

# Texts by Fr. Kentenich on Divine Providence for the Propaedeuticum of the Schoenstatt Fathers

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## 1. The Concept of History

Letter to Fr. Franz Bezler, 1962

The central problem dividing the world in two today is the meaning of world events. The problem has two views: a natural-historical and a salvation-historical one. Of course, practically speaking, the two views frequently overlap a great deal.

I have made such thoughts the foundation of my pastoral work with the Germans here [in Milwaukee]. You see, they are scattered all over [the city]. They lack their own church and their own parish. This left no other way [than] to take the time-honored Catholic concept of history and make it come alive for the German Catholics that gather from so many different parishes, impressing it indelibly on their minds and hearts.

What does this concept look like? It joins the Augustinian-Platonic view with that of the Eastern Fathers.

In his *City of God*, St. Augustine especially stresses the opposition between the *Civitas Dei* [City of God] and the *Civitas Diaboli* [City of the Devil]. He sees world history quite strongly from the vantage point of the threat to the City of God by the City of the Devil. In principle such a view is entirely biblical and doubtlessly corresponds to historical facts. But if the Devil's power is stressed too much, it tends to put its adherents on the defensive, arousing a paralyzing pessimism and causing one to withdraw to the island of the Church as it is, with the feel of being just a little flock.

In contrast, the Eastern Fathers' concept of history spans the whole globe, that is, not just the Christian and Catholic peoples, but even the pagans of all nations and cultures. According to this view, world history as salvation history is a constant process in which the whole world matures into the full stature of Christ (cf Eph 4,13). Those imbued by such an attitude will constantly take up the offensive. A natural optimism will carry them and they will find an interior affinity not only with Christians and Catholics, but with all persons and nations in whom the *anima naturaliter christiana* [the inherently Christian part of the human soul, see Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 17] is at work.

The atomic age, with its decidedly pluralistic view of society and its way of completely demolishing the protective walls between the nations, is apparently being forced by the modern situation of the times – with God doubtlessly behind it – to at least adapt to the attitude of the Greek Fathers. (...)

From the beginning we have fused the two views into one organic unity. Hence, in the early years of the family we were already inspired to seek the Marian transformation of the whole world in Christ. At the same time we took all due precautions against the Prince of this World. Precisely because

Our Lady, in the plan of God outlined for us by Sacred Scripture, is simply *the* one who crushes the serpent – and because she has received, in holy and inseparable two-in-oneness with the Redeemer of the World, the mission to destroy the works of the Devil and to lead mankind to the Father – she has assumed the prominent place she is known to have in our spirituality, more precisely: in the structure and history of our family. Mary has always been for us not only the official cooperator with the Redeemer of the World, but also the official adversary of the Prince of this World, and both as a conscious service to the glorification of the Father.

The interior connection between both concepts of history can be spoken of as the wellspring and cause for the irrepressible dynamic which has carried the family from its beginning and which gave it the strength to assert itself in the face of all forms of resistance. (...)

With that I have characterized the background of my pastoral approach here. The whole ideal with all its parts lives in me at all times. But practically speaking I always take one particular element for the public, be it in a sermon or in personal counseling inside and outside the confessional, while the other elements have their impact in a hidden way, being touched on indirectly. My normal starting point is a political or social or personal event; from there I ascend to what God intends in his providence. Not infrequently, natural-historical perspectives of current events, such as those found in the Bolshevist world also offer fruitful starting points. In this way one gains and keeps the attention of those one addresses, shedding light in a practical way on how world events and the happenings of one's own life can be seen and mastered in the light of God's plan. (...)

Of course, the final word has not yet been spoken about the method. The main thing is whether and to what extent one realizes God's intentions. Success or failure should not be the cause of any gray hairs. Sooner or later the success must come.

## 2. Mary

Letter to Fr. Turowski, December 8, 1952

Challenges to Faith in Divine Providence

Mary and Other Biblical Figures

[Why Faith in Divine Providence is Important]

What Sacred Scripture, the Fathers and doctors of the Church, theologians and saints say in general about the basic importance of faith for Christian life applies not only to any concrete faith in Divine Providence, but especially to [the need for such a faith] today...

The reason for this is evident. Faith in Divine Providence is put in strong danger when the way God governs the world exposes us to incomprehensible reality after incomprehensible reality. In consequence, this is an area in which one's faith must especially prove itself in hard testing.

In fact, a living faith in Divine Providence is not only an expression, but also a way to bring life and vitality to the entire supernatural organism. It is therefore no surprise that all great Christian leaders of nations were heroes of faith in Divine Providence and had to withstand the hardest tests of faith precisely in this area.

[Examples of true Faith in Divine Providence]

This is especially true – to name at least two examples – of Abraham, Paul's "father [of faith]" (cf Rom 4,18), and of the Blessed Mother, whom Alphonsus Ligouri calls the Mother of Faith. Both stand out for their high degree of faith in Divine Providence, a faith that proved itself in difficult tests.

The bliss which Sacred Scripture ascribes to faith in general is declared of Mary, *Mater credentium* [Mother of all who believe]...

Hence, the Holy Spirit says through Elizabeth: "Blessed are you because you have believed" (Lk 1, 45).

While Jacob turned his eyes to the past in order to savor the kindness of God shown through his merciful actions and dispensations, Abraham's spirit and heart focuses primarily on what is to come, on the future. As the bearer of the great promises of the chosen people, he held fast in every circumstance, even the most desperate, believing without wavering or doubt that his descendants would be as numerous as the sand on the shore; that the Promised Land flowing with milk and honey would be theirs; and that the Redeemer shall come from them. This faith was unshaken when God

told him to leave his home and wander in foreign lands, even when God's dispensations seemed to make lies of the threefold promise. He lived so strongly in the world of divine values and was so firmly rooted in the soil of the supernatural that he was prepared to raise the knife against his son when asked by God, even if this must mean, humanly speaking, the end of all hope that the promise can be fulfilled. For him it is self-understood that God's ways are not our ways (cf Is 55,8) and that human speculation must yield to the incomprehensibility of God's plans.

[...Quote from John Henry Newman]

Ever since, everyone who, like Abraham, is called to be a father or mother of many nations, seems called into this hard school of faith in Divine Providence. That ought to give calm and consolation to many of our own [Schoenstatt] people.

[Mary: tension between promise and fulfillment]

This was also true of our dear Blessed Mother. The interior prophetic light must have been extraordinarily strong and bright in her, and so she could not avoid hard, even hardest tests of faith, especially of her faith in God's Providence. The contradictions between promise and fulfillment grew during her life. But this did not cause her to lose her faith. On the contrary, her faith grew to perfection, and with it her entire supernatural life. She was promised that her Son would sit on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom would be without end. And the reality? The child was born in a stable. He had to flee from Herod. After his return from exile he was hidden and unknown, like a violet under a hedge, living for three decades as the son of a simple worker in an insignificant corner of the world and in an insignificant house without extraordinary signs or wonders...

This is how the promise and fulfillment looked [in her life]. But Mary's faith in his divinity and mission did not waver. The wedding at Cana showed that, despite the endlessly long and deep obscurity, her faith was unshakable. She had not yet seen her Son work a miracle. John explicitly points this out to us, stressing that the miracle at the wedding was the first one he worked (John 2,11). He worked it at the request of his Mother, who, in spite of 30 years of obscurity, was convinced of his divine power and that his word could change the water into wine.

The hardest trial by fire for her faith was at the foot of the cross. The One to whom the throne of power was promised, fell victim to the intrigues of his enemies, hung on the ignominious gibbet of the cross and died a criminal. Heaven and earth were shaken. But Mary stood upright, not only in body, but also in and through her faith.

St. Bernard stresses:

“In Mary alone did the faith of the Church endure during those three days. All others doubted; but she, through the faith she had received, always remained firm in her faith.”

She accepted the plans of God in silence and strength, even when enveloped by darkness. She thus

proved the truth of her words at the hour of the annunciation: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done to me according to your word" (Lk 1,38).

The word of the Lord said that he would rise again on the third day. This she believed. Even when everything else seemed to speak against it. As a result, she did not go with the women who hastened out before dawn on Easter morning to anoint the body of the Lord. *Stabat* [she stood]! She always stood, faithful to him, to his word and to his mission. This is the image of the Mother of all who believe!

This stands in stark contrast to modern man to whom the admonishment of Our Lord must be directed over and over again: O you of foolish hearts and slow to believe! The majority of Christians today are not ready to face the testing of their faith in Divine Providence.

### 3. Individual Divine Providence

Letter to Fr. Turowski, December 8, 1952

[The three dimensions of Divine Providence]

Faith shows us that God the Father cares for the government of the world in three ways:

- (a) In his fatherly-divine providing and protection for the entire world of creation and man,
- (b) in his personal interest for each individual person and
- (c) in his most special attention to specially chosen persons and communities.

In the first case one speaks of *providentia divina generalis* (general Divine Providence),

in the second case of *providentia divina specialis* (special or individual Divine Providence),

in the third case of *providentia specialissima* (a most special and extraordinary Divine Providence).

[Faith in individual Providence is difficult]

Because God lives in inaccessible light and is beyond the comprehension of our senses; because he, in his being and actions as he governs the world and guides each individual life, is incomprehensible; and because man in his natural way of looking at things is unable to grasp the values and measures of God, especially when it comes to cross and suffering, it has always been difficult for man to believe in *providentia divina specialis*, in special and individual faith in Divine Providence.

If we look more closely, we find that even most good Christians normally never get farther than faith in general Divine Providence, especially when life sends great hardships. The result is that they are unable to master life or, at the very least, are unable to transform it into a true masterpiece...

Is it not the same for many today in our own ranks, in spite of our meticulous education in faith in Divine Providence, in spite of Schoenstatt's oft proclaimed and listened-to message of the same name, and in spite of the charism which the Family believes it has received in this regard?

We must not let ourselves be deceived by the mere sound of words. How often do we hear from Christian lips in times of cross and suffering the words "faith" and "trust"? How often do we not say ourselves: "God is Father, God is good, everything he does is good..." or "Nothing is mere coincidence, everything comes from God's providence!" and so many other sayings and prayers of this kind? They give the appearance of expressing a living personal faith in God's individual, special providence, that I believe that God knows me and my personal helplessness personally, that I believe in his personal interest in me as a person, but in many cases this is not true, because for all intents and purposes we see God too onesidedly as an idea, as a great mysterious "It," perhaps kindly and benevolent, but not (or at least not enough) as a living and vibrant personal You, in a way analogous to how I would discourse with any human being. We may theoretically know that he calls us "by

name,” by first name and last name, but it does not sink into who we really are. In prayer and (even more so) in everyday life we gaze into a vacuum, not into the eye of a personal God who directs his personal affection toward us in our talents and limitations.

[Quote from Cardinal Newman]

Because this is so, they [the faithful] offer too little resistance to evil, have too little vigor in doing good and lack drive in pursuing high goals and heroism.

As children they may have learned to pray: “God’s eye sees all, even in the dark of night.” Perhaps this thought left a mark back then, as it did on Hagar when she fled into the desert and met the angel who sent her back; in response she cried out, quaking: “You are the God who sees!” (Gen 16,13). He may have preserved them from many evils back then. But today they must admit, “I hear the message but lack the faith; I am not convinced of – nor does it permeate me – the truth that God watches over my personal life in an individual, special way. Hence God and the thought of him have lost their influence on my actions and omissions. He no longer defends from evil; he no longer gives consolation in darkness and distress, anxiety and danger.

[Quote from Cardinal Newman]

[The principle which guided the lives of the saints]

The lives of the saints show that each without exception first began to total open up to the good and to pursue the path to the summit of perfection when their faith in the *providentia divina specialis* took deep root in their souls and lives, that is, when they personally experienced how they were accepted by the personal Father-God and knew, believed and felt that they were cherished and treated as the personal apple of his eye; when they could join with St. Paul in saying with true and vibrant conviction: “He loved me and gave up his life for me” (Gal 2,20) and could pray with Ignatius in every situation of the way of the cross: “All this he has done for my sake.” Every Saint without exception was therefore a child of Providence *par excellence*.

This gives just one more proof of how important it is for the education of every age to teach practical faith in Divine Providence.

It goes without saying that the next conclusion is this: how greatly important must such an education be for a time [like today] which is depersonalized and mass-minded to its roots.

#### 4. Schoenstatt's Identity: "Child of Providence"

"Key to Understanding Schoenstatt," 1951

Those who wish to understand Schoenstatt must confront the great and clear idea that inspires it and sets so many people in motion. But one must also know

##### THE DRIVING FORCES

at work in its history. Both together – guiding idea and driving forces – allow one to understand a given historical organism. The guiding idea urges from without as the *causa finalis* [the goal] while the driving forces motivate from within as the *causa vitalis* [inner vitality]. The idea defines the task, the driving force is constantly in function.

In our case the driving force is a magnanimous childlike devotion to the guidance of God as its hidden plan is slowly and gradually unveiled by the law of the open door, challenging us and urging us to action.

Such devotion can only be spoken of as a driving force if, for all intents and purposes, it has become "second nature" to the soul, so that one can perceive a holy compulsion and say with St. Paul: "The love of Christ urges me on" (cf 2 Cor 5,14). If what one is dealing with is merely the labors of groping for God's will one cannot speak, properly speaking, of a driving force. Dogmatic theology would define such a condition as a distinctive form of the *habitus fidei* [habit of faith] developed through the gifts of the Holy Spirit, especially the gifts of knowledge, understanding and wisdom, rising to a pronounced supernatural "seventh sense," but still seeking the tests and confirmation of legitimate Church authority to be free from self-deception.

The habit of faith has taken on a unique shape and development here. Devotion to God's guidance is indeed a faith-filled devotion to God the Father and his plans. The habit of faith is therefore especially at work here as a variation on "the love of the Father urges us on."

God can reveal and manifest his plans in sovereign freedom, how and when he wishes – through extraordinary means such as visionary dreams, miracles and the like. Or he can choose ordinary means – through his ordinances and dispensations which, after all, are determined by and help realize a great divine plan of wisdom, love and omnipotence. An unassuming faith in Divine Providence which discovers the hand, wish and will of God the Father behind all things, even the smallest happenings, is gradually able, while remaining lovingly alert, to discern from the threads of the individual divine dispensations the net of God's hidden grand scheme, to rejoice in this knowledge and to work toward its realization with undaunted courage.

This practical faith in Divine Providence is demonstrably the main source from which Schoenstatt has drawn the knowledge of its God-willed being and activity. This faith directed us to "God's countenance as it shines out to us from the events of the times," to "God's nod and wish making itself



evident through the ontological structure of persons and things as well as through the engagement and disengagement of circumstances public and private, wishing us to embrace it as the main program and main schedule of our life and activity" [J. Kentenich, October Letter to the Schoenstatt Family, 1949].

In the beginning it was difficult to properly see the threads which God placed in our hands, to correctly interpret them and to discern the weaving of a divine grand plan. But it was always our prime concern.

New Schoenstatt was born in 1912. Two years later, an unassuming faith in Divine Providence tried to see through the events of the time into what was behind the closed curtains of the Divine. It was done with great caution. At the time we said: "How often in world history have not small and insignificant beginnings been the source of great and greatest accomplishments? Why could this not hold true in our case? Whoever knows the history of our sodality (the pre-history and short history of the student sodality is meant) will have no trouble believing that Divine Providence has something special in store for it..." [October 18, 1914]. We then tried to discover God's hidden plan.

Two years later the contours were even clearer. (....)

We were not spared voyages of discovery for mind, heart and will – whether it was a matter of the inner or the outer structure of the work. (....)

Another two years passed – the end of World War I – and our insight into God's intentions for the foundations [of Schoenstatt] had become so clear that, a year later, we could write the constitution of the whole structure in the founding meeting [August 20, 1919] in Hoerde. The blueprint was so clear that it never had to be changed. It remains the guideline for our future development. (....)

After all of this one can understand why we refer to Schoenstatt is a great, mysterious globe in the hand of God, planned from all eternity but only gradually revealed in time through the law of the open door and entrusted to his instruments to be realized a little at a time.

It has become as great, all-encompassing and multifaceted as the work conceived of by Pallotti, allowing it to be compared to a globe, whose image cannot be seen in total with the same ease as one sees a point, a line or a circle. Only those who step back from the globe and pause to contemplate the individual parts will find the right perspective.

Those who take the time to study Schoenstatt and, with the eyes of faith, penetrate and take into account the tapestry of divine guidance and dispensation found in its origin and history will be able to correctly evaluate and understand it.

God, therefore, stood at the beginning of the work, he stands in the middle and he will stand at the end. Human cooperation limits itself to a child's listening and obedience. The difficulties which this brings are captured in the term "the law of the open door." The expression – describing faith in

Divine Providence – is adapted from the vocabulary and wisdom of St. Paul. He was totally filled by his life's great idea. He was called to "renew all things in Christ" (Eph 1,10). But where he should go to realize this goal and the details of what he should do he allowed the Lord to show him and say to him through the circumstances, through the "doors" which opened (1 Cor 16,9; 2 Cor 2,12, see also Col 4,3 and Acts 14,27). In the first letter to the Corinthians he says that a "door has been opened wide for his work" (1 Cor 16,9). For us this was not always the case. We have often been in the situation where the door was not wide open, at least not by human reckoning – even under the influence of grace. The door was open only a tiny crack.

Only a deeply supernatural attitude – what dogmatic theology calls (as we have already mentioned) the perfection of the divine virtues through the gifts of the Holy Spirit – could see here clearly and make the right decision. All of this often meant nature had to make a leap of faith, a leap of faith for intellect, will and heart. The October Letter from 1949 points this out. After indicating how little there was to go on in the early events of Schoenstatt's history, and in how much uncertainty many had to wrestle with the plans of God, it goes on to say:

"After [1914], God spoke more and more clearly through events and circumstances. His light grew brighter and brighter with each passing year. His countenance radiated more brightly and clearly in the history of our family and our times. The events in and around Schoenstatt stood out more and more against the darkness of our times as something singular and unique and made it easier to interpret Divine Providence. God's voice became more distinct to our listening and ever more trained ear. It exacted increasingly greater dares, and these were by no means of a routine nature in the war years gone by.

"Its voice was always restrained and from a long way off ... It never revealed itself to us like the hand in the days of King Belshazzar in Nineveh which drew mysterious signs on the wall and thus laid bare the future [cf. Dan 5,5]; God never spoke to us through the sudden budding of a bare rod as he did through Aaron's staff [cf. Num 17,16ff]. We never had visions like Cornelius or Peter [cf. Acts 10,1-24], never had dreams through which he spoke to us like to Don Bosco. Nonetheless, we grew in confidence as we dared, year after year, to repeat the words of the Egyptian magician: *Hic est digitus Dei*, Here is the finger of God [cf. Ex 8,15]. It is God who, through the signs of the times, reveals to us his face and speaks to us.

"What God's words lacked in immediate clarity forced us to make a death leap of mind, will, and heart. We did so with courage – and have done so at every stage of our history. Each time we were guided higher and upward, and each step on the dangerous summits exacted this great price." (October Letter 1949).

In its origin, being, and acting, Schoenstatt is a pronounced child of Providence. It should come as no surprise then that this point of view is making more and more headway as point of attraction and gathering-point of the faithful who are not dependent on extraordinary signs and miracles, but are rather called to and capable of mastering their daily lives – even when heavy and difficult burdens pile up as they do at present – with the help of this simple faith in Divine Providence and thereby

ascend to the summit, to the mountain of perfection.

But it must be the genuine, proven, and historically creative Catholic version of faith in Divine Providence which meticulously submits to the divine plan of the world and to God's omnipotence. It therefore avoids every vestige of historical activism which desires to impose its own plans and calculations, even while keeping free from historical passivism and the quietism of just laying one's hands in one's lap while letting life run a fatalistic course. Those who find this too little, who demand more, have Fatima and Lourdes placed before them by God's kindness and wisdom as a lighthouse in the darkness of the times.

This view is correct inasmuch as it uncovers the secret of Schoenstatt's origin and shows the task it can help modern man accomplish. The child of providence can make as many people as possible into children of providence, into witnesses and imitators of divine wisdom.

In any case, it is incorrect to call Schoenstatt a coincidence or product of convenient circumstances. But it is just as erroneous and misleading to believe that it is the work of a human genius who pressed the circumstances into the service of a preconceived and totally predetermined plan. That is all false. Schoenstatt considers itself an instrument of God that demands of its human cooperators and instruments a certain degree of ingenious naivety, of magnanimous childlike surrender, in order to realize, at the right time and in the right way, a plan of love, wisdom and omnipotence prepared from all eternity.

## 5. The Message of the Father

(Letter to Fr. Turowski, December 8, 1952)

The New Testament image of God is distinctly formed by the image of the Father.

Over the decades we have become so convinced of this in our circles that I only need to mention the fact here.

It has gone over into our flesh and blood that Christ's task was to reveal these features to his amazed listeners and disciples and to give us a mystical share in his own childhood.

In his High-Priestly prayer (John 17) he looks back over his entire life and bears witness before his heavenly Father, "I have proclaimed your name, your name as Father, to all."

Just as he constantly and in all things – in prayer, work and suffering – circled around the Father, he likewise draws all of those who become one with him into this current of love flowing to the Father.

This is what he did during his earthly life. This is what he continues to do in the liturgy and in the promptings of the Spirit. No one comes to the Father except through him. He will only have fulfilled his mission when all the elect have found the way to the Father – in being, attitude and life. He places the name of the Father on the lips and in the hearts of his own, teaching them to pray, "Our Father..."

With uplifting enthusiasm and colorful images he therefore proclaims not only the good news of the Father's *providentia generalis* [general providence], but also and especially of his *providentia specialis* [special, or individual providence].

God's general providence was familiar to his audience, trained in the school of the Old Testament. It was nothing new that God took care of his creation, feeding the birds of the air and clothing the lilies of the field.

They knew that Israel was Yahweh's favorite, his chosen people. They knew through numerous examples from their history about the way *providentia specialissima* [God's providence for his elect] works. They only had to think of the patriarchs and the prophets. Numerous were the times when, again and again in centuries gone by, first in this way and then in another, it happened as Sacred Scripture reports of Moses, "that the Lord spoke to him face to face, like a man speaks to his friends" (cf Ex 33,11).

What was new for them was the fact that the Father is deeply and personally interested in the tiniest details of the life of each individual and is therefore so fatherly in his concern that not even a hair from our heads falls without his knowledge, will or participation (cf Mt 6,25-34).

This is the message of *providentia divina specialis*, that is, of the individual or special Divine

Providence which teaches us that God not only encompasses all the great events of the world with his immanent and effective laws, wisely guiding to a mighty, foreseen end, and that he not only keeps a few great leaders of the people in mind, but simultaneously and with equal attention, cares for each individual.

We know all that. We have been told that by many different people. But we must confess that, for the most part, while our head believes, our heart is not convinced – at least not as much as we would like or ought.

To be sure, the MTA has taken us by the hand in the covenant of love and led us to the Father. And ever since we have had a whole new world open up to us.

Still, we must admit: When we compare ourselves with St. Paul, who always lived in the awareness of God's loving gaze turned personally to him, evoking his lively devotion – eye to eye and heart to heart – we, in contrast, feel that each day makes us smaller and more helpless, as if we had never grasped the most basic ABCs of what it means to be a child of the Father.

Who among us can honestly say with Paul, "I can say with a totally clear conscience that I have walked with God up to the present day" (Acts 23,1). "This is our boast, the testimony of our conscience, that we, in simplicity of heart and God-given sincerity, walked in this world not by the wisdom of the flesh but by the grace of God, especially when with you" (2 Cor 1,12).

We sense that Paul lives what he teaches when he admonishes, "Your citizenship should be in heaven" (Phil 3,20), that is, that we should live with and in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father who is so interested in us that he not only watches over us always, but even knows us heart and soul.

This is how intimately he is one with us. And he expects us to revolve around him with a similar devotion.

[Reasons]

What might be the reasons for such a chasm between knowledge and life?

There are many. They can be sought and found in the mind, heart and will. Will and heart revolve around false gods, around idols of our own making, and the mind – that needs to be especially stressed here – has not grown deeply and comprehensively enough into the world of faith... it is too little penetrated by God's light...

The mind, created and therefore limited, feels helpless before the infinite fullness of Divine Being and the vast spectrum of his attributes. It measures with human standards and is therefore incapable of entirely absorbing the image of the Divine Father. True, in the light of faith it grasps that God holds in his mighty hand the complete and infinitely great and intricate workings of the universe, and

that he has ordained for world and world events laws to which his infinite holiness, truth and justice strictly adhere in his government of the world, which he must sanction in order to realize the great plan he has drafted from all eternity and wishes to deliberately lead world history through to its final aim.

But here the disturbing question already thrusts itself into the foreground: because God in his impartiality is not allowed to favor this or that person, must he not treat each individual purely objectively, rewarding and punishing the good and bad attributes, as it were, with closed eyes?

Is... it not an imperfection that contradicts his own essence for him to show warm personal interest in individual persons or to love them for their own sake?

And even if this attitude would be possible and would correspond to the objective reality, could God's personal love as a pure spirit exercise as much influence on us as, for instance, the fervent glow of the noble love of parents or friends?

Moreover, one might suppose that God – who is, after all, Father, or must be one – takes into account the well-being of each individual in at least the overall scheme of his universal government, structured as it is through eternally valid laws, and that his goodness is therefore one that radiates rather like that of a naturally amiable person.

This would give the appearance, of course, that he is personally concerned for the well-being of each person, without actually being so. [And so one could maintain that] He loves, but without any particular or warm and individual interest in the person, an interest that would let him share in a totally personal way in the hopes and fears, in the joys and sufferings, in the anxieties and expectations of each one – in short, in each one's wealth and woe, in all the events of one's life and in all the ups and downs of one's moods, after the fashion of a friend who shares in whatever fate befalls the other, or like a father and mother feel for their children with whom they suffer and rejoice.

[God as a God of truth and love]

Such a faith, no doubt, admits that God is mysteriously both together – [1] the God of truth and justice and holiness who does not bend a hair's breadth from his predetermined norms and laws in the plan of world history and the history of salvation, and [2] the God of love who is constantly solicitous of the total well-being of creation and cares for the needs, both great and small, of each individual as if – we speak now in human analogy – he only had this one child to take care of. In fact, [this same faith will no doubt admit] that he always places truth and justice and holiness in the service of love, both in general and in the needs of each individual, or – as St. Gregory says – that Divine Providence extends over each soul in the same way it extends over an entire city, over each city in the same way it extends over an entire nation, and over each nation in the same way it extends over the whole human race, but in such a way that he watches over each individual as if he had no other care or concern and over the whole world as if he did not need to care for each one individually. But this truth of faith normally never gets farther than the head; it makes no deeper

impression on the heart, indeed, it frequently fails to arouse any substantial concept in the head because points of comparison in the earthly-human world are generally lacking.

[The importance of experiencing earthly transparencies of God's fatherly concern]

It is rare indeed that transparencies of God manage to provide a tangible, if imperfect, likeness of God's masterful union of general Divine Providence and individual Divine Providence. When they do, it gives a decisive experience of God the Father, through the law of emotional transference.

Once more we touch on the importance of genuine fathers for the renewal of the world.

In other words: faith in *providentia divina specialis* lacks the vitality it needs and remains a pale idea with some religious sugar-coating. In practice one feels used, if not misused by God and his way of governing the world. It is for a common good, one is sure, but one does not feel personally and individually accepted and cared for. The personality does not feel itself deeply anchored or at least sufficiently anchored in God; it does not feel cherished and protected, but instead – even if for divine goals – depersonalized, a means to an end, just a cog in a machine.

That is why faith in Divine Providence is not a decisive force in the lives of individuals and whole nations and why the extraordinary catastrophes of our times cause such total confusion, driving people into the arms of anti-godly movements.

This is especially true when, as we find today, these movements consciously work to deprive God of his *providentia generalis* by creating gigantic financial organizations to provide a smoothly running machine for all the world's needs. They say they are running the world better than before, through human means alone, and in this way hope to detach the world completely from God.

[For continuation, see J. Kentenich, *Rediscovering the Father*, p. 54f]

## 6. Invitation to Meditate on the Heart of Jesus

(Letter to Fr. Turowski, December 8, 1952)

[The question at hand]

What has God's fatherly wisdom devised to simplify our way to faith in *providentia divina generalis*, and to help us grasp *providentia divina specialis*?

(...) We first turn away from man and occupy ourselves exclusively with God, the God of mercies and the Father of all consolation.

The One who created our nature knows better than we do what we need. And his wisdom and love know ways and means to fulfill them, while his omnipotence transforms into reality what his wisdom and love devise.

In order to convince and show us that he – even while focused on the global picture of world events, even in the fullness of his infinite perfections, even given the incorruptibility and impartiality of his truth and justice and the untouchability of his holiness, even given his loving embrace around all his creation – has a tender affection for each individual and is personally interested in every small and smallest detail, he allowed his only-begotten Son to take on our nature with all its noble human inclinations and passions. *Et verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1,14).

In the God-made-man [the Father's] mysterious totally-personal interest in each individual, which we have such a hard time imagining because he is pure, immutable spirit, is reflected and personified in a sentient way.

[Jesus: the face of the Father turned to us]

The only-begotten Son is the face of the Eternal Father turned toward us in human form, revealing to us in a genuinely human way how we can humanly imagine God the Father's spiritual interest in each one of us.

[Quote from Cardinal Newman]

[Two attributes of God's providence: tender and attentive – *amor affectivus* and *amor effectivus*]

God's personal interest in us has two attributes above all others: it is infinitely tender and infinitely attentive. In other words: in the person of his Son, the Father has given us a mirror, as it were, from which his infinitely tender and attentive father love radiates to us and becomes understandable – even if a more precise understanding of how such a profound divine affection can be reconciled with his other attributes eludes our grasp. (...)



[Savoring Christ's love for us]

But whoever wants to be immersed, heart and soul, in the personal love and affection of God (...) must learn to understand, savor and respond to the tender emotional life of Our Lord as a humanly tangible expression of God's fatherly love. It is as if Christ calls out his famous words with this meaning, too: "Whoever sees me, sees the Father" (John 12,45). "No one comes to the Father, unless it be through the Son" (cf John 14,6).

No one has a deep grasp of the personally and individually focused love of the father unless he sees it in the image of the Only-begotten.

[The Father's tender love]

(...) The philosopher will have no difficulty in seeing behind the word "tender" God's *amor affectivus* [affective or emotional love] and behind "attentive" God's *amor effectivus* [effective love].

[Devotion to the Sacred Heart and faith in Divine Providence]

This sheds bright light on devotion to the Sacred Heart for all who want to become masters and models and apostles of faith in Divine Providence. In keeping with the law of transmission, they must, of course, ascend from the Divine Heart of Jesus to the Father.

What one must do is lovingly immerse oneself in the life of Christ, especially taking time to dwell on the features which capture and express the tenderness and attentiveness of his personal affection.

In his fatherly wisdom, God goes even a step farther. In the God-man we occasionally see and experience a baffling, mysterious spectrum of contradictions which for an ordered divine unity, but which cannot be grasped by our small human intellect.

As humanly close as he comes to us on so many occasions through the warmth, radiance and strength of his noble human inclinations, there are moments and situations in which he causes us to tremble and quake before him because of his total divine unapproachability. In such moments the words from the cross ring out to us: "Behold your Mother" (Jn 19,27).

## **7. Ways to the Father: The Humanity of Jesus Christ as the Way**

(Letter to Fr. Turowski, Dec. 8, 1952)  
(First part = see Text 5 above  
Second part = see Text 6, here somewhat expanded)

*[Christ is centered on the Father]*

The New Testament image of God is distinctly formed by the image of the Father. Over the decades we have become so convinced of this in our circles that I only need to mention the fact here.

It has gone over into our flesh and blood that Christ's task was to reveal these features to his amazed listeners and disciples and to give us a mystical share in his own childhood.

In his High-Priestly prayer (John 17) he looks back over his entire life and bears witness before his heavenly Father, "I have proclaimed your name, your name as Father, to all."

Just as he constantly and in all things – in prayer, work and suffering – circled around the Father, he likewise draws all of those who become one with him into this current of love flowing to the Father.

This is what he did during his earthly life. This is what he continues to do in the liturgy and in the promptings of the Spirit. No one comes to the Father except through him. He will only have fulfilled his mission when all the elect have found the way to the Father – in being, attitude and life. He places the name of the Father on the lips and in the hearts of his own, teaching them to pray, "Our Father..."

*[The newness of the central role of the Father in the NT]*

With uplifting enthusiasm and colorful images he therefore proclaims not only the good news of the Father's *providentia generalis* [general providence], but also and especially of his *providentia specialis* [special, or individual providence].

God's general providence was familiar to his audience, trained in the school of the Old Testament. It was nothing new that God took care of his creation, feeding the birds of the air and clothing the lilies of the field.

They knew that Israel was Yahweh's favorite, his chosen people. They knew through numerous examples from their history about the way *providentia specialissima* [God's providence for his elect] works. They only had to think of the patriarchs and the prophets. Numerous were the times when, again and again in centuries gone by, first in this way and then in another, it happened as Sacred Scripture reports of Moses, "that the Lord spoke to him face to face, like a man speaks to his friends" (cf Ex 33,11).

What was new for them was the fact that the Father is deeply and personally interested in the tiniest details of the life of each individual and is therefore so fatherly in his concern that not even a hair from our heads falls without his knowledge, will or participation (cf Mt 6,25-34).

This is the message of *providentia divina specialis*, that is, of the individual or special Divine Providence which teaches us that God not only encompasses all the great events of the world with his immanent and effective laws, wisely guiding to a mighty, foreseen end, and that he not only keeps a few great leaders of the people in mind, but simultaneously and with equal attention, cares for each individual.

*[The discrepancy between knowing this in one's heart and being convinced of it in one's heart]*

We know all that. We have been told that by many different people. But we must confess that, for the most part, while our head believes, our heart is not convinced – at least not as much as we would like or ought.

To be sure, the MTA has taken us by the hand in the covenant of love and led us to the Father. And ever since we have had a whole new world open up to us.

Still, we must admit: When we compare ourselves with St. Paul, who always lived in the awareness of God's loving gaze turned personally to him, evoking his lively devotion – eye to eye and heart to heart – we, in contrast, feel that each day makes us smaller and more helpless, as if we had never grasped the most basic ABCs of what it means to be a child of the Father.

Who among us can honestly say with Paul, “I can say with a totally clear conscience that I have walked with God up to the present day” (Acts 23,1). “This is our boast, the testimony of our conscience, that we, in simplicity of heart and God-given sincerity, walked in this world not by the wisdom of the flesh but by the grace of God, especially when with you” (2 Cor 1,12).

We sense that Paul lives what he teaches when he admonishes, “Your citizenship should be in heaven” (Phil 3,20), that is, that we should live with and in God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father who is so interested in us that he not only watches over us always, but even knows us heart and soul.

This is how intimately he is one with us. And he expects us to revolve around him with a similar devotion.

*[Reasons]*

*What might be the reasons for such a chasm between knowledge and life?*

There are many. They can be sought and found in the mind, heart and will. Will and heart revolve around false gods, around idols of our own making, and the mind – that needs to be especially

stressed here – has not grown deeply and comprehensively enough into the world of faith... it is too little penetrated by God's light...

The mind, created and therefore limited, feels helpless before the infinite fullness of Divine Being and the vast spectrum of his attributes. It measures with human standards and is therefore incapable of entirely absorbing the image of the Divine Father. True, in the light of faith it grasps that God holds in his mighty hand the complete and infinitely great and intricate workings of the universe, and that he has ordained for world and world events laws to which his infinite holiness, truth and justice strictly adhere in his government of the world, which he must sanction in order to realize the great plan he has drafted from all eternity and wishes to deliberately lead world history through to its final aim.

But here the disturbing question already thrusts itself into the foreground: because God in his impartiality is not allowed to favor this or that person, must he not treat each individual purely objectively, rewarding and punishing the good and bad attributes, as it were, with closed eyes?

Is... it not an imperfection that contradicts his own essence for him to show warm personal interest in individual persons or to love them for their own sake?

And even if this attitude would be possible and would correspond to the objective reality, could God's personal love as a pure spirit exercise as much influence on us as, for instance, the fervent glow of the noble love of parents or friends?

Moreover, one might suppose that God – who is, after all, Father, or must be one – takes into account the well-being of each individual in at least the overall scheme of his universal government, structured as it is through eternally valid laws, and that his goodness is therefore one that radiates rather like that of a naturally amiable person.

This would give the appearance, of course, that he is personally concerned for the well-being of each person, without actually being so. [And so one could maintain that] He loves, but without any particular or warm and individual interest in the person, an interest that would let him share in a totally personal way in the hopes and fears, in the joys and sufferings, in the anxieties and expectations of each one – in short, in each one's wealth and woe, in all the events of one's life and in all the ups and downs of one's moods, after the fashion of a friend who shares in whatever fate befalls the other, or like a father and mother feel for their children with whom they suffer and rejoice.

[God as a God of truth and love]

Such a faith, no doubt, admits that God is mysteriously both together – [1] the God of truth and justice and holiness who does not bend a hair's breadth from his predetermined norms and laws in the plan of world history and the history of salvation, and [2] the God of love who is constantly solicitous of the total well-being of creation and cares for the needs, both great and small, of each individual as if – we speak now in human analogy – he only had this one child to take care of. In

fact, [this same faith will no doubt admit] that he always places truth and justice and holiness in the service of love, both in general and in the needs of each individual, or – as St. Gregory says – that Divine Providence extends over each soul in the same way it extends over an entire city, over each city in the same way it extends over an entire nation, and over each nation in the same way it extends over the whole human race, but in such a way that he watches over each individual as if he had no other care or concern and over the whole world as if he did not need to care for each one individually. But this truth of faith normally never gets farther than the head; it makes no deeper impression on the heart, indeed, it frequently fails to arouse any substantial concept in the head because points of comparison in the earthly-human world are generally lacking.

[The importance of experiencing earthly transparencies of God's fatherly concern]

It is rare indeed that transparencies of God manage to provide a tangible, if imperfect, likeness of God's masterful union of general Divine Providence and individual Divine Providence. When they do, it gives a decisive experience of God the Father, through the law of emotional transference.

Once more we touch on the importance of genuine fathers for the renewal of the world.

In other words: faith in *providentia divina specialis* lacks the vitality it needs and remains a pale idea with some religious sugar-coating. In practice one feels used, if not misused by God and his way of governing the world. It is for a common good, one is sure, but one does not feel personally and individually accepted and cared for. The personality does not feel itself deeply anchored or at least sufficiently anchored in God; it does not feel cherished and protected, but instead – even if for divine goals – depersonalized, a means to an end, just a cog in a machine.

[*Human ways of corrupting Providence*]

That is why faith in Divine Providence is not a decisive force in the lives of individuals and whole nations and why the extraordinary catastrophes of our times cause such total confusion, driving people into the arms of anti-godly movements.

This is especially true when, as we find today, these movements consciously work to deprive God of his *providentia generalis* by creating gigantic financial organizations to provide a smoothly running machine for all the world's needs. They say they are running the world better than before, through human means alone, and in this way hope to detach the world completely from God. [This is especially true] when they preach with such fervour and passion in both theory and practice – that is, through teaching and life – the mass man and depersonalisation as the ideal, using incentives, threats and coercion to impose it as the only remedy to the needs of our times. The individual is lost in the masses and, what meagre remnants of individual Divine Providence one still knew in a pale, religiously sugar-coated way, are swept away with a single blow.

So today God and his ape, the devil, confront each other, here as elsewhere, in the field of

Providence.

(....)

*[A Pedagogy of faith in Divine Providence]*

What has God's fatherly wisdom devised to simplify our way to faith in *providentia divina generalis*, and to help us grasp *providentia divina specialis*?

At this point we will not even mention the God-planned reflections of the [divine] creative tension and unity which he has placed in the life processes of human and family life and in the ordering and government of the world, as are found in the laws of organic transference and transmission. We will consider that in more detail at a later point.

One will permit me to at least point out the fundamental importance of such immediate tangible likenesses (casting a glance at the father principle) for modern man, dependent and even addicted as he is on the things of the senses, and given the uprootedness of his soul.

*[The Pedagogy of the Person of Christ]*

But first, we first turn away from man and occupy ourselves exclusively with God, the God of mercies and the Father of all consolation.

The One who created our nature knows better than we do what we need. And his wisdom and love know ways and means to fulfill them, while his omnipotence transforms into reality what his wisdom and love devise.

In order to convince and show us that he – even while focused on the global picture of world events, even in the fullness of his infinite perfections, even given the incorruptibility and impartiality of his truth and justice and the untouchability of his holiness, even given his loving embrace around all his creation – has a tender affection for each individual and is personally interested in every small and smallest detail, he allowed his only-begotten Son to take on our nature with all its noble human inclinations and passions. *Et verbum caro factum est et habitavit in nobis*. “And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1,14).

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[Two attributes of God's providence: tender and attentive – *amor affectivus* and *amor effectivus*]

God's personal interest in us has two attributes above all others: it is infinitely tender and infinitely attentive. In other words: in the person of his Son, the Father has given us a mirror, as it were, from which his infinitely tender and attentive father-love radiates to us and is made comprehensible – even if a more precise grasp of how such a profound divine affection can be reconciled with his other attributes eludes us. But when we remind ourselves of what we let Pascal and St. Thomas say to us earlier about tension and harmony, about the way very different virtues meet in the genuine holiness of human likenesses of God, and if we then assume such features to exist in God to an infinite degree, then the abstractly thinking mind may be on the way to grasp how seemingly contradictory attributes can join as one.

[Savoring Christ's love for us]

But whoever wants to be immersed, heart and soul, in the personal love and affection of God must not be content with merely thinking the matter through in such an abstract and philosophical way. Nor can he be content with simply examining God's special providence in the teachings of Sacred Scripture or with the common [Schoenstatt] practice of carefully and regularly savoring the personal mercies of God in one's own life and in the history of the Family. He must go a step farther and learn to understand, savor and respond to the tender emotional life of Our Lord as a humanly tangible expression of God's fatherly love. It is as if Christ calls out his famous words with this meaning, too: "Whoever sees me, sees the Father" (John 12,45). "No one comes to the Father, unless it be through the Son" (cf John 14,6).

No one has a deep grasp of the personally and individually focused love of the father unless he sees it in the image of the Only-begotten.

(...) The philosopher will have no difficulty in seeing behind the word "tender" God's *amor affectivus* [affective or emotional love] and behind "attentive" God's *amor effectivus* [effective love].

[Devotion to the Sacred Heart and faith in Divine Providence]

This sheds bright light on devotion to the Sacred Heart for all who want to become masters and models and apostles of faith in Divine Providence. To be sure, in keeping with the law of transmission, they must ascend from the Divine Heart of Jesus to the Father.

It is therefore necessary to lovingly immerse oneself in the life of Christ, especially taking time to

dwell on the features which capture and express the tenderness and attentiveness of his personal affection.

God's fatherly wisdom goes one step farther. From time to time he even lets us see and experience in the God-man the baffling, mysterious spectrum of contradictions that come together in the ordered unity of God, but which defy the grasp of our small human intellect.

*[The role of Mary as the Mother of Mercy]*

As humanly close to us as Christ comes through the warmth, radiance and strength of his noble human inclinations, [one must admit that] there are moments and situations in which he causes us to tremble and quake before his complete divine unapproachability. In such moments the words from the cross ring out to us: "Behold your Mother" (Jn 19,27).

Our Lady, his official permanent helpmate and companion in the entire work of redemption, is totally human and only human – she is and will always be the Mother of Mercy. Just as she stood for the human side of life while here on earth, especially when Christ's divine strictness and unapproachability forced him to stand at a distance – such as when he visited the temple at the age of 12 or at the wedding feast at Cana, or when she, touchingly concerned as his mother, wanted to protect him from the attacks of his enemies and bring him back to Nazareth – so it is that she, ever since being taken up into heaven, where she has a voice and vote in the council of the Triune God, is the guarantee in the same situations that – we now speak in a very human manner – the outcome will also take our humanness into account in spite of God's sovereignty.

[St. John] Chrysostom puts the law of divine government this way – *Haec est consuetudo misericordis Dei, hunc honorem servis suis dare, ut propter eos et alii salventur* [It is the custom of the God of mercy to give the honor to his servants, so that, for their sake, others also are saved]. This is especially true of Mary, whom we call our life, our sweetness and our hope.

And Cardinal Faulhaber declares:

"God has not fixed his grace to the stars; we would not be able to bring them down from there. God has not submerged his grace like the pearls in the depths of the sea; we could not bring them up from there. God has placed his grace in motherly hands, because a mother's hands are always ready to distribute with full hands."

*[The Person of Jesus must always be seen in connection with God the Father]*

But the child of providence and apostle of providence will not be satisfied with just seeing and showing and falling in love with such human features in the image of Christ and Mary. They will also want to systematically and consciously connect them with God the Father.

(....)



Neither do we wish to rest until we and all our followers can repeat wholeheartedly the words of St. Paul: "I bend my knee to the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ" (cf Eph 3, 14). This, too, should also be the meaning of Marian education as it has developed and proven itself in Schoenstatt.

*[The compassionate love of Jesus: Lazarus]*

In order to show at least a few examples of the tenderness and humanness of Christ, and how attentive he was in his human relations, it is worth observing how he related with his friends.

To be sure, we can only paint a few broad strokes here, awakening our initiative and desire to investigate the question. It is hoped that this would direct one's energy to this fruitful area of study in the interest of a powerful current of the Father and of Divine Providence.

Alone the fact that Christ – the Lord of Heaven and Earth who actively wields the scepter of world government in his hand – is capable of friendship and its affection is something which is especially appealing and, at times, even amazing to us moderns. Sacred Scripture states its case with masterful strokes of detail, allowing us to pause and reflect on its individual features.

For instance, it speaks of the tears which Our Lord wept with such genuine emotion over the fate of Jerusalem, of how he treated Peter before and after his denial, of how he related to John, and of how he spoke with Thomas when he doubted.

On occasion we also get a glimpse of how he related to the pious women.

Especially touching is his relationship with Lazarus and his sisters. Allow me to dwell on this a bit longer, since Scripture does the same. This scene's charm can be summarized with the image of Jesus' tears at the tomb of Lazarus and the brief explanatory detail added by John (Jn 11,43f). Jesus says, "Where have you laid him?" And they said to him, "Lord, come and see!" And Jesus wept. Then the Jews responded, "See how he loved him."

Now, we gladly admit that the limitations of the human mind make even the outward events enigmatic, and when we recall his divine nature the riddles join to form an imponderable mystery, making us ask: How could he always be happy as God and yet weep as a man; how could he be all-knowing and at the same time not know? And so those who wish to unlock the mystery of the Father stand once more before the veil of mystery.

And is not his Mother, as Mirror of Justice, also largely enveloped by mysteries such as these?

And so we never escape the world of the imponderable in which only living faith can guide us. And one must not be surprised when world and personal events are also filled with imponderabilities.

Christ weeps, and he weeps with genuine emotion. It is not mere show.

And what causes him to shudder and break out in tears? It is a truly human reason: compassion for

the suffering of those who are grieving and weeping around him. He lets himself be moved, as we would too, by their tears and lamentation. "When Jesus," says Sacred Scripture, "saw that Mary cried and that the Jews who were with her were weeping, he was deeply shaken!" (Cf Jn 11,33).