

PatEx (1967) in: aspm 8, 258-279
The Father wins the victory over us

Text 17

The Father wins the victory over us

Retreat Course for the Fathers on Mount Sion 1967, thirteenth Conference
(1.12.1967)

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My dear Confreres,

today we again want to consider together Our Lord's invitation: Venite! Come out of the world, out of the earth-bound ['worldly'] world, the Godless world! Come into the world of deep and personal love for the Father, the world of being gripped by love for the Father, the world the victory of the Father!¹ Has God the Father conquered our nature - as individuals and as a community? Victoria Patris! This is the life current of the 'Victoria Patris'.

[1. 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, a proof of our willing 'Yes' to this Divine Guidance.

[The purpose of this talk]

What is the purpose that we are persuing today, at least in this talk and the next? It is to prove that that such Divine Guidance exists. To be more precise: It is to prove the victory of the Father. So let us ask ourselves, where do we try and discover the Father? From which point of view has God the Father, as the ***God of life***, been victorious in our Family? That is the important point. We wanted our lives, the life of our Family, to be completely dependent on the guidance and direction of God the Father. Because we submitted so willingly to the God of life and to his guidance, we have become what we are today.

So let me ask again: Does such guidance exist? Taking into consideration all that we have reflected upon up till now - if we constantly keep in mind the background we have been considering for such a long time - we will again notice ***the***

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law of contrast'. 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; and on the other hand, when we think of ourselves and our Family, we encounter an incomparable experience of God's Guidance.

[We are 'Children of Divine Providence']

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 and every one of us has not personally been a '*Providentia Child*', a child of Providence, to an eminent degree. A '*Providentia Child*' to an eminent degree, that is to say, a person who has been led in a wholly original [unique] and special way by God. Indeed, allow me to repeat the expression again and again, 'subject to God's Guidance'. That is to say, the helmsman has always had the helm firmly in his hand. So nothing happened just by chance. Oh, no! I can feel tangibly how God has steered the wheel. Of course, we have also tried to follow every turn, and all the inner and outer manovers and instructions of the helmsman.

[Following the slightest indications of God in the ship of our lives]

Here is a thought, indeed a favourite thought of mine, that I try to hold on to as clearly, comprehensively and profoundly as possible - a thought that I liked to

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reflect upon down in the prison bunker² and later on. I tell myself repeatedly: if only we could manage to hear and respond to the slightest wish and hint of the

² The Bank vault of the Gestapo prison in Koblenz, where Father Kentenich was kept in

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helmsman each and every time, what a sure and certain course our lives would take!

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

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 or indication 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, grant me at last complete

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conversion!"³ What conversion of heart do we mean? It is not enough to say in very general terms: "Yes, Father, may your will be done again, whether it brings

³ A line from the prayer in "Heavenwards", pg. 143f. „Father, I ask you for every

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me joy, suffering or pain!" Nor is it enough to say: „I know only one longing: Lead me according to your wise plans!"⁴ The essential thing is to educate myself with utmost care in the art of recognizing God the Father's will in every circumstance and situation.

[The contrast between our convictions and the world around us]

Is this not an absolute contrast 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 deny that he carries out this Plan victoriously to the very last detail. They deny that he cares about the very least details of world history, that he personally cares. 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 out for ourselves. Of course, it does explain things to a certain degree, 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 so interested in the individual and the most insignificant details of their lives as though the community did not exist⁵. Of course, the analogy is very limited. Here we see the living God who far, far surpasses all that is purely human. We again touch upon a mystery.

[A saying of Jean-Pierre de Caussade]

Then we hear another saying. It is a saying we have often used in our history, it concerns the "*sacramentality of the present moment*"⁶. 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. At the same time offers me *the grace* that I need to recognize and carry out God's will at every moment.

⁴ Heavenwards, pg.14, recites in the 'Morning Consecration':

„May what you have foreseen for us
Be realized in every moment of our lives.
We have but a single longing:

⁵ "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" ⁶ This

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[Faith in Divine Providence is our way of understanding 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 has a second place in our way of thinking and doing. Oh, no! It is simply the central, indeed 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*"⁷. 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.

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.

[2. Faith in Divine Providence in the Holy Scripture]

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

Let us allow him to teach us various aspects and then look for a total view of his teaching summarised in a few principles.

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When we think of *the Lord's teachings*, we can differentiate between explanations that are purely words and ideas, and those that use pictures and parables.

[2.1 Three words 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.

[2.1.1 The Father 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 I interpret 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 is always involved in every detail of its fulfilment. He guides my life. I think we should impress this saying - "*He guides 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 a theological sense, 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 anyway.

[My life - a 'Divine Comedy']

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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*”⁸. Allow me to say it

¹ ⁸„*Divine Comedy*” is the title that Dante to his main work where he interprets, in a

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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 discover and carry out 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 actor in this 'comedy'? We must always remember and hold onto the position 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 everywhere have shown God the door.

[Necessity and meaning of prayer of petition]

So I do not need to ask then. However, why does he nevertheless require us to ask? Let us hear it from his own words. "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" (Mt 7,7; Lk 11,9). 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 remember him. He wants us to tell him what we expect of him ultimately. After all, he is not merely the main actor, or the universal actor, he also plays a part in every role, even though he is not the only actor. He always wants to be part of the act. He wants us to be 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 actions. What sort of actions? 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]

Then, there are the other teachings of Jesus. They go much further and emphasise far more strongly what his Jewish listeners would have found so strange at that time. He told them that God is not just concerned about the Chosen People. However, his listeners were totally convinced of this - the people of Israel were the only 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, so that 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 briefly going to examine in a moment? The Father is concerned not just about the People of

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Israel as a whole, he is not just concerned with every individual member of the People of Israel, he is also concerned about the most insignificant details 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 slightest detail, which does not have 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 we cannot get enough of God, i.e. that we want even more of his closeness 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.*" He 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 cares about us, about each individual one of us, and about even the slightest detail that affects each one of us. Please presume this always, and then you will immediately understand and be able to interpret the two following teachings our Lord now wants to give us.

[2.1.2 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 listeners. Now listen to his words: „*Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny?*”(Mt 10,29). 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 how people understood and treated birds. If we are not mistaken, it was even more common than it is today. A sparrow is not very important at all. 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? In truth, these are such insignificant, worthless creatures, that 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?*"(Mt 6,30; Lk 12,28).

[Every hair on your head ...]

"*Every hair on you head has been counted!*" (Mt 10,30). What does that mean? God must be a brilliant mathematician. He can count every individual little hair on my head. The Biblr scholars interpret the saying in this way. "Every hair on

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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 cares 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 in the signs of the times]

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 need only understand the art of discovering God's will from them.

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So don't sleep, don't dream, don't constantly look downwards. „Sursum corda!”⁹
Always ask: What do you want of me, my God?

⁹ „Lift up your hearts!” - See the introductory acclamations to the Preface at Holy

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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 possible to learn it to a certain degree. But 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.

[2.1.3 The birds of the air and the lilies in the field]

A final teaching of Jesus Christ 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 for (Mt 6,25-33; Lk 12,22-31). 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 the picture of the birds]

We need to remember once again what the spiritual sensitivity of Jesus' listeners was. They had never had such an insight into God's plans. Please remember that as far as they were concerned, the whole 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. However, there are other aspects. The birds do not have to worry about anything. Yet, look at how often God does not seem to 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.

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[2.2 Jesus teaches us God's fatherly care in parables]

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 and parables* to deepen and drive home what he has said. What pictures did he use? I shall only mention one or the other. For example:

The picture of the lost coin;
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 individuals. So what did he want to impress on his listeners? God's interest in each individual human being. We are not some kind of coincidental item!

[Today's background 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 made dependent on *our technical and collectivistic world*. People have been robbed of their freedom, they have lost their ability to think for themselves. 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 an 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 person that plays God, and the society that plays God should take over, that is, the "human-god" who has created everything, who has created a new human society and a new world in his own image.

[2.2.1 The parable of the lost coin]

Please try to interpret the pictures in this or a similar way. Let us think, for example, of *the parable of the lost coin* (Lk 15,8-10). Even if we are not financial geniuses, we can all understand what it means if a coin is lost. Now

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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 willing to sacrifice]

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" (John 15,13). All of us have this longing. We need someone who does not just give us a hug. We need someone whom we know not only carries us in his heart, but 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 appearing on 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

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planned. "Utamur haereticis, ut contra eorum errores veram doctrinam catholicam asserentes tutiores fiamus."¹⁰

¹⁰ "Make use of the heretics, in order to discover the true Catholic doctrine through

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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 life-current 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.

[2.2.2 The parable of the Prodigal Son]

[2.2.3 The parable 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* (Lk 15,3-7). I should leave 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 an important 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 life-current 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.

2.3 Resuming in an axiom: Do no worry anxiously!

[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 anxiously!“ (Mt 6,25). 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 anxiously!"

[God as the ‘main actor’ and ‘helmsman’ of our lives]

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 - he does not worry anxiously. 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 should care - but never worry! 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 care - but never anxiously!

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." What are we dealing with 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 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 in this instance: Do not worry anxiously!

[Sharing in care 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 care? 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,

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and because we are made in God's image and likeness, we are also drawn into his care for all his creatures.

[Reasons why we should not worry anxiously]

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

[First reason: The passing nature of this 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 anxiously!" All these things referred to will be eaten away by the moths tomorrow. So, why should our hearts be dependent on them?

Now allow me to ask you to do something. I imagine that you are listening to a modern priest preaching from the pulpit. He would be quite unable to say anything like this. How would he put it? "That is simply false!" What would he say? "You have got to care about the world, because the world is not going to be destroyed. One thing or the other 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 have all your comforts in the world! Even if it all disappears for you tomorrow or the day after, ultimately the world needs to be transformed. The great task placed before the Church today is to see to it that the world will be transformed, that it will be transformed as perfect as possible, at the end of time. God will care for everything else and he will look after you."

Can you understand the change of perspective? If we were to preach about this topic today, or we had to preach about it, how would we present 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 that time I gave four imperatives: Out of the world! Into the grave! Then into eternity! Either an eternally blissful or an eternally miserable Eternity! Could I still preach like this today? Without any doubt! However, where would I now have to change the emphasis? Otherwise we are not going to be able to understand each other any more. Let us simply accept the emphasis 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* - that is, as far as we are concerned.

Now comes the theory of evolution. Naturally, at the same time 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?

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When the historian considers how everything has developed up to now, he faces the same danger as the adherents of the theory of evolution: i.e. 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 take these things into consideration. We have to place the emphasis correctly, we have to ensure, with a few words, that the context remains true.

Therefore, as we have already stated: Why should we not worry anxiously? The selfish side of ourselves is being addressed here. What we need for life should be satisfied. Because one day things will cease to exist as far as you are concerned

[Second reason: the capacity of human love is limited]

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” (Mt 6,24). 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 most important thing about love? 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.

[Third reason: We should not forget the caring God]

Now comes the third and 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 desire that human society, which he loves so infinitely and for which Our Lord Jesus Christ gave his life, should love him in return.

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.

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[In our helplessness - heroic trust]

If you take what I have touched upon briefly very seriously, then it will mean for us in practice the following: 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 wider 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.

[A saying of Juan Donoso Cortes]

In this regard, please recall what we have emphasised so often, for example, when quoting a saying of **Juan Donoso Cortes**¹¹. He asked why God allowed his Church to fall into such times of need? What is his intention? The Church should become aware that God is the Lord of the Church, the Ruler 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, give a trumpet blast and every enemy will collapse.

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

We are all only little, tiny instruments. At present an idea is doing the rounds in our Family. People are talking about a 'donkey-community'¹². 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 most important 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 wants to ride. Only God does something like that. Who should ride on the back of this donkey? Who should lead our Family? Who wants to lead us? That is and remains only God,

¹ ¹² There is a background story behind this surprising expression. One of the leading Schoenstatt diocesan priests chose a biblical scene to express his attitude as instrument in God's hand. He wanted to do his pastoral work like the 'donkey' who carried Mary and the Child Jesus to Egypt. According to this picture the important persons are Jesus and Mary; but he considered himself in his pastoral service as the humble 'donkey' that is willing to carry the burden. - One of the Fathers had given Fr.Kentenich the small figure of a donkey to be placed on his desk.¹³ Ps 31,1: „In you, O Lord, I put my trust,

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the one who plays all the parts, the main actor, the universal helmsman, the main helmsman. "In te, Domine, speravi, non confundar in aeternum."¹³

¹³ Ps 31,1: „In you, O Lord, I put my trust, never let me be confounded.” This verse is quoted in the solemn hymn of thanksgiving ‘Te Deum’, which the Church recites on

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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 achieved great things in us and through us, although we are so small and helpless. "He who is mighty has done great things for us, holy is his name."(Lk 1,49).

Questions to cheque the understanding and to reflect further

1. What were your spontaneous impressions when you were reading this talk of Fr.Kentenich? What drew your attention? What did you like? What was strange for you?
2. In his talk for the Schoenstatt Fathers Fr.Kentenich uses quite a few concepts and expression which may need a proper understanding:
 - the God of life,
 - Providentia Child,
 - Life-current,
 - Faith in-formed by love,
 - my life - a 'Divine Comedy' (Dante).
3. John XXIII. was the Pope who called for the Second Vatican Council. Fr. Kentenich relies on him in order to express his conviction, that the interpretation of the Bible and the understanding of the signs of the times are interrelated. How to explain this interrelation?
4. What is meant by the „law of opposition” [law of contrast, law of contraposition] and what are its pastoral implications?
5. Life is marked by joys and worries. They belong to each one's life history. In the way people deal with their worries they get strengthened, they may get overburdened or fall even sick. Observe life and give examples from your own experience. What is the proposal of Fr.Kentenich?