing. The eyes fixed upon the eternal God, the paradisal person is at ease in the presence of God, the eternal Father, the main actor in the salvific drama and therefore is personally a little sun, a little sun for all. A paradise atmosphere radiates from a person like that.

I think that I have now laid the foundation for our purpose. Now we know what it means to say that human life is a game. What follows from the essence of this game? The first important rule of the game is not very difficult to understand, at least not as difficult as later rules of the game will be; yet, it is rather significant. How is it worded?

Strive untiringly for the ideal of being co-players with the living God in the drama of world history, of salvation history, as it relates to yourself and to other people; co-players who are interiorly detached, always joyful and loyal, and filled with the Spirit.

This is a sentence of great significance. Should we discuss it in detail?

What does an ideal co-player look like? I must be carried by a deep inner, all-embracing detachment. What does this mean? From what am I detached? And if detached--I also have to be attached somewhere.

38

Where am I attached? Detached from myself, detached from loving my ego, detached from being a slave to my ego, detached--well, which other expressions should I enumerate--detached from being enslaved to my ego. The ego is locked up within its own shell and revolves around itself.

To whom should I be attached? This detachment from my own self must be transformed into a new perfect surrender, an attachment to the main actor. Who is the main actor? This is the eternal, living God in the great drama of salvation history. I have to be totally surrendered to him or at least have the desire to be. This is impossible unless I am detached from myself.

What does this mean in detail? Being detached from self and being attached to the eternal God and Father, the infinite main actor in the gigantic drama, excludes above all any compulsive attachment to self. Every game, even though it might have clear directions, clear rules, asks the co-players to be free from compulsion. One must be able to follow the directions which one recognizes and must accept them but yet preserve a certain inner freedom and ease. Therefore, be free of compulsion! A person filled with compulsions is a very useless co-player in the great drama, in the great game of salvation history. Free of compulsion, free also of a heartless will power, a will power that is rigid and emotionless in pursuing its goal by hook or by crook and stamps out everything else. This is not a real co-player; this is a person ruled by compulsions, a person who is useless and must be put aside, although here and there it might be possible to create a masterpiece.

What does it mean to be detached? In a previous sermon we described it differently. Then we talked about the qualities of the paschal person who is characterized by openness to the Father, agility in the Father and availability to the Father. In this game I have to be totally and unconditionally available to the Father; I have to be totally open to the main actor and be attached to him; I have to enter upon his wishes and try to fulfill his plans by hook or by crook.

39

There is a story about St. Francis Borgia who, by and large, was a serious, a very serious saint. One day, in the middle of winter, as he was traveling, he was surprised by a snow storm. The icy wind and the snow flakes cut his face and he could hardly see. Being an expert in playing the game for his personal salvation and that of others, it was a matter of course for him to take the snow flurries as the Father's teasing game although it was rather unpleasant for his nature. The saint thought: God the Father plays with his child. He likes to tease his child. So, I join in this teasing game and will endure all unpleasant circumstances, I will endure them gladly and smilingly since the eternal Father smiles to me through the situation.

On other occasions we said that a genuine player, a person playing according to God's plan, moves like a feather in the breath of the eternal God and Father; this person has the character of a feather. To the extent that I am such a feather for God's breath, that the slightest breath of God moves me, I will be an expert co-player.

In this connection we now could repeat many expressions which we coined before. We have only one thought: "Yes, Father, yes, your will be done, whether it includes joy, sorrow, or woe." Who, then, is the main player? A certain change of attitude is demanded of us. If we stay with the idea of a game, the living God has to be seen as the main player; our dependence on him is our very greatness as co-players.

If we look at things in this way while keeping in mind the inner detachment and freedom and then compare this attitude with contemporary Christian life, we observe that there are innumerable good, devout Catholics who lost confidence in the modern Church. We like to think of the Church as a rock. In the past we absolutely believed what the Church taught. This was our norm, frequently in a rigid form. Now it is said that God breathes differently and therefore, he wants to move his feathers in a different way.

God speaks in a clear language to us through circumstances. It is not as though we should abandon old principles. It is rather a question of applying these principles to contemporary life. Therefore,

"Eternal Father, see to it that we, as the important co-players in the great drama of our salvation history, become truly free co-players, interiorly detached from old forms whether it is a question of daily life or forms of prayer or piety. See to it that we become agile, open little feathers."

We will not abandon the substance. Of course, it may be difficult to find the happy mean. Therefore, it is all the more urgent that we learn to consider our lives as a great drama, as a great play about our salvation.

Continuing our reflections, we also need to tell ourselves that we should be ever joyful co-players with the playing God. A cheerful, joyful, inner detachment and an attachment to the living God as the Eternal Good, to his wish and will and to his plan are identical with constant joy. Everlasting detachment and everlasting cheerfulness are really the same.

Philosophers give us a definition of joy: Joy is the resting of the appetites in the possession of a good. Since we are dealing with a game for eternity, it is essentially a matter of our hearts and minds to rest in Eternal Love, in the Eternal Good. We know a song, called the "Home Song," which says,

"Do you know the land imbued with joy  
because the sun never sets there?"

What does it look like in this land, in this land of joy, in this land of the sun? It is understood that our appetites rest in the Eternal Good. Even when cross and suffering pierce our hearts, "love's magic wand swiftly transforms all gloom into joy."

If we are to elaborate a little more---and we actually ought to 'we could take Therese of Lisieux as an example or ideal. She could be called the saint of a constant smile. This constant smile is the expression of an inner detachment, of a continuous inner, spiritual joy. What is her life's story? It seems to me that we could call it the story of

a lost human smile and the lasting gain of a heavenly smile. What does this mean? Whoever is familiar with her life, knows that she suffered greatly when her mother died. Therese was four years old. As a result, her soul became very sick with hallucinations and compulsions to a degree which can hardly be imagined for a little girl of four. Her heart and mind were affected, she was filled with compulsions and obsessions. She was extremely sensitive, she saw sins everywhere, she had scruples on top of scruples. We can imagine that such a condition, especially in a sensitive girl of this age, affects the body as well. The girl was near death. At this time she lost her childlike smile and her childlike joy. The first expression of joy and cheerfulness in a child is always a smile. All we have to do is observe our own children. How happy parents are when they see their baby smile for the first time. And the last sound, the last affection of the dying is again a silent, peaceful smile. They die with a smile.

Therese had lost her natural happiness. As we know, in this great

need she turned to the Blessed Mother. What did the Blessed Mother do? She showed herself as Our Lady of the Smile. Through a statue which Therese passed, the Blessed Mother gave the sick, tired child a warm smile, a smile that was a reflection of the eternal goodness of the infinite God and Father. The little girl recovered and was freed from her compulsions. Similar miserable compulsions torment many people today, making them sick, useless, sad unto death, upset and depressed. Depression on top of depression. What happened then? From then on Therese was the model of a constant divine smile in all situations of her life. No matter whether she experienced exterior joy which delighted her heart and mind or whether she was under great pressure, she lived but a constant smile, a constant joy in God and the Blessed Mother.

This feature of constant joy is especially worth our admiration in all those situations which she had to endure, which are called the dark night of the spirit, the dark night of the soul and of the senses. All this

42

she endured. Until death she suffered from terrible doubts of faith and yet, the eternal smile never disappeared from her eyes and lips.

Now we understand how she teaches us to communicate with the eternal main actor in the great game of salvation. She calls this holiness little holiness. This is the little way of divine childhood. It demands immense confidence in the eternal God and total abandonment to him. It demands a continuous revolving around the main actor so that as co-players we skillfully bring the game to conclusion. She also has some advice for us: I want to tell you what helped me to really become a little saint with a constant smile. What are we to do? We should scatter flowers of little sacrifices for Christ, but also give him the secret affections and tenderness of a deep, a fervent love.

What does this mean? A little way of confidence, a little way of surrender. To scatter flowers is a child's way; it is the expression of childlike surrender. A child who scatters flowers does so with a certain inner joy, joy on its lips and joy in its eyes. If we want to show a tender love for someone, we can do so only if a true inner joy and cheerfulness permeates our whole being.

If we see all this in context and rest in these thoughts, we sense the rule of the game that we also have to apply to ourselves. We have to see to it that we not only grow in inner detachment and abandonment to the eternal Father, the main actor in this gigantic drama, but that our whole being becomes permeated with an unchanging cheerfulness, with a happiness of heart and mind, a smile in our eyes and in our souls.

This happiness has to radiate into all our actions, into our lives, not only our work but also our prayer life. It frequently happens that people who usually are cheerful, become serious as soon as they begin to pray. A mysterious seriousness covers their faces. This might be all right, but very often it is not. With whom do we communicate in prayer? Reverence is necessary before the eternal, infinite God but this reverence is certainly compatible with constant happiness and joy which manifests itself outwardly. After all, we know how God presents himself to us. He said that he wants to be called Father. A communication with

43

the~ Father is always a joyful communication. Doesn't this make us happy?

For example, if you open the Old Testament, you will feel and hear what the eternal God tells us through the prophets. What does he want? He wants our hearts. He longs for our hearts. It is the Father's desire to shelter his children in his heart. Here they should live and find a home. And a child who lives in an indescribably tender and living union in and with the Father is filled with delight, with joy. Therefore, our hearts should be joyful also during prayer. Even if my communication in prayer were nothing more than an exceedingly silent resting in the eternal, omnipresent God, I silently rest in him. I want to be in him, with him, silently; my lips do not speak, my heart speaks, my heart rests and is relaxed.

The prophets expressed it also in these words: What does the eternal God want to do? He wants to show us his tender affection. What does he want? He wants to carry us on his shoulders, he wants to carry us in his heart, even on his knees. In meditating on my basic relationship as co-player with the main player in the game of love, I cannot help but feel deep happiness and joy permeating my heart, and a silent smile, a joyous reflection of my heart will shine through my eyes. This is what the eternal Father is waiting for. He wants to be my Father in the true sense of the word so that he may see in me a reflection of his only-begotten Son and can embrace this reflection in me and take it into his heart. I wonder whether we understand this. Do we now understand the first rule of the game and do we have the courage to apply it?

There is a final quality the co-player has to develop. I have to participate in an animated way; it should be an animated, not merely an exterior participation. Even if I desecrate my smile (and how many people do desecrate their smiles by seducing others to sin) I have to re-consecrate it; I have to make up for it by having a consecrated smile shine through my eyes. Animated, imbued with the Holy Spirit--all we

have to do here is to repeat everything that we said last Sunday. It is the Holy Spirit who in indescribable sighs repeats this one word Father.

44

"Yes, Father." How can we picture this? We think of a little child. The mother wants the child to say father. The child cannot do it by itself.

What does the mother do? We may say that she prompts the child to repeat after her the word father. The very same happens in the soul of a true Father child. The Holy Spirit keeps on saying the word Father, and the child repeats it. Or, when the child says it, the Holy Spirit says "Abba, Father" along with the child.

Today we heard and listened to a few thoughts only, which, however, are exceedingly important statements and decisive truths. Now, what are the consequences for us? I think we should try to seriously apply this first rule of the game until next Sunday. What should we do and how? Every day we should meditate on these ideas, reflect for a few minutes on those thoughts which touched and kindled our hearts. But this is not sufficient. It seems to me that we should unanimously agree to look upon our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt as Our Lady of an Eternal Smile. Under this title and in this quality, we should look upon her, especially those poor people among us who continuously suffer from compulsions, poor people who make themselves and others sick.

"Mother of an Eternal Smile, be for me also the model and mother of a transfigured smile. Your example, your strength, and your grace should help all of us so that during this week we become more and more little experts in the game of love; interiorly free, always joyful, animated and loyal co-players with the eternal God in the game for our own salvation and that of others. Amen."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 20, 1965

We expect a twofold gift from the Holy Spirit: a deeper understanding of the rules for Christian living under the viewpoint of a continuous, suspenseful and exceedingly important game of love between our God and Father and the Father child. Besides this, we expect gradually to become experts in playing the game of love. From this we may immediately conclude that essentially there are three types of rules of life. I repeat, three types. We call it a game. What, then, are the rules of the game? We call it a game of love. So, there must be a rule of love. We speak of a game of love between the eternal God and Father and the Father child. Consequently there must be a family rule, a rule which applies to the family life between the eternal God and us human beings. So far we know the rule of the game. Would you like to hear it once more? Seek to successfully play the game with God, the game of your personal salvation and that of others. You should play this game interiorly detached, with constant joy, and always with soul and enthusiasm.

Today we want to begin to work for a clearer understanding of the rule of love. After knowing the rules of the game we are, of course, particularly interested in the rule of love. We will proceed by the same method as before. First we will investigate the nature, i.e. the essence of the love which is meant here, in order to then derive the proper rule of love or life. The topic we study is, however, so involved that it is impossible to complete it in one sermon. Today, therefore, we have to be satisfied with working out the nature of love, the essence of love.

A twofold answer is possible, a more theoretical answer and a more practical answer. The practical, perceptual answer will be given in the next sermon. With that we have narrowed the theme down to one point: the theoretical clarification of the nature of love or the essence of love.

47

The theoretical answer should have three qualities: Above all, the answer has to be clear; then we wish and somehow expect this clear answer to become even clearer through appropriate descriptive definitions. In addition, we expect that according to our way of thinking all this is based upon last principles.

I said before, the theoretical answer has to be clear. In order to avoid misunderstandings, I wish to emphasize from the very beginning that essentially two known truths are presupposed. We want to mention

them at least briefly. The first truth: What kind of love are we talking about? As we can gather from previous sermons, we mean true, genuine love of God which implies a twofold element: God's love for us and our love for God. Presupposing this, we must not overlook that in the course of centuries much has been said in regard to love, also in regard to love of God as mentioned above. Many hymns of praise have been sung about love, that is, about love of God in the twofold meaning: God's love for us and our love for God.

There are a few thoughts which I would like to imprint upon you more deeply, the knowledge of which I do presuppose. We speak, for instance, about the cycle of love. What does this mean? Love, my love, whether it is love immediately directed toward God or love for my wife, for my children--but certainly love in the Christian sense--love, all true love surges from the heart of the eternal, infinite God and is to be transmitted into the hearts of other people in order to flow back through them into the heart of the eternal, infinite God. Cycle of love.

On hearing this, we are probably inclined to examine how it is with the cycle of love in our own lives. Think of your love for your wife or the wife's love for her husband and children--is this love drawn into the cycle of love?

The well-known Imitation of Christ chose a different expression for the same truth, saying that love originates in God. An important insight, even my life does not originate below; it comes from above. Love, true, genuine love originates in God and therefore has to be directed beyond everything earthly to God! Otherwise love and our hearts are not at

48

peace. Is this true? Can we say this of ourselves, of the love that moves us?

Certainly each one of us loves something or somebody. A person without love is unthinkable. Love is above all a fundamental longing in our hearts. Others expressed this principle of the cycle in this way: Love is a gift from heaven to the earth and a gift from the earth to heaven.

You will agree with me when I say that, examining our own interior lives or the lives of those around us, we must admit there is love; there are numerous forms of love, but very few forms of God-pleasing, God-willed love. What forms of love do I mean here? Love that forgot or lost its relationship to the living God, sensuous love, love as a mere gleam of true love. Despite the many forms of love, it is immensely cold in our time. We immediately understand the reason for this phenomenon. The cycle of love has been interrupted. This love does not come from God, nor does it return to the living God.

There is another phrase I want to remind you of in this context. We speak of the principle of exchange. What does this mean? Each genuine love is directed toward a you. By this you we mean another person as well as the you of the living, eternal God. The principle of exchange! What should the loving partners exchange? Everything they have. If anyone is excluded, my love is sick. The principle of exchange. How often did we hear from this pulpit about an exchange of hearts and a fusion of hearts. The exchange of hearts! Husband and wife should exchange everything. If they do not exchange their hearts, if there is no fusion of hearts, well, then we know, to the same extent there will be a lack of inner peace, of inner contentment, of inner fulfillment. The heart remains restless.

There are, however, more things which should be exchanged according to the principle of exchange. An exchange of interests. If a wife is not interested in her husband's concerns, or if a husband is not interested in his wife's concerns (the same holds true for parents and children, for each love), this love lacks something; it is not genuine, true love. The principle of mutual exchange is not intact. Of course, there is

also an exchange of goods. This means that everything which belongs to me in some way belongs to my wife and vice versa. An exchange of goods.

Perhaps we feel stimulated to apply this principle of exchange of love to our relationship with Christ, with God, with the Blessed Mother. True love – how strange and unusual this sounds – demands of us, if we think of the Blessed Mother, an exchange of hearts, a fusion of hearts between our hearts and her heart, or since we often speak of God the Father, an exchange of hearts between our hearts and the heart of our God and Father. A fusion of hearts, an exchange of interests, also an exchange of gifts. These few words sound very abstract but they include a tremendous world of values. Once more, if we look deeply into our own selves, we realize that each revolving around ourselves – be it conscious, be it unconscious, be it strong, be it very fine and subtle--each revolving around our own selves, any type of egoistic love, of being enslaved to our ego, of being engrossed and engulfed in ourselves means to kill, to give the deathblow to true, genuine love, to make our love sick.

Last Sunday we emphasized this so strongly. If we ask why there is so much coldness in the world, the answer is the same. We adore ourselves too much in some way or another. We do not surrender our hearts totally, we do not allow the cycle of love to flow back through our neighbor, through the other person back to the eternal, to the infinite God.

I think I should add a few words yet about all that is said nowadays about love and has been said for centuries in literature and in practical life, words which sing a hymn of praise about love. Of course, nobody will expect me now to summarize all these songs of praise. I only intend to recall two expressions. Frequently love is called the force of gravity and the basic or fundamental force of the soul. Love is also compared to wings by means of which our hearts soar upward, fly into the eternal, the infinite God.

You see, we constantly center on the principle of the cycle of love and we have no peace until we penetrate this cycle and apply it to our own lives. I ought to explain these two expressions briefly. Force of gravity! We all know either from school or from experience that all material objects are governed by the force of gravity. When you drop an object, it falls according to definite laws. The pull of gravity forces objects down, they seek a new support. If we now call love the force of gravity of the soul, of the heart, what does this mean? By its very nature, love is always impelled to give, it is impelled to go toward the you and through the human you ultimately to the eternal, to the divine, to the infinite you. Now ask yourselves, if the force of gravity in your souls is in order? Few of us will be able to state that it is. We realize that our hearts are restless, that our hearts are not content, that our hearts are often cold. We cannot cope. What might be the reason? The force of gravity is not in order.

Furthermore, love is called not only the force of gravity but also the most basic force in our soul. Actually, love is the root of all roots implanted into our souls. Love, the power of love. It is easily understood. After all, the human person is created in the image of God. Love is the basic force in God and, therefore, in my heart as well. To the extent that I am God's image--not the image of an animal, not the image of a beast, not the image of a machine--again, to the extent that I am God's image, the basic force in my heart must be the power of love; the power of all powers, the power through which all other powers in my nature can and will receive a definite meaning, must be the power of love.

Love is likened to wings. A picture: an animal, a bird has wings to soar upward. My soul has wings, pinions. What does this mean? Away from the ego--it's always the same story--away, absolutely away from the ego, right into the you! Love is the force which is responsible for all the great and deep processes of life within ourselves, in our nature. Wings! Thérèse of Lisieux also used the picture of the wings, although she gave it a different interpretation. She said that love which seeks itself will never be able to give itself totally, neither to a human partner

nor, and much less so, to the divine you. Such a love (in our language we could say, a love which breaks or interrupts the cycle of love) is to be likened to a wing, to a singed wing. The wing is in a certain sense singed, burnt and therefore has no strength. The more the soul becomes aware of the crack in the wings, the more the soul will strive to fly upward and try to rid itself of the ego and to surrender itself undividedly to the you, the eternal, infinite God.

A German poet pictured in a beautiful way not the wing itself but, symbolized by the wing, the circling around the eternal, infinite God. Humanity speaks, "I revolve around you, around the ancient tower." This is a picture. Who is the ancient tower? This is the eternal God. Humanity says, "I revolve around you, the ancient tower; I have revolved around you for centuries." What does this mean? People of all zones, of all times were unable to cope with God. Whenever they wanted to strike him from their vocabulary, they failed. Again and again the eternal, infinite God stirs up the human heart, draws attention to himself and ultimately wants to be the magnet that draws all unto himself. "I have revolved around you, around the ancient tower, for centuries." Now people are classified by their degree of surrender. "I don't know whether I am a falcon, a storm, or a violent song." What does this mean? Perhaps I fought against this old, ancient building, against the tower. I wanted to push it aside. Did I lose confidence in the living God? Did I flee from God? Did I want to ignore him? It is no disgrace if we have to truly admit that, we were not seldom in danger of thinking that way. But actually, it seems to me we have always been fortunate enough to repair and restore our relationship to the living God and to preserve it well.

Am I perhaps a storm? Did the storm of circumstances sweep the spirit of faith, the spirit of hope, the spirit of love out of my heart? Indeed, people's greatest problem today might be and remain: How do I arrive once more at my former supernatural faith, supernatural hope, and supernatural love? We, the older ones, still live out of an old tradition; it will take a long time before these seeds are removed from

our hearts. But the younger generation, when we think of our children and grand children... If this development continues--well, how soon will we have to say: indeed, we are a storm today. The coming generation is

a storm that sweeps everything away that is in us, in our human nature, everything that is supernatural in our thinking, everything that in any way would deepen our basic relationship to the living God.

"Am I a falcon? Am I a storm or a powerful hymn?" Here I touch on our fundamental attitude or, I even may say, our own situation. Our entire life is a great hymn of praise to God's infinite love. A great hymn of praise! Everything that we bear and endure, that we experience in happy hours, in hardships and trials, everything, everything becomes somehow a stanza in that great, great hymn to the honor, to the glory of the eternal, infinite God.

What did I say? It is only a brief preparation. I merely recalled what we are talking about. We are speaking about God's love. His love for us and our love for the living God. We must presuppose this; otherwise we will not understand the last answer which we have to give.

We may and want to presuppose a second point. No matter what love it is in my life, it must be a true love. I may not be totally debased or torn out of the stringed instrument of my soul and, in the final analysis, be nothing more than sexual lust. Every true, genuine love follows the same principle, whether it is love of neighbor or love of God. The principles remain essentially the same.

With that we have arrived at the answer to the question: What do we understand by the nature of love? It should be a theoretically clear answer. We direct the question to the common human feeling; we ask the philosopher and we will also ask the theologian.

I will make it brief. If we are asked what we mean by love, we might shake our heads and reply: For goodness' sake, how can I define love? If we are asked once more: Please tell me how you experienced love. Think perhaps of the time when you were engaged or think of the deepest expression or forms of expression of love that you experienced. I think that sooner or later the answer would be: Love is nothing more (it

sounds odd to say, nothing more) than souls being in one another and with one another.

Isn't it true that we, especially we who are married, know that the moments of happiness and bliss are those in which we can honestly say: I am in you, you are in me, and the two of us are in one another. We two are a unity, a closed unity. If I wanted to apply this now to our relationship to the Blessed Mother or to Christ or to the heavenly Father, I would ask myself, is it really true that my soul and the Blessed Mother's soul are in one another? Can I say: I am in you and you are in me? We two are in one another? We don't mean being beside one

another, being against one another. How frequently it happens in our marriage that we live beside one another, even against one another, whereas living in one another is totally destroyed!

The Blessed Mother says the same to me, "I live in you." Does she really live within me? "You live in me." Or, think of the living God. Well, for heaven's sake, what do we all conceive as religion? How little we are capable, inclined and willing to confess: God and I, we are a union of souls, we are two in one, we are united in one another, with one another, and for one another. Now we touched upon questions that we discussed before: The Blessed Trinity dwells in my soul, dwells in my heart. We are Holy Trinity churches, dwelling places of the Holy Spirit. What does all this mean? This is an objective truth, but is it also this way subjectively?

What will the philosopher answer if I direct my question to him? Essentially he will repeat in a more learned way what I said before about the principles of exchange. What is love? It is a power of the soul, not a physical power. It is a unifying and uniting power of the soul that creates a similarity between us. It is easy to remember this theoretically, but we have no idea of its importance for our practical lives. If from childhood on we pursued only the goal to love God above everything, to love him passionately, to love him sincerely, how quickly our souls will then be united with God and how quickly we will resemble the Blessed Mother, how quickly the eternal Father or Christ! Then we

are independent of pretexts and evasions, of individual trifles. There is only one goal--lover Love sincerely, love perseveringly, love selflessly!

Indeed, we observe this frequently in life, when father and mother have lived together for a long time, year after year, one decade after another, we often realize that they resemble each other, not seldom even in their weight.

A poet coined a special appropriate expression for that, "The way he clears his throat, the way he spits, you copy him with all your wits." This refers more to an exterior imitation. Where you really love, it is understood that this unifying power which makes two persons resemble each other manifests itself in practical life in an ever newer and deeper way. Having seen this so clearly, we ought to and may then say that now we really want to be serious about loving, about loving in a God-pleasing manner. This would be the masterpiece of our lives. When we later work out the rule of love in this relationship in order to apply it practically, then our everyday lives will have new goals and new meaning; our everyday lives will make a complete turn most beneficial for us and for others.

Now let us listen to the last answer which the theologian shall give

us. What is love? A perfect bond. It perfectly binds God and the human being to one another, person to person; it links and unites all virtues in the human heart with each other. What we consider virtue is often nothing more than a large pile of stones, useless and without value, because it lacks love. The stones are not united with each other: here a stone, there a stone. Love is the bond of perfection.

My time is up again. It is only a small, a very small part of the question that I answered so far. What is the answer? We want to have a theoretically clear answer as to what love is. The second thought should describe love. If I wanted to do this more elaborately, literature, world literature would give me numerous starting points. Actually I intended to explain just two expressions in this context, but I will do so next Sunday. You may reflect a little on it if you wish. What do I want to describe? The process of life which is love.

55

Dante called world history as well as each individual's history a divine comedy. What does this mean? If we want to know the answer, we first have to inquire into the background against which Dante wrote. Applied to me, in how far is my life a divine comedy? In how far a human comedy, and in how far and when is this divine-human comedy turned into a horrible tragedy? These are serious questions! We will discuss them next Sunday.

A second thought: Our lives are a romance with God; my life is a romance with God. What do you understand by a romance, a love story? What does this romance with God look like in my life? Finally, the last question: Where is the ultimate, the deepest reason for the meaning of love? These are questions which we will discuss next Sunday. What may I say at the end? If we understand a little what I stammered here, then we see that we as Christians are called to be a kind of Columbus: Westward there is a land--and this land, well, should we say that we want to conquer this land in the full sense of the word, the land that we call the cycle of love or exchange of love.

The story has it that the discoverer of America was convinced that he would discover this land, that he would conquer this land. His soldiers mutinied; for days, weeks, months they saw no land, only water. Finally! the moment came, the cry was heard, "Land, land, land? It will be that way in our lives also; if we seriously seek it, some day we will discover and conquer the land of genuine love. Insights similar to those we have discussed here moved St. Augustine to write the bold words, "Love, and then do what you want." I wonder whether we understand how true this is. If we truly love, then we actually never do what

we want; we will always do what the other person wants. "Love, and then do what you want."

Because my will is deeply one with God's will, because my heart, through a human heart, is deeply one with God's heart, it is self-evident and eternally true, that if I love God I have performed the masterpiece of my life. Then I know how to repeat in all situations of my life: Yes,

56

Father, yes, your will be done, whether it includes joy, suffering or woe. The Blessed Mother acted this way, and we will imitate her.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

June 27, 1965

In the spirit of the Constitution on the Liturgy which conceives of liturgy as a continuous game between God and the human person in the game for the world's salvation, we seek to see our entire Christian life as a game of love between God and us humans. We also seek to become familiar with the rules by which to play this game. To the extent that we are able to do this, we will obviously be disposed to actively and fully participate in the liturgy. We are not satisfied with performing mere exterior acts. The main thing is that we experience, relish, and savor the liturgy in our hearts. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to penetrate more and more deeply into final relationships.

So far we are familiar with one rule. Did we also succeed in practicing it, perhaps even with a degree of skill? What is the rule? Play the game for your salvation with God, the game for the salvation of your soul, for your happiness--partly here on earth, partly in heaven--play along in the game. Play it with a deep inner detachment, that is, free yourself from unnecessary compulsion, detach yourself from self-love. Play it always cheerfully. The love of God we strive for has to be a joyful love of God just as St. Paul taught us. "Rejoice [in the Lord], always! Rejoice" (Phil 4:4). Is my life really a life of joyful love for God, of joyful cheerfulness? Finally, play it animatedly; that is, with soul and resolute verve.

Is it true, did we really succeed in saying yes, Father with the Holy Spirit in all situations of life? It is he who says it in us with unspeakable moanings. Are we able to repeat these words in all situations? Or, expressed differently, do we really conceive of our Christian life as a life that is governed by a continuous openness to the Father or readiness to be moved by the Father, availability to the Father, joy in the Father,

59

even in the most difficult situations of life, and faithfulness to the Father?

This is a life's program for us, a rule of love, a rule of the game that gives us enough to do for our entire lives. Nevertheless, we are eager to learn about the other rules in this game also and to try to apply them. Last Sunday we pointed out the rule of love and the family rule. Only after knowing all three rules can we perceive a clear life's program which we must strive to actualize.

The rule of love. As is our custom, we are going to study the es-

sence or the special character of love first in order to derive from it the meaning or the appropriate, suitable rule of life. Last Sunday we theoretically discussed the special attributes of God's love. As it seems to me, we explained it rather well. What is the meaning of love, love of God? Well, essentially its meaning is the same as that of all genuine love, except that here it is applied to God as the partner of love. Love, God's love in us, seeks an indissoluble unity of love with the eternal God and Father. Expressed in other words, what does love of God aim at? What does God's love for us aim at? Both aspire to a fusion of hearts, an exchange of hearts between the infinite God and his little creatures.

It is true, we understand all this theoretically. But our hearts are filled with the desire to be permeated by that which is in our minds. This means that this theoretical answer should be supplemented by a more practical illustration. The purely theoretical does not grip our hearts so quickly. Only if we speak concretely and perceptually, will our hearts become moved and inflamed. At the end of the last sermon, we mentioned the way we are going to choose to accomplish this purpose. We will reflect on familiar descriptions of love. Today I will speak about one single description only and dwell on it.

The description reads: Our Christian lives should be seen as a divine comedy.

A strange expression! From beginning to end, my life is a divine comedy. In order to make this a little more intelligible, it might be good

60

to recall for a moment where and when we first heard this term. It was probably in connection with the great Italian poet Dante. He lived at a time that was similar to ours; there was a great revolution within Christianity, within Catholicism itself. The individual members of the Church quarreled among themselves and tore each other to pieces. Dante himself was a victim of this discord; he was exiled several times, driven from country to country. It is easily understood that in circumstances like these many likened the entire Christian life as it was at that time with all its human doings to a human comedy: People tear each other to pieces.

With this background we perhaps understand the expression better: Indeed, world history is primarily a divine comedy. Who stands behind all this confusion? Who has the reins in his hands? Who guides this human confusion, the human comedy here on earth? It is the eternal, living God.

This includes my own life. Human factors may have a place, even an

outstanding place. Perhaps we now think of the dictators who also chased us around the globe; we think of all the injustices we endured from relatives and friends. All this is a human comedy, are human doings, human trifles. But we may not forget that God stands behind them. It is God who plays a major role in this drama. With this we begin to give an answer to the first question that we like to raise in this context: What does this statement mean: My life and all of world history is a divine comedy?. The second question is: What outcome does God have in mind for this comedy? These are, obviously, very practical questions.

What does it mean: My life is a divine comedy? I will give a threefold answer, at least briefly. The story of my life is above all a divine history in which God plays the main part; he is the main person. After all, it is he, the living God whom we humans exclude from our calculations; it is he whom we like to ignore today. But as far as I am concerned, I believe that the living God plays the major part in my life's history. What does this mean?

61

We learned in our catechism that the eternal, the infinite God not only created the world, he also preserves it, he governs it. He governs my life also. He keeps all the threads of my life's history in his hands. He knows how to bring them together more and more, to have them unfold their beauty in a masterpiece, in a piece of art. How often did we hear these words? But do they touch our hearts? Do they move us interiorly?

In order to gain an even deeper insight into this whole process of life, we may say that our lives unfold according to a plan made by God from all eternity. What plan is this? It is a plan of love, a plan of wisdom, a plan of omnipotence.

A plan of love! What did God plan? He planned me; he created me because he loves me, he loves me from eternity. What else does it mean? My whole life should be the unfolding of this plan of love. Later on we will discuss in greater detail how true it is that ultimately love, not justice, is the cause of all causes, of all divine operations. Love is therefore this virtue, this basic attitude which sets everything in God into motion, including his justice, his omnipotence, and all of his attributes.

Ultimately all must serve God's love. He means to pour this love over us. By lavishing his love upon us, he means to move us to an answer of love until we live with him in a deep, indissoluble unity of love here on earth, and ultimately throughout all eternity.

It is a plan of wisdom. What does this mean? In his wisdom God created us according to his image. According to his image means above all that he planted a deep, deep power of love into our hearts--a power of love. It is the same power of love which is the essence of his own being. Therefore, the basic tone, the basic affection in my life is my power to love. This power to love is measured in degree and manner according to his plan, a concrete plan which he designed for me. He measured it according to the type and extent of the mission which I have to fulfill here on earth.

62

A plan of wisdom! Upon hearing this in an abstract and yet very deep-reaching way and by comparing it with real life, we often realize that it seems as though the power of love in human nature has totally or at least to a large extent decreased. The Apocalypse tells us that, toward the end of time, love will grow cold. How little genuine, true, warm love we know today! Yet, God's wisdom planted this power of love into our hearts. Think of the Little Flower. She also raised the question about the meaning of her life. She finally found the answer: Now I have it; my mission consists in embodying love within the Church. Love is the meaning of my life, that is, heroic love. Ultimately, this is the meaning of everyone's life.

Now, God's wisdom is to be supplemented by his omnipotence. This means that he is also able to create a movement of love, to accomplish the goal in a person's life despite greatest obstacles, to achieve that union of love. Therefore, you may compare him (this is a popular image) with a tennis player. What does perfect skill consist in? It consists in hitting all the balls, especially those which were aimed badly. And oh! how many balls we do aim badly! We frequently miss God's heart when it is really our task to aim at God's heart, to be united with God's heart. He knows perfectly how to direct those badly aimed balls to their goal.

All in all, we perhaps understand a little how true it is to say that the main person in our life's history, the main actor is and remains the eternal God. In order to express it differently, I think we should say, he designed the plan of my life. He, not I, sees to it that this plan will be actualized. In the last analysis, he is the leading actor, the main actor, in the actualization of this plan. He is the main character, the main actor.

The second meaning of the phrase that my life's history should also be seen as a human comedy is that I have to play along; my cooperation is necessary; my playing along is necessary. But my role is the role of a subordinate actor. We need to draw attention to this fact!

We need to emphasize that in this drama, in this comedy, we have to play along. In order to make this intelligible, at least basically, I will use

63

two expressions. One is familiar to us. It is from St. Augustine, "He who created us without us, does not want to redeem us, does not want to lead us to eternal happiness without us." We have to cooperate. Seeing our lives under the viewpoint of a game, of a comedy, we ask what it means? We have to supplement the love of the main character with our own personal love. We have to learn to love and we have to learn to love anew, again and again. It is love that must unite us with the main actor.

The other expression is from Duns Scotus, a great medieval theologian. It reads, "Deus quaerit condiligentes se." Why did God create me? What does God want? What should I do? I should love. I should love as he loves and what he loves. How does he love? What does he love? Above all, he loves himself and in himself all creation. This is a very consoling thought. What is God's intention of creating me, with the plan he has of me? He wants to have someone he can love. It is almost as if he could not be happy without me. He needs just me in order to fully unfold his power of love. But he also asks me to love with him what he loves, to love him and because of him everything else. How should I love? Sovereignly, in such a way that this love is ultimately the keynote of my entire life.

Now we understand the phrase, "My life's history is a divine, a human comedy." It is our task to color the main and subordinate roles accordingly. How can this be done? Let us ask St. Therese of Lisieux whom we will ask more often. She mentions two expressions which somehow bring this harmony close to us, two expressions which she imprints upon our souls. The first expression is little holiness, the second, lift of holiness.

Lift of holiness! What do these two expressions of hers mean? Little holiness! This refers to self-activity. She does not say that self-activity is a subordinate matter. No, no, it is necessary, but it is of minor importance and we should consider it such. We should not look upon it as the major part. God is the main thing. Ultimately it is God who introduces us into the world of love. He has to introduce us into this

64

world. Ultimately, it is God who draws us to himself like a magnet. We must learn to consider whatever we do (it may be extraordinarily heroic) as insignificant doings. Therefore, we should not take ourselves too seriously. Don't think that each one is--put drastically--that each one of us is a great or little "would be great" and the whole world revolves around us. No, the world revolves only around the eternal Father. I will not attach too much value to my actions, even if I give my life.

The second expression, lift of holiness! St. Therese saw a lift which was something new at that time, and quickly she related it in an intelligent way to her inner life and striving. She sees a child standing downstairs before the lift and far above there is the eternal God and Father, his arms open, longing to have his child with him. And what is the child doing? It is not as if the child did nothing, but what it does is so little. Its main task is being with God. The child also opens its arms and waits and waits until the eternal God takes it into his powerful, merciful arms. Do we understand how we may harmonically combine the divine and the human comedy? We allow God to play the main part while we play the subordinate roles, while we are his little partners, seriously acting along but leaving the main activity, the major responsibility to God.

With that we arrived at the second question which reads: What is God's activity and what is ours so that the divine and human comedy is secured in our lives? I will give two answers; we will then realize that this involves fundamental statements. They are simple but we need a whole lifetime to live them. What do we have to do? First, we have to swim in the infinite ocean of God's mercies. Second, we should swim in our own personal ocean of weaknesses and miseries. I will explain each word, each sentence as necessary. The aim is to obtain a union of love between God and the creature, between Father and child.

There is a great law of regulating the relationship of love. It says as the old Romans put it: *Si vis amari, ama!* If you want to be loved, you have to love first. Therefore, if God wants to have our love (and we learned before that he does want it, he wants to have our hearts totally,

undividedly), if he wants that, then he has absolutely no other choice than to love us first, to love us boundlessly, visibly, tangibly. *Si vis amari, ama.* If we now examine how God himself applied this law and ask how we have to apply it, then we immediately have a number of answers. Holy Scripture tells us and the beloved apostle [St. John] imprints it upon us that our love does not consist in our loving God first; no, God loved us first. Are we aware of what this means?

God observed this law. Because he wants to have our love, he loved us first. And how he loved! He loved us under greatest sacrifices.

Because he loved us, he loved us to the end, to the exhaustion of all his strength; he loved us persistently. Yes, he loved us faithfully here on earth and he will love us throughout eternity. What do we have to do? If we want to be loved by God--it is the very same the other way around--then we have to love him in a similar way that he loved us.

What do we have to do for this purpose? We said it before. We have to become aware of all the gifts of love which the eternal, infinite God has bestowed upon us during our lives. Where did God manifest his love to me, his love as he showed it to all people, to all Christians?

Think of all that is included in God creating the world, in redeeming and sanctifying the world. We have to call this to our attention and not run about like an animal that only lives for the moment. Instead, swim in this ocean and savor God's mercies. This holds especially true in regard to God's proofs of love in our personal lives, in my personal life. Where does my life differ from someone else's? How frequently did he fill us with special gifts and graces? What are they? To swim in the ocean of mercies means to savor frequently all the gifts of love that God ever gave to me personally. It is commonly expressed like this: to meditate upon God's mercies.

It also means to swim in the ocean of our weaknesses and miseries. The basis for this law was formulated by St. Paul as follows, *Diligentibus Deum omnia cooperantur in bonum*. To those who love God all things work together unto good--all things, absolutely all things. St. Augustine adds: even sin. All weaknesses, all weaknesses that we experience in

our lives-- and they are countless -- have, according to God's plan, the purpose of leading the truly loving child upward, more deeply into God's head. The Little Flower expressed the very same by saying: We have to experience ourselves before the eternal God as small, helpless children. What does this imply? We have to recognize and acknowledge our nothingness, our weakness and misery. We are asked to trust, to trust in all circumstances that the eternal, loving, infinite Father wishes to call this poor creature his own and that, by our acknowledging our weaknesses, he wants to draw us all the more deeply into his head.

For this reason we should not take our shortcomings and failures too seriously. Our sins should help us to confess that we are small. When we acknowledge our smallness, God draws us into the very depth of his head. It is wrong to become restless. After all, it is the eternal God who plays the major role. After all, it is God who uses all means, especially our weaknesses and miseries to draw us totally into his own head.

If we want to look at a vivid example to see how this is meant, let us look into the life of Therese of Lisieux. Above all, we are interested in the basic experience that shaped her entire life. What might it be? I do

not want to go into detail although it would be very interesting and informative. So much has been written about her, and time and again the question is raised what her basic experience was?

I think I could say that her basic experience was actually an experience of love. More exactly, the experience of love was prepared through the basic relationship between her and her father. Later on she pointed out time and again, "My father treated me like his little queen." The basic experience was thus prepared. It reached a climax as time went on. What does the climax consist in? We recalled it on another occasion. Her sister, who was a mother to her, left home. Therese was attached to her in a childlike way. Suddenly, this sister entered the Carmel. This led to a nervous breakdown for Therese. She became sick through and through, her heart was filled with compulsions, scruples, she saw sins everywhere and was in a state of constant depression; she was actually close to death. Everybody was convinced that she was

67

near death. Now the decisive event in her life: The statue of the Blessed Mother in her room suddenly smiled and began moving toward her. The great basic experience in her life became a reality. She herself describes the happening best, "The Blessed Virgin was so wondrously beautiful. I will never be able to describe her in human words; her countenance reflected only kindness, mercy, compassion, tenderness, so that I could do nothing but look at her. What charmed me most was her mysterious, ravishing, inimitable smile."

What does this mean? Now her experience with God was crowned. How did she encounter God in the smiling Virgin? How did she encounter God? She encountered him as the infinite God of warm and ardent love. In the Blessed Mother, in the person of the Blessed Mother she saw a reflection of the eternal God and Father. Therefore, her basic experience is one of love; love of God, not fear. The eternal God does not stand before her with a whip in his hands; he is the infinite God of love. This picture is impressed upon her soul. From then on, she always sees the eternal God meeting her throughout her life with a smile. Smiling. No matter whether it happens through his direct guidance or through the decrees of his providence, through inner inspirations or through injustice and unfairness; everywhere she sees the smiling countenance of Eternal Love, and she knows no other task than to answer this smile with her constant smile.

There are three expressions which from now on shed light on her life. I am sorry but I cannot explain them now. From then on, Therese became an image of Our dear Lady of a constant divine smile. What

does this mean in detail? All of us, without exception, should become the same if we take the world of love seriously:

three times admirable children of a constant divine smile;  
secondly, three times admirable martyrs of a constant divine smile;  
thirdly, victims of merciful love, of infinite love.

68

A great world lies hidden behind these three expressions. I do not want to start opening this world to you now, I leave it for next Sunday. However, I would like to ask those of you who have some understanding of their purpose in life to try to clarify these three expressions for yourselves.

The conclusion of the sermon:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, Three Times Admirable Mother and Model of a constant divine smile, transform me, too, into a child of a constant divine smile and into a victim of God's merciful love. Amen."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 18, 1965

Due to special circumstances we had to interrupt our cycle of sermons for two weeks. The theme of our sermons being of great importance for our everyday life, it will be worthwhile to take up the thread and to continue spinning it. I said that the theme of our course is important. We remember its purpose. We are trying to conceive of and to live our practical, everyday life, our Christian life, with its drudgery, its disappointments, with its many great crosses as a continuous, exceedingly suspenseful game of love between our God and Father and us, the Father children. Once again we see our lives as a game of love, more exactly, as a free and interiorly detached, always joyful and animated game, a game of love with our God and Father, in order to obtain eternal salvation. Differently expressed, we deal with a game whose end will determine our personal lives and the life of the nation for time and eternity.

If you ask me now where we should continue the thought, then I think I should refer to the prayer that we tried to say together at the end of the last sermon. It is a prayer that we, as it were, took from the lips of the Little Flower, that we stole from her heart, a prayer that we wanted to meaningfully apply to our own practical lives. It contains three petitions, three petitions translated into our language, into our way of feeling.

The first petition, "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, transform me into a child of a constant divine smile and human cry." Human cry refers to a child, to a child of God, to a child of the Father who deeply experiences every sorrow, even when a divine joy shines through its whole being.

The second petition, "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable martyr of a constant divine smile and human cry."

The third petition, while going in the same direction emphasizes a new thought, "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, transform me into a constantly smiling victim of divine merciful love."

At the moment the meaning of these expressions might still be foreign to us. But even a quick glance at the prayers as we just heard them will tell us what is above all in the foreground. It is the constant divine smile, of course always connected with a human cry, with deep human compassion.

Obviously we deal here with a special ideal of Christian living. It is the ideal of the person of the sun, children of the sun, that is, Christians who constantly revolve around the sun of divine love; Christians who flourish in this sun and, being constantly permeated by the sun, are vitalized and gradually transformed into children of the sun, little suns that create a unique, joyful, cheerful, relaxed atmosphere, an environment where other people feel good. Such Christians are able to offer a special mixture to people, an ointment which they prepared out of their personal experiences, out of a constant inner joy, a consciousness of being sheltered, of being securely rooted in divine ground. They cannot say much about themselves, usually they do not say much at all; above all, they do not set themselves up as examples for others, not even when God leads them into all shades of darkness, into all the prisons of the world. They are mature, mellow personalities who by their very being radiate a perpetual, joyful *sursum corda*.

Here we are face to face with an ever joyous and joy-giving Christianity, even when crosses and sufferings are poured upon them in buckets, as so frequently happens today. To be more specific, we here remember especially those saints in whose lives joy, cheerfulness, a joyful Christendom was dominating. It is true, of course, each Christian, each saint should be characterized by an eternal joy. Joy should shine

72

through their eyes and words. This goes so far that, before a Christian is canonized, the Church investigates how far joy, a constant joy emanated from him or her during their life time. This, however, does not prevent us from affirming that there have been saints whose outstanding feature was joy, saints who had an especially joyful disposition.

If we pause for a moment and browse through our memories, if we recall what we heard here and there in our youth, we might recall St. Lawrence, a martyr. We know that he was roasted on a grill. God did not trifle with him. He was slowly roasted on a grill which never gave off its full heat. It was a slow glowing and burning, and we can well imagine how St. Lawrence suffered under such torture. But we have to admire his attitude. Perhaps his lips were burned, his eyes, limb after limb; he no longer was able to radiate joy, to proclaim joy in words, yet, filled with inner joy he managed to say, "Now, you better check, on this side I am well roasted, my flesh is well done, but the other side is still raw." Do we understand what this means? This is the ideal of a constant divine smile. It is also--although it is not clearly apparent we take it for granted--it is the ideal of a deep human feeling, if we want, of a human

sorrow, of a human cry.

Or, we might think in this connection of St. Francis of Assisi. It was not for nothing that he was called by his contemporaries and later generations God's troubadour. He was God's faithful singer. He sang unceasingly. If you are familiar with the life of St. Francis or, life as such, you also know how much suffering, how many disappointments the saint had to endure all the way through, even in, from, and through the order which he himself had founded. Nevertheless, he was God's troubadour.

St. Francis de Sales pertains to the same group. We are familiar with his expression, a characteristic one, "A saint who is sad is and remains a sad saint? He did not like a gloomy piety; he did not like gloomy Christians. Any sadness, which, after all, we cannot escape, ought to ultimately flow into the ideal of a deeply felt divine joy.

73

Since we pointed out once before that we are interested in relating and tracing the entire train of thought to the spiritual attitude and teaching of St. Therese of Lisieux, it might be worth the effort to stress once more that she is called the saint of a constant divine smile.

I think now our souls are somewhat prepared for this new world. We feel that these are facts which are really of great significance, especially today when so much suffering, indescribable suffering is poured upon US.

It seems to me that we should now analyze step by step the three petitions and, while absorbing the effects, reflect on what they have to tell us. We should contemplate them until we have the feeling and the conviction that the petitions contain an attitude which should become second nature to us. Once we call the attitude from which the prayer, the three petitions, sprang forth our own, we may truly say that we will succeed in becoming experts in the game of love between the Father and the Father child, as did the Little Flower.

Today we'll begin with the first petition. We know what it says, "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile and a human cry." The objective thinker here raises three questions: What do the individual expressions mean? What is the basis for the attitude which is expressed here? How does this attitude affect practical life?

For the moment it suffices to briefly answer the first question: What do the individual expressions mean? Well, we just need to take them lightly into our hands and weigh them; we do not need long arguments and explanations. There are essentially three elements which should be

pointed out.

We listen once more. It is not primarily an extraordinary, tense, personal struggling and striving, a call on our own will power, a call on our ambition. No, it is rather a simple petition. Our will power alone would, of course, not be able to reach for such a high ideal. What is the ideal in general terms? "Transform me into a three times admirable child"; that is, a three times admirable Father child. At issue is not just a one-

74

time admirable Father child, but a three times admirable Father child; that is, a uniquely, wondrously, and admirably formed and transformed Father child. More specifically, what is expressed here? To become a three times admirable child, a three times admirable Father child in the aforementioned sense is ultimately the fruit of the Holy Spirit alone. Personal struggle and effort does not even dare to seriously reach out for this ideal. It is a gift from above, a fruit of the Holy Spirit. What does the Holy Spirit have to effect in us in a far-reaching, all-embracing way before our entire being can be permanently sustained by a constant divine smile and a human cry? Speaking in theological terms, we are used to saying that the Holy Spirit has to form us into heroes of the three theological virtues faith, hope, and love.

Once more, the Holy Spirit needs to effect a transformation in our entire spiritual life through his gifts, through his seven gifts. It takes time before we acquire a heroic belief in God's providence, a constant divine hope and divine love that conquers, illumines, and penetrates everything. Only where this wondrous transformation of our being, of our nature can be regarded as a gift from the Holy Spirit, may we expect to have a constant smile on our lips even when the whole world abandons us or throws stones at us. It is a divine smile!

It seems to me that we all understand that without prayer – and we do beg the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt – and without the Blessed Mother folding her hands with us, we may not expect to overcome the purely human element in our lives. But we may expect it, especially--I think I may remind you of this again--since on the occasion of the mission in our parish we all made the covenant of love with our dear Mother, and she obliged herself as our educator to change us interiorly into this admirable form, the form of the heroism of the three theological virtues. These virtues are the foundation for a constant divine smile in our eyes and on our lips. It is with good reason that St. Paul tells us that joy is the characteristic feature not only of saints, not even those whose outstanding quality joy was, but that it should mark all of us without exception, as St. Paul says, "Rejoice,

gaudete. Rejoice always" (Phil 4:4). Always, even when we perhaps experience St. Lawrence's fate, when we are roasted, when we are persecuted, mistreated physically and spiritually: Rejoice, rejoice always. In all situations--rejoice in the Lord.

Do we grasp what is implied in the phrase, "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child!" If I may take the time to give you an example to illustrate what we just said, I would like to acquaint you with a man who, like us, had made the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother, the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. He was a priest belonging to the Schoenstatt Family. He abandoned himself to the Blessed Mother as her instrument. During the government of National Socialism, he realized that this was the devil's realm. Therefore he said, "Since I want to fight for the kingdom of the Blessed Mother, for the Father's kingdom, I have no choice, I have to protest against everything that National Socialism plans on doing with the world." Therefore, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to Hitler, fully aware of the consequences. Of course, he expected death. After all, he had given himself to the Blessed Mother. He wrote his own death hymn which ended in the petition, a rather strange petition: "My dying smile shall whisper, 'O dearest M.T.A.'" With this attitude he went to his death...

Why am I telling you this? We pointed it out before. Such an attitude, a mixture of a constant divine smile and a human cry, is possible only if a mysterious supernatural world is created first, if the three theological virtues triumph in the human soul. In the preceding stanzas we, therefore, find a repeated reference and petition that the Blessed Mother might transform his soul, his entire being into one large flame of love, into one great victim of love.

Do we understand the meaning of the words, "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable Father child"? Perhaps it is worthwhile to quickly read the three stanzas. At the moment we are not so much interested in

76

pursuing many ideas, but rather in letting them slowly sink into our hearts.

The first stanza of his death hymn reads:

"O Sign so great and wondrous, O sun-clad Sign above.  
Transfigured, penetrated with God's all-holy love.  
I know but one desire-to burn with love divine  
enkindled by you, Mother, in Schoenstatt's holy shrine."

If we want to radiate a divine smile through our countenance,  
through our eyes and words in the midst of crosses and sufferings, we  
have to become heroes of love for God.

Second stanza:

"You stand as Queen of Martyrs beneath the cross so still."

A smile, a constant smile is not equivalent to being caressed, it is  
not equivalent to being spared crosses and sufferings. No, no.

"You stand as Queen of Martyrs beneath the cross so still,  
consenting by your fiat because it is God's will.  
I hear the Father's calling for heroes strong and true.  
Oh offer me, dear Mother, as loving victim too."

In the background we have to remember the situation at that time.

These are no trifles, there is no preservation from the cross and suf-  
fering, no escape from the hoarfrost of the time, no protective coat  
around me. No, no, the flame of love is to become a victim of love. The  
basic attitude is a basic attitude of heroism! These are men and women

77

from whose lips a constant divine smile radiates, in whose eyes you see  
the glow of warmth and love.

The last stanza:

"O Queen of earth and heaven, command the storms to cease.  
Destroy the devil's power, O Victress, grant us peace.  
Make me your own apostle."

What for? For your kingdom, for the victory of the Marian Kingdom  
over the devil's realm.

"Make me your own apostle, your knight, I ask and pray."

I want to stand before you, not as a coward, not as a weakling but as "your knight." Now listen to the great and beautiful words:

"My dying smile shall whisper: O dearest M.T.A."

We have now explained at least a small part of the simple petition.

May I just add another thought before we start with the second part? You will certainly understand me when I emphasize that people with such a heroic attitude are not necessarily men, nor priests. They could be children, women, old women, old men. When meeting such people we are inclined to say that a participation in the transfigured suffering of Christ already shines through, not only a participation in the transfigured life of Christ, but also in his suffering. Only a person whose earthly life is the embodiment of Christ's transfiguration will be capable of such an attitude and life.

With the second part of the petition we are deeply drawn into the clockwork of our considerations. We pray:

78

"Let me become a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile, a divine or a heavenly smile."

After everything that has so far been said, it should not be difficult to see clearly, at least somewhat, what it means: a divine or a heavenly smile, a smile when we are touched by crosses and sufferings in all those situations which we mentioned before, which we experienced in our own lives. Yes, we call this smile a divine smile. Why a divine smile? God is the source of this suffering or this joy, of this smile; God is the goal of this smile, and God is the model for this smile.

It seems to me that those who follow our Sunday sermons a little must feel that we are transplanted into another world, into the supernatural world, into the divine world. We are at home in this world. We must grow ever more deeply into this world. If we fail to do this, we will not master life. If we fail to do this, the supernatural world will remain for us a sealed book of which we know nothing and which we are unable to savor interiorly. Today's life with all its countless struggles and storms will break us, will destroy us.

It is a divine smile, because God is its source. To a large extent we actually proved this before. Only God can create such an inner transformation within our hearts so that we are heroes of the three theological virtues and therefore have an entirely new standard for

evaluating life, crosses and sufferings, all earthly sensual pleasures and lastly also our own personal miseries. God is the source. A smile, a divine smile!

We who are somewhat at home in the supernatural world and heroically believe in Divine Providence, believe that there is a divine plan behind our lives. We are not subject to chance. There is a divine plan, a plan of love, a plan of wisdom, a plan of omnipotence which divine love and wisdom carefully designed to the smallest detail. It also contains all the crosses and sufferings and injustices that we will have to endure whether we belong to this or that state of life. It is God who designed the plan.

What does this mean for me if a deep love of God permeates my being? What is joy in the first place? It is the peace of the appetites in a good! Peace! My appetites rest in a good. What is for me the highest good? It is the living God and his plan. Therefore, it is clear what we mean by a divine smile. God is the source of this smile. Smilingly I say yes to God's plan. Even if my nature breaks down, cries out and weeps and sobs with tears in one or even in both eyes. Nevertheless, I bear a reflection of joy. Why? "Yes, Father, yes, your will be done, whether it includes joy, suffering or woe." A divine smile, once more: a divine smile.

God is also the goal of my smile. All I want is to please the eternal God. I belong totally to him in heroic love, detached from myself. Remember the phrase that we used before: To play the game of love we need to be interiorly free, perfectly free, free from ourselves, we should play it with constant joy and with soul and enthusiasm. What does all this mean? We have only one goal--to please the eternal God and Father. Whether it is pleasing to ourselves does not matter. The Little Flower went so far as to say: Dear Lord, you suffered so much for me; that's why it is not becoming for us, (of course, we have to add that this is only possible on the highest level which we won't attain overnight) to complain to you about our own personal cross and suffering. You have to listen to enough complaints. All we want to do is smile, smile in the midst of death, of confusion, of being interiorly detached, of dryness in our hearts, of dryness in our whole nature. We do not even want to complain to you. We are so detached from our own selves, so selfless. We know only one thing, we want to console you, we want to please you, we want to meet you with a smile.

Do you understand what greatness this is? Do we understand what it means to have a constant divine smile in our eyes, an eternal divine smile? Once more, the eternal, living God is the source of this smile. He is the goal of this smile and he is the model for this smile. The smile, a

divine smile belongs to the essence of God. A divine smile! When we picture God in our human way of thinking, it cannot be in any other way

but with a smile. Theologians know the reason for this: Joy, smiling joy is peace, rest in the possession of a good. The Blessed Trinity essentially possesses its own self, entirely and totally in an eternal triune embrace. That's why God is simply joy. Those of us with a little education are familiar with the verse: "Freude, edler Goetterfunke, Tochter aus Elysium." (Joy, noble divine spark, daughter of Elysium. Beethoven's 9th symphony) What does this mean? God is not only love. Because he is love he is also everlasting joy. If we live in God, if we want to be images of God, we ultimately have to be reflections of eternal joy.

As always I must end in the middle of my sermon, but let us remember these few thoughts. I will not forget to continue next Sunday because these thoughts will then rise before us with all their implications. How about our human cry? How do the human cry and the divine smile coincide? We have to know this before we will be able to try to repeat the prayer during the week:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile and a human sorrow or a deep human sorrowful compassion."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

July 25, 1965

Last Sunday we had chosen quite a high twofold goal for this past week. The sermon was to stimulate us to say the prayer of petition frequently during the day: "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile and a human cry."

In addition, we also wanted to try to become little artists, little masters of the constant divine smile in practical life. While looking back and examining what we accomplished, we are, I believe, immediately stimulated to look ahead, to have a review and a preview; we will review the past week and preview the coming week.

In the review we would like to find an answer to the question: What did we accomplish this week? In general, the answer will probably be: truly, not much. What did we accomplish during the past week? If we thought of it at all, we quite often told ourselves without any doubt that the goal put before us was too high for us simple faithful; in any case, the goal fails to consider our weak nature.

May I make an attempt to discuss this twofold answer a little more closely? Is it true that the goal is too high? Doubtlessly, it is high, but is it too high? Once more, it was and is high without any doubt. All we have to do is to look into practical life. All we have to do is to remember how difficult things are for all of us who suffer tremendously from the tensions and annoyances of everyday life. How difficult it is to patiently say a courageous yes to all the perils in our lives, and now we should even say a joyful, smiling yes in all situations. This is truly quite a high goal. We might go so far as to admit what the great St. Teresa (of Avila) once said: "The person who wants to become something worthwhile has to adhere to a high goal."

83

For example, it does not mean much if I make the resolution and convince myself to climb over a molehill. This means nothing; it does not stir up any strength. But if I have the goal to climb a mountain, the highest possible mountain, it awakens inner energy. Granted we think that way too; nevertheless, we repeat: Isn't the goal that was set before us too high? I repeat, it is doubtlessly high, it is very high. We recall what we discussed last Sunday; we look at it once more and we know and want to impress deeply upon our hearts that there is a prerequisite for a constant smile. To smile even in the greatest hardships and disap-

pointments in our lives – and we know how many there are – to acquire a constant divine smile, to joyfully say yes in all situations in life presupposes something else. I would like to express it differently. Holiness presupposes that we are perfectly at home in the world beyond, that we have found a home in the supernatural world. It presupposes a very tender and deep fusion of hearts between the human heart and the divine heart, the Father's heart.

This fusion of hearts is so deep that the soul at all times feels interiorly prompted by the Holy Spirit. With unspeakable moanings the Holy Spirit makes us utter, "Yes, Father," even if our nature bleeds, even if it weeps and cries. Do we understand this? Basically it is clear to us. It is not as if we did not have to endure crosses and sufferings, as if we were freed of that once we are entirely at home in the world beyond. It is just the opposite. The more tender our love, the deeper the fusion of hearts between our hearts and God's heart, the more receptive, perhaps the more sensitive we will become to crosses and sufferings.

Our nature moans and yet, the Holy Spirit repeats time and again with unspeakably tender, gentle, fervent, joyful affections: "Yes, Father, yes." Once more, this fusion of hearts is so fruitful that we are able to overcome the animal within us and all inordinate animal drives, all animal cravings. It is so fruitful that it uplifts our purely natural thinking, our purely natural willing, our purely natural loving in a unique way. That is, it will be uplifted through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. These gifts

enable us to stand in divine light, in divine confidence and in divine strength in all situations of life. We have to keep this strongly in mind so as to impress on our souls the considerable, unattainable height of the goal. We see that we cannot reach out for such an ideal with purely human means, even if we all were little heroes. Therefore, what is presupposed? What is presupposed in order to become persons, heroes of a constant divine smile as well as of a human cry? The Holy Spirit's immense power and strength of transformation is presupposed.

Indeed, the goal is remarkably high. It always has been and the goal seldom has been reached. This is all the more so today when we realize that humanity is completely earth-oriented, world-oriented, enslaved, enslaved to self. What miraculous power is necessary to experience in such a time the miracle of being a three times admirable child of God. I have to add, however, even if it is true that the goal is remarkably high, it is not too high, at least not according to God's intention. Did not Christ, too, clearly give us this very goal in the Father's name? We only have to listen to one or two utterances from his lips in order to know the great commandment. What is it? We know

what answer Christ expects. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind" (Lk 10:27). What does this mean? It refers to the height that I described. I should simply live in God's head, experience ever anew and ever more deeply the fusion of heads with the living God and Father. And the commandment does not only hold true for XYZ; it holds true for all of us without exception. Therefore, according to God's plan, the goal is not too high for us. God has a deep reverence for us. He knows how he created us and he has reverence for our nature and for our ability. He places demands on us. He does not play with us.

The other expression might go even deeper because it is less known. "You must be made perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Mr 5:48). What does this mean? We were told today. What is a deep love, a fusion of heads? What is love? It is a power that unites and brings about a likeness. Practically speaking it means that if we love

85

God as ardently as we should, we will be united with him in an indescribably tender way and we will grow in likeness to him. We will be little images of the eternal, infinite God and Father.

May I repeat what I said? The question was whether our goal is not too high? The answer was that it is high but not too high because God gave it to us, because the eternal God and Father attuned his entire world government to the realization of this goal. He attuned the government of my life, a possibly rather troubled and entangled life, to this goal. Therefore he placed the sacraments at our disposal. Therefore, the entire course of my own small life is to be reduced to three thoughts. The eternal Father overwhelms me with gifts of love and he wants me to interpret these gifts of love as a sign of his seeking love and he expects a corresponding answer of love. We might have heard these truths often before; we might even repeat them once in a while, but how long it takes before these truths sink into our minds and heads.

It seems to me that all of us recognized a second difficulty, however mistakenly. We thought that this unquestionably high goal would not take our weakness into consideration. I should like to repeat my answer. Of course, we are weak, but not too weak. On the contrary, our weakness is precisely what draws the Father into our lives. Are we weak? I need not prove this in greater detail. In connection with the all-encompassing trains of thought which we perceive here, all of us have to acknowledge that we are too dependent on our senses, that we are too dependent on the stimuli of this world and on our own self-love. Both elements are immensely strong and forceful: We are weak toward

the stimuli of the world and weak when faced with our self-love. Thinking of this self-enslavement, I would like at least briefly to draw your attention to two facts.

We know what it means to have bad habits, any bad habits in any regard. We are obstinate and hardened. How stubborn we human beings frequently are. Why stubborn? We are locked up, our heads are locked to God. He cannot get into our heads. We are obstinate and hardened because of bad habits, we are obstinate also--we might not

86

be familiar with this idea – because of empty forms in our Christian lives. Of course, it is difficult to find the golden mean. On the one hand, we have to adhere to definite, clear principles; on the other, we want to be open to the Father and available to the Father, as we discussed in previous sermons, especially when we reflected on the resurrected person, the paschal person. Talking about joy, we often repeated the idea that we have to become interiorly free, detached from ourselves, detached also from a slavish dependency on empty forms. Empty forms, forms which lack inner spirit, are also the cause of spiritual hardness. We are so obstinate that we adhere compulsively to forms although God, through circumstances, is pointing at softening these forms, although God is speaking within us, is seeking us, is longing to draw us to himself. We do not listen. Why do we not listen? We are deformed, spiritually deformed.

First and last, these few words suffice to convince us of the truth that we are really weak; weak when faced with the goal of being open to the eternal Father in such a way that he could draw us unto himself like a magnet and aim at and achieve a deep fusion of hearts.

Can you guess why I am emphasizing this second thought? Are we weak? Very, very, very much so. But this is no hindrance. On the contrary, seen in the right light, our weakness is the ideal means to draw God into our hearts. In other words, we must never overlook the fact that if we rely on our own selves, we remain weak. God did not intend us to rely on ourselves. He wants to be united with us. When, however, does he most strongly, most permanently want to unite himself with us, with our souls? When we joyfully and gratefully acknowledge our weakness, our limitations, our spiritual miseries and inadequacies.

St. Paul impressed this truth upon our souls with the famous words, "for when I am powerless, it is then that I am strong" (2 Cor 12:10). There we have it, he also says that he is weak. There is a simple spiritual book which expresses it so beautifully, probably with reference to St. Paul. The expression reads, "Personal weakness and misery, if per-

ceived and acknowledged, means on the one hand, the powerlessness

87

of the Father and on the other, the omnipotence of the child." It sounds beautiful and we might remember such truths. When, however, do we experience them? When do we experience how true this is? When I, like a child, gratefully and joyfully acknowledge my weaknesses, then according to a divine principle, I compel our God and Father to bow down to me. I am weak and helpless--he is almighty. Before a child, before a humble, simple child who acknowledges its weakness, this eternal, almighty God is downright powerless; of course, powerless only because he makes himself powerless, because when creating the human heart, he attuned it to his own divine heart so as to be almost forced down into the heart of the child who is simply, openly, humbly acknowledging its weakness. In her symbolic language, St. Therese of Lisieux used the image of the lift. High above, the Father is in a lift where he is waiting for the child down below to feel little and insignificant and to acknowledge its smallness. If the child does so in the right way, then the Father cannot refrain from suddenly hastening down and taking the child in his arms. Before the child realizes it, it is in the heart of the Father.

This is, of course, mere stammering and helplessness; these are words which seek to disclose a mystery which we moderns in particular cannot imagine any more at all. We are so entangled in the world below, we are so infatuated with our own selves, enamored with worldly things and with creatures, that we are far from even thinking of the mysteries of God's Kingdom.

With this we may close our retrospection. May I ask once more, what will this retrospection bring about? Should we say, well, this is the end. If the goal is so high and we are so weak, then we stop right then and there? Just the opposite. After having heard all this, we have no reason whatsoever to abandon this high goal of combining the constant divine smile with a human sorrow. We uphold our goal.

Therefore, we prefer to consider the second point, a preview. What are we going to do during the coming week? We uphold our goal. In other words, we will try to penetrate deeper into the simple prayer that I

88

just mentioned and that occupied us last Sunday. More specifically, we

deal with two questions. "What do we actually understand by the divine smile and the human cry?" We could substitute heavenly smile for divine smile. The two expressions mean the very same. I think last Sunday we sufficiently explained the divine smile. Our smile is divine in all circumstances of life, that is to say, we will succeed in practicing this divine smile only if the Father, in the Holy Spirit, gives us the grace. We may never forget that it must be a gift from above.

Furthermore, we will only be able to practice it if God enlightens our minds so that we see the divine plan as a plan of love, a plan which guides our lives and convinces us that everything done, decreed, permitted by God is an expression of his love. Everything is the realization of a plan of love, not a plan of justice; it is not an expression of condemnation but an expression of God's special and specific love, of his singular and unique love.

Thirdly, we will be able to practice it only if in and through the Holy Spirit we are interiorly prompted to do what pleases the Father, also when we are despised, when we are wrongfully accused, when we become sick or die. We still have a divine smile on our lips. Everything, absolutely everything that once will be and might happen in my life is nothing more than a proof of divine power, of divine operations in my life. My life is carried by God. Because my life is carried by God and because I feel deeply motivated to always say yes to the Father and his wishes, therefore it is understood that my eyes and my lips constantly reflect a joyful smile. I belong to God, I go continuously to God, I am carried by God, even when my eyes are filled with tears. A strong divine reflection yet comes through, at least a little--the fruit of the awareness that God is in me, God works through me, all is for him. This is the eternal smile, this will be the eternal smile.

If we want to deepen this thought a little more, we should try to understand the second expression a little better. A heavenly smile, which means basically the same as the divine smile, but under a

different viewpoint. St. Paul steers us in the right direction since these are two expressions he used.

We are familiar with one expression since we quoted it repeatedly. Although we have striven to be at home in the supernatural world, in the beyond, for all the years that we have been together (and how many years that is) it is always the same: We want to be at home there. St. Paul expressed it by saying, "we have our citizenship in heaven" (Phil 3:20). Of course, we need to have explained what St. Paul understood by it. At that time people had a saying, "your citizenship should be in

Rome." Why in Rome? We have to remember that Rome was the world capital at that time. People were to orientate themselves to the way of thinking, the customs, and usages common in Rome. We understand this very well. In the same way, our citizenship should be in heaven; St. Paul conceived of Christianity like this: the capital of Christianity is in heaven. Citizens of Rome? No, you have your citizenship in heaven. What does this mean? Orientate yourselves to God's way of thinking and that of the angels and saints and to God's scale of values as customary at the throne of the eternal God and Father. This scale of values should become our personal scale of values for our thinking and willing.

Allow me to repeat this. How do these words of Holy Scripture affect us? (We should study Holy Scripture more thoroughly.) They are uplifting, they lift us above the earth. It is not as if we should leave the earth. We may cling to it with both feet, but we also should grow into the world beyond, climb the ladder into the supernatural, the divine world and reality, the same world and reality which we all take for a plaything, a phantom, mere fiction. Your citizenship should be in heaven. Indeed, if I measure everything in my life by God's wish, God's scale of values, I always have reason to smile; then I possess the ultimate good. Who is the ultimate good? God. What is the ultimate good? God's wish and will. This is the masterpiece. Of course, we may not venture to believe that we could do this by ourselves. That's absolutely impossible. We cannot do it unless a higher power, unless the Holy Spirit speaks in us in

90

unspeakable moanings, unless he sings unspeakable, joyful tunes within our hearts. Of course, these would find an expression in our exterior behavior.

Then St. Paul continues. We know the expression very well, "Set your heart on what pertains to higher realms..." (Col 3:1). He does not mean to say we should not look for what is below. We should work so that we have something to eat, to chew and to bite. We have to do all this, too, and that's just the difficulty. We should be citizens of two worlds. It would be much simpler to be a citizen of one world only, of heaven and not of earth, or only of earth and not of heaven, but our hearts are created to embrace both worlds. "Set your hearts on what pertains to higher realms." I may seek what is below, I may also look after goods and money. I should do it, I should want to make progress, even become a capitalist. That's all right, but we should not overlook and forget the most important thing. We should use everything according to the divine scale of values. Set your heart on what pertains to

higher realms. St. Paul continues, "Be intent on things above," savor them. You should savor the things that are of heaven. Of course, anybody can give a few learned thoughts saying, "It should be this way." Even a fool can penetrate these thoughts intellectually and say, "It would be just wonderful if I did this or that this way." St. Paul knows how quickly human nature deceives itself in this regard. Therefore, he says that we should savor the things that are of heaven. In and through my senses I should experience them as the highest good. Again, how helpless we feel when we hear words like these. We are to be citizens of two worlds, of the world below and the world above, the world beyond. I think that theoretically we have explained these things sufficiently.

Now I should really take the time to illustrate a little what I said so far and I would do so gladly, Unfortunately I will have to stop in the middle of it. I would like to take Th-r-se of Lisieux as illustration material. There are two questions which interest us in this context. I can only hint at them and answer them briefly. Perhaps we will have some more time

91

later on. The first question is: What is the basic religious experience in her life? I could also say, what is her Damascus experience or her peak experience? Naturally, in the back of our minds we wonder what our basic personal experience might be? Mind you, I am not asking what our basic religious insight is, but our basic religious experience.

That is a very important question. For several decades theologians have occupied themselves with the question just raised. Some were of the opinion that her soul felt impelled to total surrender. There is no doubt that this desire was strong in her. We only have to recall the following little episode. When she was still very young, she was presented with many things and from these she was to choose one. How did she choose? "I want to have everything." This is the drive for total abandonment. Later on, when she was more mature, when she had taken deeper religious roots, the drive for total abandonment formed the attitude in her, "I would like to embody everything great that was ever alive in God's Church, all vocations whether martyr, confessor, etc. All this I want to be at the same time." There you see the desire for greatness.

Deo gratias, if desires like these are yet alive in human hearts today. The drive for greatness, not only the drive for pleasure, not only the drive for sexual gratification. The drive for greatness. She adds immediately: By what means do I want to be and become that in a heroic way? "I will be Love... in [the heart of] the Church." I will be a hero of

simplicity, a hero of divine love, and this perfectly. If at all, then perfectly. Indeed, this desire was alive in her heart. However, a fundamental tendency of the soul is not the same as a basic religious experience. Do you understand the difference? Now we should ask ourselves what the basic tendencies in our nature are and what the basic experience, the Damascus experience, in our lives is. Don't I have one? Then you are a poor creature, then you can do whatever you want, you will never feel at home in the world beyond. God have mercy on you if you have no Damascus experience.

92

Another opinion is that the basic tendency in Therese's life (I say purposely "basic tendency") was the desire for absolute radicalism. True, even when she was little as well as later when she went to school, she displayed a marked self-will. A nice story – a self-willed saint. But there was an underlying vital power, a radical, most radical persistence. This was so strong in her life that she experienced no adolescence at all. It was quite different with St. Teresa (of Avila) who lived her teens in the convent; she deceived herself using all kinds of cosmetics. If she lived today, what a sports fan she would be, how she would rush about in her car and tell herself that all she wanted to do was to be kind to all people by taking them along in her car. Ultimately, this is nothing but a slavish attachment to things. Imagine, believing that it is the glow of glory from my supernatural love. Perhaps I can elaborate a little more later on.

Well, the Little Flower did not experience that. She was radical to the utmost: If I want to belong to God at all, then totally. Nothing else and nobody else; I belong totally and undividedly to the living God. All in all, this was the basic tendency which in later years made her central religious experience so fruitful. Actually, I talked about her basic experience once before. Forgive me if I do not elaborate on it since I did so earlier. It really was the smiling Madonna who, in the moment of her breakdown, smiled at her. By the way, we probably do not even know that there was also a negative disposition in her soul, a tendency toward melancholy. She had a deep inclination toward depression. Later, after her mother's death and her motherly sister's entry into the Carmel, this led to a total nervous breakdown, compulsions, hallucinations. How was she cured? We are familiar with the event of the smiling Blessed Mother.

This is the central experience in its symbolic content. In the smiling Madonna Therese experienced and became aware of the infinite, merciful love of the eternal God and Father, of the wondrous order, the

ideal of the order beyond as an order of infinite love. Therefore, it was understood for her, she said so herself, that everything on this earth

93

smiled at her. We know how to interpret these words. God continuously smiles at me. How?. Through all events. I experience that the Blessed Mother's smile is the smile of the Father. In all her experiences, even in those which tortured body and soul and led to a breakdown, the Blessed Mother smiled at her, the Blessed Mother as the symbol of our God and Father. What was her response? She could not do anything else. The meaning of her life was to smile in return through everything that happened. When her eyes were weeping and her body was tormented, her soul arid, dry, and God was distant--she smiled, she smiled, she smiled. Why? Because of the mutual relationship. Since God smiles in all situations, the child has to smile too, it has to answer by smiling back.

We know a little how these things are interiorly connected but they have to become much more real. All these things which Therese experienced in the supernatural world she had learned through natural basic experiences, basic truths. The thought which stood before her eyes, which was very real to her was an idea that we all know: Her whole life was a unique game of love between God the Father and the Father child. A game of love. A constantly repeated game of hide-and-seek. What does this mean? How does a mother, a father do that? Where family relations are still healthy and intact, father and mother are interested in directing the child toward each other and themselves. They look at the child so that the child will look at them. What is a game of love? Love moves father and mother, moves their eyes, moves their hearts so that the child is moved toward them. The eyes, the heart of the child should be directed toward father and mother. What do father and mother do, no matter how attached they are to the child? They continue on their way. What is the intention? The child should follow. What do father and mother do to educate their child? In families with good, sound fundamental relationships, father and mother often hide from the child. They want the child to look for them. The child should look for father and mother. Do we see how easily this can be applied to supernatural life? How frequently God hides from the child, from us. He

94

is hiding, perhaps in the mother-in-law who constantly turns the house upside down, in the husband who is so passionate. Again and again God is hiding. God hides. What do I have to do? I have to look for him, even in my mother-in-law, even in my passionate husband. We may apply this to our situation. Perhaps he is hiding in those who rob me of my good name. They may be my tormentors. God is hiding. A game of hide-and-seek. He hides. Theologically speaking, he hides as a child in the Child Christ, in the human child, in the human nature of Christ; he also hides in the host. He hides like a worm, in a worm--if you will--as he was martyred on the cross.

A game of hide-and-seek. What do I have to do, what is my task? I have to play my game of love, I have to look for him time and again, I have to look for him ever anew and find him ever anew.

Therese's whole life was like this. Throughout her life she used all creation as a mere stepping-stone in order to see the supernatural world and reality ever anew and make it her own. You see, human experts of love use a peculiar picture for what I briefly sketched here. Unfortunately, I am unable to elaborate on it at the moment. What picture is this? The picture of a masquerade which they applied to God and the game he plays with us. A couple in love go to a masquerade, a fancy dress ball; they come to the dance disguised in costumes and the beloved is to find the partner. What a longing awakens in the two until finally the young woman recognizes her young man in spite of his mask. The game continues: How did you recognize me? What gave me away? They lovingly hug after finding each other despite the mask. Masquerade. God also wears a mask. What mask? Under what mask does he meet me? What does the masquerade in my life look like practically?

It sounds beautiful and we like to listen to it, surprised at the existence of relationships like these. But now we should make these relationships practical in life. Unless we do that, we must not expect at all ever to master today's life, ever to feel at home in the supernatural

world and to use it as the Archimedean point from which to move and change the world.

I have to come to a close. You have to work out the second part of the sermon yourselves. Reflect how the game of love manifested itself in Therese's life. My conclusion is very simple. Let's continue praying:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile and

a human cry."

I suppose, we would also like to know what the human cry looks like. This will be the object of the next sermon.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.  
96

## EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 1, 1965

Sunday after Sunday we seriously try to better understand our Christian vocation. We see the characteristic of our Christian life as a continuous, suspenseful game of love between our God and Father and Father children, a game that determines the eternal destiny of the individual and the community. I am certain, it is not difficult for us to admit that it is no simple matter to work our way into living and loving within this world of values. We are not accustomed to looking at things in this way. In addition, this view of things presupposes an exceedingly intimate, quite personal relationship between our God and Father and the Father child; a prerequisite that most of us do not and cannot fulfill. Nevertheless, these difficulties should not hamper us from endeavoring to find our way into this world time and again. It is probably worthwhile to recall the proverb: Slow and steady wins the race. We are not out to reach the mountain peak overnight.

At first, it should suffice if we may admit that at least we are longing for it; we are longing for this attitude. The measure of longing is the measure of fulfillment. We know this because Christ himself said, "Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill" (Mt 5:6), they will be interiorly fulfilled and liberated. Blest are we if we can confirm that such a longing is alive within us. Is it alive? I believe so, at least in those hearts which carried out the resolution that we took last Sunday, namely to pray frequently during the week:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform us into three times admirable children of a constant divine smile and a human cry.

97

If we examine the prayer more closely, we will find two petitions implied: the petition for a constant divine smile in all situations of life, even when things go wrong, against our wishes, and the petition for a constant human cry. Today we want to weigh these two petitions once more. There is not much to be added to the first petition because we have been trying to analyze its content for a long time in great detail. If I refer to it once more, it is only to deepen a little under two aspects what we already know.

We ask once more, what is the special property of this divine smile? We also used another expression for divine smile, namely heavenly

smile. This is the first question. It is best if I use a different method today. I will divide the question into two parts. I ask first: What does this petition not imply?

Generally speaking, since we talk about an exclusively divine and heavenly smile, we exclude the smile that is purely human. What does a purely human smile look like? Actually we have to admit that in this field we are all greater or lesser experts. Our question is: In how far did we succeed in being formed in the art of the divine, heavenly smile? If you will permit me to summarize and to recall what can be said about the human smile, I would like to mention four types of an exclusively human smile; that is a smile which has nothing or extremely little in common with a divine smile. If we want to become children of a divine-heavenly smile, a constant divine-heavenly smile, it is understood that we have to turn away from the purely human smile. We have to turn away from it. On purpose I am speaking of an exclusively human smile.

If I think of the first type, what would I want and have to emphasize especially? There is a self-complacent or smug smile, a coquettish smile, and a seductive smile. We are not behind the times; we know today's life. If we did not experience it ourselves, then we just have to look at the pictures presented on television. Let us examine what kind of a smile we meet there. What kind of a smile is that? If we stop for a moment and talk about daily life (we do not want to go into great details), then we will realize that by and large this kind of smile is part of

98

woman's nature in particular. I am referring to a self-complacent, smug smile, a smile that expresses personal smugness. It can be a healthy smile, but here I always see it separated from God. A self-complacent, smug smile might be a protection for one's personality. In this case it is an expression of personal value, of self-respect. Of course, as always when we talk about human nature, human instincts and emotions, it is very difficult to draw a line and find a balance, the golden mean. Nevertheless, it is worth the effort for those among us who really reach out for the constant, markedly divine-heavenly smile to examine how much self-complacency or smugness is still buried in our nature, how much dishonorable, ordinary self-complacency.

This self-complacency becomes worse when it leads to a certain coquetry in relationships. The desire to be attractive is part of woman's nature. This desire to be attractive and the way a woman practices it is ultimately her means to attract and to conquer. Up to a certain point, this is all right. Again it is difficult to draw a line. Coquetry implies that the woman wishes to please her husband and she should please him,

of course. When does infidelity usually begin? Whenever the desire to please becomes a craving, an obsession to please and is extended to other people, including the opposite sex.

You see, when we talk of an inner craving or obsession to please, the source of the smile is a craving to please which is intent on stirring up similar feelings, a similar craving, in the other person. If this craving to please becomes more intense, it leads to a seductive smile. There is no need to say much about this. After all we know practical everyday life. But I would like to emphasize that we must not deceive ourselves, especially those of us who really strive for the highest. Don't deceive yourselves. Who of us knows to what degree our own smile is still motivated by a craving to please? Just let me remind you of the great St. Teresa whom we compared once before with St. Therese of Lisieux.

It is known--she herself admitted it--that for twenty years, for approximately twenty years of her convent life, that is, excluding the time before she entered the convent, she struggled to gradually overcome

99

an ignoble coquetry, a craving to please. The contrast between a coquettish smile and the desire to please in a God-willed way becomes obvious when we compare the two expressions. The divine smile ultimately always seeks to please God. Self-complacency becomes a God-pleasing complacency, complacency in the divine. A seductive smile becomes an uplifting smile. The smile of the lips, the joy in the eyes is to be a sursum corda. It does not mean to attract to self and remain there; this may be so only if a human being belongs to me in a God-willed way. Then all noble affections may be expressed in some way, of course, always in a God-pleasing manner.

This is one kind. Once more, let us seriously ask ourselves, especially if we really strive to reach the height whether we do not deceive ourselves when we say: Well, we have to adjust to the modern world, we may not look old-fashioned; we have to be attractive. How quickly we deceive ourselves by hiding under a religious cloak while smothering in coquetry and grandiose self-complacency, if you will. It is time to seriously pray and beg,

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a divine smile who overcomes this kind of [coquettish] smile or keeps it within God-pleasing bounds.

There is another kind of a purely and exclusively human smile: a

habitual, practiced smile that lacks soul. We keep an eye on practical life. I am thinking of a habitually practiced smile which lacks soul. Being familiar with other nation's customs, we know that in some cultures the woman is trained to acquire a habitual, if artificial smile. Think of some Asian cultures. However, we cannot overlook that there are also many people who train themselves to smile habitually. Americans have a popular saying, "Keep smiling." Always smile. At the moment there is a popular motion picture with the title, "Keep smiling." Always smile. Why? Everybody might think you had something important on your

100

mind. This is a habitually practiced, deceptive smile which lacks soul. Obviously this smile has nothing in common with a divine smile. It is in complete contrast to it. The divine smile is an animated, spirited smile. Why? It comes from God and leads to God. God is the soul of our soul.

The third kind of smile is a compulsive, disguising smile. What does this mean, a disguising smile? I want to hide the fact that I did not yet master this or that sorrow. Therefore, I compulsively suppress the undigested happenings in my life. I hide them compulsively. The divine smile is the opposite; it is the expression that in God, with God's grace and after his image, I interiorly master all difficult situations, even the most difficult. This does not prevent us from experiencing a human cry and sorrow.

Finally, there is a God-alienated smile. Why God-alienated? People do not want to have anything to do with God. Of course, they may smile. After all, there are quite a few enjoyable things on this earth. But if our smile is a divine smile, it always arises from the ultimate source, God, and from the desire to please him.

With that we have briefly recalled what the divine smile excludes. The second question: What does it include? Actually we already discussed this step by step. If we want to summarize it once more, we will have to say that a divine smile is a constant inner joy, either a Sunday or a weekday joy, a constant joy arising, welling up in our hearts from a most tender, deep, intimate union of love with our God and Father. It is a joy that becomes effective in the consoling realization of fulfilling the plan of love, wisdom, and omnipotence of the eternal God and Father or of allowing it to be fulfilled in me to the glory of the Father and for my personal good.

There we have a train of thought, a brief statement that includes a multitude of ideas. What does the divine smile look like? It is a constant inner joy, not an outward behavior. It may be a "Sunday joy" which deeply warms our feelings, our hearts and minds, and motivates them.

But it may also be simple "weekday joy," an inner resting in the Father, in his wish and will, without much movement in the heart. What is the

101

source of this inner joy? It is a most tender, deep intimate union of love with our God and Father. Wherever this union of love is missing, it is impossible for this type of divine light, of divine smile to be present. How does it show? It shows in the deep consoling realization that even in persecution and defamation, even when carrying crosses and sufferings of any kind, I have fulfilled the Father's plan of love, his plan of wisdom, his plan of omnipotence. All of this will serve the glory of the Father and be for my personal good.

With this we answered the first question anew, in a deeper way. We wanted to have a final answer as to what the divine smile includes and what it excludes.

Let us turn to the other side of the coin. Who is the cause of this divine smile? God himself. More concretely (I do not want to go into detail since we often discussed it), the source is the Holy Spirit with his seven gifts, the Holy Spirit with his beatitudes, the Holy Spirit with his fruits. This means that the Holy Spirit, through the intercession of the Blessed Mother, in Christ, will take possession of my whole soul. He will transform my soul, above all, he will transform my heart so that the participation in the divine nature becomes a special characteristic of our whole outlook on life; furthermore, at the same time, God's scale of values is indelibly impressed upon our hearts and minds.

I believe I should say nothing more about the first petition. Perhaps we are now interested, perhaps we now have a greater desire to learn what the second petition includes. I repeat it briefly:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant human cry.

Imagine, I should ask that I may learn to weep. How should I learn to weep, to feel, how should I learn to feel my cross and suffering? Wouldn't it be better not to feel, to become hard? Immediately we feel that here we are dealing with something very important in our Christian

102

lives. In order to proceed more clearly, more systematically, I raise two

questions:

1. What does the petition mean?
2. What principles does the truly human cry follow?

Actually the first question needs no special explanation. We speak of the human cry. In the context discussed above, this means that I do not orientate myself only to the principles and laws of grace, but simultaneously to the principles and laws of nature. My nature has a right to feel suffering. I do not want to become insensitive to suffering. It is not necessary, of course, to really weep. You see, the word cry or weep has been chosen as a word play, a divine smile versus a human cry.

A cry can be taken in a wide and in a strict sense. In the strict sense, tears are shed. In the wide sense, I painfully experience sorrow. It hurts that my honor is attacked; it hurts that I am not recognized like others; it hurts to be Cinderella everywhere; it hurts that my body is ill; it hurts to fail. This is human, truly human sorrow. I repeat, all of us, especially women, have a right to cry. We must not rob anyone of this right. There is even a law in our nature that everything which opposes our nature causes us sorrow. We should recognize and accept this sorrow. We must not pass over it saying: A religious person is callous and feels nothing any more; a religious person just pretends. If such a person practices charity, it is only divine love and there is no real interest in the other person as such, neither in their well-being nor in anything else. Do we understand what is meant by a human sorrow, a human cry? It means that we consider the laws and rights of human nature.

We should keep in mind that it is not good to lead people who bear suffering too quickly to God, regardless whether I am a father or a mother, a counselor or teacher. I have to grant them their right to open their hearts, to weep, to unburden their hearts; I have to give them time to cry and to grieve. It is a human right, an absolute human right. In

order to see how some saints are great examples of this very truth, I may remind you of St. Francis de Sales. I do not want to mention St. Therese of Lisieux because we will talk about her later on.

St. Francis de Sales lived totally in and out of the world of love as we strive to do; he made special efforts never in any way to disregard a healthy movement of his nature. Therefore he once asked himself, what about the cross and suffering, what about suppressing our tears when crosses and sufferings are poured over us in buckets. He observed St.

Augustine's life and realized that St. Augustine was very attached to his mother. Yet after her death, he almost compulsively sought to stifle in himself all emotion, all emotion of sorrow, of compassion, all tears. It is true St. Augustine admitted very soon, it did not take long until his nature asserted itself. What does St. Francis de Sales say? "I am of a completely different opinion. When my mother died, I indeed first proved myself as priest son. I gave her my blessing, I gave her absolution, I kissed her as a true child, but then all my sorrow welled up with elemental force and I never felt ashamed that I wept, I wept like never before."

Do we understand what is meant? Human sorrow requires that we make allowances. Human grieving, human compassion requires that we make allowance, that we consciously make allowance for the laws and rights of human nature. We have to be on our guard against becoming interiorly hardened through our spiritual life. I will add, however, a second thought. This human cry, this feeling has to be orientated at the same time to the laws of grace. This preserves us from becoming unrestrained and teaches us healthy self-control.

Again, it is St. Francis de Sales who shows us the right direction. He once said something like this. "I cannot imagine how a person rooted in God, striving for holy indifference and conformity with the divine will, would respond to suffering in an uncontrolled manner for any length of time." It is a matter of course for a striving person to see God behind everything; to see God's beckoning through the cross and suffering, to see God's gifts of love or in our language – God lovingly courts us, he

104

woos us, even through our cross and suffering. And so, the human sorrow is alleviated if we are deeply convinced that the sorrow is the Father's gift of love. Cardinal Faulhaber coined a beautiful expression for the same truth. He thinks of a mother whose beloved child died suddenly. He says that this mother may suffer, but if she turned to stone--we understand the expression; how easily a mother can turn to stone at such a blow, at the death of her child whom she loved so tenderly. She cannot weep anymore, she cannot mourn any more--but if she became insensitive, incapable of feeling, she would forget that it was God who took the child from her arms into his arms. Shouldn't a mother be happy that her child is with him for whom she bore the child?

In the interest of all afflicted and suffering people, let me tell you once more, we must allow them to grieve, to express their sorrow, we must allow people entrusted to our care to express their sorrow. If we fail to do this, we deform their human nature and we prevent them from

being open enough for the divine, for the eternal.

It is now up to us to apply these thoughts to our own practical lives. If we want to go deeper and orientate ourselves to the principle underlying the human cry, human suffering, human sorrow, it can only be a principle governing both the human cry and the divine smile. There are three principles which I would like to emphasize, three principles which stimulate us to take a good look at our lives. People today are rushed, we are always on the lookout for new sensations and we fail to take enough time to look into ourselves.

First let me mention the three principles:

1. We need to accept the fact that the human cry, human sorrow, and the divine smile exist side by side; they are always close together.
2. The human cry, cross and suffering, feeling deeply, carrying and enduring human suffering can be the cause of the divine smile.

105

3. The human cry, carrying and enduring the cross and suffering can be the prerequisite for a constant divine smile.

Now I do not want to proceed too much in a rush in commenting on each statement. Slow and steady wins the race. Even if we do not have much time, we would like to internalize the individual truths drop by drop, savor and relish them. So as not to become too abstract, let us pause for a moment at the life of the Little Flower. It was our objective to go into her school for a while in order to examine her teaching and to apply it practically. We will view her life to see where and how these three principles were realized.

The first principle: The human cry, human crosses and sufferings exist side by side with the divine smile. Those of you who know even a little about the life of the Little Flower can try to work this out by yourselves. I think I may put the question like this: What is her basic attitude to crosses and sufferings? How did she evaluate crosses and sufferings in her life?

Basically as a woman, as a girl, her thinking was very strongly dependent on sense impressions. She frequently chose symbolic images to express abstract ideas. We would like to know more about her basic relationship to God, especially under the view point of the cross and suffering. In speaking about the cross and suffering, we mean the human cry and the divine smile which is determined by the basic

relationship between the two partners, God and us. To cope with crosses and sufferings is the masterpiece of our lives; it is a vital question for us. St. Therese liked to use three pictures. She thought of herself as God's ball. But she emphasized that she meant a ball to play with, not a ball just to be looked at, wrapped in nice paper or given a place of honor and to be looked at. No, no, no, she thought of herself as a ball that God may play with, even play an arbitrary game, as it were. He may do with the ball as he pleases. He may stick a needle into the ball; he may kick it aside with his feet. Who is the ball? She herself. Her attitude to crosses and sufferings is truly radical, all-embracing. God

106

may do anything with this ball. Her attitude is an outflow of the conviction that he may send any cross, any suffering. This is actually the *tertiam comparationis* in this case, because in her thinking, the Lord of this ball, the owner, may do what pleases him. I have no will of my own, I am totally available to him. God's will be done and I remain silent.

The second picture takes up the same thought--bowling. What does she want to be? She wants to be God's bowling ball with which he may hit the pins. The eternal God, the eternal God and Father, may do anything with this ball; he may hit the bowling pins, the pins within her, the pins in her environment, everything and anything. Isn't this a first-rate fundamental attitude?

The third picture is very meaningful too--a spinning top. We know the game although the name may differ in different parts of the world. Anyone who plays with a top has to constantly move it with a whip; otherwise it lies still. What is the meaning of this? God may use the whip; he may use the whip day and night. If I want to be in motion, if I want to spin – and Therese wanted to spin – then it is understood that the Father may do anything with his child, he may play with his spinning top as he pleases.

Please recall the sermon in which I discussed Therese's basic religious experience and the basic tendency of her soul. We said the fundamental tendency was twofold, a tendency toward a staunch radicalism and a tendency toward a tremendously strong will. Examine once how this basic tendency became effective in her attitude toward the cross and suffering. Radicalism. Nothing is left out. The heavenly Father may send crosses and sufferings as he pleases. He may do anything with his child, absolutely anything. Consider how her strength of will prevailed all the way through. As we know, when she was fifteen years old, she wanted to enter the Carmel. Everything and everybody

opposed this step. Her relatives said that it was absurd; priests said the same. What did she do? She had a strong will; she wanted to carry out

107

her plan; she went to see the pope; she undertook all kinds of things until she finally found the doors open. Strength of will.

We, on our part, are often but little pussy cats, soft little animals who cherish all kinds of great ideas and sentiments. But what about real daily life? Well, I might be *in dulci jubilo* while I converse with God. I might see great relationships, I might be filled with sentiments and be deeply moved. After meditation, however, I am unable to cope with a broken dish; I go to pieces if someone frowns at me. What should I call this? Is this really the strength that is in me, that must be awakened? We should become Catholic men and women. God should be able to do with us as he pleases. We know the words, "None of those who cry out, 'Lord, Lord...!' [will enter the kingdom of God]" or yes, Father, Father... "but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven" (Mt 7:21). What does it mean, to do his will?

These are matters we have to talk about later on. Great persons who want to govern and renew the world! "I don't feel like it,"--for goodness' sake, who feels like it? Who always feels like being whipped like a spinning top? Who always feels like being pierced, like being forgotten? Who always feels like carrying out what is right in God's sight? We are daydreamers; we are liars; we build castles in the air; we merely talk about God. Where are God's children who are truly willing to be treated according to God's wish?

We may follow up these thoughts by ourselves. We merely touched on the first principle. In the next sermon we will continue in our train of thought in order to then better understand the other two principles.

Conclusion: We will continue praying:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child, not only of a divine-heavenly smile but also of a truly human cry and feeling. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

108

## FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION OF OUR LADY

August 15, 1965

As we know, today we celebrate with the Church the Feast of the Assumption of Mary into heaven. Assumed with body and soul into heaven, she then was crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth. This means that in the future she will participate in the Trinity's world government. God wants her help. In a decisive battle with diabolic powers, she should help place the entire creation at the feet of the eternal Father for all eternity. I am sure, you know that since 1950 the core of this wondrous mystery is a defined article of faith. Because of this we rejoice with our whole heart.

If we take the mystery as a whole, it is a significant remembrance and encouragement. What does the mystery remind us of? I mean the mystery as a whole as I just illustrated it. What does it remind us of? With this I take up the thread of our cycle of sermons. It reminds us of the fact that the Blessed Mother in a superb way played along in the game of love between our God and Father and the Father child, and that she now plays a very important role in our game of love. What does the role consist of? This may interest us today in a special way. In summary we may say that she has a seat and vote in the "council of the Blessed Trinity," of course in her own way. In a certain sense, she may co-determine the character of our game of love and the manner in which it will have to be realized. This, however, is not all. At the same time she helps us in a very warm, motherly and effective way to master our game of love as perfectly as possible.

Each word of this statement is filled with meaning. What do I want to emphasize? I said that the Blessed Mother works along in an especially warm, motherly, 'tender way. Here we encounter the heart of the Blessed Mother, a heart with very special traits. We are happy to look into this heart; and this even more so in our modern time in which we

109

find so little true, genuine love, so little warmth of heart. It may be true that the first time a girl and a boy meet, an erotic sensation is awakened; but how seldom the first meeting results in deep, warm, genuine mutual love.

You would like to know what the heart of the Blessed Mother looks like? I think we should recall three aspects. By nature it is an unbroken womanly heart, it is an unbroken warm heart. After all, she is not affected by original sin and so she does not have the brokenness that is

in our hearts. She is not enslaved to her inner drives nor to the exterior stimuli of the world. By nature, as it were by birth, she has a warm heart. This warm heart became a surprisingly motherly heart from the moment that her lips uttered the fiat. By this fiat she also became our mother. In turn, the warmth, width, depth of this motherly heart has infinitely increased at the moment that God's Word expressly confirmed her as the Mother of humanity. We rightly say that God's words effect what they contain. What did Christ say from the cross? *Ecce mater tua*. There is your Mother. If we really picture what became a reality, we must say and confess: How endlessly great and rich the ocean of motherly love must have been from this moment on.

Then her final completion. We must not overlook that through the assumption of the Blessed Mother with body and soul, there is, in addition to the transfigured human nature of the God-Man only one more transfigured human nature in heaven. I wonder how the Blessed Mother appears up there, how she appears in the realm of spirits, in the realm of saints, of holy and saintly souls, of angels. Furthermore, we must not overlook that this transfigured human nature has an endlessly transfigured heart in its bosom. I wonder what this heart is like.

We repeat: By nature this heart is pure, untouched. It is warm because it received the task to be our mother and because it is especially predestined for this task by the Divine Word. Who can imagine the ocean of warm motherliness that encompasses us today. Let us take it seriously. The Blessed Mother is in heaven with her body, with her

110

transfigured body and with her transfigured soul, with her transfigured heart, and as such she is active for us; she is active on our behalf.

We pointed out before that she helps us to play the game of love, our game of love, as perfectly as possible. Well, how does she help us? "Turn your eyes of mercy toward us." How frequently we recite this simple prayer of petition. What echoes here? "Turn your eyes of mercy toward us!" is the same as though we said, "Open your endlessly merciful heart to us." Hers is a heart which beats with unimaginable warmth and ardor for us, her children. Saints, especially St. Bernard, pointed out that the Blessed Mother has the same love for us with which she served and cared for her Son on earth.

How effectively she, the Blessed among women, the Mother of Our Lord, helped Christ on earth. She was the mother who provided bread; she was the mother who provided a home, she continually cared for him. What does this mean to us today? Remember how Christ was persecuted, mistreated later on, how he was abandoned. Yet one home

he always had, that in his mother. Mother of a home. She is the Mother. She always provided him, Our Lord, with a home. Hence she also loves us effectively as a mother who provides us with bread, as a mother who provides us, too, with a home. We must not forget that. What does this mean today when so many people are homeless? At all times, she offers us a warm home in her heart. In her heart the warm, ardent fervor of God's heart, of the Father's heart always burns for us; it burns unceasingly for us. With all this in mind, today's feast has an additional meaning for us.

Finally, we must not overlook the fact that since she is in heaven, God appointed her as our Mother of grace. Our Mother of grace. Imagine all the graces she obtains for us. When we consider what power she has over the heart of the eternal God, when we take into account that her mission is to be our mother, when we remember that the warmth with which she embraces her task is the same warmth with which she embraced her child, then we take all these things for granted.

111

Here I really pick up the thread of our present Sunday sermons. I only will add one more thought. If our petition to the Blessed Mother--the kind of prayer we have become accustomed to saying--will ever be of any consequence for us, then today. We refer to her assumption, we refer to her warm, motherly heart and her interceding omnipotence with God saying:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform us into three times admirable children of a constant divine joy and a constant human cry, a human cry in a divine smile and a divine smile in a human cry.

I said we ought to add another phrase today: Transform us into children of a divine smile and human cry according to your image. With this we encompass the whole great new connection. According to your image. By way of summary, we may say that the Blessed Mother became the Three Times Admirable Mother and Queen, the Mother of a divine smile and the Mother of a human cry in heaven because she was the model here on earth with regard to both emotions, because she was a Three Times Admirable Child of a constant divine smile and a human cry here on earth. In a well-known song we call her *Mater sanctae laetitiae*, Mother of holy joy. Using a word play, we have to add that she became the Mother of holy divine joy and hence of a divine smile because here on earth she was the model of this divine smile, this holy

smile.

It is now our task to contemplate her under these aspects. We have to look at the Blessed Mother with great faith as she stands before us as the Three Times Admirable Child of a divine smile and a human cry. Much of what we discussed so far and will consider later, is exemplified in her as our model. Thinking of the first question, she stands before us as the model, the three times admirable image of a divine smile. What does it mean, a divine smile? This is a smile which expresses joy. It is joy, regardless whether it is a Sunday or a weekday joy. We understand

112

the expression; it is the kind of joy which has its source in God. Hence a divine joy. It is a joy which is constantly nourished by love for God. Love and divine joy. It is a joy which permanently rests in God's plans. Resting in God's plan divine joy. Resting in God's plan even if this plan contains endless suffering for her and others. The joy lies in the realization of this divine plan. Hence it is not only a resting in this divine plan but also a continual invigorating joy in the realization of God's plans, regardless of whether these plans mean for me or meant for Mary jubilant joy or horrible suffering, so horrible a suffering that she repeated the words, "Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering" (Lam 1:12).

We now ask more concretely: Seen in this light, how is it with divine joy in the Blessed Mother's life? We receive a twofold answer. One of the answers having its source in the simple Christian people, draws our attention to the mysteries of the rosary which do not only characterize Christ's life but also that of the Blessed Mother. There are fifteen decades; of these fifteen decades, fifteen masterpieces of Mary's life, ten deal with divine joy. We see this when we consider the joyful mysteries and the glorious mysteries. Now we might ask: Doesn't this point out very emphatically, what joy, what great joy characterized the life of the Blessed Mother? Now I would like to ask you to mention the mysteries, but I will forego it so that we have more time to reflect a little more deeply on the type of joy.

As another sign of our Christian thinking and feeling, we admit how gladly we look at the Blessed Mother under the viewpoint of her seven joys. It is joy, again and again. It shows what is primarily emphasized here and what we call Sunday joy. All our emotions are interiorly moved and gripped by a jubilant joy. In addition, we have to maintain that these highlights of Sunday joy are also a sign of a permanent attitude of weekday joy, the resting in divine plans, in divine wishes. With this in mind--I am saying this to those who heard and followed the whole cycle

of sermons--we understand much better why the Blessed Mother

113

appeared to St. Therese with a ravishing smile, with a divine smile, with a smile as we just described it.

We have to allow the Blessed Mother to give us a second answer that goes deeper. Then we have to try to find out whether the Blessed Mother did not sketch her own self and embody this sketch in life. All we have to do is pay attention to the words of the Gospel and the readings. What do they point at? At the Magnificat of the Blessed Mother. What is the Magnificat? It is a jubilant hymn of joy, a jubilant hymn of joy which was sung not only once. It was the fundamental attitude of the Blessed Mother throughout her entire life. "My soul magnifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God." It is a divine rejoicing, a rejoicing in God and because of God.

We have to be content with an overall illustration. The Blessed Mother is overjoyed to have discovered a divine plan in her life, she is overjoyed because she is called to realize this divine plan of her life down to minute details. The Almighty has done great things for me. What does she refer to? Who imparted the greatness of her mission, the greatness of her gifts, who imparted it? Did she create it herself? It is from God; it corresponds to a plan of God, mapped out from eternity and carried out in time. A divine joy about the plan, a divine joy about the execution of the plan filled Mary. What is so great about the plan? Elizabeth revealed it to us in today's Gospel, "But who am I that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Lk 1:43). We know what "mother of my Lord" means. This also means Mother of all children of God. How can this be explained?

In the course of centuries, theologians interpreted the concept "mother" in this way. From all eternity she has the mission to be the official permanent helpmate and associate of Christ in the entire work of redemption to the glory of the Father. We are familiar with this expression. "God who is mighty has done great things for me." She relies on the omnipotence of the eternal God, an omnipotence which proves to be especially mighty and powerful when it means forming something great out of nothing.

114

"He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness." A lowly creature,

a miserable creature, a little being, small, weak before the infinite God. On this creature, God's plan, God's eye, God's pleasure rested. As he created matter out of nothing, he created a miracle out of moral nothingness. Out of her acknowledged littleness, out of her conscious reliance on her littleness, God created a being, a wonderful being--as the Blessed Mother experienced herself. "He has looked upon his servant in her lowliness." And because God is also the All-Holy, everything he planned in her life is something very great and holy. And so, after experiencing her dependence on the omnipotence and kindness of the All-Merciful, after acknowledging her lowliness, she does not hesitate to proclaim, "All ages to come shall call me blessed."

If we now follow the Magnificat, we will very soon realize that her whole being is immersed in these divine plans. After attesting to God's plan in her own life, she rises upward to the great fundamental laws of divine world government. What does she state? A great many truths. Above all, there is no such thing as an accidental happening. God holds the reins of all world affairs in his hands, and the living God governs the world according to definite laws, the same laws that underlie her own life. "He has deposed the mighty from their thrones and raised the lowly to high places."

But this does not yet suffice. This is the world, the atmosphere in which she is perfectly at home. If St. Paul stood here to speak, he would say "her citizenship was always in heaven." She measured everything by divine standards; she made everything dependent on the world beyond, on the inbreak of the divine in nature. And finally she applied the laws of divine guidance to the history of her own nature. Shouldn't this be our favorite occupation too? How classically the Blessed Mother presents her own life. She sketches it, above all, as a life of divine joy, as a life of a constant divine smile. How did she embody it in her life? There are two statements from Holy Scripture which sufficiently demonstrate the point. "*Ecce ancilla Domini. Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*" Fiat. In this context we now understand much better

115

what it means. It is a yes, an unconditional yes to the plan of God. Yes. We used similar expressions as, for example: "Yes, Father, yes, your will be done, whether it includes joy, suffering or woe."

When did she say her yes? At the hour of the Annunciation she spoke her yes for the first time in a very pronounced way. We know that she never retracted it, but rather repeated it in the most important moment of her life, under the cross. Stabat. She stood to her yes.

If we now ask for the source which gave rise to her yes to God's

plan, she herself gives us the answer: *Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. Let it be done to me as you say. *Fiat. Ecce. Fiat. Ecce ancilla*. I am nothing but the servant of the Lord. What is her attitude when she says yes to the divine plan? Well, if we may summarize everything that could be said here, we can interpret the word *ancilla* in a twofold way, in the proper sense of the word and in the wide, symbolic sense. Above all, the Blessed Mother means her serving attitude as such. The infinite Creator God stands before her, the little creature, just as a potter who can do with the clay as he pleases. After all, it [the clay] is his property; he may break the little pot he has molded, he may use it as he wishes. This is a serving attitude, the attitude of a servant. I am totally dependent on the eternal, infinite God. The real meaning of my life consists in my willingness to let the potter use the pot as he wishes. He may break it; he may give it a place of honor in a gallery, he may play with it, he may treat it as he likes. This is the kind of attitude we heard about in the course of our cycle of sermons and saw practiced by St. Therese. I do not want to repeat the pictures which she used; they merely illustrate what the Blessed Mother said in her simple way. A serving attitude--a joyful yes. Why? Because God may do with me as he pleases. I am totally dependent on him. It is always a source of ever-welling joy for a creature to fulfill the will of him who is the exclusive sovereign Lord and Ruler. *Ancilla*.

But we also may interpret this word in a wider sense. Then it discloses the idea of Mother and Bride. She says yes. In this case, she says yes to becoming the Mother of the Lord. The idea of motherhood,

116

what does it mean? Christ himself once drew our attention to it. The woman who is giving birth experiences fear and pain, but after the birth her heart is filled with joy. The former does not apply to the Blessed Mother for she did not experience labor pain and hence she only felt the inner joy a mother feels when the child has been born. This joy permeates her whole being; the joy is all the greater since she realizes that the child of her womb is also the God of her heart. This was to her a source of constant indescribable joy, of an ever-growing sincere and warm joy, if not always Sunday joy, it was at least weekday joy.

Finally we also can discover a bridal attitude in this word. Just savor the effect that the expression has on you: As Mother of the Lord she is the official permanent helpmate and permanent associate of the Lord. This is the unique dimension of it. She did not only give physical life to Christ but was drawn into his destiny and entered into a bridal relationship for the redemption of the world. Isn't this a source of joy? Bride and

bridegroom, of one mind, spiritually united to one another even when the bridal function includes hanging on the cross, continuously hanging on the cross. I wonder whether we understand a little how true it is that the Blessed Mother was the model of divine joy on earth.

What can we say about the second expression? Actually I touched on it before. It is true, she does not state it herself; it is written in Scripture. The Evangelist states of her, "Stabat." What does stabat mean? She was unconditionally faithful to her mission, even when this mission was connected with suffering, with the cross, with sorrow. Saints and saintly men and theologians tell us this may be an exaggeration--that the pain which the Blessed Mother experienced under the cross was so intense that, if it were distributed among people, many would die because of it. This is only a sidelight; in any case, we maintain that she stood under the cross. She stood to the plan of the eternal God and Father, she rejoiced over this plan even when it included indescribable crosses and sufferings.

I have to conclude. All we have done is talk about the divine smile, and last Sunday we had already begun with the human cry. Perhaps we

117

do well first to consider the human cry, a constitutive element of our game of love on earth, in more general terms in order then to view and illustrate it in the mirror of her life. What may I say in conclusion? The same I said the last time; we pray again, but perhaps with greater sincerity:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform us into three times admirable children of a divine smile according to your image.

We may humbly add, "but also of a human cry." We touched on it a little, "of a human cry amid a divine smile and of the divine smile amid a human cry."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

118

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST  
THE FEAST OF THE IMMACULATE HEART OF MARY

August 22, 1965

Last Sunday we began to meditate on the life of the Blessed Mother as an example for our Christian lives. We know what her exemplary character consists in. In her earthly life she was an expert in continuously playing a suspenseful game of love between our God and Father and the Father child through which she merited the grace of becoming the mother of this game of love from heaven; that is, she has a decisive influence on our personal game of love. We often put it like this: First, the Blessed Mother proved herself here on earth in a unique way as the model or as the Three Times Admirable Child of a constant divine smile, that is, of a constant joy in God, out of God, through God, for God in all, even the most difficult situations of everyday life. It was worth the effort that on the feast of the Assumption we impressed this thought once more on our minds. This thought is rather closely related to the nature of that feast.

As we know, today we celebrate another Marian feast, the feast of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. It seems to me we would do well to draw from the meaning of this feast and to ask ourselves in how far the Blessed Mother can be taken as our model, that is, as a Three Times Admirable Child of a constant human cry or a constant human feeling as she carried her cross and suffering. It is not as if the divine suffering had made her interiorly hard and callous. She remained human, she had human feelings in all situations. She not only participated in divine joy, in divine-human joy, but also in divine-human sorrow. This should be the subject of today's sermon.

We might not get beyond the first point. The question suggests itself:

119

1. What is the meaning of today's feast? This must be the foundation.
2. We consider how from this feast radiant light is shed upon the constant human cry, the compassion, the suffering of the Blessed Mother here on earth through which she merited the grace so we may say to become the Mother of all of us, the Three Times Admirable Mother of a constant human cry.

With that we have two trains of thought before us that we will

penetrate more deeply.

The first question is: What is the actual meaning of the mystery of this feast? Once more, what feast is it? What is its name? It is the feast of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Mother. A twofold thought suggests itself. First, we have to recall the history of the feast and then try to interpret it.

The history of the feast directs our attention to Fatima, to the apparitions of the Blessed Mother in Fatima. I do not know whether we have to spend much time discussing it. What makes the apparitions in Fatima so unique? This is the important point. The apparitions are unique because of Mary's exterior appearance; they are unique because of the message she proclaimed; they are unique because of the mission she emphasized.

Three factors express a certain uniqueness. Her appearance is unique: she is young, wondrously beautiful in all her features, especially her countenance. She is clothed in a white dress veiling her figure completely and, strangely enough, quite frequently she appears without the Child in her arms. Instead she has a rosary in her hands. Despite the joy emanating from her manner, from her person, she is enveloped in deep sadness. A unique picture of the Blessed Mother.

What is her unique message? I presuppose that we all know the main points although in religious questions we are often very, very forgetful. Nevertheless, if I were to characterize the uniqueness of the message in one sentence, I would have to say that in a singular

120

manner, the Blessed Mother very emphatically draws our attention to her own person. It is not as if Christ or the heavenly Father had to step into the background. They are always included. But her own person stands strongly, extraordinarily strongly in the foreground. At first, we must be surprised at this. Why? True, when we examine Holy Scripture, we find that remarkable things are written about the Blessed Mother, but generally speaking, as compared with her Son, she disappears in the background. Here, however, her person stands very powerfully in the foreground, and she does not tire, as it were, of pointing to herself time and again. It almost seems as though she wanted to move herself into the foreground by all means. If we understand even a little of what is implied here and we think of the Council and the Marian trends that arose from it, it almost seems as if these contemporary trends, at least to a large extent, aimed at pushing the Blessed Mother back into obscurity. An immense contrast. But we children of simple Catholic people will not cooperate in such counter currents. On the contrary. We

are happy to hear and to be able to internalize what God's plan looks like in regard to the activity and operations of the Blessed Mother.

If I now could and would trace the general characteristic to single points, what would I have to say? I would have to point out different elements. I would have to explain little by little the apparitions which began on May 13, 1917. As we know, the three children were outside guarding and shepherding the flocks. Suddenly there was lightning. The children became frightened and wanted to leave. There, lightning again, and in this flash of lightning there was a person. She asked the children to wait and listen. What did the person tell the children? They should come the following months at the same time. She would want to give them a message for the world, and at the end she would tell them who she was.

Already at this time she asked the children, they were young children, whether they were willing to surrender themselves totally to God. Here she pointed to God. How would they surrender themselves? They should express their total abandonment to God by doing penance

121

and offering reparation--and now she says something very peculiar--not only in order to satisfy the offended love and majesty of the eternal God, but also in order to make reparation for the injuries afflicted upon her Immaculate Heart. I am not sure whether we detect in these words the emphasis with which the Blessed Mother points to herself. I am not sure whether we realize that when we offend God, when we, as it were, hurt him, we also offend the Immaculate Heart of Mary. I do not know whether we realize what is clearly implied here and whether we ever seriously considered to ask the Blessed Mother for forgiveness for all the sorrow that we caused her. Well, I almost have to ask whether we who surrendered ourselves to the Blessed Mother, not only when we were little but also today, whether we ever feel compelled to atone for all the suffering which contemporary Christians, including Catholic Christians, bring upon the Blessed Mother, even though there may be relatively few who made this consecration.

This was on May 13, 1917. On June 13, the Blessed Mother appears again. The children are at the same place, and once more the Blessed Mother speaks of herself. At first, this is peculiar. I do believe that I should strongly emphasize this each time: she speaks of herself. She also claims a place in our hearts. What place? We will come back to that. She points out that she will soon take away the two youngest children standing and kneeling before her. Who is she? We know, of course, [she acts as] God's finger. God wants to call the two children

through the Blessed Mother. The older child, Lucia, would live longer. Through her, Jesus wanted to teach the world to love the Blessed Mother and to imprint this love upon the world. It is peculiar, isn't it? We might not have thought of it: "...the world should love me."

Actually, if we go a little deeper, we have to admit that this is only a consequence of what Christ said on the cross, "There is your Mother." What does it mean: There is your Mother? You should love her. So, this is a fruit of the cross. Then she adds that Christ wanted to spread devotion to her Immaculate Heart in today's world. All who venerated her heart, who consecrated themselves to her heart would be saved.

122

The living God would treat them in a special way, as it were, as her flowers in God's garden, as flowers that she had grown, as her flowers. Those of you who have the time and who desire to examine the texts more closely are encouraged to do so. Then you will discover that this is really so. This was in June 1917.

In July the Blessed Mother leads her children, her favorite ones, and us along with them, further and deeper. She sketches the time. The children, young though they are, may not only see the horror of hell but, as it were, experience it themselves. This is the first great message. At the same time she imparts a second and third message. The second message was publicized only after twenty-five years, and the third message given at that time is not known yet. It is the second message which is of special interest to us. The Blessed Mother draws the children's attention, and hence ours, to the message, saying, "Now you have seen where a great number of people will end, in hell." She adds, "By devotion to and love for my holy and immaculate heart, Christ wants to save the world from hell. Whoever does what I say shall be saved. If the world consecrates itself to my heart, there will be peace soon."

First, I have to emphasize again to what extent the Blessed Mother is here in the foreground; although always in connection with God, she does not forget her own person. She always points to the covenant of love with her; this is what is most important. "Love for me, love for my heart is the most important thing for you. God made peace in the world dependent on it. If you do not do it, if you do not do what I say..." Again, I is in the foreground; she does not say "what God tells you." Today one would mind very much if someone pointed to self, even as God's messenger, even if it always implied that the person acted as an instrument in the hand of God.

Once more, "If you do not do it, then you have to expect the outbreak of a terrible war; then you have to expect that entire nations will

be annihilated; then you have to expect that the Holy Father will have to bear terrible crosses and sufferings. But, after all, I am here to preserve the world from all that. What do I ask of you in turn? You should

123

consecrate yourselves to my heart. You should keep the Saturday as a day of reparation and frequently recite the rosary. If you do this, Russia will be converted and great world peace will be given to you within a reasonable space of time. Once more, if you do not cooperate, the enemies of God will spread their teachings and power in the whole world, and they will not tire of making war, one war after another. Ultimately, my immaculate heart will be victorious and triumph, it will be victorious and triumphant over all the evil in our time, victorious and triumphant over the countless victories of diabolical powers in contemporary world history." She says this very triumphantly. Again she does not speak of God directly, because she is always in union with him.

I wonder whether we understand all this, whether it touches our hearts a little. Are we not fortunate to be once again told in an unmistakably clear way how sincerely and dearly the Blessed Mother loves us?

We listened to the messages of May, June, July. Now it is August, August 13. The children are not there; they are in prison. The Masonic government wants to make them retract and uses all kinds of means, even beatings and abuse. They should retract what they had said. But the children don't. Finally they are released. A few days later the Blessed Mother appears again. August! May, June, July, August, September. Suddenly the sun darkens; it is so dark that one can see the stars and the moon. All of a sudden, a luminous globe irresistibly moves toward the children, irresistibly moves toward the crowd surrounding the children. The people present take it as the dwelling place in which the Blessed Mother now appears to the world. The children see the Blessed Mother while the people only see the luminous globe.

October follows and the great miracle, the miracle of the sun occurs. The sun begins dancing, rotating on its axis and the spectators there are thousands and thousands of them--sense and feel as if the dancing sun irresistibly moved toward them. They kneel down, they fall on their

124

knees and pray and pray and surrender themselves to the Blessed Mother. Is this a precise, or at least a precise enough, illustration of what constitutes the originality of the message? The essential part that I personally wanted to stress in connection with contemporary Marian movements is the Blessed Mother's way of pointing to herself.

So far we have discussed the originality, the uniqueness of her person, the uniqueness of her message and finally the uniqueness of her mission. If I wanted to express it in my own words, I would have to say that in the Blessed Mother, God takes a new initiative on behalf of our modern uprooted, sick and ailing time. The Blessed Mother should prove herself again as the Mother of Christ, as the Birth-Giver of Christ.

There are two thoughts we would like to dwell on:

1. I think we understand this a little. At the beginning I said that usually the Blessed Mother now appears without the Child in her arms; she does not have the Child with her. This is the world, the modern world which does not know the Child anymore. The Blessed Mother stands there alone, the rosary in her hands. What is she saying? It is her task to give birth to Christ for our time in a new, divine initiative.

2. Perhaps we did not even observe and interpret it in this way: the miracle of the sun. We think we have reason to recognize in the miracle of the sun the apocalyptic woman, the apocalyptic image of Mary, the woman of the sun, the woman surrounded by the sun, yes, totally orientated toward the sun, as it were, embraced by the sun, penetrated by the sun in her inmost being. It is her task to make the Sun known everywhere in our modern time and world, to deliver the world to this Sun.

However, looking more closely at the apocalyptic image of Mary, we also know that wherever the woman of the sun appears, the dragon also is ready. What does it want? It wants to kill the Child, the Child in the

arms of the woman of the sun. She suffers labor pains. To be sure, these labor pains do not refer to the first birth (it happened without labor pains), but to the second birth, the birth of the members of Christ, in our time especially. This birth costs her labor pain. After all, although resplendent with light, although a wondrous beauty emanates from her countenance and her whole person, there is sadness in her eyes, sadness over her whole person. What is the meaning of this? It

expresses symbolically that the Birth-Giver of Christ for our time points out how much she is suffering because of this great task. Do we understand what this means? Furthermore, do we sense her solicitude and efforts in these messages? She feels sadness because so many of her children to whom she should give and had given birth for Christ, were on the fastest way to hell; sadness is the symbol of her inner attitude. Everything that she repeatedly proclaims through the children strongly expresses the apprehension of the Blessed Mother as she longs for the fulfillment of her task in us and the entire world in a most perfect way.

This, then, is a general review of the historical aspect of today's feast. We stopped at Fatima. We probably know that later the Church accepted the message from the lips of the children. Portugal was first to fulfill the Blessed Mother's wish and to consecrate itself to her heart. We know that in October 1942, Pope Pius XII consecrated the whole world to the heart of the Blessed Mother. Perhaps we also remember that in the course of time, countries and dioceses followed the example of the deceased pope. Nevertheless, if we compare 1942 with perhaps the years from 1963 until 1965, what is the fruit of this consecration? Don't we witness an immense tragedy?

For our purposes, we sufficiently explained the historical aspect. Now we have to interpret it. We might reply that it is interpreted. I would like to summarize what the Blessed Mother said.

What is really the meaning of the history [of Fatima], what does God want to imprint upon us through its history? To understand this, we need to interpret the expression consecration to the Immaculate Heart

126

of the Blessed Mother. What is the meaning of a consecration? It means to surrender, to surrender oneself unconditionally. Hence we want to strive for the unconditional surrender to the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Mother. Since every word from the lips of the eternal God, from the lips of the Blessed Mother, obviously has a profound meaning, we could now begin pondering and explaining.

Surrender, unconditional surrender to the heart of the Blessed Mother. What is the meaning of heart?. It has a twofold meaning. The heart is, first of all, the symbol of love and then the symbol of the entire personality. A symbol of love. We may surrender ourselves to the Blessed Mother's love, but we must emphasize from the very beginning that this is her love for God and for us. Once more, it presupposes that the Blessed Mother has not only a head, not only a will, but a heart as well. The heart is what is essential; love is what is essential. We should

surrender ourselves to the immeasurable, to the moving love of the Blessed Mother--her childlike love for the Father, her motherly love for us, her bridal love for Christ; but it is always selfless love, love suffering for the sake of love, love sharing in suffering for the sake of love. Surrender [to her heart and to her love]. Her love is always a symbol, a mirror of the love which the Father has for us. We surrender to the Blessed Mother's love for the Father and for us as a symbol of the infinite love which the eternal Father lavishes upon us.

What does this mean? If we have followed the sermons, we will understand. We believe. If I totally surrender to Love, it means that I believe in the endless love of the Blessed Mother for the Father and for us--but as an expression and assurance of the Father's love for us, as an excellent means to safeguard our love for the Father. We understand this, don't we? If our lives revolve around the infinite love of the Father and the endlessly warm and glowing love of the Blessed Mother for us, we have the correct image of the Father and the correct image of the Mother. Then it is understood that the basic drives of our nature are touched and our nature answers with love, boundless love. What did the old Romans say? *Si vis amari, ama*. If you want to be loved, love.

127

God wants to be loved, we should love him with all our heart. *Si vis amari, ama*. If you want to be loved, love. And how the living God loved us, how he manifested his love, how he illustrated his love through the love of the Blessed Mother! Then we understand that the consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary involves a total transformation of the individual and of the whole human race. That's why the devil has such an interest, such an intense and keen interest in destroying the image of the Blessed Mother, in falsifying this image as is often done these days. We do not go along with this. How often we, too, consecrated ourselves to the heart of the Blessed Mother, either here or at home in our parishes. We repeat: By the consecration [to the Immaculate Heart of Mary], the love of the infinite God, the love of the Blessed Mother, is solemnly raised on the shield; so, too, is our warm, sincere, strong, sacrificial love for the Blessed Mother and the eternal God and Father. Do we sense that this is a program, a first-rate program of reform?

I am not at the end yet. I said before that the heart is also a symbol of the personality. The core of one's personality is not the will, as is frequently assumed, but the heart. Well, to whom should we surrender ourselves? To a person, not to an idea. It is a tragic fact that contemporary Catholic theologians in Germany reject love and devotion to the heart of Mary or the heart of Jesus. Why? They are afraid of

having to bow to a person in faith. I can readily bow before ideas which someone took hold of and glued together to form a system. Why? I can analyze them, at least to some extent. To surrender myself to a person--this is something else again.

Isn't this the tragedy of our modern time? Our time does not know what personal love is; personal love is dwindling more and more. Therefore, we stress the consecration to the person of the Blessed Mother as an expression of our surrender to the living person of the Blessed Trinity. If you understand what I present so very briefly, you will sense what a program of reform stands before us. Then you will beg the Blessed Mother: Yes, increase my love, increase my love for you who are a firebrand of love, but increase my love for you as a person, too, in

128

order that I may give myself unconditionally to the infinite love of the eternal God and his person; that I may overcome the purely ideological, the compulsive clinging to ideas only which prevents me from being transformed interiorly.

I am not at the end yet. We sense the deep meaning of God's words, of the Blessed Mother's words: the Immaculate Heart of Mary. Now I actually would have to refer to what I said last Sunday about the heart of the Blessed Mother. I do not want to go into it now. As I explained, it is an unbroken heart. Remember, it is unbroken because it is free from original sin and hence it is a warm heart. Since it is in heaven, it is also a transfigured heart, it is a glowing, warm heart, a firebrand of love that we are unable to picture to ourselves.

Now I would like to point out another expression that without doubt applies to the Blessed Mother. There is perfect order in the heart of the Blessed Mother. Her immaculate heart is an ordered heart. What do we have before us in the heart of the Blessed Mother? Her heart is a microcosm of integrated order, of living order, her heart represents infinite harmony; it symbolizes the order which the Blessed Mother wants to give to the macrocosm, to the entire world. An ordered heart. The world is in disorder, in disarray, the world is breaking down, is hopelessly falling apart. The Blessed Mother's heart is in order to an unparalleled degree. If I give myself to the immaculate heart of Mary, I give myself to personified order, I give myself to an incarnate microcosm of order. The effect will be that my heart becomes ordered too. The effect will be that from my ordered heart order will be restored in my surroundings (if I belong to a community, order in my community) because my environment is the sum total of personified microcosms put in order. Again, if I belong to a community, to a Catholic family, what

does the embodiment of peaceful microcosms of order look like? If our Marian devotion, our piety fails to bring about [this type of order], if we live together like cats and dogs and everything is upset... It is the great, great mission expressed in the Song of Songs: He put order into love. In the Blessed Mother, love is ordered in all its ramifications. The

129

consecration to the Immaculate Heart of Mary has, therefore, such profound meaning.

I only gave a brief answer to the first question. What is the meaning of the feast? We would like to live and experience it. The second question: Where is here the connection with the Blessed Mother as the Three Times Admirable Child of a human cry? Actually I pointed it out here and there. If you want to, think about it on your own.

Next Sunday, I will elaborate on this human cry. I will do so, first, in the light of our previous discussions; secondly, by interpreting the great basic laws in God's Kingdom; thirdly, by looking at the biblical image of the Blessed Mother. Meanwhile we continue praying and begging:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform us into three times admirable children of a constant divine joy and a human cry connected with a divine smile. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

130

## TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

August 29, 1965

Today's Gospel emphatically imprints upon us the great Christian commandment. This commandment is not simply love of God and love of neighbor, but heroic love of God and heroic love of neighbor. For the past months we have been accustomed to using a different expression, an expression that ultimately says the very same. Christian life is a continuous, exceedingly Suspenseful game of love between our God and Father and the Father child; a game of love which ultimately determines time and eternity. If we applied the exhortation of today's Gospel to our situation, it would tell us that we should play this game of love as perfectly as possible on earth. Hence, in this game of love we have to prove that we love the Father with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with all our strength and with all our mind, and we should love our neighbor in like manner (cf. Mt 22:37-38). A wonderful task, a promising task, but a difficult task as well.

Speaking of the game of love between our God and Father and the Father child, we usually add that we want to play this game according to the example of the Blessed Mother. Why precisely according to her example? Of course, ultimately we refer to the example of the only begotten Son of God, but when we speak of purely human images of God, the Blessed Mother holds the first place. She is truly the most perfect image of Christ. We also could say that she truly is in a clear, classic way the womanly image of Christ. And so, according to the image of the Blessed Mother we should and want to play along in our game of love with our God and Father as perfectly as possible.

Now we ask ourselves: What does the Blessed Mother's inner attitude look like which she manifested in this game of love and which increased in depth? We know the answer. We know, at least theoretically, it is a twofold element. It is, first of all, the wondrous

constant participation in the divine smile in all, absolutely all forms of the game. A wondrous participation in the divine smile means that in all situations, in all happenings, in all forms and variations of the game, we see the Blessed Mother as she is described in the Gospel, as she describes herself in the Magnificat: "Filled with joy." He looked upon his servant in her lowliness. Therefore, she rejoices in all situations. A divine smile, a participation in the divine smile. This is an attitude worth admiration. All this sounds beautiful, but when we apply it to our

Christian life, then we know from our own plentiful experience that what we deal with here is a masterpiece of Christian living.

Nevertheless, we like to speak of a second attitude in this game. It is the attitude of a wondrous, perpetual human cry. A strange expression. We would like to add, we always did so, it is a constant human cry amid a divine smile. A constant divine smile is permanently connected with a human cry. With these words we want to emphasize that the constant happiness in God did not make the Blessed Mother inhuman, insensitive or interiorly devoid of feeling. We mean to emphasize that she suffered, that she did not just pretend to suffer, that she did not perhaps speak of suffering in a mere objective way. No, she suffered in a human way, she remained genuinely human while she was through and through divinized. Actually, this is true greatness in Christian life. The more divinized Christian life is, the more human it becomes.

The Blessed Mother is a model of genuine complete humanness in her practical life. A statement that might be known to some of us holds true of her: *homo sum nihil a me alienum, nihil humanum a me alienum*. I am and remain human, even if I am completely divinized, even if I live entirely in God. I remain human, my human nature remains human and whole and hence willing to suffer, able to suffer. It is not as though she had only suffered as we do. No, she drank a chalice of suffering which was unspeakably painful, filled to the brim with crosses and sufferings of every kind.

As we will see in the next sermon, we may be convinced that no chalice of suffering ever was as filled with sorrow and grief as the

132

chalice of suffering which Christ and the Blessed Mother emptied. Keeping this in mind, we understand how the Church may apply the prophet's words to her: "Come, all you who pass by the way, look and see whether there is any suffering like my suffering" (Lam 1:12). I think we should take these and similar words seriously. It is something strange. We as Christians should probably understand best why no picture of Mary moves and kindles our hearts more intensely, that there is no picture in front of which Christians pray more ardently than the picture of the Mater dolorosa. There are many pictures of the Blessed Mother to which we are sincerely attached, for example the *Inrnnaculata*. How often we kneel before this picture. All our noble inclinations, all our supernaturally-oriented inclinations awaken, a sense of purity, intactness, nobility is stirred in our whole being. When we kneel before the *Inrnnaculata*, [a desire] for the divinization of our whole nature awakens.

Or, how we love the picture of the Blessed Mother with the Child in her arms. We longingly compare ourselves to this Child, and how grateful we are when we may recall that the Blessed Mother, as our Mother, has enclosed us into her heart and wants to lead us on into the heart of Christ, into the heart of our God and Father. All these pictures move our heads. But strangely enough--in any case it seems to be like that--Christians like best to kneel before the Mater dolorosa. Mater dolorosa--Sorrowful Mother. The sorrowful Mother is the mother of endless suffering as well as the model of how to carry endless suffering. The picture of the Mater dolorosa is easily imprinted upon our heads with three features: the sevenfold sword in her head; the Child in her arms, the dead Child in her arms, and beneath the cross as the mother of suffering. Don't these images deeply penetrate our heads? Why? I think because suffering arouses our compassion.

I once read about a German emperor who had a deep, warm head. He was greatly attached to his mother. Why? During his childhood he had often seen his mother weeping. A weeping mother. Why, weeping? She wept because of the endless worries which she suffered, which a

133

mother bears because of her children. A weeping mother. How many prayers remind us of the truth that we are children of Eve and so have to endure endless pain and suffering.

By way of summary, I believe I may answer the question as to why the picture of the Mater dolorosa is inscribed in our hearts by saying that simple magnetic threads unite suffering humanity with the sorrowful Mother, the model of suffering, of cross and suffering. It is just natural that when I suffer, my soul instinctively embraces all other people who suffer in a similar way. Truly, the Blessed Mother was not spared any cross and suffering. The Blessed Mother simply stands before us in genuine, complete, whole humanness; she is capable of suffering and she even demonstrates joy in suffering.

Once more, the Blessed Mother is our great model in suffering. What does it mean? Our sorrow is reflected in her. We feel understood by her. What does it mean? By her own cross and suffering she illumines our suffering. Here all dreams end, all learned discussions end. No doubt, people today like to talk about great ideas. Here we have a living embodiment of an ability to suffer, of patience in suffering and of rejoicing in suffering.

There is a very beautiful book on suffering written by Bishop Kepler. The book bears the title School of Suffering. We immediately sense what this title means. In this book, the general validity of the law of

ssuffering is explained. The first sentence of the text reads, "Suffering makes us all equal and alike." Do I have to explain it? All humanity, all of creation suffers. A general law of suffering. Where does this general law of suffering originate? If we want to summarize everything that can be said about it, we would have to refer to two laws that we easily forget. The law of original sin and the law of the imitation of Christ.

The law of original sin. Through original sin our nature is broken but not corrupt. Since our nature is broken it is necessarily subject to the law of suffering. Elements that actually belong together to form a perfect harmony are now torn apart, we could almost say, artificially torn apart. If these elements could speak, what would they say? Alas, how we

134

suffer because of this disharmony. Although we know it, I would like to remind you that the Blessed Mother is not subject to the law of original sin. Therefore, her cross and suffering does not go back to original sin, at least not directly. For her, the second great law, the law of the imitation of Christ holds good and in an outstanding way. "If you wish to come after me, you must deny your very self, take up your cross, and begin to follow in my footsteps" (Mr 16:24). Christ is simply the great model for all of creation, the great model for all human beings. We are to be aligned with Christ, we are to be aligned with his whole person, but in a special way with his cross and suffering. This is the law of the imitation of Christ. We immediately understand why the Blessed Mother ultimately had to be the Mother of Sorrow, not only because she followed Christ but because she was the most perfect image of Christ that Christian thinking can imagine. Consequently, we cannot picture the Blessed Mother in any other way than we have just seen; we cannot picture her in any other way. Because of the law of the imitation of Christ, she was subject to the law of cross and suffering in an extraordinarily deep and tender way. The law of the imitation of Christ. All suffer, not only humanity but all creation. St. Paul interprets this for us in a most beautiful and profound way. He heard all of creation, not only humanity, constantly weep and cry out. Why? All are subject to the law of original sin--hence the disharmony in nature--and to the law of the imitation of Christ. Nature suffers on the one hand because it, too, lost its state of original justice and on the other because Christ is the head of all creation, including inanimate creation. All creation, then, suffers. To what extent? We just have to see it in its entire relationship and we understand the little phrase: "Suffering makes us all equal and alike." Suffering is a bond which unites all of creation. Lastly, it unites us with the suffering Christ.

The aforementioned book then begins speculating, philosophizing: Just as suffering makes all people equal and alike, suffering also separates them. In other words, the manner in which people suffer makes them different in manifold ways. Some suffer in the right way,

135

according to Kepler, and others in the wrong way. With some the meaning of suffering is fulfilled, with others it is not.

We immediately ask, what then is the meaning of suffering? So much could be said about it. I only wish to point out one thought which will accompany us later on. The meaning of life, the meaning of suffering is our alignment and union with Christ. Christ should and wants to suffer once more in us. This is the meaning of suffering. [We are to be] images of Christ. And to what supreme degree the Blessed Mother was an image of Christ. Yes, in manifold ways. How few people fulfill the ultimate meaning of suffering. How few can speak with St. Paul, "In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ [for the sake of his body, the church]."

All without exception must once more go into Christ's school of suffering. Until the end of time, until the end of the world, Christ wishes to repeat, continue and complete his suffering in each human person. If I want to know the reason for the brokenness in my nature, the reason for my many bodily ailments, the reason for psychological and physical pain, I have to realize that Christ wishes to suffer once more in me. We should make up what is lacking; we should be aligned with him. This is the ultimate purpose of suffering.

Now about the last difference. It really should be the point of departure for later discussions. There are people who carry their crosses as heroes of suffering, and there are others who carry their crosses as cowards. I assume that theoretically we understand this. I spent relatively much time to prepare our hearts a little for the purpose of suffering, the reality of suffering.

If we want to proceed a little more rapidly in our thinking, seeking, living and loving, if we want to summarize once more what we discussed so far, I believe to be justified in saying that the Blessed Mother is simply a hero in carrying her cross and suffering. Here we need to pause. It is a certain point of rest. In order to proceed from the purely exterior to the last, to the ultimate, I would like to add two thoughts.

136

We stated that the Blessed Mother is a hero in carrying her cross and suffering. Actually I sufficiently treated this point before. The two trains of thought read: It must be so, it cannot be any different. The second thought: She really is a hero in carrying her cross and suffering in a unique and wonderful way. We will probably not be able to elaborate on that thought today anymore.

The first thought. Allow me to go a little deeper. I would like to express what all of us feel; we take it as a matter of course that the Blessed Mother has to be really a hero in carrying her cross. Here we are confronted with a great law in God's Kingdom which we perhaps know but rarely acknowledge in our hearts. What is the law? That's the first question. The second question: How did this law have to be fulfilled? I am not asking how it was fulfilled but how it had to be fulfilled in Mary's life. What does the law say? Christian heroism should not be measured by honor and status, by possessions and beauty. None of this is the essence of Christian greatness. What is and must be the yardstick with which to measure Christian greatness? I repeat: Christian greatness should be measured by the degree of our participation in the life of Christ, more precisely, by the degree of our participation in the suffering and transfigured life of Christ, or differently expressed, by the degree of our participation in the joy and glory of Christ's suffering. Christ is the yardstick for us.

Now I could and should help you recall countless truths that we discussed in the course of the years. I would have to point to Baptism. I would have to point to the Eucharist, to the holy sacrifice of the Mass. Do we remember what the core of Baptism is? In Baptism we are drawn into the suffering and transfiguration of Christ. I would like to just mention it, I do not want to prove or illustrate it now. It is a participation, an initial participation and I must add, a twofold participation. We participate in both, in the suffering and in the transfigured life of Christ. If we follow our train of thought, considering what we discussed in regard to the Constitution on the Liturgy, we understand that this is basically the core of holy Mass.

The sacrifice of the Mass is set present, not only on Good Friday but also on Easter Sunday. This participation in the dying and transfigured life of Christ into which we entered through Baptism, should be renewed, deepened, completed day after day if possible. What is the meaning of our Christian life? Well, it consists in our efforts to realize the participation in the transfigured and suffering life of Christ in all situations of life. Remember what we discussed in detail about the

resurrected person? The resurrected person, the paschal person, participates in the transfigured life of Christ to a high degree.

I wonder whether the four expressions re-echo in our souls. What is meant? What does the transfiguration look like? The law reads: The qualities of Christ's transfigured body should increasingly become the qualities of our transfigured soul. Do we still possess the four qualities? Openness to the Father. Are we interiorly open to the eternal Father? Availability to the Father, constant rejoicing in the Father, never-ending faithfulness to the Father. What a fullness and depth these words have. Is my life formed accordingly? Do I live the transfigured life of Christ under this fourfold aspect, day after day?

By virtue of Baptism, by virtue of the Eucharist, by virtue of all the sacraments, Christ wishes to continue and complete his life of suffering, his poor, humble, crucified life. This is the great law. What is the yardstick for a Christian's greatness? Christian greatness is measured by the degree of our participation, to limit it to suffering, in Christ's life of suffering. All in all, if I want to know how great I am, if I want to have a yardstick for a person's greatness, I may not ask, what has this person accomplished? What cosmetic means did this person use to fool others with apparent beauty? I may not ask what honor and reputation, what power and wealth someone enjoys, although we do appreciate these things. No, no, I must rather ask to what extent Christ continues his way of the cross in this or that person. Or to what extent can the person standing before me say: In my own flesh, that is, in my own life, I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ? What does this mean? Until the end of time, Christ means to draw all into himself. Indeed, he is the

138

head of creation, the first-born of all creatures. He wants to draw all into himself, not only into his transfigured state but also into his suffering state; not only into the glory of his transfiguration but also into the bliss of suffering.

I know that these are difficult concepts, difficult for all of us, even for those who have occupied themselves with these deep questions for years. In order to relax a little in our abstract, fundamental illustration, I think we should go into the school of the saints. Did all saints possess this concept of the greatness of their lives, of the mission of their lives? Doubtlessly. Hence there is a strong desire to bear crosses and sufferings. If greatness consists in carrying the cross and suffering, if greatness consists in heroically carrying the cross and suffering, then, as a matter of course, the same Holy Spirit who was effective in Christ, who was effective in the Blessed Mother, must be effective in all children of

God, in all members of Christ, according to the same laws. It cannot be any different. With unspeakable moaning he speaks in us, 'tAbba." However, this "Abba, dear Father," is not only spoken when it is a question of openness to the Father, availability to the Father, joy in the Father and faithfulness to the Father, but also in joy in the midst of suffering. Abba. All without exception had an immense longing for crosses and sufferings. If this is greatness and if a drive for greatness is innate in human nature and if we are drawn into Christ's life, it is evident that everything within us impels us to follow Christ, to imitate the suffering and transfigured Christ. I said "longing" and I could enumerate various expressions saying the same thing.

Isn't it so that we drag our cross with us, happy if we succeed in patiently saying yes. How difficult this is. How difficult it is to willingly say yes. How far, when, and how do we succeed in even saying a joyful yes. This is simply the fundamental attitude of the saints. Why? Because this is a law in God's Kingdom. Vice versa, whenever this longing is fulfilled, well, we have to read about it when we have a book of saints on hand, how much joy there was in their hearts when they were tormented by crosses and sufferings of all kinds. There we have it. This

139

simply belongs to it. This is part of being a Christian. How frequently we read that after the greatest cross and suffering, despite an inner pressure, the Magnificat would not die on the lips of [saints]. Or, after all kinds of disappointments people reacted with praising the mercy of God. Why, [did they consider it] God's mercy, God's gifts, God's gift of love? Why all this? Because in this way we are drawn, mysteriously drawn, not only into the transfigured life of Christ but also into the suffering, the dying, the poor and humble life of Christ.

As always, I have to say, unfortunately I have to end. I intended to quote a whole series of statements by saints and explain them in all directions until we acquire a new basic attitude toward our cross and suffering. With that I have just explained and illustrated this great law a little. Then the second thought, what may and will it have to be like? Now I would have to illustrate, I would have to prove briefly why the Blessed Mother, after Christ, is the greatest person in God's Kingdom. If she is the greatest person, if she is gratia plena, if she is full of grace, then her chalice, her chalice of suffering was filled to the brim with crosses and sufferings of every kind. Hence, the Blessed Mother must be a hero in suffering. Let us be satisfied with that, but we should also encourage each other to say our simple, little prayer:

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform us into three times admirable children of a constant divine smile and human cry; a human cry, a feeling of crosses and sufferings, but always connected with a divine smile, with divine joy. Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.  
140

### THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

September 5, 1965

In September we celebrate three Marian feasts. We commemorate the Birth of Mary and the Holy Name of Mary. We also should warm and kindle our hearts anew for Mary as the Mother of Sorrows. What is the meaning of all this? Maybe the Church means to prepare us for October when we do not have just one day, one feast day of the Blessed Mother, but a whole month. Furthermore, it seems that these feasts invite us to feel more at home now already, in September, in the holy and sacred space of the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Mother. If we really make her heart our abode, it will be relatively easy to resist the worldly spirit which tends to attract us and pull us down with all its power.

We gladly, very gladly follow the invitation. More yet, we gladly fulfill the wish of the Church and strive to embody the meaning of these three feasts. With God's Church we would like to praise the birth of the Blessed Mother. Indeed, "Your birth, O Virgin Mother of God, heralded joy to all the world." Why, joy? As virginal Mother of God, she gave us the historical Christ, the Redeemer of the world, and year after year, day after day, she wants to transform and mold us into images of Christ, into images of the mystical Christ. Gladly we will also use the name of Mary which, so it is said, if used devoutly, is a powerful remedy and protection against all attacks of the devil, who in a singular manner seems to play his game here on earth.

How happy we are to go to the Mother of Sorrows who, as we know, was given to us by Christ on the cross as his last testament. We accept all this. Happy are we if we live and love ourselves into this world anew.

Above all, it seems to me, we should indelibly impress the image of the Blessed Mother in its entirety upon our minds and hearts, as the Church wishes. It is the image which, we say, we absorbed with our mother's milk, as it were. It is the image we adhered to in the course of

our eventful lives, the image which was not shaken even though some circles at the Council began to rock it. We have remained steadfast. And today we repeat the simple petition we prayed as children: "Let us walk like you through life, let us mirror you forever."

With that we take up the thread that we have been spinning Sunday after Sunday. We are concerned with the image of the Blessed Mother. If we ask, what the image is like, we receive an answer from the poet, a pious poet, "I see you, Mother, in a thousand pictures..." You are hidden in a thousand pictures, but none equals the picture that I have of you in my heart. What does this mean? It is extraordinarily difficult to paint an all-round picture of Mary. Therefore, we would have to decide on a definite point of view or aspect. We would like to see the picture of the Blessed Mother as the mother and model of a continuous, suspenseful, heroically played game of love between our God and Father and Mary as the unique Father child.

We divided this central thought which has deep meaning and great value into two parts. Hence we have to say that we would like to see her image, on the one hand, as the three times admirable Mother; on the other, as the three times admirable child of a constant divine smile, that is, of constant divine joy in all situations, in all stages of the game of love, but at the same time we would like to see her as a child, as a three times admirable child of a constant human cry. Carrying crosses and sufferings with deep, human feelings is the root, the cause and the expression of this constant divine smile.

Last Sunday we began examining more closely the sorrowful features of the image of Mary. Do we remember what we discovered? It is actually understood, we cannot imagine this picture without markedly sorrowful features as the source of a sincere, warm, divine smile. What a contrast this must be for the average person: Sorrowful features are transfigured through a constant divine smile.

How did we arrive at taking it as a matter of course? We referred to a great law in God's Kingdom, a law which might occasionally stir faint memories in us but which is generally little recognized and acknowl-

142

edged. What law is it? The law of suffering. It is the law of the necessity of suffering. It is the law of Christians maintaining a certain joyfulness in suffering. In the light of Baptism, the baptismal rite, and the Easter mystery we tried to better understand Christian greatness. It does not consist in the greatness of perhaps exterior renown, possessions, honor, success; rather it is measured by the degree of our participation

in the suffering and transfigured life of Christ, by the degree of our participation in our Lord's joy in suffering and glory of transfiguration. We may want to rethink and pray through everything that we have internalized in this regard.

What do we intend to do today? We will continue our train of thought. It seems to me that what we discussed in this regard, although it fully corresponds to the new Constitution on the Liturgy, may be new to us, at least in the form in which we discussed it. Hence it is worth the effort to penetrate more deeply into this central thought: The law of suffering as a necessity of suffering, as joyfulness in the midst of suffering and as the glory resulting from suffering. What should we do for this purpose?

There are two thoughts which we will mention at least. In order to deepen the concept of this great law, we first of all look at the saints. Then, if time permits, we will apply this great law to the life of the Mother of God.

Examples of saints. It is understood that by the law of the paradigm we always find the great laws in God's Kingdom embodied in the lives of the saints in a classical, in a most classical way. Now we have to direct our attention to the teaching and the lives of the saints. From the very beginning, we expect a kind of visual instruction, a classically visual instruction on the same law: the necessity of suffering, joy in the midst of suffering, glory flowing from suffering. How does this sound? To some extent, these expressions are now filled with some meaning.

Well, let us examine the teaching of the saints. I suppose that nobody expects me to discuss everything saints ever said in the course of Christian centuries on the subject of suffering. All we can expect is a

certain selection, I almost would like to say, a spontaneous selection. Disregarding the time element, I will choose a saint of this or that century to speak to us.

First we examine St. Francis de Sales, who in general is a classical example for us, a classical teacher in all respects. He coined the well-known phrase, "If the angels (note, not the saints), if the angels could become envious and jealous at all, they would be terribly envious and jealous on account of two facts. The first fact: God suffered for humans, and secondly, humans may suffer for God." With that we have lifted the law of suffering from the purely natural level to a supernatural plane. Everything has to be seen in a deep inner relationship with the living, infinite God. To suffer for God. We almost would like to say, to suffer primarily for God.

A great Pauline thought was that it is Christ, the living God, the God-Man who, by virtue of the great mystery of the Mystical Body which the Constitution on the Liturgy does not tire of emphasizing, suffers in us. In a unique and mysterious way Christ wants to continue his historical passion in us. Hence he suffers in me. Now I may mention my personal cross in plain terms. Is it a physical cross, a spiritual cross or a mental cross? I never suffer alone. I suffer in God, with God and for God. What St. Francis de Sales means is that angels are unable to do that. They cannot suffer. What are they prevented from doing? They cannot participate in the whole greatness of glory rooted in suffering and joy in the midst of suffering, [they cannot participate in the glory] based upon the cross. Let us remember these three expressions: the necessity of suffering, the glory resulting from suffering, the joy in the midst of suffering. A person who is constantly inundated with crosses and sufferings, yet never loses the transfiguring features of a divine smile, is absolutely beautiful, attractive and captivating. Glory of suffering. Joy in suffering. Indeed, it is the saints' opinion that in accordance with this law, there is no greater joy than to suffer, to empty the cup of sorrow, to empty the cup of sorrow filled to the brim, yet never to distort the transfiguring features of joy, of a divine smile. With that we are back in

144

the world that we had opened up to us last Sunday from a theological perspective.

The second addressee. Now we may play and address whomever we want to. Think of your favorite saint; examine what he/she says, how they embody the great law of the necessity of suffering, of the glory resulting from suffering, of the joy in the midst of suffering. Let us quickly ask St. Teresa, the great St. Teresa [of Avila]. Later on, we'll occupy ourselves once more with St. Therese of Lisieux under this viewpoint in a new and deeper way. "If God loves someone," she [St. Teresa] writes, "he sends a cross and suffering." Isn't this a common way of expressing the very same great law of suffering? Let us pause for a moment and apply this statement to our own thinking and living. What is the saint telling us?

How may we conceive of our cross and suffering? I think I have to say: We should take it as an affectionate caress, as an embrace, as a visitation of the eternal God and Father. God caresses his child, God embraces his child. God gives his fatherly hand to his child. He touches his child with his hand. What is the effect? Cross and suffering. What is my cross? Mention it--what is it? I have a limited intellectual capacity. How I wish I had a better mind or a warmer heart. Or physically seen--I

have heart trouble, my stomach is not in order, I have intestinal problems. What does all that mean? The living God touches me with his fatherly hand, with his fatherly finger. It is an affectionate caress. Or, what is often much harder on us--other people speak ill of us, despise us. [We remember] all the suffering inflicted on us--physical suffering, psychological suffering. What is St. Teresa telling us? How did the saints take it when God's finger touched them?

Well, they always distinguished between being touched by God's hand and finger directly and the indirect touch of his finger. They ignored the finger that touched them directly; this may have been a sinful finger, a cold finger, a dirty hand. They ignored it, they turned on the light of faith and saw behind this cold finger, behind the dirty hand the warm hand of the Father. Or, to use a well-known image that we have

145

often reflected on before: the Father's warm hand wears an iron glove. What does the iron glove look like? I call it by name--it is the person who deprived me of my good name, who stole all my possessions. What does the iron glove look like?

People who are completely at home in their faith, in the world of faith, look beyond. They do feel the hand that touches them in the iron glove, but they recognize the warm hand of the Father in the glove; they recognize the Father who touches them through this hand, through this fist, through this dirty fist... Just to mention one example: There is a story about a certain saintly Brother Mariella. He was a tailor. During his apprenticeship he was often mistreated because of his piety. He had the habit of smiling; the more abusive the other tailors became, the friendlier he smiled. We can imagine how this enraged them and they beat him all the more. They wanted to make him whimper and cry out but they achieved just the opposite. What was his secret? The answer is as simple and plain as a child of faith can put it: "When you abuse me and beat me up, I imagine that God touches me through the blows and if these blows come from him, then they can only be affectionate caresses, for God is love."

This is a spiritual, supernatural world. And this supernatural world of faith makes us see crosses and sufferings in a strange light: the law of suffering, joy in the midst of suffering, glory resulting from suffering.

Or, we go a step further and think of the Curb of Ars. Humanly speaking, he was no light of wisdom and the sciences. But supernaturally seen, in the light of faith, he had an extraordinarily clear insight into processes of life and demonstrated them classically, although never in learned words, always in very simple terms. He told

his people: If you want to become rich, you normally have to work diligently. Unless you receive a large inheritance, you cannot put your hands in your laps, twiddle your thumbs and wait until you become rich. If you would be rich, you have to work hard, you have to become active and busy. Well, if I want to get to heaven--if we had to explain it to our children, what would we tell them? We would remind them of the

146

commandments and I don't know what else. And he? "If you want to get to heaven, you have to suffer." That's all. Practically speaking, this means that if I want to get high up in heaven, I have to suffer much, I have to suffer heroically.

This is the very world that we people today increasingly forget and, thinking of our youth I'm tempted to say, it is a world that has generally been totally forgotten. We view everything with purely natural eyes. How we, who by virtue of our calling strive for the heights of perfection, fuss over an upset stomach or an unfriendly look or a little detraction. We believe ever so much that we have to consider ourselves heroic. Ask the Cur6 of Ars. This is the most natural thing in the world. True, we often say, we want to get to heaven--and most people today have no interest in heaven any more. If we want to get to heaven, of course, we have to suffer. We should even be surprised if no one makes us suffer.

It was this way with the saints. They became restive when they were left in peace for long. They could not bear this peace; they had to be burdened with crosses and sufferings, otherwise it was nothing; otherwise they were not happy. They could not live without the glory of suffering, without the joy in suffering. We poor little earthlings, what we make of every little sensation. We think we have to tell the whole world what crosses and sufferings we poor little earthlings have to carry. We are toys, playthings--well, should I say, toys in the hand of the devil? We merely play with Christian life. A mystic soul, we are familiar with her name, a French woman, Lucie Christine, beautifully illustrated how we should deal with our cross and suffering. She said, "Imagine that you have a grain of sand in your eye." We know what it means to have a grain of sand in one's eye. Of course, we keep rubbing it. But we should not do so because this only makes it worse. Isn't it the same when we have to bear crosses and sufferings and constantly revolve around them, prostrate on the ground before our own majesty because we are poor, banished and unacknowledged children of Eve? Isn't this how it is? We do nothing but play with religious truths. We are childish and remain childish. It doesn't matter what state of life we belong to,

what dress we wear; none of us descend to the bottom, none of us go to the depth. Therefore, we do not really grow and therefore, God has simply no use for us. He wishes to offer us his treasures, his most valuable treasures. How does he send them? Through our enemies, through crosses and sufferings. And we? We do not understand him. Hence, sooner or later, the words of St. Augustine will be realized in us. Yes, I fear that if I let Our Lord pass by with crosses and sufferings--if I let him pass by, he will grow tired of it and leave me alone. Either he no longer sends his cross in which case we will forego the glory resulting from suffering and the joy in suffering. Who knows where we will then end up. Or he allows us to be touched by severe hardships but does not give us the necessary grace so that we can carry and endure them.

A different addressee. Now we could play for days, write letters, and receive quick answers, The answer is essentially the same. These truths are not always very pleasant. We reflect on ourselves, "I have been a good person, I made sacrifices, I renounced marriage and what not... I wanted to be filled with ardor when I love God, I wanted to glow and burn for God." And God? What does he do? He plays a trick on me. "Once upon a time I attracted you through fervor and through the warmth of love, the warmth of love for God. But now... That's over. Now you have to show me that you love me for my own sake, not for the sake of warmth." As playful as it may sound, we sense the immense greatness, the moral-religious greatness behind all these truths.

One more addressee. A mystic soul, a medieval mystic said: The horse that leads me to perfection most quickly is the cross and suffering; not inner joy but the cross and suffering; not the horse that lets me recover my health most quickly, that gives me greatest relaxation, no; the horse that leads me to perfection... You see, the saints of old did what we are doing, they looked for images to render an important truth somewhat intelligible. As we know, modern young girls not only go to the dance so young, they also need a horse, they must pursue sports to be fit and healthy so they believe. "The horse that

148

leads me to perfection most quickly is the cross and suffering." It is not interior happiness; it is the cross and suffering. This is no play, this is earnest striving; this is taking the cross and suffering seriously. Do I

need to explain the statement? The horse which leads us to perfection most quickly.., to true holiness, to saying a sincere and courageous yes to the wishes of the eternal God and Father, a yes to the fundamental laws in God's Kingdom including the law of the necessity of suffering, joyful readiness for suffering, joy in the midst suffering... The horse that quickly leads us to the summit is the cross and suffering, is my cross and suffering. What does my cross and suffering look like? Can you sense how, as a matter of course, the saints lived in this world, how in the light of faith they showed us that things which seem worthless to us had a great value to them? Isn't it understood that I would be a little fool indeed if I did not reach out for the great treasure someone offers to me? What is important? We have to see in a new light, in the light of faith, what our nature hates and considers worthless.

I am not at the end yet. Referring again to the Middle Ages, to the beginning of the new time, I think of St. Bernard. One of his expressions transmitted to us brings us close to the modern way of thinking. He says: It is a terrible scandal to be a complaining member of a Head crowned with thorns. Do we understand? Here we touch on a favorite expression of the Council: Corpus Christi mysticum. What does the Head look like? A strange picture it is indeed: thorns above--and below, nothing but cats and kittens, dragons maybe, I don't know what else. What a paradox. A head crowned with thorns--what does it need? What does it demand? Members plunged into sorrow, sorrow endured in fortitude, not in playfulness. We don't fuss over it, we don't run from Pontius to Pilate. We take it for granted, it is part of it. We should run from Pontius to Pilate if no one hurts us, if we have no cross to carry. In the light of faith, this is what the divine smile and the human cry is all about. These are great goals, wonderful ideals which we have generally forgotten.

149

Cardinal Faulhaber takes up this beautiful picture in his own way. He instinctively takes up the world which at that time was rather vehemently in upheaval, including the Catholic public. He coined the beautiful expression, actually two expressions which I would like to quote and explain a little. Suffering, my suffering, what is it? I call it by name, my suffering is Christ's mark. This is a beautiful expression. Christ's mark. St. Paul would say instead: I bear the sign, I bear Our Lord's mark of the cross in my soul, in my body. My cross is Christ's mark. If I wanted to express it theoretically, in a scholarly way, I would have to say that, ontologically, attitudinally and practically, my cross means growth into Our Lord's marks. Now I can tell myself--I have a

constant headache..., my poor heart, it is pierced. What does all this mean? What do I bear in my body? Christ's mark. Christ means to press the crown of thorns once more upon his head, upon my head.

Therefore, it seems to me, I should not lament under the cross. I am happy; I say: Yes, you are the object of my love. I wish to suffer everything that you endured. But as soon as I have a chance to do so, I am miserable, I moan and groan. It is true, I may feel it and I may even express it; I should not become insensitive; my whole human nature, all that is human in me, does not have to be disregarded. But let's not wail and weep as though the whole world were falling apart just because I have a little headache. And if I have it constantly, what does it mean? What would St. Paul say? He would say: Christ crowns my head with thorns not just once, but constantly. The same applies when my heart is the cause of trouble. Of course, I am not saying we should not see a doctor if it is necessary. When reading what so many doctors state (doctors who see life as a whole) we are told that people's attitude is: There it hurts a little, go quickly to the doctor. What do we forget? The meaning of pain is not fulfilled at all. I am not saying we should not go to see a doctor. We may do this, too, once in a while. Our grandparents--when did they ever go to a doctor? I am not saying, we should imitate them. If someone said: Go, see a doctor, people had to be gasping for their last breath. Even then they might not go. Today we

150

are living in an extremely playful, superficial, insignificant time, totally enslaved to earthly goods. Again, my cross and suffering--stomach trouble, I don't know what I should mention--pain in my hands, in my feet; what is it? Christ's mark. All that we explained last Sunday from a theological point of view, should be much clearer now. By our very existence, by our very Baptism we are incorporated into the suffering of Christ. Hence if the *ordo essendi*, the objective order of being, is to be the norm for our life, then, as a matter of course, we have to say a sincere, courageous yes to suffering in attitude and life, and we have to consider it the most natural thing in the world.

If we live and think that way, if we are at home in this world, then we are truly masters in knowing and living true Christian practical wisdom. Otherwise, we merely rattle off these truths (especially if we talk about them professionally) but fail in the attempt to become masters in suffering ourselves. Necessity of suffering, joy in the midst of suffering, glory resulting from suffering. Otherwise we can train a parrot and send it [to teach] someplace. It will do a better job because in situations like these, when we are unable to cope with our cross, we feel sick, as we

commonly say, we are depressed. Why! Of course, we are depressed. That's part of it. Christ was depressed in Gethsemane too. We cannot say that he sang hymns of jubilation. He was depressed. Nevertheless, his attitude was, "Let it be as you would have it, not as r' (Mr 26:39). This is strength, this is courage, this is maturity. Let's forget about all these playful things if we want to become genuine Christians, Catholics who are able to cope with the time.

Once again, doesn't it look beautiful, doesn't it touch our hearts? On the cross Christ indeed annihilated himself to the utmost. What is the deep meaning of Christ's desire to have us participate in his cross? He could have redeemed the world with a motion of his fingers. What did he do? He annihilated himself to the utmost. Why? He asks the same of me---annihilation. I should become a little nothing. The greater the task that I have in God's Kingdom, the more he compels me to interiorly empty and annihilate myself. Whatever I do and suffer I should consider

151

nothing, worthless, futile. This is what he wants. By his example he shows us his will, but he also gives, provides, merits the strength and grace to say yes to this personal self-annihilation. Hence we should not take ourselves so seriously. We should do all we can, but we do not consider it important. It is understood that we sacrifice ourselves for others. I should do it and don't make a fuss over it. What is important? The Father alone is important, that is, the merciful God and Father. He loves me, not because I did this or that, but because he is Mercy.

Now the second phrase. I will have to close soon. Let me at least mention the second expression. Cardinal Faulhaber says in his particularly beautiful language: The children of this world manifest their love by giving roses to each other. How many roses did I receive in my life? We manifest love through roses. And the Lord of heaven and earth? He sends us the messenger of his special love--thorns. God Almighty sends me plenty of thorns. What do I do with them? I shout: I want roses. I only receive roses if I kiss the thorns. Then the thorns will be transformed into roses and the necessity of suffering, the burden of suffering becomes joy in suffering, glory in suffering.

I must close. I wonder whether the great law of suffering has touched our hearts. Later we will apply it to the Blessed Mother's life. As we did so frequently during these weeks, we pray:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile and a constant human cry, of suffering and of carrying the cross. Amen."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.  
152

## FEAST OF THE HOLY NAME OF MARY

September 12, 1965

We are happy to celebrate the name day of the Blessed Mother today, the Mother of our family. We are going to do what we normally do on the name day of a mother in the natural family; that is, this year we celebrate with extraordinarily great gratitude, sincere joy, and unshakable hope.

I said, with great gratitude. All we have to do is glance at healthy natural family life in order to understand what is meant. Once more, [we celebrate] with great gratitude, that is, we gratefully recall everything we owe to the Blessed Mother as our heavenly Mother, our personal Mother and the Mother of our family; we recall everything we owe to her as individuals and as a community, whether it be the nation or our own personal family. I assume, I take it for granted that, at a closer look, we could enumerate a whole series, an endless series of the Blessed Mother's mercies. Therefore,

My heart, O Mother, longs to thank for everything,  
In ardent love for you and childlike self-surrender.  
What would we be alone, without your care,  
Without your mother-love and your concern.

You saved your children in distress and needy times,  
In faithful love you drew us close into your mother head.  
I thank you now, thank you eternally.  
In perfect love I give myself to you.

But gratitude alone is not enough on such a high feast. To gratitude we wish to add sincere joy; joy because of the greatness and beauty of the Mother of our family, joy because of the great mission she has,

153

especially today when the Church is in peril. What is her mission? The Council impresses upon us very emphatically all that has always been a matter of course for our hearts, all that our Catholic thinking and feeling has always adhered to as true and that we still firmly believe today. It draws our attention to the Blessed Mother not only as the powerful, almost all-powerful and wise Mother, but also as the unique model of the Church, the contemporary Church which is in peril.

Mother of the Church. I need not remind you of all that the Council

taught us in this regard. But we are happy that the title Mother of the Church, also of the contemporary Church, has newly been given her. According to our thinking and feeling, it would have been strange if they had been content with considering and acknowledging Mary as the most perfect member of the Church. On the other hand, the Church made a great effort to present a sound self-concept to today's world. What does this self-concept consist in? The Church wants to be seen as God's People. We could say instead, as the great family of God. Wherever there is a family, there necessarily are a father and a mother. The Father of the People of God is the eternal God and Father, in Christ Jesus, in the Holy Spirit. And the Mother~ As Catholics we hardly would be a family in the perfect sense if we did not have a mother. And so, to us the statement that the Blessed Mother is also the Mother of the contemporary Church sounds very comforting and makes us feel good. We are happy about it.

I also mentioned that the Council praised the Blessed Mother and presented her anew as the model of the Church. This concept had caused many arguments in the background. It is St. Augustine who imprints a truth upon us that has always been alive in the feeling and thinking of the Church. He emphasizes very clearly and distinctly: Christ created his Church, formed it according to the image of his mother. This is a very significant statement. What does it mean? From all eternity, the picture of the Blessed Mother stands in God's plan as the model for the Church. The Blessed Mother, pure and spotless, is to be the Church. We may truly call her Christ's whirlpool, that is, everything

154

within Mary is oriented to Christ. It is like being helplessly exposed to a whirlpool or vortex. Whoever comes near the Blessed Mother, comes under her influence and is drawn into her heart. All who give their hearts to her cannot help being drawn into this whirlpool. The modern Church, too, wants to be pure and spotless according to the image of its model, according to the image of the Blessed Mother. The Blessed Mother wishes to place the world into the hands of the Church so that the Church will find its way more deeply into Christ's heart, into Christ's person. All in all, we are happy to see and accept this anew. We congratulate the Blessed Mother on her name day and on her glory.

However, we also wish to deepen our hope. If we remain sensible and natural in our thinking, we take it for granted that on her name day, each true mother is willing to fulfill the wishes of her children as far as possible in a special and generous way. If she asked us today what we were longing for, what would our answer be? What would we answer,

we, who Sunday after Sunday listen to God's Word and want to summarize our desires in the petition:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine joy and a constant human cry."

And so, if the Blessed Mother is compliant today in a special way, we won't rest until she understands us, until she gives us the grace we have long prayed for. We also could express the aforementioned petition as follows and, as it seems to me, it would be a fruit of last Sunday's sermon:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, help us to penetrate as deeply as possible the great Christian law of suffering as the law of the necessity of suffering, glory resulting from suffering, joy in the midst of suffering. Obtain for us the grace to actualize the law of suffering in a heroic way."

155

Those who have been attending our Sunday Masses for years, might want to put the petition like this:

"Triune God, silently speak your all-powerful words: Let there be a little Mary who finds glory and joy in suffering."

We all would like to see this great law of suffering actualized in us according to the example of the Blessed Mother.

With this I believe the right atmosphere has been created which will open us sufficiently for all that God wants to tell us today in this regard. Yes, we know, "Blest are they who hunger and thirst for holiness; they shall have their fill" (Mt 5:6). In our modern way of thinking we interpret the beatitude like this: Children of longing are always children of fulfillment. If we want to nourish our longing for the realization of this great law of suffering, we do well to at least deepen two ideas today. On purpose I said, to deepen. The ideas are not new since we have been discussing them for quite some time.

The first thought should lay the foundation or rather deepen the great Christian law of suffering. The second thought reminds us again of the effects of this foundation.

The foundation of the law of suffering. We do well to turn to two addressees. First we will examine a well-known French philosopher who

bases his entire life's observation and experience upon this law. Secondly, we will turn to the Constitution on the Liturgy of Vatican II, as we have done before. The answer from both sources is essentially the same. The Constitution on the Liturgy, however, furnishes us with the deepest reason. The ultimate reason that can be given for this great law of suffering, for the Christian law of suffering, can only be the wish and will, the ordinances of the eternal God and Father. He alone has the right to issue such a law and to govern the world by it.

How does Pascal--that's the name of the French philosopher--interpret this law? He says that whatever was done to Christ will and must be done to the body and soul of each Christian in the course

156

of centuries. After all our discussions we understand this law very well. When we ask what was done to Christ, our Savior stands before us, on the one hand, as the suffering and dying Christ, and on the other, as the risen and transfigured Christ. It is very simple to draw the consequences. If we as Christians are to be little Christs, we know very well what is required of us; it goes without saying that we have to suffer like Christ, that we have to carry the cross and suffering like him, in the true sense of the word; we have to expect a great deal of suffering. At the same time, we will participate in his transfiguration and glory partly here on earth, but above all, after death. How simple and natural the law sounds. If this applies to all Christians, then--so we conclude--it applies to the Blessed Mother in a special way. Why? I believe that you will understand when I immediately add, she is not only the first Christian, that is to say, the first person who surrendered herself to Christ, the first Christian in the true and literal sense of the word, but also the most perfect Christian, the most perfect individual who imitated Christ, the most perfect individual in whom Christ re-lived, re-incarnated his life and destiny. This, I assume, is enough for the first answer.

The second answer is based upon the Constitution on the Liturgy. It reaches far deeper. Actually we have elaborated on this topic for two Sundays. If I repeat the central truths once more, I do so because, by and large, these truths seem to be very new to us and we need time to absorb them. Why such a law, a law of suffering? The liturgy, the Constitution on the Liturgy, emphatically points at Baptism and the Eucharist: What do both tell us? The Constitution clearly underlines that Baptism gives us the basis for an ontological participation in Christ's life as a whole, the suffering and transfigured life of Christ. It gives us an ontological participation in the suffering life of Christ, hence a participation in the necessity of suffering, in the glory resulting from suffering, in

the joy in the midst of suffering. Baptism gives us the basis for an ontological participation. We sense, then, that deep down a Christian is indeed different from all other people. At the same time, it is a participation in Christ's glory of the transfiguration, that is, we are given an inner

157

ontological openness for the Father's influence, hence, openness to the Father, a capacity to be moved by the Father, availability to the Father, rejoicing in the Father and faithfulness to the Father.

If we now continue asking what the liturgy, the Constitution on the Liturgy, tells us about the holy Eucharist, about holy Mass, we learn that it emphasizes the very same. This twofold ontological participation is now endlessly deepened; the participation in the suffering and transfigured life of Christ is deepened under the aforementioned conditions. With that we have newly deepened the foundation of the law of suffering.

If we ask more precisely for the effects of this foundation, we are confronted with two great laws. One says that our obligation as Christians consists in seeing to it that this twofold ontological participation becomes an attitudinal and practical participation. This happens in an outstanding way by our active participation in holy Mass, possibly daily. We will not discuss what this means in detail now. Once more, this is one effect of the clearly seen foundation.

We discussed the second effect before. The whole greatness of a Christian, Christian greatness is rooted in what? It all depends on the degree of our ontological, spiritual/attitudinal and practical participation in the suffering and transfigured life of Christ.

If we now tried to apply these laws to the life of the Blessed Mother, we would quickly come to the conclusion that because the Blessed Mother is the greatest Christian person, not only the greatest real person, but also the greatest thinkable Christian person, we take it for granted that she is and has to be the greatest imaginable, the only imaginable hero of suffering in Christendom. With that we stand before a result, before a powerful fact that we now should explain and clarify step by step. For the time being, however, we pause at this more basic discussion. We began clarifying the law, the law of suffering in its essence in all directions. We did so in order to apply it afterwards to the picture of the Blessed Mother.

158

Last Sunday we began studying this law by means of the teaching and life of the saints. We proceeded from the conviction that the laws of God's Kingdom are in an exemplary manner actualized by the saints. A number of remarkable quotations helped us illustrate this great law of suffering. Today I would like to extend the series a little.

Once again, I begin with words of Cardinal Faulhaber as an interpreter of the saints' way of thinking. He pointed out that suffering is Christ's mark on the soul of a Christian. Suffering is a sign of election and in no way a proof of condemnation or a proof of God's aversion toward someone. Hence there are three statements.

The cross, my cross--I quickly name it what? Christ's mark. It is an ontological participation in the suffering life of Christ, as the Constitution on the Liturgy states. Ontologically speaking, in Baptism and the Eucharist the marks of Christ's wounds become the wounds of my soul, possibly of my body. We could dwell on this for a long time. The marks of Christ's wounds. The crown of thorns. The sword in my heart. Nails through my hands and feet. What is suffering? The marks of Christ's wounds. However, we must never overlook that to bear and endure these marks, to embrace these marks is ultimately possible only if we surrender ourselves unconditionally to Christ so he can carry and endure this cross, these marks in us. We could also say, in order to interiorly experience the glory of suffering and joy in suffering when we participate in the marks of Christ's wounds, we need to abandon ourselves unconditionally to Christ and set no limits to Christ re-living his suffering in us. Here we actually touch upon the profound meaning of our participation in holy Mass. Here Christ represents, Christ renders present his suffering, his suffering on Golgotha. He annihilates himself to the utmost. He wants to be annihilated once more in us. We should become detached, absolutely detached from our ego. We should ignore what we do even though we do everything possible and we try to accomplish great things for Christ and his kingdom. But we should not consider it important. Important is only one thing--the infinitely merciful Father love of the eternal God. Under this aspect we should not even

consider our weaknesses and sins important. Important is only the merciful love of the Father. It does not mean that we should not suffer when we failed, when we sinned. This is the strange part of a truly Christian attitude toward life. It includes many secrets that are difficult to understand. On the one hand, we suffer from our limitations, from our inadequacies, from our sinfulness; on the other hand, if we see things in the right context, we are happy about them. Why? By acknowledging

these limitations, these shortcomings, these sins, we move the eternal God and Father in a mysterious way to bestow all his fatherly love upon us. He wants us to become empty of self so that he can fill us with himself.

Let us look at holy Mass under this viewpoint. St. Paul lived this in an outstanding way. He tells us very clearly: Every day--quotidie morior--I die every day. But he does so in connection with holy Mass. This gave rise to the words: Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). The death of Our Lord--we always see the death of the Lord as the foundation of our resurrection, of our transfiguration. It practically means that in each holy Mass we let ourselves be nailed to the cross with Christ. We hang on the cross, but on a cross that is the foundation for the transfiguration of our nature. It is the foundation of openness to the Father, availability to the Father, rejoicing in the Father and faithfulness to the Father. This is the general meaning of holy Mass. Both Good Friday and Easter Sunday are rendered present at the same time. After we were nailed to the cross in the morning during Mass--I always have to repeat that we do so as the foundation for the participation in the glory of Christ--we may not be dishonest and quickly drop from the cross during the day. We simply have to see to it that our ontological participation in the suffering and transfigured life of Christ becomes a subjective participation, an attitudinal and practical participation.

However, we must not forget that the attitude expressed in the aforementioned quotation by Cardinal Faulhaber implies a second

160

element. It says that a cross and suffering are signs of election, not of condemnation. Signs of election. Under election we may understand two factors. Election for grace. Hence it is a great grace when we are given crosses and sufferings. It is also a sign of election for glory. That is the big question which occupies us in silent hours: Will I get to heaven? Will I really get to heaven? We all know our weaknesses; we know what we are capable of. All we have to do is look into our past. It is therefore only natural that in quiet hours this question should bother and torment us. Did God predestine me for heaven or am I predestined for hell?

Theologians give us two criteria that will help us answer the question whether we are predestined for glory. One sign is a deep, warm devotion to Mary. The second sign is a participation in the suffering life of Christ. So, what does it mean if God lavishes crosses

and sufferings upon me, physical or psychological problems, contempt, failure in my profession? It is a proof that he wants to have me in heaven. If we fully understand the basis of the great law of suffering, the conclusion will be obvious. Election. A cross and suffering are signs of election. I believe that if we examined the lives of the saints, we would discover that they were convinced of being chosen for heaven because of their capacity for suffering.

I will point out a few examples. First of all, I am thinking of a simple Carmelite brother, Lawrence of the Resurrection. He had a very deep and serious concept of life. He wanted to become a saint and he wanted to abandon himself unconditionally to the eternal God. Being very down to earth, it was understood for him to renounce any and all spiritual consolation in his striving for piety, for sanctity, for total self-surrender. So it happened that, as soon as he felt inner warmth or consolation when making sacrifices, when fighting his nature, he became suspicious, he resisted it saying: I don't want consolation, I want to suffer, I also want to be detached from all spiritual gratification of my nature. Eternal God and Father, all I want is you, not your consolation.

161

This may well be heroic, but we should not imitate such a petition in this form. All we have to do is two things: On the one hand, we should even ask God for consolation in prayer, for consolation when we are faithful to the inner impulses of the Holy Spirit, if in the long run it becomes too difficult to remain faithful to God without consolation. On the other hand, however, we also have to be ready to say: If you take this inner joy away from me, if you send me darkness, dryness, aridity for my senses, then I beg you for all the crosses and suffering that you, O Father, hold ready for me; but all this only if it is in your plan.

Do you sense how the inner desire for a cross and suffering is taken as a proof for being elected? This conviction was quite strong in him. For four years the brother endured a dreadful aridity in his senses; he had doubts of faith on top of doubts of faith. Four years. But suddenly all obstacles, all forms of suffering disappeared, and in his original way he reproached God: In the game of love that you have played with me you cheated me. There is a kind of cheating in games, that means, you deceived me. What is the deception all about? "I thought that I would have these dreadful inner struggles throughout my entire life." And now? He used to say: "In the midst of all suffering, my soul is filled with happiness." He called himself a light-hearted and cheerful child of God. And it was not easy to be light-hearted and cheerful. We just have to

remember that for many years he had to be the cook in the monastery against his natural inclinations. What does it mean to be the cook in a monastery? Only those familiar with monastic life know what it implies, There something runs over, maybe the milk, I don't know what. Then in a monastery, here is a superior with orders and there is another superior with conflicting orders. Good heavens, what is right? In addition, he was physically disabled. Not only that he had flat feet, his feet were crippled. His back was deformed. Yet he never complained, he never had demands. He never told the Brothers assisting him, "you, you, you have to do it. You; you, you, not I, I, I. I am the head of the kitchen." Or, when they had guests who politely offered to help, he did not make a fuss to get their help and bring the whole house in

162

confusion, "Oh, poor me, after all, I am sick. I can't and yet, I have to do this heavy work." No, no, he was cheerful and therefore he repeated time and again, "Dear Lord, you are cheating me." You see, [this is] joy in the midst of suffering, an all-embracing joy in suffering.

Let us at least think about these small contributions to the realization of the great law of suffering in our lives. Good foods, delicacies should be consumed in small quantities. I think we should continue examining the saints, at least until the law of suffering deeply permeates our minds and hearts.

Again, let us take the resolution with us for another week and repeat our petition more ardently than before:

"Dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, transform me into a three times admirable child of a constant divine smile and a human cry. Amen."

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.