

Excerpts from *Seelenführerkurs 1928 über das Sexualproblem*

August 26-31, 1928

in: H. Hug (Hg.), *Das Katholische Eheideal* (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1989), p. 60-127

First (Introductory) Conference

{61} 1. What does it mean: *to see and consider our pastoral children (Seelsorgskinder) with Marian eyes* ? Marian, supernatural eyes as opposed to natural eyes. Marian eyes are eyes with which Mary looked at her Child. She saw in him the Child of God (first) as the object of her education and (second) as the aim of her self-education. Here you have two partial thoughts which are so practical for us. We, too, must see our pastoral children as the object of our education, but also see in them the aim of our [self-]education.

That seems to be a contradiction. But if we penetrate more deeply, a new world will appear to us. Therefore, what is the object of our education or pastoral activity? It is the child of God. With these words I have actually sufficiently answered the question at hand. But because we are of the world, where we have suffered to some extent from the world's dust, I will probably be doing you a service if I take some time to fill the word *child of God* with meaning. (...)

{66} 2. I announced a second thought, too. We not only want to see the child with Marian eyes, but to also *love the child with a Marian heart* . Here I could construct an entire pedagogy. But the one or the

other point will have to suffice. What does a Marian heart look like? Mary's heart was a humble heart, a kind heart, and a strong heart.

a. It is a *humble* heart. If you want to work this through, ask yourself each time: Did Mary's heart really look like this? And: What should my heart look like? What should a humble heart look like for me? We know Mary's personal ideal: "*Ecce ancilla Domini* – Behold the handmaid of the Lord" (Lk 1,38). Mary considered herself an instrument, a handmaid of God. Expressed philosophically, we would have to say that she was always aware that she was a secondary cause. If we are truly humble as pastors of souls, I will be aware that it is God who is ultimately the great Educator and that I only provide him a certain assistance, and I will always remain in ontological contact with the Primary Cause. I will remain an instrument. A humble educator-heart is always aware that he is only an instrument. This word contains an entire spirituality. Whether I meet with success or failure I will remain inwardly calm and collected. It will urge me to use means which promise success according to the standards of the ontological order of being. The science of education reminds us here of the importance of Marian devotion: Lead the children to Mary!

b. A Marian heart is a *kind* heart. Was Mary's heart kind? Of course! After all, we touch here on the greatness of the mother principle which God has built into his order of salvation. What a world of values! With it everything is simpler, swifter, more certain. Must the heart of an educator also be kind? We don't want to confuse kindness with softness. But true kindness seems to be a powerful force in education. Even discipline must ultimately flow from kindness. It seems to me that kindness must be especially stressed since people today {67} have too little opportunity, or none at all, to just be children. As a result they lack a natural starting point for the supernatural world. It is said that difficulties of faith are less in the mind and more in the heart. Put in

practical terms: Many can no longer love God as Father because they never loved a natural father. If we would see it our task to be able to show to our own a reflection of the kindness of God the Father, then it would be easy for them to address the heavenly Father as “Father” and to find their way to a childlike relationship with him. I stress once more: Kindness is not the same as softness. Kindness! Look at the Good Shepherd, at the Blessed Mother, how do they take care at the wedding feast in Cana! We ought to become shepherds who show fatherly concern for our people.

Allow me to add a second thought. One often complains at how wild and rebellious modern young people have become. They bear a portion of the guilt, to be sure, but we must not forget that parents must earn the childlike love of their children. Thomas discussed the sources from which filial love flows. Is it birth? Not solely, for it only gives one the inclination [to filial love]. The actual love must be earned by the parents. They must give their children the sunshine of kindness. The same applies to us priests. Nowadays we cannot just insist on claims of authority. If we want to be respected and revered, we must earn it at the cost of great sacrifices and total surrender to those entrusted to our care.

c. Finally, the third point: a Marian heart is a *strong* heart. Think of how strong Mary is at the foot of the cross. Must our heart be this strong too? How necessary it is for us, since we are dealt so many failures. Unless we are strong and anchored in God we will too easily throw in the towel and not muster the courage to sacrifice ourselves for our vocation.

These are a few thoughts which can prepare the soil of our soul a little. We experience so many failures, but we cannot lose faith. We have such need of this great spirit of faith so that we do not become pessimists. The task I have been given is to help the child of God to

grow to maturity in those God has entrusted to me. For, “Unless you become like children, you cannot enter the kingdom of God.”

Seventh Conference

2. The purpose of the sex drive

{111} Now that we have recognized the protective wall around the sex drive, I must tell you something about the sex drive itself. The purpose of the sex drive, both when I abstain and when I use it, is the *bonum prolis* [the well-being of the child]. The whole sex drive can only have meaning as a reproductive drive in connection with the *bonum prolis* .

You must keep this thought clearly in mind. This is perhaps what is novel about this insight. In everything concerning the sex drive, in all the laws of the procreation of the coming generation, we see shining forth the wisdom, kindness and mercy of the Heavenly Father.

Eighth Conference

[I. The law of procreation [1](#):

Children come into the world through the sexual union of man and woman.]

{115} II. The laws established around procreation. These are the *laws that protect procreation* , namely

1. *marriage* and
2. *the sixth and ninth commandments* .

In order to properly grasp sex and reproduction in the light of faith, one must bear two things in mind: First, {116} our constant source of strength (*Kraftquelle*), whether one is celibate or makes lawful use of one's sexual power, must always be our tender love for the God-man.

Secondly, the purpose of the sex drive. I spoke about this source of strength yesterday. My main concern both yesterday and today is to clarify what purpose the sex drive has. And the purpose of the laws governing procreation is the well-being of the child, or, more generally speaking, is the wisdom, goodness and mercy of the Heavenly Father toward the child.

Yesterday we applied this standard to the law of human procreation. This law is protected by two other laws:

the first is called marriage,

which is itself protected by the sixth and ninth commandments.

You can conclude from this multiple protection how great the Heavenly Father's concern is for the well-being of the child!

[II-1] Let us take a look at the first law that protects procreation: *marriage* . It is difficult to say much more on this point. But I want to try to extend yesterday's train of thought and show how this protective law reveals the Heavenly Father's love, wisdom and kindness. Yesterday we said that the law of procreation is this: The child comes into the world through the sexual union of man and woman. Today, when we speak about the laws protecting this reality, we must add: **The child comes into the world through the *marital* union of husband and wife** . The child must only come to earth in the context of God-willed marriage. This is natural law. It is therefore binding not only for

Christians, but also for pagans, because it is part of the reality of creation. Looking more closely at marriage as a protective law, three thoughts would need to be considered:

marriage as a covenant of love,

marriage as a covenant of love,

marriage as a covenant of fates. (...)

Ninth Conference

{122} We have gotten to know [I] the law of procreation and [II-1] the law [of marriage] that protects it, both in a supernatural light. But so great is God's concern for the coming generation that this is not enough for him. He erects a fence even around this protective law. Hence, there is a protective law which protects the protective law protecting the law of human procreation.

[II-2] *The sixth and ninth commandment*

In the end, every commandment was established for the well-being of man. It would make a worthwhile study to look into how God ultimately gave all the commandments out of love for man. "If you do this, you will prosper like your ancestors before you" (cf Dt 8,1; 30,15-20). This is true of all his laws. God desires the well-being of man. The first three commandments were given by God to bind us to himself. In the other commandments (less the sixth and ninth) he exerts his concern for our fellow men who already exist. He gave two further commandments. Their concern is the coming generation. The sixth and ninth commandments want to protect the law of procreation.

Indeed, the matter is so grave that this protective law must bind under pain of mortal sin. In the end the issue is not the existence of the coming generation but their essence (*So-sein*). But this is extremely important. After all, we are {123} dealing with the creation of beings which have practically infinite value in God's eyes. For everything which God has done in his Providence revolves around the well-being of man. The God-man died and the Trinity uses its power so that man can become the children of God and praise and glorify him in eternity. When something of practically infinite value is at stake, then the law which safeguards these beings must bind under pain of mortal sin. You can see that confirmed in the letters from the apostles.

We want to discuss two thoughts. We want to learn to gain a moral and cultural appreciation for the sixth and ninth commandments.

1. Moral Implications

I don't know if there is much point in discussing this, since you deal with these things daily in the confessional. On the other hand, the theology of the sixth commandment is [too often] left to personal study. We understand words, but fail to see how it fits into the bigger picture. This causes great uncertainty in how we deal with ourselves and others. Hence, let us first take a look at the moral implications.

Let me introduce two axioms:

- 1) Any voluntary unchaste act is always a serious sin.
- 2) Not every voluntary immodest act is a serious sin.

[Axiom 1] We therefore speak not only of sinful actions, but also of [lust in the heart] – meaning that it is also a grave sin when I desire it with full will and purpose, or when I delight in a transgression. In the sixth commandment there is no parvity of matter ². But here we must be extremely careful. Many educated people have suffered sexual distress because they were not taught clear concepts. To say that there are no venial sins in the area of the sixth commandment is also incorrect! As long as we are seriously striving [for sanctity] we can assume that all our sins are venial ³. *Ratione materiae* [with regard to the matter] there is no parvity, but *ratione actus* [with regard to circumstances] [the matter may be mitigated].

Let us consider this commandment in more detail. “Any voluntary unchaste act is always a serious sin.” This means, first of all, any voluntary squandering of the sexual powers outside of marriage. This can happen through adultery, fornication and masturbation. Secondly, any voluntary sexual pleasure outside the God-willed context of marriage [is a grave sin].

{124} Why is any voluntary sexual pleasure outside of marriage a grave sin? This pleasure outside the God-willed context is also called wrongful pleasure or lust. One could compare it to the abuse of the pleasure we derive from eating. But there is an essential difference. In the latter we are dealing with the self-preservation drive, but in the former with the reproductive drive. It is not a great catastrophe if one oversteps drive for self-preservation here and there. But if one plays around with the reproductive drive, then the common good is in danger, not just my private good. *Bonum communi praevallet bono privato* ⁴.

Let us examine this more closely! I speak of sexual pleasure. St. Augustine defines sexual pleasure as the pleasure one feels when the genitals are aroused. Sexual pleasure is therefore not the pleasant sensation I may feel when I stretch, or when I scratch an itch.

Secondly, I maintain that *any* voluntary sexual pleasure *outside of the way permitted in marriage* is grave sin. Even in marriage one cannot enjoy every sexual pleasure in every imaginable way. Forbidden even in marriage are fornication, adultery and [practice of] sexual pleasure that makes impossible the conception of a child. Thirdly, everything which occurs as a result of *lust*, even if it is not sexual, is always a grave sin if the intention is to arouse sexual pleasure in me and others, for instance, through the way I dress...

[Axiom 2] The second law: Not every voluntary immodest act is a serious sin, but generally only a venial sin.

2. Cultural Implications

The *cultural* significance [of the sixth and ninth commandments]: If we had time, I would have to show you the horrendous shipwreck of the sex drive. But we already know that day after day from the confessional. Read what our bishops wrote about this in 1923. The shipwreck is visible all around us. There is hardly any other sin which has such devastating consequences as sins against chastity. Why is that?

We have already heard the answer. Because we are dealing here with things of the highest social value. Imagine a big house. I can remove all the parts I want. But if I remove the supporting columns, it will collapse. God's commandments are constructed in a similar way. The sixth and ninth commandments are the supporting pillars, for they deal with things of the utmost social importance... In our mind's eye we must see the scourged and suffering Savior. This is what broken chastity has done.

Sins against chastity are also the universal source of unhappiness of society. They affect things of utmost social importance. Do we hold

marriage in such high esteem? If I marry only to make myself happy, do I have the right understanding of marriage? Selfishness is at its root. Every act within marriage which is directed by selfishness is a failing against the purpose of marriage and the sixth commandment. The purpose [of marriage] is directed to the well-being of the whole human race. If we want to save modern society, then we must recognize and stand up to this error. Has the purpose of chastity been correctly grasped by those who strive for purity only for fear of punishment, or for the sake of purity as something beautiful? Of course, [fear and beauty] are effective motives, but they do not correspond to the purpose of the sex drive. {126} Here everything is ordered to the well-being of the coming generation. The sixth and ninth commandments want to be viewed as the fountain from which the coming young life is fed. This is why every failing against the sixth commandment is a drop of poison in the well of life of the coming human race. We have totally lost track of this thought [in society today].

Even when committed in total privacy, sins against chastity not only poison the well of life of the coming generation because they have an incredible drive to repeat themselves or because every sin tends to breed new sin. No, if we think supernaturally, we find that all of us are part of the great mystical body of Christ. If one member suffers, all suffer. Hence, if I am not pure, this is a disadvantage to the whole body of Christ. Nor is this only through my bad example, but because the stream of grace now misses an unhealthy member. We would really have to stress that much more, including for ourselves. The sex drive is in the service of the coming generation; this is why I should remain pure. But not only for that reason. Take a look at the sixth and ninth commandments. The commandments are meant to be motivated by love of the coming generation, love of God and love of neighbor. We must see to it that the next generation turns out to be naturally and

supernaturally healthy. It must be our task to contribute to the building up of the body of Christ! The body of Christ must be built up again, better and more perfect than we see it now. Does this not resonate in the words of Christ, “Let the children come to me!” (Mt 19,14)? Is this not an invitation to parents to bring children into the world so that the kingdom of God can be made whole? Before us is the kingdom of Christ and the coming generation. Hence, I live a pure life so that the body of Christ is immaculate, without wrinkles, here and in eternity.

I think that if this perspective would make headway in us and in our people, it could help transform and improve general morals. But we would have to begin at an early age. To educate children in unselfishness is already sexual education. To point out to them the missions, the diaspora or the children in poverty. This education would need to be consciously followed up in the parish organizations. Perhaps you have already experienced how the one or the other young man suddenly finds his purity when he is reminded of the future [and to prepare himself for] marriage. In such a case {127} the purpose of the sex drive has been grasped: You must remain pure for the sake of marriage. If we could awaken more interest in the male world for the entire work of Christ, what a strength we would be setting in motion!

What I admire in the general director of the Catholic youth is how he systematically directs all his thoughts in this direction. In fact, I think we really need to be more idea-oriented today. This is how I would capture the greatness of the Holy Father [Pius XI] – that he frees the ideas from their former [outdated] context and gives them new reason to be discussed by the Catholic faithful.

As a result, we must put the accent more on final principles, discussing them and waiting for the ideas to shape new life. This is how we must do it with our youth. I then think our young men will remain pure and not dabble [in nonsense]. To the extent I know the modern

situation, I think that this is even more necessary because the work of young men today is very narrow, and they can no longer engage their creativity. A man who is not able to engage his creativity is at risk of becoming a slave of his passions. Then one must seek an alternate form of creativity and put it at the service of family. In other words: to work and earn money to give my future family a good head-start. These ideas need to be brought to our people so that they see the big picture.

What is true of the young man must also be said of the young woman. It is good, especially when they discover that they are bearing a child beneath their heart, to remind them that they must keep their thoughts pure to keep from passing on anything undesirable to the child. Then the young mother will be motivated to make better use of her influence on the coming generation.

You will find everything in most beautiful form in the Holy Family: the purpose of childbearing, the glory of God, the relationship between husband and wife. A family spirit must be as it was in the family of Jesus.

FOOTNOTES

[1:](#)

The outline at this point in the workshop was prepared in the Seventh Conference. The German word being used for the concept of procreation here is *Werdegesezte* .

[2:](#)

A classical norm of moral theology. When it comes to sexual sins the objective matter is always grave (“parvity” means smallness or triviality).

3:

Another classical axiom. If one is striving to lead a life of total union with God, one can ordinarily assume that one's sins are venial. Of course, such a one is still capable of mortal sin and must be vigilant, but generally the abhorrence of sin and love of God will keep one away from such complete abandonment of God.

4:

An principle of moral theology: "The common good has precedence over the private good."