

Father Joseph Kentenich

Retreat Course for the Fathers on Mount Sion 1967

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My dear Confreres, today we again want to dwell on our Lord's invitation: Venite! Come out of the world, out of the worldly world, the Godless world! Come into the world of deep and personal love for the Father, of being gripped by love for the Father, the victory of the Father! Has God won the victory over our nature - as individuals and as a community? Victoria Patris! This is the Victoria Patris trend.

[We are being guided by God]

There is no need to prove that God has obviously guided our Family in a special way, and that the Family willingly allowed God to guide it. We have all experienced it. The fact that we are together, and the way we have grown, is a proof of this divine guidance and our willing acceptance of this divine guidance, our willing 'Yes' to this divine guidance.

What is important for us today, at least in this and the next talk? It is the proof that that such divine guidance exists. To be more precise: It is the proof that the Father's victory is assured. So let us ask, where do we look for the Father? From which point of view has God the Father, as the *God of life*, been victorious in the Family? That is the important point. We wanted our lives, the life of the Family, to be completely dependent on the guidance and direction of God the Father. Since we submitted so willingly to the God of life and his guidance, we have become what we are.

So let me ask again: Is there such guidance? Measured against all that we have considered together until now - if we constantly keep in mind the background we have been reflecting on for such a long time - we will again notice the law of contradiction. On the one hand, we see a world that believes it is totally without divine guidance - at least that is how the world sees itself very often. On the other hand, when we think of ourselves and our Family, we see an incomparable guidance.

I even think it would be a mistake, it would be a sort of superficiality, if we were not to consider individually whether our personal lives have not been subject to a very special guidance, a divine guidance. Expressed in more usual terms - we should ask whether each one of us personally has not been a Providentia child to an eminent degree. A Providentia child to an eminent degree, that is to say, a person who has been led in a wholly mysterious and unique way by God. Indeed, allow me to repeat the expression more often, "subject to God's guidance". That

is to say, the helmsman has always had the helm in his hand. So nothing happened by chance. Oh, no! I can feel tangibly how God has directed the helm. Of course, we have also tried to obey every turn, all the inner and outer intentions of the helmsman.

It is a thought, a favourite thought of mine, and I try to hold onto this idea as clearly, comprehensively and profoundly as possible. It is a thought I liked to reflect upon down in the cellar¹ and also later. I tell myself repeatedly - if only we could manage to hear and answer the slightest wish and hint of the helmsman each time, what a direct route our lives would take!

I would like to express this in another way. Of course, it is thought of in very human terms. If I am really negligent at times and God gives me hint after hint, and I do not react (if the helmsman wants to have my life or the Family ship take this or that direction), and then I finally begin to react again - I have deliberately said that it is put in very human terms - it will mean that I will have overlooked so many hints. Will I then receive the strength to obey the most recent hint?

Of course, I know that from the point of view of Church teaching I could give a number of answers. I could say that God has included this in his plan from all eternity. However, let us remain with the other way of thinking. How easy it would be for me to remain calm in every situation of my life, especially the most important, if I have educated myself to say a heartfelt yes in every circumstance to the least hint from God? I would always be prepared, especially since I know that God, the helmsman directing my life, is a loving God, a wise God, and an all-powerful God. He is not playing around with me, he is not trying to prove that he can do what he likes with me. He is Love, Love in Person. So everything that enters into my life at some time is an expression of the fatherly love of our infinite God.

We are well advised, therefore, to try to enter into and apply such thoughts in practice. We could tell ourselves: "Father, let me change course completely at long last!²" Which course [conversion]? It is not enough to say in very general terms: "Yes, Father, yes, may your will be done at all times, no matter whether it brings me joy, suffering or pain." Nor is it enough to say: "I know only one longing: Lead me according to your wise plans!³" The important thing is to educate myself with utmost care in the art of recognizing God the Father's will in every circumstance.

Is this not an absolute contradiction to what was said yesterday [about the world today]? People don't want to try to discover God the Father's will. He is too far away. Unless, of course, his existence is denied altogether. People deny that he is a Person and that he exists. They deny that he has drawn up a plan. They

¹ The cellars of the Gestapo prison in Koblenz, where Father Kentenich was kept in solitary confinement in almost total darkness for over a month in 1941.

² A line from a prayer in "Heavenwards"

³ *ibid*

deny that he carries out this plan victoriously in every least detail. They deny that he is concerned about the very least detail, that he is personally concerned. Of course, there is no natural analogy for such an attitude. Either we get stuck with the individual and overlook the whole of reality, or we over-emphasise the whole and overlook the individual.

[A saying of Pope Gregory the Great]

St Gregory once gave a beautiful answer to this. We could have found it for ourselves. Of course, it does explain things, but it nevertheless remains a mystery. He said: It is like this with God, he holds the reins of world events in his hands in such a way that it might seem he does not care about individual people, and he is concerned about the individual and the least detail of their lives as though the community did not exist⁴. Of course, the Analogia entis is very limited. Here we see the living God who far, far surpasses all that is purely human. We again touch upon a mystery.

Then we hear another saying. It is a saying we have often used in our history, it concerns the "**sacramentality of the present moment**"⁵. What does that mean? What do we understand when we speak about a sacrament, the sacramental character? It is an outward event that is a symbol of inner grace. The sacramentality of the present moment - each moment is a sacrament. It indicates more to me than just *the wish* of God the Father, it at the same time offers me *the grace* I need to recognize and carry out God's will at every moment.

[Faith in Divine Providence is our way of seeing the world]

When we hear things in context in this way, we have to say: For us, faith in Divine Providence has simply become our way of **understanding the world**. It is not as though we *also* believe in Divine Providence, as though faith in Divine Providence *also* has a place in our way of thinking and willing. Oh, no! It is simply the central, one of the most central ideas in our way of thinking and loving.

[Faith in Divine Providence and the covenant of love belong together]

However, we may not overlook that this is "Fides *caritate* formata"⁶. For our everyday lives this means that faith in Divine Providence is the source from which we can know and live our covenant of love, [both at the same time], as cause and effect.

⁴ "God's Providence spreads itself as much over one soul as over a whole town; over a town as over a people; over a people as over the whole human race. The Lord cares for each individual person as though he had nothing else to worry about, and at the same time he cares for everything as though he did not care for the individual"

⁵ Coined by Jean-Pierre de Caussade

⁶ Faith formed or in-formed by love

There we have it again. Although what we have is most original, it can all be "written on a single finger nail", as Professor Bartmann of Paderborn put it, and as we have repeatedly quoted him. So if we personally want to become and remain genuine Schoenstatt members, we have nothing else to do than to place both in the foreground - faith in Divine Providence and the covenant of love. Faith in Divine Providence is "Fides caritate formata"; we live the covenant of love on the basis of faith in Divine Providence. Faith in Divine Providence shows us how to live our covenant of love at every moment. And the covenant of love draws our attention to the fact that we should repeatedly draw from the wellspring of faith in Divine Providence.

[Faith in Divine Providence in the Gospels]

What we now want to *prove from the Bible* is no less important to our entire lives. Of course, when we open the Bible, we are trying to discover God's directives from it. So we examine our Lord. What does he tell us about faith in Divine Providence as we have just described it? We ask - I think we will now understand this still better - how did he describe a charisma in an organic context, as we have described it? It is a charisma that the Blessed Mother mediated for us in a very deep and extraordinary way.

Let us allow him to give us a few teachings and then look for a total view of his teaching traced back to a few principles.

When we think of *teachings*, we can differentiate between explanations that are purely ideas, and those that use pictures.

[Three teachings of Jesus on Divine Providence]

These are explanations of ideas - there are *three short teachings* which are almost presented as a list in the Sacred Scriptures. We want to meditate on them individually.

[The Father has made a plan: he knows what we need]

The first statement: "*The Father knows what you need before you ask him*" (Mt 6,8). What do we have to presuppose with regard to this statement? The whole teaching on Divine Providence. Put more precisely, it is the teaching that God has drawn up a plan. In very human terms we could say that it is a plan he has weighed up very carefully, it is a plan of love to a quite extraordinary degree, it is an extraordinarily wise plan, an extraordinarily omnipotent plan. So how have I been created? How can we describe the individual things that happened in my life? All that has happened in my life was foreseen. If I now say it was "predetermined", it has to be understood in the right way. Everything has been planned in advance, everything has been foreseen, everything has been predetermined. However, at the same time the grace placed at my disposal has

been included in the calculation. Grace is offered to me so that I can discover this plan in each individual instance. Grace is offered to enable me not just to discover it, but also to carry it out.

It is said: "The Father knows". Why does he know everything? Because he has planned it all, because he has foreseen it, and because he always keeps in hand and controls the way it is carried out in every detail. He directs my life. I think we should impress this saying - "**directing my life**" - very deeply upon our minds and hearts. He is directing me now, he has directed me in the past. So, if things happen in the way it is laid down here in theological principle, we can understand the statement: "The Father knows what we need". Does he really know it? Yes, he determined that I should need it. And he is also ready to give me all I need. That is why it is expressly stated: "before you ask him". So, I do not first have to tell him that I need something. I don't need to draw his attention to the fact that I need something now. He naturally knows about it anyhow.

[My life - a divine comedy]

We have again looked back on the things we discussed in detail last year, and touched upon here and there this year. For instance, we talked about the fundamental relationship between God's activity and ours in the act of salvation. I think we cannot do this often enough. Let us again listen to the statement: The whole of life, including my own life, is a "*divine comedy*". Allow me to say it again, although we have stressed it almost to excess. Who has drawn up the plan of my life? I haven't! When I later drew up a plan, it was only justified to the extent that I tried correctly and successfully to copy God's plan for my life. It is not my plan. If it isn't God's plan, nothing will come of it. He has drawn up a plan. Who is the main and universal player in this comedy? We must always remember and hold onto the place God - as a Person - has in the whole of salvation and also in each individual act of salvation. Dogmatically this is correct and has always been correct. It is all the more correct today, when people have shown God the door everywhere.

[Necessity and meaning of prayer of petition]

So I do not need to ask. However, why does he nevertheless require us to ask? Let us hear it from his own mouth. "Ask!" What does that mean? "You have no need to ask." It only shows that we need not ask as though he had no idea of our need, or as though he were not ready to answer our need. Nevertheless he tells us: "Ask and you will receive. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you"⁷. Why does God require us to ask, even though he has drawn up the plan, even though he knows everything, even though his knowledge is love, his plan is a plan of love? Out of love for us. We should be reminded of him. He wants us to tell him what we expect of him ultimately. After all, he is not merely the main actor, the universal actor, he also plays all the roles, even though he is not the only actor. He always wants to be part of the act. He wants us to be

⁷ Mt 7,7; Lk 11,9

reminded of this, he doesn't want us to forget him. That is the point! God is speaking to us all the time. He wants us to ask him. And how does he answer? Through his deeds. What sort of deeds? By giving us new light so that we get new insights. Even though our lives are so confused, even though the ways of life today are so chaotic, he wants us to be able to recognize what he wants, but he also wants to give us the grace we need to carry out his plan.

[The Old Testament background to Jesus' message about Providence]

There are other expressions. They go much further and emphasise far more strongly what his Jewish listeners found so strange at that time. He told them that God is not just concerned about the Chosen People. His listeners were totally convinced of this - the people of Israel were the Chosen People. Their faith went to such lengths at times that the Israelites were convinced that God's Providence and love did not include other people. We are the Chosen People! The people as a whole, not the individuals. You need to keep this background in mind, only then you will be able to understand correctly what is meant by God's individual and personal Providence.

What was our Lord trying to say through the teachings we are going to examine slightly in a moment? The Father is concerned not just about the People of Israel as a whole, he is not just concerned with every individual member of the People of Israel, he is also concerned about every least detail and he is, in addition, concerned about all that he has created and especially about all human beings. Applied to myself, this means that there is absolutely nothing in my life, not even the least detail, which has not got a place in his plan.

Please take note of this. On the one hand, there is this tendency in the world to do away with God. On the other hand, there is this tendency in Schoenstatt that God cannot be brought closer to us. He cannot come closer, he cannot be more close to us, if we want to do justice to what our Lord has told us about the Father.

Allow me to remind you of what I said when I quoted the words of the Rector of the Seminary in Cologne, who had been a prisoner in Russia. He told the seminarians: "***The living God is closer to us than our skin.***" It puts it very simply. God is closer to us than our skin. What can be closer to us than our skin? He is saying in his own way that God is concerned about us, about each individual one of us, and about even the very least detail that affects each one of us. Please presuppose this, then you will immediately understand and be able to interpret the two teachings our Lord now wants to give us.

[No sparrow falls to the ground - the Father's personal care]

Jesus puts it in such practical terms. He always spoke very simply to the people, he used pictures in order to adapt himself to them, his audience. Listen to his

words: "*Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny?*"⁸ It is not difficult for us to imagine ourselves in the situation at that time, and think ourselves into the values and feelings of that time. What are we concerned with here? Obviously with the feeling at that time with regard to birds. If we are not mistaken, it was even stronger than it is today. A sparrow is not very important. So he asked his audience: "Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny?" That is the foundation for the point he wanted to make. "*And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing.*" Is it possible to put it more simply? These are such insignificant, worthless creatures, no one bothers about them, but the Father does. Not one falls to the ground without this being in the Father's plan. "*Will he not much more look after you?*"⁹

[Every hair on your head ...]

"*Every hair on you head has been counted!*"¹⁰ What does that mean? God must be a brilliant mathematician. He can count every individual little hair on my head. The exegetes interpret the saying in this way. "Every hair on your head" - by this our Lord means the very tiny little hairs we have on our necks. What does that mean? If it is true, and it must be true, or is it merely a picture for something very general? Even if it is just a picture, the picture is clear enough. If this picture is being used as a symbol, it can only mean that God is concerned about me, he knows about me. All that has happened in my life has been foreseen and planned in advance. However, it is all out of love, for love and through love. Everything should help to bring about my loving union with him.

[The art of trying to recognize and interpret God's will]

My task in life quite simply consists in trying to discover what God wants. How can I discover it? We have always made use of three definite means. First of all through our times, that is, through circumstances, the circumstances of life. To start with, please listen to what Pope John XXIII said so profoundly and beautifully. "We should interpret what the Scriptures tell us by making use of history." I should make use of the events around me, world events around me. I must only understand the art of discovering God's will from them. So don't sleep, don't dream, don't constantly look down. Sursum corda¹¹! Always ask: What do you want of me, my God?

This is very important for us, especially as we are living in the world. On the whole we have a great deal to do with the world today, we have to work and work. God is shaking everything, just as the storm shakes the tree. God is shaking the trunk of the tree of our lives on countless occasions. We cannot be grateful enough for this. We need only learn the art of understanding what he is doing, of interpreting every breeze, every hint. We have to learn this art. It is

⁸ Mt 10,29

⁹ Mt 6,30; Lk 12,28

¹⁰ Mt 10,30

¹¹ Lift up your heart!

possible to learn it to a certain degree. Ultimately it has to be given to us from above.

***[Faith in Divine Providence:
A 'competition' between guidance and obedience]***

Please try to understand how true everything is that we have taught from the beginning about faith in Divine Providence. Faith in Divine Providence is the source from which we have drawn everything. We have said a loving 'Yes' to God the Father's wishes and hints. The history of our Family has been a strange competition between God's guidance through circumstances and human obedience to all the hints this God has given us. So it is a competition, a competition between God's guidance and human obedience.

[The picture of the lilies in the field]

A final teaching takes us in the same direction. Once again it is a picture taken from everyday life. We are asked to observe the *flowers growing in the fields* and the way they are clothed, or *the birds in the sky*, and how they are cared for¹². This is obviously quite extraordinary. Even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like the flowers in the fields. The birds in the sky do not sow or reap, they are simply delivered up to God's Providence. And the Father cares for them all without exception.

[Limitations of pictures]

We need to remember once again what the spiritual attitude of Jesus' audience was. They had never had such an insight into God's plans. Please remember that as far as they were concerned, the people of Israel were the object of the especially tender love, guidance and dispensations of God. Here we are told that not just people, but also the flowers in the fields and the birds in the sky are included. Of course, we have to understand that this is just a picture. What is emphasised in this picture? Only one aspect. There is more than one. The birds do not have to worry about anything. Yet, look at how often God does not worry about them. So many die. So you also have to hear the serious side of the picture. Even when this happens, it is in keeping with God's plan. Just as his care, so also his lack of care is part of his plan, it is part of God's great plan for the world.

[Learn to interpret the signs of the God of life]

Since we are dealing with an important teaching, and since our Lord was in the habit of repeatedly impressing such teaching on his listeners, we will not be surprised that he also makes use of *pictures* to deepen and drive home what he has said. What pictures did he use? I shall only mention one or the other.

The picture of the lost coin;

¹² Mt 6,25-33; Lk 12,22-31

The picture of the lost son;
The picture of the lost sheep.

What do all these pictures have in common? Something that was very dear to our Lord's heart. It is what he wanted to impress on the minds and hearts of his audience, because of their fundamental attitude. In all these parables we are dealing in a wonderful way with an individual. So what did he want to impress on them? God's interest in each individual human being. We are not an accidental goal.

[The background of the times for the message of Divine Providence]

Let us now compare what has been said with all that we spoke about yesterday about the people who have been formed by our technical and collectivistic world. People have had to give up their freedom, they have lost their spiritual core. How this teaching resounds against such a background! How important it is for us to allow our Lord to tell us these things again in a new way. The world is spinning deeper and deeper into the abyss of ugly collectivism, which is unworthy of human dignity. It is a collectivism which does not see human beings, who are endowed with a soul and freedom, as the climax of evolution. Instead, the climax of evolution should deprive people of their souls and their personalities. The machine should triumph, a machine which people themselves have constructed. This construction of the machine is the symbol of the construction of a new social order. Very soon the hominified person, the hominified society should take over, that is, the "human-god" who has created everything, who has created a new human society and a new world.

[The picture of the lost coin]

Please try to interpret the pictures in this or a similar way. Let us think, for example, of the picture of the lost *coin*¹³. Even if we are not financial geniuses, we can all understand what it means if a coin is lost. Now what does the housewife, who has lost the coin, do? She turns the house on its head until she has found the coin. Would it not have made more economic sense if she had left it alone and spent the time working hard and earning money? You see, human prudence is here simply taken 'ad absurdum' to an extreme. Why?

Who is this woman who has lost a coin? It is the living God who has lost one of his children. And what does he do? Well, what did the housewife do? She turned the house on its head. That is how interested God the Father is in each individual person. Who is that individual person? I am. He is interested in every least detail about this individual person. We can understand this message when we tell people today - and it is again shouted from the rooftops today - that people cannot exist if they are not loved, if they are not the objects of someone's love.

[The longing for faithful love that is prepared for sacrifice]

¹³ Lk 15,8-10

Yesterday someone said something really beautiful to me: "I have often thought about whether there is anyone in my life who would be prepared to give their all for me, if I was in need." This fits in so wonderfully with what we said about the weakness of people today when it comes to love. Their passions can be quickly aroused, or even their love, but what they lack is unending faithfulness. Think of how our Lord personally reflected and lived this faithful love. He himself told us: "A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends"¹⁴. All of us have this longing. We need someone who does not just caress us. We need someone whom we know bears us in his heart, indeed, who is prepared to give his all for us, his blood and his life, if necessary.

[Behaving according to the law of opposition]

Can you understand what these little and yet so great things mean? Are we not confronted here in every way with a total contrast, the law of opposition, to the people now rising above the horizon today? Do we want to understand our times, the signs of the times? Of course! Not just the signs in the heavens, but the signs in the heavens of our times. If we can understand what the world today is saying to us, then the most beautiful principle of St Augustine comes into play: "Utamur haereticis ...". What do we want to make use of? All the people who go astray around us, who think very differently from the way God has foreseen and planned. "Utamur haereticis, ut contra eorum errores veram doctrinam catholicam asserentes tutiores fiamus"¹⁵.

We have always held onto this clear principle. It is by no means a bad thing if God makes life hard for us, when he allows the stars above us to be darkened. It doesn't matter. Because this is the way we learn to listen: What does he want? What task, what mission, what counsel, what plan, what commission is he presenting to me? It may sound odd when we list things in this way, it may sound very complicated. Of course, it is complicated if we constantly have to think about it. I have to do my share in order to become such a Providentia child. However, it gradually becomes part of us, so that we are unable to do anything else, it is our spontaneous and natural reaction. That is what God wants, what he is giving us. That is also the reason why we are talking about a Victoria Patris trend in the whole Family. It is not the only reason. If we are alone in stressing it, we do so out of gratitude. However, we also do it because we think God wants it. He wants us to recognize and acknowledge him, because the world outside has totally dethroned him as the God of life.

[The picture of the lost sheep]

Would you like to interpret the other parables in the same way? It will probably be easy for you now. If we think, for example, of the one *lamb*¹⁶. I should leave

¹⁴ John 15,13

¹⁵ "Make use of the heretics, in order to discover true Catholic doctrine through opposing their errors."

¹⁶ Lk 15,3-7

ninety-nine in the desert and run after one! Isn't there a danger that the wolf could break in? Here, as in every picture, the comparison is somewhat exaggerated, it is a symbol, it reflects a great thought. Look at the lengths God is prepared to go to in his care for just one individual! I am that individual.

You could meditate on similar thoughts in this way. We should end up by saying: Yes, we are fully justified in believing in Divine Providence, we are justified in applying it to our history and in speaking about the Victoria Patris trend in our Family. When we talk about the Victoria Patris trend, and try to increase and deepen this trend, we know that we are not hunting after a phantom. We know that we are carrying out God's wish today. On the one hand, the world tells us that there is no God to provide for us, and on the other, we adore the God of Providence in an endlessly deep and tender way.

When we have entered into the school of faith in Divine Providence, when we have personally become children of Providence, it may gradually become easier for us to bring ourselves into line with this Divine Providence. Then it will be easy for us to recognize and quickly carry out all the plans of God's Providence in practice.

[Do not worry! Between trust and sharing in God's care]

If I may now summarise all that the Bible offers us in the way of individual teachings, I think we should again refer to Matthew and there meditate on the great *thesis* our Lord proposes to us. It is done in the form of a request, in the form of a command, and in the form of an axiom. "Do not worry!"¹⁷ If God cares for us in the way we have described, if he directs everything as the helmsman, what follows can be briefly summarised in the words, "do not worry!"

We have said that God is the main actor, he plays all the parts, but he is not the only actor. We now have to apply this to life and say: He cares for everything, he cares for us in every situation, he is the helmsman, and he steers the ship in every situation. However, he needs people who care with him, who help him to steer the ship, who naturally guide the ship in the same direction as he does. So it is also true to say: We have to be concerned! That is, we shouldn't become superficial, letting everything just happen, for example, like the stars in the sky, the birds in the air, or the flowers in the fields. No, no! According to the structure of our being we are different from them. We should be concerned, but we should not worry and be anxious!

If you look at the text more closely, you will notice once again how simply, but clearly our Lord formulates the principle: "I am telling you not to worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it." With what are we dealing here? With people's fears about their existence. What matters here is not just to have a better rhythm of life, a higher culture. No, no! Our very existence is at stake! And if there is anything to worry about, we

¹⁷ Mt 6,25.

naturally have to worry about our very existence. We have experienced this to the full in the past years when our existence was endangered. Look at how we tried to defend that existence. However, even here: Do not worry!

[Co-responsible concern is part of human existence]

Shall we pause for a moment here? Ask yourselves what it means in detail. "Do not worry!" The important question here is: Why should we be concerned? I think we take the answer for granted: Because, according to the structure of our being, we may share in God's intellectual life. Therefore, because we are intelligent beings, we cannot and may not leave everything to God. Because we are intelligent beings, simply because we are made in God's image and likeness, we are also drawn into his care for his creatures.

[Three reasons why we should not worry]

Why should we not worry and be anxious? That is the great question we have to answer. Our Lord gives us *three reasons*.

[The transitory nature of the world vs. the theory of evolution]

The first reason: The things we are dealing with here are life and death matters - food and drink, clothing - but these things are passing. "Do not worry!" All the things referred to will be eaten up by the moths tomorrow. So why should our hearts get attached to them?

Allow me to ask you again to imagine that you were listening to a modern priest preaching up there in the pulpit. He would be quite unable to say anything like that. What would he say? "Heresy!" What would he say? "You have got to be concerned about the world, because the world is not going to be destroyed. One or the other thing will be destroyed, but it is our task to ensure that the world is perfected. You have to see to it that the world is perfected! Ensure that you lead a good life here in the world. Even if it all disappears for you tomorrow or the next day, ultimately the world will only be transformed. The great task placed before the Church today is to see to it that the world is transformed, so that at the end of time it is as perfect as possible. God will care for everything else, he will naturally care for you."

Can you understand the changed way of thinking? If we were to preach today, if we had to preach, how would we have to describe it for the way people think today? I can well remember the first of the four-week Ignatian retreats I conducted, when I spoke about these things. At the time I presented four imperatives: Out of the world! Into the grave! Then into eternity! Either eternally happy or eternally miserable! Could I still preach in this way today? Without doubt! However, where would I now have to change the emphasis? Otherwise we would no longer be able to understand each other any more. Let us accept

the expression as it is presented here. According to the way people see and feel it, everything in the world is passing in the way it exists for *us*.

Now comes the theory of evolution. Naturally, the philosophy of history also presents itself. What do they both tell us? What does the philosophy of history tell us? What is the danger which the historian has to face? When the historian sees how everything has developed, he faces the same danger as the adherents of the theory of evolution. Nothing is stable, everything is changing. How far is it in the process of change? When we talk on such subjects today, we have to reckon with such things. We have to place the emphasis correctly, we have to explain things briefly, so that the content remains true.

Let us remain with the thought: Why should we not worry? The selfish side of ourselves is being addressed here. What we need for life should be satisfied. One day things will cease to exist for *you*.

[The limitations of human love]

Secondly, and this is more important, our Lord then appeals to the human intellect. He put it this way: "No one can be the slave of two masters."¹⁸ What does that mean? If you want to belong totally to the Father, you must ensure that you belong to him - this is expressed in our terminology - in an organic and holistic way. Organic and holistic! If your heart is enslaved by these transitory things, the danger is too great that your love will get stuck on the way, the danger is far too great that God will be short changed.

Let us recall what we have stressed so clearly in these days. People today are able to love, their ability to love can be activated, often even passionately. Yet what is the main thing? Eternal faithfulness. Our loyalty is endangered - let us put it exactly as we ourselves think - because we cling anxiously to such things, to such transitory things. We are, therefore, constantly in danger that our attachment to things no longer leads us onwards to God.

[We should not forget our caring God]

Now comes the main point, and it is this that we have to stress. Our Lord tells us this very clearly. The meaning of what he has emphasised is this: The Father also wants to have an opportunity to remind us that he is there! In practice this means that in his wisdom God has seen to it that human society is repeatedly faced with times of need. We will never achieve the paradise on earth that is proclaimed today. God just does not allow it. Why? If people on earth already enjoyed an earthly paradise - not just individual people, but humankind as such - God will have lost humankind. By his very nature he cannot do anything else than demand that human society, which he loves so infinitely and for which our Lord gave his life, should love him in return.

¹⁸ Mt 6,24

All in all, then, why should we not worry and be anxious? In order not to deprive God the Father of the possibility to surround us with his fatherly concern and care.

[When we are helpless - heroic trust]

If you take what I have touched upon briefly very seriously, it will mean in practice for us: If we want to build House Sion up there on Mount Sion, and we don't have the money we need, I think we would almost have to say that the best financial security for all the money we need is heroic trust in God the Father's kindness. Actually, heroic trust is also a financial means, in fact it is an extraordinary financial means, a first class means. So we have to get used to seeing things in their great context.

Naturally we need an even more heroic trust when it comes to carrying out our tremendous mission. That is the greatness God wants of us - the greater the mission we can point to, and the weaker we feel, the more we depend on heroic trust.

In this regard, please recall what we have emphasised so often, for example, when quoting a saying of Juan Donoso **Cortes**¹⁹. He asked why God allowed his Church to fall into such times of need? What is his intention? The Church should become aware that he is the Lord of the Church, the King of the Church, the Governor of the Church. So when the moment has come, he will appear on the pinnacle of the temple of time, blow the trumpet and the enemy will collapse.

[As instruments we are the donkeys who bear God into the world]

We are all only little, tiny instruments. At present a concept is doing the rounds in our Family. People are talking about a "community of donkeys". We want to be proud that all - some more, some less - may share in the qualities of a donkey, in the character of a donkey. We are helpless, little instruments! We are not the main thing, the one who rides the donkey is. Who is that? Should the devil ride the donkey? The devil doesn't fetch a donkey if he want to ride. Only God does something like that. Who should ride this donkey? Who should lead our Family? Who wants to lead us? That is and remains God, the one who plays all the parts, the main actor, the universal helmsman, the main helmsman. "In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum."²⁰

I think that if we meditate again on all that we have touched upon briefly, we will begin to realise that the Family was always well advised to trust heroically in God. We will begin to realise that we have lived in a supernatural world. We will feel how supernatural forces have worked great things in us and through us,

¹⁹ Spanish Philosopher 1809-1853

²⁰ Ps 31. In you, O Lord, I put my trust, never let me be confounded.

although we are so small and helpless. "He who is mighty has done great things for us, holy is his name."²¹

²¹ Lk 1,49

Fourteenth Conference - 1.1.1967

My dear Confreres, let us ask our Lady to see to it that we find a home - a permanent and indestructible home - in the atmosphere of the Victoria Patris trend. This is the trend that is penetrating and permeating our whole Family at present.

We know which three questions we want to answer. We have already listed a few historical memories, and we have begun some discussions in principle. We have already said the most essential things. However, since we are dealing with important matters, the foundations for our existence, the mystery of our development, growth and fruitfulness, you might like me to try to deepen what has been said in various directions.

I shall do so from two points of view. We shall, first of all, survey our spiritual literature together, and then spend more time discussing "Heavenwards". However, also in this regard I shall only do so as far as necessary for our present circumstances.

[1. A survey of our religious literature]

This survey of our religious literature begins with the thought with which we closed our last conference. It is a beautiful thought which we have not really enlarged upon and interpreted so far. This does not mean it is unknown.

[First picture: The child of the helmsman]

"My father is at the helm". We know this quotation. Perhaps we should use it more often so that its meaning can penetrate us more deeply. It is a picture or an event which is well known. Once upon a time a ship was on the way from England to America, and on the way it encountered a fearful storm. Everything was in chaos. A boy, the son of the helmsman, slept through it all quite calmly; it didn't bother him. In the end someone woke him up. The people below decks pointed out to him that they were in the greatest danger. The boy merely asked whether his father, the helmsman, was at the helm. They answered, "Yes". He turned over and went back to sleep. The poet immortalised this lovely scene, and the refrain repeated over and over:

"The storm may howl, the winds may rage,
the lightning strike from heaven,
I think as does the helmsman's child:
My father is at the helm."

I think this reflects the history of our Family. It also describes our Family's vision of the future. Our Family ship will have to sail through storms and mountainous

seas on countless occasions. We have only to hold onto the awareness: Our Father is at the helm, so no matter the circumstances, we can turn round and go to sleep again. That is to say, we can go on sleeping in the sense that we do not grow grey hairs, or that we do not think that overnight or very soon the end will come. What is asleep in us? Trembling anxiety, anxiety and worry.

"The storm my howl, the winds may rage,
the lightning strike from heaven,
I think as does the helmsman's child:
My father is at the helm."

[Second picture: the tender hands of the Father in iron gloves]

That is the first selection, now comes the second. It reminds us of something we said very often in the past years. It is a statement that presupposes that the Father's hands are always kind and gentle. However, when we consider more deeply how the Father's hands treated the only-begotten Son of God, we gradually become convinced that the Father often wears iron gloves on those hands. I need not remind you of anything else. We need only ask ourselves: How can we describe the iron gloves he was wearing for me? How can we describe the iron gloves he put on for the Family as a whole? When was it, what were they like? And what are those gloves like today? What will they be like tomorrow or the next day? I think that also in this regard we have to remember the principle: "Conquer what you have inherited from your forefathers, so that you may possess it."

You know how St Ignatius prayed that his Family should constantly be driven to and fro by the storms and waves, it should always be persecuted. We in Schoenstatt can count on it that this will also be our lot. Perhaps - who knows? - to an even greater extent than has been the case with the Jesuits. Thinking in this way could be justified, because the times we are approaching seem, at least to start with, to be very unfavourable for the rule of God the Father.

[Learn to love the many, different hands of God]

Another saying, another quotation from literature, goes in the same direction. It is a saying of the French mystic, Lucie Christine. One of her favourite pictures is wholly in keeping with her womanly character. It is the picture of God the Father's hand. She takes God the Father's hands as her starting point and explains things to herself in this way: We should love God the Father's hands at all times, we should always kiss them²². How can we describe those hands? It is typical that

²² Love all the hands of Providence! These are the creatures through whom God has touched us and through whom he has been at work in our souls. Once we have learnt to see him in them, we will love them all. There are hands that crucify us. There are others that bruise and crush our hearts without realising it. There are hands that scourge us with their poisonous remarks. They have all worked at our sanctification. There are also hands that comfort us, that reveal the love and kindness of Providence to us. There are hands that bless us and bring success where we would not have been able to succeed on our own. Those are the

she first of all looks at these hands that crucify the soul, placing the crown of thorns on our head, thrusting the lance through our heart. We should learn to love all these hands. This means learning to love - to put it another way - our enemies! Love for our enemies. So we should place glowing coals on their heads by loving them. However, we should also love the hands of the Father that bless, that pray, that comfort, that heal. What does that imply? Behind all the hands that touch us in this way, that are folded in prayer, that open to us, that anoint us, that care for us, we should see God the Father. He has done everything thorough other people. And since he has done it, we love those hands, we always see the hands of God, our eternal Father.

We also know the other two beautiful expressions. All that is created should be a "nutus Dei"²³ for us, a "manutergium patris"²⁴. A "nutus Dei" - a greeting from God. God greets us. Of course, he greets us with crucified hands, but also with hands that bless. Love God's hands!

A third kind of hands - these are the actual hands of God the Father. They do not make use of an instrument, but they reach deeply into the deepest depths of the human soul. They touch the soul where it cannot be touched by anyone else. They make springs gush up in the depths of the soul, and the only aim of these waters is to flow into eternal Love. His hands can awaken acts and emotions that no other creature can entice from the soul. We should love all these hands.

[Become children of Providence - our goal]

Please try to understand what I am trying to say. We are dealing here with various ways of expressing the one great goal we may all strive to reach - to be children of Providence, Providentia children to an eminent degree. This is what we should all be and become, that is, the Family as a whole, but also each member of the Family.

So if I want criteria by which I can measure the extent to which I am a Schoenstatt member, I think we would always have to say that it is the degree to which I have become a child of Providence and the way I have shown that I am a child of Providence. Of course, you must understand the expression "Providence" in the way we have described it. It is always "Fides caritate formata", it is always faith in Providence, on the one hand, and the covenant of love on the other. Both have to be united and fused insolubly.

[Third picture: the two sides of a carpet]

prayers of the little ones and the unfortunate. Finally, there are hands that lead us, carry us up to God and keep us upright on the path to heaven."

²³ St Aufustine of M.A. Nailis: Workaday Sanctity (Everyday Sanctity) in the section on Prophetic Attachment to things.

²⁴ St Bonaventure, *ibid.*

You know about St Augustine's favourite thought. It is strongly influenced by psychology, but also by philosophy. He put it this way. When you think about the way God govern or leads world events, you could well compare it with two sides of a carpet. We only see the reverse side. What is it like? There is a confusion of threads. On the upper side there is a wonderful harmony.

[In heaven we rejoice in the discovery of the ways of God's Providence]

In this context I would like to draw your attention to some dogmatic considerations. We are told that an important - secondary²⁵ yet by no means insignificant - part of the Visio beata²⁶ consists in receiving the grace to survey the whole of world history in God as though in a mirror. We will see the history of the Family and our own personal history, and then discover the wonderful way in which God has carried out his plans to the last detail. This is part of the Visio beata, although a secondary part.

We have already tried to anticipate the Visio beata to some extent from two points of view. First of all, as celibates we want to anticipate the state in the Visio beata in which people are not married or given in marriage. Secondly, we want to anticipate the eternal Visio beata in the sense that we want to live and love in a constant inner union of love and fusion of love with the Triune God dwelling within us.

Through living our faith in Divine Providence we are also trying to anticipate a bit of the Visio beata. How? When we personally try, through never tiring of looking into the past, to decipher what God has planned with us from all eternity, and how he has carried out this plan. "Your homeland is in heaven"²⁷. Also in this sense, our homeland is already in heaven.

[Suggestions for morning and night prayers]

Allow me to draw your attention to some methods people have already applied to bring this about [the anticipation of the Visio beata]. This does not mean that we should or must copy them. One of us has for years been in the habit each evening of writing down a definite act of benevolence on the part of God during that day. He does this before going to bed and then adds how he has answered this act of benevolence with a sign of gratitude.

The key thought expressed here is probably well known to us. We have to become aware of how God has touched our lives. Of course, it is quite possible to do this in a purely intellectual way, but it could also be meaningful, at least

²⁵ The word used by Fr Kentenich is "accidental", derived from the Thomistic concept "accident", as opposed to substance. Since this meaning has been largely lost today, I have used a less precise but more understandable term.

²⁶ Beatific vision - the vision of God in heaven

²⁷ Phil 3,20. The accepted English translation does not capture what Father Kentenich means with this quotation. The German translation could be rendered as: "Your way of life should be [is] in heaven". This is a reference to a saying in ancient Rome, which implied that people in the Roman colonies took the way of life in Rome as their yardstick.

under certain circumstances, to write it down. This is because more of our senses are then involved in the whole act of love, and because we are then better protected from forgetting things or a change of mood.

Our method of meditation, which is very dear to us, is essentially nothing else than securing this anticipation of the Vision beata - a type of anticipation of a secondary part.

We could go on in this way. We will repeatedly find out in new ways how our ascetical books, but also the lives of the saints, offer us a pre-eminent example or model of the Victoria Patris trend.

What has been said should merely be a small starting point and inspiration. I shall now add one or the other quite superfluous saying that points out the direction in various respects.

[God can also build a house with falling stones]

There is a saying that comes from Cardinal Faulhaber. He spoke about God as the master builder, when he spoke about God's Providence. He said, "It is the divine master builder who can even put up a majestic building with falling stones."

What does that imply? Cardinal Newman reminds us that this is a form of Divine Providence. Indeed, he said, God is passionate about attaining his goals through all forms of disappointment and breakdowns. Let us remember this when our hopes have collapsed - our hopes in certain events and their fruitfulness. Let us never forget that God makes use of everything in order to build something new. We actually take it for granted, since he is both wise and kind, so that we can always trust him in everything. This trust is based on revelation. So we take for granted that in every circumstance - whether they are, humanly speaking, favourable or unfavourable - we see everything from the point of view:

"Nothing happens by chance, everything comes from God's kindness".

[God has a sense of humour]

You know the saying we have used jokingly on occasion. We are told that a teacher had given the children the task of re-writing the sentence: "Man thinks and God guides" in the imperfect tense. One of the children put up a hand and said: "Man thought and God laughed"²⁸. How often must he not have laughed about our plans when they were not in keeping with those of almighty God, whose plans are the plans of eternal wisdom.

[Adapting ourselves to God's schedule]

²⁸ As so often, humour is untranslatable. In this instance, the German word "lenkt"=guide, is (incorrectly) put into the past tense to become "lachte"=laughed.

There is a particularly serious admonition that applies to us all. It comes from Cardinal Faulhaber. We should not want to disturb God's plans by trying to run forward faster than he has foreseen for us. This could be important for us, at least for quite a number of us. Our group is still small. The task has grown, the plans are growing. It is quite understandable if we become restless. God leaves himself time. If he can leave himself time, we can also leave ourselves time. So we don't want to go faster than he does. We want to adapt ourselves to his plans, and we only want to carry out the individual parts of his plans when he himself has begun to do so.

So, to sum it up, we are well advised to try in every possible way to remain Providentia children to an eminent degree. We should also see to it that we pass on this legacy to our members, from generation to generation.

[2. A look into the Credo of "Heavenwards"]

There is still a second thought we want to deal with briefly. Let us take a look into "Heavenwards". If what we are dealing with here (faith in Divine Providence) is a central subject, we can be sure that 'a priori' "Heavenwards" will also take a stand to it. You can page through it wherever you like.

Let us choose one section that could then inspire us to dig a bit more deeply into the past, into our history. We are well advised to examine ***the Credo***. You can guess that the Credo summarises everything we know about faith in Divine Providence. It is a synopsis of all we have said, formulated and lived in the course of the years in one or the other way.

When you meditate on the Credo, you will immediately notice that it reflects and highlights the different ways in which God exists. So not just the God of life, but also the God of our altars and the God of our hearts.

[The God of Life]

In keeping with the subject of our course, we want to dwell at greater length with the God of life. Naturally you won't come across anything new in these passages. This is not what we are about. What matters is that we again convince ourselves that from the very beginning we have aspired to this high ideal.

Take a look at page 26²⁹. The text begins by turning to the God of life. "You" refers to the Father.

"You look at us with a Father's gaze, allowing us to share in the Son's happiness.
You direct everything that happens to us so that it serves our eternal salvation."

²⁹ All the references are to the German edition. The various English translations will use different page numbers. I am deliberately not using any of the accepted English translations.

[God greets us]

The God of life is obviously meant here. Now listen to a few expressions that have become very important to us historically, with regard to the way we explain our spirituality:

"Every suffering is a greeting from you."

You will understand that when we think of the God of life, we visualise above all the cross and suffering, because this is the school into which he has taken us. Generally speaking, it is not just every suffering that is a greeting from him, so is all that is good. Human kindness is also a greeting from him. Strangely enough it is true to say that when God is kind to us, we usually forget him. However, when the cross and suffering oppress us, especially when they have reached a certain degree, we are far more liable to raise our gaze to God the Father and his hands. So you can understand why special mention is made here of the cross and suffering.

"Every suffering is a greeting from you that lends wings to our soul."

That is how it should be. Let us again impress the expression "greeting" on our minds and hearts. If God greets me, what does he expect me to do out of politeness? To return his greeting. So if we - I think, we can hardly say this of ourselves - if the world today repeatedly talks about the "latens Deitas"³⁰, the hidden, silent God, we have to object: God is constantly talking to us through every circumstance of our lives, through all that happens in our lives. I think we have proved this quite sufficiently when talking about our Lord. He is concerned about us, he talks to us, he greets us on countless occasions. The great fear, the great danger, is that we do not return his greeting.

[Loving gifts, suing for our love, loving answer]

In our context, this "greeting" is obviously a benevolent one, a loving greeting. In the past and on countless occasions in the course of our history, we have said that all the events of our lives - also and very particularly the cross and suffering - are a loving gift from the hand of the Father. What are they also, at the same time? That is the second saying. We should value them as a greeting, but they should also be seen as God suing for our love. A loving greeting, suing for our love, require that we give a loving answer.

These are well-known processes in life, which we can follow up through the history of our Family like a golden thread. We should constantly and loyally preserve what we have inherited. We should not just teach it when we speak to others, but also try to live it with great love and great fervour.

So it is not without reason that we are told here that "every suffering is a greeting from you that lends wings to our souls". That is to say, we should not be constantly oppressed by suffering. It is as though wings, which had become tired,

³⁰ From Thomas Aquinas' hymn: Adoro te devote, latens Deitas ...

again unfold and spread themselves. Now we can fly upwards. Sursum corda! I have rested for long enough, the Lord God is suing for my love, he is speaking to me, I shall answer him.

[The image of changing the points³¹]

The text that follows uses another image.

"Every suffering is a greeting from you that lends wings to our souls..., that powerfully changes the points, that keeps our striving going."

So, in addition to being a loving gift, it changes the points. Seen historically those words had a completely different meaning, a special content, from the beginning. We talk about "changing the points" when we are dealing with something that is not just an ordinary, everyday suffering. It has to be a very profound suffering, something that shakes us up, something that confuses us altogether. We have all to reckon with this happening. One day it will be, or should be, a joyful task in our lives to look back and see where we have been inwardly shaken up in this way.

Here we are told that the points are being changed. Let us imagine an express train travelling at speed through the countryside on the wrong track. Unless the points are changed, the train will have a terrible accident. Now it is God, the eternal Father, who makes use of the most terrible disappointments to intervene profoundly in our souls and switch the points to the right track. What could this switching of points be in practice? I could be in disgrace. With whom? With my superiors. I have broken down in the course of my activities, I have become seriously ill, I have caught an infectious disease. I don't know what else, it could be all sorts of things. However, when we look at life, we will often discover that such a change in the points has been a great good fortune for us. What matters is that we really become aware of this change in the points, that we don't reject it, that we don't overlook what is being said to us.

Many of the things we have been touching upon in these days would fit in here. We have spoken about our subconscious. If we have become inwardly free people, children of freedom, children of God, if we really and truly want to become children of freedom, what matters is that we should overcome so many undigested impressions festering deep down in the subconscious levels of our souls. They have to be integrated into the loving plan of God the Father. When we have personally experienced and can prove how strongly we have been transformed, how much we have changed direction through this or the other dreadfully deep and shattering experience, through this or that cross, through this or that disappointment, we will find it easy to see the hand of the Father everywhere, to love the Father's hand, to kiss the Father's hand.

³¹ on the railway line.

Now the creed shows in detail how we should react to such greetings, to the way the points have been changed in our lives. This has been sufficiently described in what has been said.

"It (the greeting) again urges us to decide that we are ready for Christ, until he alone lives in us, and works in us, and reaches out to you."

[The challenge - to learn to decide]

Through all these things, at first in a primitive way, we want to harvest a gift for ourselves. Ultimately what matters is that we can one day say and pray with St Paul: "I live now not with my own life but with the life of Christ who lives in me"³². In practice this means that we have to take a new decision. That is what matters. We have to decide again and again that we want to live as Christians. If we avoid taking such decisions, for example, during the Novitiate or in the Tertianships, we will not be able later on to decide in a positive way for him in the midst of the chaos of life, when it is difficult to come to a decision. The ability to decide, and the willingness to see the decision through - those are the two functions of the soul that have to be exercised time and again.

So let us be grateful. I do not think we find it at all difficult to come to a new decision, especially when we look back and see what burdens God has placed on our shoulders in the course of the years. This is even more the case when we notice how the Schoenstatt Family as a whole has decided again and again to bear all sorts of burdens, and has mastered all sorts of dangers.

[Faith in Divine Providence - turning to the Father]

"As the sunflower turns to the sun, which bestows itself richly, so we turn heart and mind with great faith to you, Father."

You call us, you awaken us, you greet us with such vital greetings. So we think that you are behind everything. It is your hand that does everything, that touches us in this or that way, which also changes the points.

"As the sunflower turns to the sun, which bestows itself richly, so we turn heart and mind with great faith to you, Father."

Now comes the statement which summarises everything. We should note it not just for the mind, but also for the heart and for life:

"We see you standing quietly as a Father behind each event, we embrace you with glowing love, and go towards you filled with courage for sacrifice."

[Indication of a further growth process]

³² Gal 2,20

That is actually the Providentia child to an eminent degree. Even if until now we have spoken on behalf of the God of life, we do not want to forget to keep the God of our altars and the God of our hearts in mind. The Family as a whole has already progressed a long way along this road. If we were to see more precisely what God has wrought in individual souls, we would have to admit that God continually exercises an ever deeper attraction on us, to the extent that he dwells and reigns in us as the Triune God.

[Contact with the God of our hearts]

We begin to realise that unless our concept of the human person is connected in a very pure way with the indwelling of the Triune God, we will not have sufficient strength to oppose the spirit dominating the world today, which flattens everything before it like a powerful storm. We could also say that genuine and true reverence, the spirit of purity and integrity, is on the whole only sufficiently safeguarded if we manage to enter into, deepen and perfect our fervent and tender contact with the God of our hearts.

The indwelling of the Triune God! My soul is a little church of the Blessed Trinity, so is the soul of my confrere, so is the soul of the people around me. This is true either as a reality, or as a potential reality. Hence our task is to make the law of rendering all that is created transparent, to make the law of rendering all sexuality transparent, more and more the norm for our entire lives.

[Love for the God of our altars]

The same applies to the God of our altars. Here we may and should apply the law of opposition in a very special way. If the God of our altars is so forgotten today, and will be thrust into the background tomorrow, it follows that we should not tire of extending and deepening our Movement of Eucharistic Adoration.

[Think and live with changes of emphasis]

When you meditate on the Credo of "Heavenwards" more closely, you will not be surprised that we have before us a compendium of the whole of the reality of supernature. All the courses we have held from the beginning on this subject have been summarised here in their ultimate content. Of course, as we know, people today are on the defensive against systematic thinking. They are on the defensive against a systematic summary of great truths. We can help ourselves by repeating the concept - a change of emphasis. What does that mean? We have to keep hold of ancient teachings, while changing the emphasis more in favour of the God of life, because the God of life is being dethroned everywhere. So we hold onto tradition, including what Scholasticism has given us through serious struggles and efforts to provide us with a systematic and ordered knowledge.

[Metaphysical thinking - experimental³³ thinking]

When we look back into the past - I am thinking here of our older confreres - we will remember that at one time there was rejoicing in Church circles when the statement was made: We notice a change in the way people think. The motto was: Discover metaphysics! That was something really great! And today? Metaphysics has been buried. Everything today that has a metaphysical tinge is rejected. However, in my opinion we should always remember that if a change in the way people think happens as quickly as it happened here, we can expect that it won't last long. The change to experimental thinking was extreme and rapid, as well as being almost exclusive.

So it probably doesn't make much sense for us to repeat in public what we have said in the past about our being children of God, members of Christ and gripped by the Spirit. For strangers - i.e. people outside Schoenstatt - we can leave it at that, but for us who are striving towards a living and organic whole, it is advisable that once we have again incorporated the God of life into our hearts, we should also discover the God of our altars and the God of our hearts.

[The Triune God lives in our hearts]

I can well remember what a joy it was for me at that time when we gladly united in praying for the gift and grace of God's indwelling presence in us, as a result of courses I had held on this subject. You can read this prayer in "Workaday Sanctity"³⁴. Such prayers usually encompass three worlds of ideas. First of all, we become aware of, or we are helped to become aware of the great gift that the Triune God is dwelling within us. Then our thoughts centre of this great gift, rising up to draw our attention to the fact that this indwelling does not imply what is usually meant when we speak about living in a room. If you live in a room, it is an outward process. The indwelling of God is wholly and completely an inward process. The Triune God lives in us and draws us in a mysterious way into the inner-trinitarian life of God.

[Make God present in our apostolic work]

Of course, we cannot prove these things by conducting scientific experiments, yet people today want to live by experiments, by experience. That is why we have said in these days that if we want to work as apostles in our modern world, where we want to draw people into the inner-trinitarian divine life, our main task consists in making the Triune God living within us present in our practical lives. Even though we also share in the superficiality of people today, we want to at least keep it in view as a goal.

[Distant goal - the covenant of love with the Holy Spirit]

³³ In this context it means "based on experience"

³⁴ See the section on the indwelling of God in "Everyday Sanctity"

It is true to say that starting with a Marian attitude, we have grown strongly into a Father-centred attitude. This has prepared the way in many souls for a covenant of love with the Holy Spirit. The time may still come when this will become the dominant trend in the Family. For the moment we have enough to do to keep the idea of the Father, the indwelling of the Father in our hearts, alive.

As I have said, we should reckon with it that one day the tendency in the whole Family will grow to enter into an explicit covenant of love with the Holy Spirit, and to form life accordingly. When the Holy Spirit has been brought more strongly into the foreground, we may expect that the whole supernatural world with then become more evident and alive for us all.

[Our Marian devotion is a fruitful root of the tree]

Since we are the leaders, the spiritual leaders of the Family, allow me to draw your attention here to one thing. We may never forget our fundamentally Marian attitude because of this Father-centred attitude. You may not overlook that this is a danger. Since people today reject all that has to do with Mary, and this includes religious groups, there is a danger that we will also become subject to the same process, although we will offer different reasons. We should always keep in mind that we owe everything we have to the Blessed Mother. I think you will now understand this after all that we have discussed together. If we allow the root to dry out, the root that has bit by bit given us this desire to centre on God the Father, we can expect that very soon this concentration on the Father will lead to isolation. So I repeat what is actually a significant expression: Concentration at the cost of isolation - here we mean isolation from the Blessed Mother, ultimately at the cost of isolation from secondary causes - will mean annihilation in the very near future.

[General advice - always see religious truths holistically]

If you would now like to spend some time examining the Credo in Heavenwards, you will find that we have here a compendium of the entire supernatural world and reality. You will naturally also realise that we are dealing here not just with our sharing in the divine nature, as such, but also with our sharing in the life of our Lord. It places into the foreground our membership in Christ and the way we are elevated to a higher level of being through sharing in the divine nature. I should constantly reflect on and consider that because people today are so dependent on their senses, because they are so rationalistic, because their mind-set is so natural³⁵, their access to the supernatural world, the world beyond the natural world, will be very difficult.

[A psychological way to God - the experience that we are limited beings]

³⁵ Naturhaft-natuerlich - so far I have found no way of translating this concept. Naturhaft refers to a level below the natural, prior to the natural, out of which the natural develops, as it were.

Seen from a purely psychological point of view, one of the best ways of breaking naturalism and rationalism is the breakdown of our nature. When we break down ethically, we soon stop trying to be ethical athletes. That is actually the most valuable way, the most valuable bridge, along which all of us have to pass sooner or later in order to encounter the God of life. However, we may not overlook that because we take our bearings in everything from ultimate principles, we must also sooner or later become aware of the fact that we have been elevated to a supernatural state, we have been lifted onto a higher level of being. Unless the light of faith penetrates through the outward shell, all the psychological means will not mean much to us in the long run.

People today are on the way to experiencing the animality of their nature very strongly. So there is great danger that they will forget their character as children of God, and hence that they live on a higher level of being. They are children of God in all its fullness, with all the greatness depicted by Scholasticism.

[The Holy Spirit is at work in every epoch of history]

We may not want to bury or hide the findings and fruits of Scholasticism in a cloth, because we are convinced that the Holy Spirit was at work not just in the early Church, he has also been at work in the past history of the Church. We may not throw away the fruits of the Holy Spirit - fruits in the wider sense. We hold onto everything the Holy Spirit has given us in the course of the centuries. We only try to work with changes of emphasis in order to be able to offer an answer, a clear, calming and satisfying answer to all the events of the present era.

Please read for yourselves and meditate on what the text of the Credo has to tell us.

"We believe with great trust and confidence whatever Eternal Wisdom tells us:
we willingly submit with our minds and obey with our hearts and actions."

You can see that we are dealing here with *Fides caritate formata*.

"Faith is a sure path shown to us by the Word. Only that person will attain eternal salvation who is given this faith."

Now we are shown the various ways God is present with us.

"O God, we believe that you power brought the world into existence. You preserve and govern it, and lead it wisely to its goal.

You who are enthroned in the heights of heaven, look down warmly on us below. You want to see your Son in us, for he reigns with you on your eternal throne.

We are so poor and weak and naked, you elevate us and make us great as a member of our transfigured Lord, who as our Head draws us to you.

You, God, raise us up to a higher level of being, you enter into the soul, making it your temple, where you are a permanent guest together with the Son and the Holy Spirit."

Consequence:

"Our body and soul is consecrated to the most blessed Trinity."

[The blessed Trinity dwells within us]

We are little churches of the Blessed Trinity. We said this at the start. Without doubt this means two things: the soul, and through the soul also the body, is the dwelling of the Trinity and is consecrated to the Trinity. The Trinity dwells in us in the way we described briefly just now, and we are drawn in a mysterious way into the divine life within the Blessed Trinity. Since we are too little aware of this, since we do not feel it tangibly, it is very difficult to believe in this truth. This is what makes such faith so tremendously great.

[Consequences for our personal way of life]

That is why we have to make such faith easy for our followers by proving through the way we are that we have not just experienced very deeply that we have been elevated to this higher state and that we share in this higher nature, but also that it has become a vital reality and attitude in us. So when everything today cries out: "People should be as naked as possible!", we have to say: Covered. Covered by what? How should we be covered? By the indwelling of the Triune God. As we struggle to work out a lifestyle for our community, we may not overlook that the root and source of our lifestyle is and must always remain the indwelling of the Triune God in our souls, and the vital experience that we are members of Christ. In practice this means three things: Live an elevated life! Live a lowly life! Live an ennobled life!³⁶

[Consequences for our lifestyle as a community of priests engaged in pastoral work with women]

These are things we should not just know and take in with our minds, they must be alive in us in such a way that also outwardly they create a certain style of living. It should find expression in a certain way of dealing with women. We should discuss this among ourselves: What is the effect on our interaction with women as priests, if we acknowledge the divine within ourselves as men, and also acknowledge it in women? Sooner or later it should happen that people say:

³⁶ Father Kentenich used these three imperatives in a Retreat Course in 1933 on the wisdom of the Marian Priest in life (not translated).

Once we have got to know one of the Fathers, we will know in essentials how they all behave. If we know how one of us behaves towards women - since we should also be the soul of the women's Movement - we should know how the others behave in essentials. Of course, there can and must be superficial differences, because each has a different personality and character.

[Challenge to discuss this together]

If you want to study this, examine how Father Bezler led the Girls' Movement, and how his successor does it now. Where can we see differences? Whose way is better? Where are the dangers? How have the dangers been overcome? This does not mean that things were not in order. It is only that when everything is beginning, you have to try things out and feel your way to find out how to do things. What should we dare to do, or not dare to do? If we manage to develop a common lifestyle at a time when all bonds are being destroyed, so that despite all freedom and originality we have a certain common measure - a measure that is always traced back to a natural and supernatural order of being - I think God will have achieved something really great.

"Our body and soul is consecrated to the most Blessed Trinity, who is enthroned in us as he is in heaven, and who dwells in us with his riches.

So we are lifted up above the whole world and placed into the divine world, we are of more value in your eyes than the whole world without us."

Once that has become part of us, imbuing body and soul, it is natural that it automatically gives us a mysterious fundamental attitude to other people.

"The works of every culture are only like a tiny speck of dust when measured against the glory your love has given to us."

How highly we should value ourselves, even if we drag around any number of weaknesses and miseries with us, and become a burden to others! It continues:

"You have given us your Son, who silently hangs on the Cross for us; you send us the Holy Spirit to educate and teach us.

You place an angel at our side, who is ready to protect us, and a most kind Mother, who is lovingly concerned about us.

With great concern you have entrusted us to the Church, the Spouse of your Son, that she may lead us through life and enkindle true love within us.

Your Son mercifully offers himself as a sacrifice for us on the altar; he is there as our friend and our food, he is silently close to us in every situation."

Then towards the end we are told:

"In the shrine of our souls we offer you homage, thanksgiving and praise; we will never leave you alone there, we want to be with you always.

Together with the saints and angel host our hearts centre on the altar; they beat for him whose veiled Presence is there, who still the ardent longing of our love.

We believe that we will be given the glory and redemption of the resurrection, so that one day we will be like the Transfigured Lord, and our body and soul will be beautiful and rich."

I think that in principle this has made us sufficiently aware of what we wanted to emphasise for our purposes.

[In the spiritual life there are always new things for us to conquer]

The Victoria Patris means for us in the first place and directly: the victory of the God of life. Who has been victorious in our lives? The God of life! Who will go on winning the victory? The God of our altars and the God of our hearts! The more we allow ourselves to be introduced to the existence and activity of the God of life, the more open we will be tomorrow and the next day for the God of our hearts and the God of our altars.

As long as we live we will still have the prospect that there are enough new things for us to conquer. God has by far not conquered everything. There is still a great deal that still belongs to us, or to the world. It has all to be conquered one day, so that sooner or later we will be able to say: "May honour be joyfully paid to the Father ..."