

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

**General Principles
of the Apostolic Movement**

Excerpts from the

Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre

der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt

Schoenstatt, April 16-20, 1928

translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2003, 2007

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Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre

der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt

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Introduction

In its substance this workshop on the general principles of the Apostolic Movement was given numerous times by Father Kentenich between the years 1927 and 1929. It was presented to various audiences, including teachers and priests.

The excerpts translated here are taken from the published version with the title *Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt* (Vallendar-Schönstatt: Schönstatt-Verlag, 1999), edited and annotated by Herta Schlosser.

This version is based on the transcripts made of the workshop for priests held April 16-20, 1928 in Schoenstatt, Germany. As the text makes clear, it was a workshop directed not only to priests who were familiar with Schoenstatt and belonged to the Federation of Schoenstatt Priests, but also to priests who were new to Schoenstatt and wished to learn more about it.

The terminology “Apostolic Movement” refers to the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt, the official name of the Schoenstatt Movement which had been organized under that title only a few years before and was rapidly growing within the German Catholic Church.

This rapid growth made it imperative that the movement director and founder, Father Kentenich, provide some direction to his followers on the basic foundations on which the movement was built. Hence this workshop and its theme.

One must also remember that the Federation was at that time the most important part of the movement, and in various statements in this workshop we can sense that for Father Kentenich it embodies *par*

excellance what all of Schoenstatt is: a work of God and the Mother Thrice Admirable.

Note: early unpublished versions included text inserts; the published German edition sets these apart with brackets []. Such inserts will be indicated here using < >, reserving the [] for the usual English convention of showing inserts made by the English translator/editor and/or carried over from the editor of the German published edition.

First Conference

{5} Once more we have dared to hold a district 1 workshop here in Schoenstatt after the busy Easter days, despite the busy Easter days, and perhaps even because of the busy Easter days. After all, for us priests out in the parishes it is often this way: When others have holidays, we must sweat, work. We normally get very little rest on such holidays. Perhaps we can view our workshop as an interior Easter renewal.

It is entitled a district workshop, but not an ordinary one. Our members from Baden were here last week. They also wanted {6} to be the largest group at this meeting. But I see so many new faces, men who have come here for the first time in order to get to know the movement more closely. I don't know which approach I should take: a more scholarly approach or one which is a more practical discussion. Perhaps we will remain with the second approach. As long as we came here during our theology studies we had to speak in scholarly tones, but now that is no longer necessary.

Will we reach our goal? Last year we focused more on mutual sharing. This time you have chosen a clearly defined topic: a clearly outlined

introduction to the Federation. This has its advantages and disadvantages. Will our souls get what they need during these days? I think so. If we are at home here, just being here in Schoenstatt does our souls good. Some, especially from north Germany, come here even when there is no workshop <just to spend a few days in the home of their soul>. Here we have a Marian supernatural atmosphere which does so much good to all those who are tossed to and fro in the practical realities of the world.

A second thing which does our soul good is the community. Will a community come about here? We know one thing about each one here: that we are united by the same thought, the same idea, otherwise we would not have come here. In earlier years and at earlier workshops the community was probably always the most appealing feature. During the year we carry this idea around with us. When we come here and see the effect the idea has had on each one <then it is always something which strengthens us and gives us new life>.

Our souls need some relaxation. You may feel like {7} the men in the previous workshop. One said, "We are completely worn out, body and soul!" Will the body also get what it needs? It may be more difficult because we will be working our minds. But if the talks satisfy, even in part, some need in your souls, then it will also have a restorative effect on the body. Many of us know the world of ideas that we will be talking about. And for them it may be relaxing to hear old familiar themes in a bigger context.

And for the other men here for the first time I can say: the fullness of ideas is so all-encompassing, so universal, that it will impact the soul here and there. In this world of ideas are values which our souls need <in the distracting activities of our profession>, so that a restorative effect on the body is also possible.

What do we want during these days? We want to be introduced to the federation, to the world of ideas of the Apostolic Movement. Our members from Baden expect of this introduction a new impulse for their local striving. Someone wrote to me, “We expect something really great.” Now that is not really so easy. We just want to go simple, unassuming ways. But if you expect new impulses, then you have already given the direction which I must take this course. And if you go home with the conviction: the Federation is a work of God, then we will have attained our goal.

1.1 The History of the Movement as a Source of Insight

{8} A work of God! In practical life we priests have already seen so much. It diminishes our respect for things that are merely human. Especially in the realm of the Spirit, we want to have the certainty: here is a work of God. Only such a such a work will earn our cooperation.

Today it is popular to approach things historically. If I know how something came into existence, then I also know what it is. As a result, I want to use this evening to try to show that this is really a work of Divine Providence. The Apostolic Movement is a chosen work in the hand of our dear Blessed Mother for the religious and moral renewal of the world for Christ. That sounds arrogant, pompous, especially for those who hear this thought for the first time. And yet I do not hesitate to present this thought to you.

One preliminary remark: Anyone familiar with our movement will know that it is inseparable from our Shrine. Love for our movement must therefore be built on the essential foundation of love for our Shrine. Our development thus far has uncovered a principle which may sound

strange to an outsider: Someone is a pillar of the movement to the extent he or she is rooted in our Shrine.

1.1.1 First Stage in our Development

{9} Let us dwell on the first preliminary remark: The history of the movement is inseparable from the history of the Shrine. Thus, the history of the Shrine is also the history of the movement. Here I must go back a few years to when the idea first came to our minds here in Schoenstatt. It was 1913-14. It is not as if we had a vision. We said to ourselves that we want to use all available means to reach our goal.

Once we recognized the prominent role that Marian devotion must play in our [community] 1 we pondered if we could dare to tell the Blessed Mother: Come to dwell in this little shrine and from here draw to yourself, using our cooperation, the hearts of many!

This was truly a great idea. But where do such great ideas come from in world history? It becomes necessary to ask: was this a prompting of grace or a merely human idea? It seems to me that the ensuing development proves that it was an interior, divine prompting. [And now we must say:] The plan was made, the idea was there. In order to make full use of the idea we said: Dear Heavenly Mother, if you come here to dwell and give us graces, do not do it alone; we want to help, make sacrifices, pray as much as we can. In {10} our youthful way we put it this way: We want to take everything which went on up in the house 1 and place it before you as capital of grace 2. Capital of grace is nothing more than a psychological-pedagogical way of formulating <the educational value of Marian devotion>.

This was the first stage in the history of the idea: *We want to do everything in our power, if you come to dwell in our little chapel, to*

draw people's hearts to you and lead them to your Son . So, the goal was a place of pilgrimage? That is correct, but not a place of pilgrimage in the usual sense. The focus was not on sick bones, but that sick souls be given new vigor and health and be urged to greater activity.

Much work was done. Our young people were cast out into the war. But we expected an answer from above. Professor Rademacher [3](#) analyzed the first year of the *MTA* [Magazine]: "... What the young people have worked, is known to God alone." We wanted to do everything we could to draw down Our Lady. Many of our young {11} people placed their lives at the disposal of the Mother of God and she also accepted some of them. You must not think that this was not something great. After all, the young people were out in the battle field and were always staring death in the face.

I remember how, after the war ended, Fr. Provincial [Kolb] of our province write a letter to a brother who had tuberculosis and knew he did not have much longer to live. He asked him to totally offer his life to the heavenly Father for the prospering of our province. The Brother did this and died for it.

And so our young people were called out, cast out into the war. And there came the thought again, the same thought which inspired and animated them: We want to do everything and see if Our Lady might not be convinced to come to dwell and erect her throne of grace here in our Shrine, in order to send forth from here in Schoenstatt an impulse of religious and moral renewal to the world. And the answer?

We looked for an answer. We found *one* answer in the fact that those who were active in the war were saved from many dangers to limb and life, and their souls were preserved [from many dangers] and they had many opportunities to be apostolic among their comrades. You will find

among the names inscribed here on the memorial plaque [1](#) many a sodalist <who fought in the war and could tell you of the wondrous protection he received from our dear Blessed Mother>. Those of us who remained behind [in Schoenstatt] were more reserved. We said to ourselves that {12} it might be true, but it was not conclusively so. Many of those who experienced all that out [in the war] truly believed that Our Lady had accepted our plan, that she had considered them worthy to do battle for the kingdom of her Son. Many had such experiences. We said to ourselves: It could be true.

1.1.2 Second Stage in our Development

And now comes the second stage in the development of our idea. On the basis of the chain of events we dared something great: we founded the little magazine which is still in existence today [2](#), without money <only 75 cents were in the sodality treasury at the time>. You will think: that is easy to say, you had the Society [3](#) and the house behind it. This is not true. I think that I can lift the veil a bit in these days about things in our past development which can now be talked about calmly. After all, the new studiously researched biography of our founder [Vincent Pallotti] [1](#) speaks such a clear language that I cannot outdo it in clarity.

There were many difficulties, difficulties on the part of the Society. We could expect no special advantages from the house [2](#). On the contrary, from that quarter everything was done to suppress the work and nip it in the bud. Now that we have gained the distance of some years, we can say in retrospect: Thanks be to God that it went that way! For every work of God must prove its vitality by overcoming the difficulties of its birth. {13} It must face opposition from the best and the brightest. If it was true that the Blessed Mother had accepted our plan, if it was true

that she wanted to use our little work, then we also had to take some risks. Of course we were sticking out our neck.

At that time we heard about an organization of life which was doing the same thing. One of its leaders, Dr. Hammer [3](#) wrote to us and asked how our work was financed. We had no finances. *Mater habebit curam* [Mother takes care]! That was our whole confidence. The magazine was opposed. When the General [Rector] of that time, the late Father Gissler [4](#), conducted a visitation of the individual houses, the matter was discussed. And it soon resulted in a {14} letter from Limburg with the prohibition: The magazine may no longer be sent to our seminarians. I traveled to catch up with Father Gissler [5](#). There he poured out all his anger. The anger which he had held back before, he could no longer hold back: What you want is something for which I cannot answer to the founder, that is not in keeping with the idea of Pallotti.

If you hear how the entire Society, especially the German Province [1](#), later came around totally to the position of the movement, then you will sense that another source must be behind it. That much I can already tell you in advance, without going into any further details: how the idea that originated here is [equivalent] to the idea of the Society. This is how one can also explain the construction of the house up on the hill [2](#). And when you read the speeches held for the dedication of the [New] House [3](#) <you will see ideas which later came to life in our ranks>. Here you have the second stage in the development of our idea.

1.1.3 Further Development: the External Organization

We said to ourselves that if this is true, that the Blessed Mother is behind this, then we can dare it. And we did dare it. {15} In all the battles Mary was our only hope. We now had no further reason to doubt

that Our Lady is behind it. She was the only reason supporting what we did. Because of it we dared the great deed: we founded the External Organization.

(....) Our boys came into the war and then founded the External Organization. We called it the *Congregatio militaris* . But our sodality was constructed differently from the other sodalities. And what guided us back then was simply the idea: we are responsible for the Blessed Mother. We have to fight for the idea out in the world, to do it we have to work together, shoulder to shoulder – no one can be allowed to go under. The exterior form which this movement took on can be found on the memorial plaque [in the Original Shrine; referring to the many external groups]. It was organized like the Federation is today.

You can therefore see how our entire form developed, how our forms historically came to be. You will say: that's a trivial point. No, there is nothing trivial about founding a community which is really able to live and grow, since so many stood in the worst filth of the war. The young people, scattered on the front, in the world, {16} could only hold together by letter. They were widely separated, hardly had any personal contact with one another. Others who imitated us and wanted to attain something similar did not succeed. That would very likely have only been possible where a similar idea would have been at work. (....)

Second Conference

{30} It is a daily fact that a community is shaped by its purpose. We know the purpose of the movement. It is world apostolate. Now you must consider what a crazy idea it was: young students imagine that

through them and from here, from their favorite place, the world shall be renewed.

World renewal! To this end it was not enough that the individuals who were formed here and who entered the movement would have a universal apostolic spirit, namely that they would be ready to be active apostolically wherever the opportunity arose. If the idea were not to be a pipe dream, then they had to win over others, they had to go out into the world. Then it [our ideal] had to urge us to attract others to our lifestream, including those who could not reach the high demands of the federation but who wanted to be apostolic in their own way. We had to mobilize all energies for the apostolic penetration of our times.

Third Conference

{41} During these days we want to flesh out the principles on which the entire movement is built... (....)

3.2.1 Community Spirit

{45} First: We do not want and must not want to be “first class” priests in the sense that the others are “second class” priests.

And second: We have an aim which does not exceed the aim of other priests. What we want is perfection according to our state in life, and every priest must strive for this perfection.

Then why do we come together? Why community? When I am asked what we priests want in the Federation, then I can tell say: We want to accomplish in community – as close-knit and intimate a community as possible – what every priest should want. In other words, we do not

have an aim which exceeds the aim of other secular priests. Must not every priest strive for perfection according to his state in life and have at least the spirit of universal {46} apostolate? Of course! Must not every priest be Marian? Of course!

But community, that is what sets us apart, that is our *signum distinctivum* [our distinctive sign]. That is not for everyone. A priest can be holy and highly successful in his pastoral work; if he does not fit in with us it is [not because of these features but] because he does not possess the degree of community spirit which we require. Compare the Federation's community of priests with other communities of priests who only want to improve the one or the other priestly activity. The Federation is not one of these kinds of communities. On the other hand there are other communities of priests which do not try to secure particular methods, but which encompass, deepen and give an interior spirit to the entire priestly life. One of these would be the congregation of priests known as the Pious Union. The Federation wants to be understood as this kind of a community. It belongs to the communities which want to encompass the entire priestly life.

Apostolic Federation contrasted with the Pious Union of Priests

If I name the Federation together with other associations, then there must be some distinguishing feature which gives it a right to exist and not just be subsumed into one of the other associations. And this lies only in the kind and degree of community. In any case, community is not what essentially defines {47} the others.

If I take this standard and apply it to the Pious Union [of Diocesan Priests], then I will come to the same conclusion. Outsiders ask now and then: What more does the Federation offer than the Pious Union does

not? It seems to be nothing other than a competing firm. And so it is that is what members of the Pious Union commonly think of the Federation – it is a competing firm. (From leading persons in the Pious Union one often hears words like: "What will happen to the Union; the young priests no longer come to us; they go to the Federation?"]

The essential difference lies in the community, in the interior community spirit. The Pious Union can exist without an interior community spirit, and has practically lived for years without one. In fact, the members often do not even want to reveal to one another that they belong to the Union. Now they are coming a little bit out of their reserve. They are now finding that a certain formation of small communities is advantageous. They also want to be seen by the outside as priests of the first degree. Yes, there is community in the Pious Union, but its source is more the community of devotions. Certain community devotions are required which each one must do. As a priest who has closely examined practical life, I understand the psychology of such devotions. They say that if a priest who has been seasoned by the experience of priestly activity does these devotions daily, one can assume that he maintains the right spirit.

Here there are two attempts to solve a problem which the Church has worked on for centuries: how the spirit of the orders can be carried into the world. I can view community as community form and specifically as community spirit. The origin of the Pious Union goes back to Holzhauser ¹. He lived {48} in the Middle Ages, when one liked to work with forms. He tried to copy the life of the orders as perfectly as possible, bringing diocesan priests together in *vita communis* (formal community life). But such an association could not last, because it was contrary to the obligation of pastors to reside in their parishes. In more recent times we see the attempts to expand on the Institute and live community more as community form. The way every religious does his

community devotions, every member in the Union must do his devotions every day.

We in the Federation see things from a different perspective. The meaning of community is community spirit. We therefore want to maintain the principle: obligations or forms only to the extent absolutely necessary, freedom as much as possible. It applies in this point, too. What is of the essence is the community *spirit* which must be fostered. This form also has a moderate obligation, and must allow and permit such [an obligation]. Why? Because we are of flesh and blood. We do not operate like the [monistic] youth movement which builds entirely on spirit [and not on form]. We not only acknowledge our upward obligations, to God, but also our downward ones. The monthly report to the group leader is the only obligation if nothing more comes from community spirit.

The Pious Union is thinkable without such a strong community spirit, but the Federation is not. If the Federation does not foster this strong sense of mutual responsibility and put it in action again and again, {49} the Federation will collapse over night. These are thoughts which cause outsiders to say, "No way! That is unthinkable [that it would fail because of community]!" But here we are touching the essence of the structure of our movement. (...)

{52} The word "community" has a different ring than "society." It also has a different ring than "mechanism." Community is an organism. In our community of leaders it is the task of every leader to use all means to realize his responsibility [to be a leader].

I declare my readiness : When what is at stake is community in the spirit of the Federation – which is in a certain sense a new development in the religious life – then my goal ought to be this: to moderately grasp

and join together all the life-attachments [*Lebensbaender*] of all the members, just as it happens in religious life. Not only by praying for one another, no, I ought to share a responsibility for the sum total [of the life of my brother], be it for his good name, his health, his usefulness in our vocation. All life-attachments ought to be given moderate attention in regard to the circumstances in which we live as diocesan priests.

We cannot live in physical community, cannot be constantly with one another. It would be ideal if such a community were present in each rectory. We priests need such a community. How many priests break down and go astray because they stand alone. When a scandal about a priest comes to public attention, it has not burst out from one day to the next, it has happened gradually. The reason is almost always: he was not able to connect with his community.

(...)

3.2.2 Apostolic Spirit

{53} *A new kind of apostolic community of leaders* . Perhaps it would be better if I would stress the other word: *apostolic* community of leaders. It is a community of leaders in the area of apostolate. For us in the Federation it cannot suffice to just minister to others and bring them into contact with the Mystical Body of Christ. No, we want to touch them apostolically and inspire them, stirring in them the impulse, in one way or another, to become apostles in their own right. *Ita ut...!* [So that... *they* become apostles!] This would make the Federation an example of what Cardinal Faulhaber was referring to in his papal speech: an action committee, a community with a task, a leaven for priests.

A new kind [of community]. What makes it new? As I have indicated a few times already, the characteristic feature is the founding principle: ‘only as many obligations as absolutely necessary, freedom as much as possible.’ The obligation upward is the attachment to the ideal. We must remember this well. Our ideal is {54} the renewal of the world. The more this urges us on, the less petty I will be <about forms> and the less I will need the obligations downward [such as many rules]. Then the sense of responsibility will come of its own accord. As few downward obligations as possible.

I say: it is something new. After all, this is the spirit of earliest Christianity.

(....)

3.2.3 Marian Spirit

{56} *With a distinctive Marian flavor* . Let us remain in context. Yesterday I demonstrated historically why we should be Marian. Here is where the “new kind” [of community] is in play. It is our goal to attain the greatest accomplishments using the fewest means and as little time and energy as possible. Otherwise our efforts will go to waste. We want to know and grasp the laws of the supernatural order of being. Consider someone with a stomach ailment. If I know the laws of the order of being of my stomach and of foods, then I can find the right diet to help the stomach. It is the same in the supernatural order. If I know the laws of God’s creation, I will be able to achieve much with little in a short time.

We have discovered again and again that the simplest, surest and shortest way to God and to perfection is, as Pius X teaches, through

Mary. We have become accustomed to seeing Mary as the Mediatrix of all graces for the Federation. After all, we need more graces, greater graces. If this is the {57} preeminent way, why take side roads? I do not even need to point out that the way via Mary is no detour. Christ is clearly at the center. Any Marian devotion or devotion to the saints which only has the creature [and not God] as its focus is idolatry and superstition.

The task of the Federation is to prepare a new-kind-of and effective apostolic community of leaders with a pronounced spirit of the orders and distinctive Marian flavor, consuming itself in close communion with the Church and Schoenstatt for the religious and moral renewal of the world in Christ.

(...)

Fifth Conference

(...)

5.1.1 Apostolate in the Statutes

{81} First a word about the idea of apostolate as found in our *statutes* [1](#). Our movement calls itself an “Apostolic Movement.” Every word here says: our aim is apostolate. Again and again you find the word apostolate. This is the point of the whole movement. It is strongly expressed in the statutes.

5.1.2 Starting Point in the Soul

How does our own soul respond to the idea of apostolate? Have we also subjectively embodied, at least implicitly, this starting point in ourselves? {82} Here we can distinguish between a natural and a supernatural starting point in the soul.

The Natural Starting Point

The natural starting point for apostolate is the creative urge found in each person – which in women should mature to motherliness and in men to fatherliness, showing as a drive to form the world or mothering, as the case may be. We bear in mind: the human person wants to be creative. Is apostolate anything other than this? The natural starting point for apostolate in our own soul is the human drive to be creative.

The Supernatural Starting Point

The supernatural starting point in one's soul: Here you can distinguish between an outward and an inward aspect. The *inward* aspect is the seminal vitality of divine life which every baptized Christian ought to have. What is the final reason which facilitates and obligates all the faithful to work apostolically? We are baptized and confirmed. Through baptism we share in divine life, in the life of Christ. That is, our sharing in the life of Christ is also a participation in his work. His work was world apostolate; hence every Christian as Christian is facilitated and obligated to make his own the Redeemer's work of renewing the world.

What baptism already lays down in the soul in a beginning way {83} is strengthened by confirmation, making us soldiers of Christ. Put

differently, we are incorporated into the Mystical Body of Christ. In any organism each member is responsible for all the others; we too are responsible for one another as members of the Mystical Body of Christ.

In this context the beautiful example of St. Augustine is well-known. He wishes to show how all the members are responsible for one another in a natural body: the foot steps on a thorn, one member of the body suffers. All the other parts are now ready to help heal the wounded member [1](#). Of course, this is how it should also be in the Mystical Body of Christ.

(...)

The Ontological Law of Apostolate [2](#)

(...)

{85} *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi* . When we seek the principles which characterize the outward structure of the movement, we must ask ourselves as scholars and scientists: what is the essential ontological law of apostolate? Here, too, *ordo essendi est ordo agendi* applies. We must be able to trace everything in apostolate back to such a law and not some random construct. How do we find the objective ontological law of apostolate? We can find it through scientific investigation, or we could consider a person who is totally apostolic. What do we find? Such a person embodies the apostolic prayer that we so often pray [1](#). This prayer shows us the apostle *par excellence* , the epitome of the apostle.

What characterizes the apostle *par excellence* ? The apostle *par excellence* is someone who {86} permanently works for the salvation of immortal souls with everything he has out of an inner attachment to

God. This is concrete. An apostle *par excellence* must constantly use every means at his disposal for the salvation of souls, that is, for the divine life of souls. He must see to it that they accept [the divine life] and embody it. And he must not do this just now and then, but permanently.

Where is the source from which this activity is always nourished? It is the attachment to God. His attachment to God urges him to work for the salvation of souls. You see, here we have the ontological law of apostolate: apostolate must flow from an interior attachment to God. In many circles today, this is much more in the awareness than it used to be [2](#). You will find it in what Cardinal Bertram writes about this source of apostolate. He defines: It is the ardor of a constantly, undyingly burning, self-consuming fire, of the fire of love of God, of attachment to God [3](#).

Here you have the ontological law expressed in simple, popular language.

The alumni from St. Peter's [4](#) know how their rector described this idea.

He wanted to warn them about becoming cold functionaries of apostolate. He wanted to show that their apostolic activity must arise from an interior fervor. He therefore coined the word: You can't start a fire with an icicle. If you want to start a fire, you can't be an icicle.

The beating pulse of divine life is the love of God. {87} Love of God, however, urges to action. Hence we must rekindle in ourselves the fire of love of neighbor. If I myself am cold, I cannot enkindle the fire of love of God in others.

Here we touch on the final center and the most difficult problem of the entire Apostolic Movement. Today we could probably accept many people into our lay apostolate who, outwardly speaking, do many apostolic deeds. But how up in arms people can be about the motives

from which such deeds are often done today! Why do people help in the apostolate? Their motive may be a totally natural compassion [1](#); it may be a merely natural drive for activity. Not least of all, it may be a natural drive for recognition: one wants to receive recognition from the leaders, from the pastor or associate pastor.

It is not something bad if such motives also play a role. But according to the ontological laws of apostolate it falls short of the mark. We are building on sand and only have an apparatus that will work as long as someone is on hand to operate the controls. But it will not be an organism. Once the person others wanted to please moves on, everything collapses. We must see to it that we ourselves do not fall prey to this danger. Today one speaks so much about priests who are only functionaries. There is a difference between doing something as a functionary or doing it from inner fervor. A functionary may do good work, but it is not the same as when an artist undertakes the same task. If we work in the apostolate only as functionaries, then we have tied our own noose.

Let me expand on this thought so that you see that this is the soul of apostolate. Father Wiesen [2](#) once said to me (he is the theoretician {88} in this area): Some years ago some Protestants from America asked their colleagues in Dresden what they would think about lay cooperators in the pastoral work. The response they got was this: Do not even start with it; such a thing could be organized, that is, a mechanism could be found, but where would one find the lay men and women who would consume themselves for souls out of an interior fervor and devotion?

We must not deceive ourselves when so much is said about Catholic Action. The soul of apostolate is and will always remain the interior attachment to God.

With that I have described for you the ontological law of apostolate. The degree of apostolic activity must flow from a corresponding degree of attachment to God. This is crucial. With that I have already revealed the first principle on which the exterior structure of the entire movement is built. The principle is:

The organic connection of self-sanctification and apostolate.

This only repeats in scientific language what I have already said: the connection between apostolate and our self-sanctification. I will mention to you the other principles and then describe them in more detail.

Ontological Law of Self-Sanctification

The whole thing revolves around self-sanctification. But here too we must observe the basic rule: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi* . We are trying to study the applicable ontological laws and build on them. An apostolic movement must do things this way. According to the ontological law just mentioned, this [the study of the underlying principles] is vital {89} for a movement to be fruitful and effective. It is therefore necessary that we discuss the meaning of self-sanctification.

The first principle is: *The harmonious connection of self-sanctification and apostolate.* Now I take self-sanctification and consider its ontological laws. And there I find a second principle: *The harmonious connection of nature and grace in self-sanctification.* [And:] Catholic apostolate is always dependent on the hierarchy, otherwise it is not Catholic. Hence the third principle: *Harmonious connection of work in the ordinary pastoral setting and in extraordinary settings* [1](#).

(....)

{93} Self-sanctification! What is understood by that? One could give many definitions. I only want to give you one, and overemphasize one aspect in order to make a point. So let me formulate the ontological law of striving for holiness this way: When am I holy? What is holiness?

Holiness is attentiveness and obedience to the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit.

(....)

Sixth Conference

(....)

{103} We recall the purpose, the concept of striving for sanctity: attentiveness, but also obedience to the [promptings] of grace. Attentiveness may promote our attachment to God, but obedience must promote our conformity to God's will. Here we must ask: what is the law governing the harmonious connection between nature and grace.

What obstacles are there to our obedience to {104} the promptings of grace? They are expressed in two words: forgetfulness and change of mood.

6.1.1 Means to a Greater Obedience

Forgetfulness! Even when we clearly see that God wishes this or that of us, and we fail to do it. We do not obey. And why not? It is a modern disease: forgetfulness. Then, even when we do not forget, the second obstacle gets in the way: our fickle moods. The harmonious connection of grace and nature requires of us that we seek remedies for these problems. There are many. They can vary from person to person.

For one it may be weekly confession, for another participation in perpetual adoration. I could very well imagine that a weekly adoration hour before the Blessed Sacrament would be a means and safeguard against forgetfulness. Each person must know his means and have such a means which is most helpful for him.

Because as an apostolic movement we place a premium on striving for sanctity, no one can hold it against us if we look for a common way, required of each of us – though not under pain of sin – which is effective in securing our striving and easy for everyone to do. What is it called? It is the written control. I will depict it concisely, both pedagogically and psychologically.

The personal written control is a safeguard against {105} forgetfulness and our changing moods. The report [to a priest or leader] safeguards the written control. These two obstacles must be overcome so that we are obedient to grace. Keep that in mind and you will easily overcome the objections so often raised against a written control. I will come back to this point later.

In order to prepare the ground, let me make a few preliminary remarks. When we in the Federation speak of devotional practices [1](#), we are by no means underestimating their importance. On the contrary, we want to openly admit that here is an area where we in the Federation have a weakness. Because the movement is an organized form of spiritual cultivation [2](#) in contrast to the formalism of our times, this option will

naturally be both our strength and weakness. The orders have the same difficulty today. In their case it is a strong accent on discipline and daily schedule, vows and how they are lived. They can be both a strength for the individual and community, but they can also become a great weakness.

In our case the weakness lies right next to the strength. As a community we do not prescribe this or that devotional practice. We leave that to the freedom of each person; he should make that determination with his confessor. The written control is not there to impose certain practices, but to safeguard against forgetfulness and changing moods the ones I have come to recognize – in an organic development – as important for me.

Eighth Conference

Marian Devotion and Personal Ideal

{137} During these days we want to elaborate the general principles of the movement. Everything which we have said thus far, and everything which we will still say, circles around the definition: What is the movement? The movement is a chosen work and instrument in the hand of our dear Blessed Mother for the moral-religious renewal of the world in Christ, and all that with a very specific character.

We tried to study the *specific character* yesterday from the aspect of the exterior structure. Today we must do so from the aspect of the interior structure. Here, too, we must find the right point of departure. Yesterday I briefly outlined how the interior forces which are at work in the movement could be unrolled from [the starting point of] Marian devotion. But we decided to unroll the interior structure from the

starting point of the Personal Ideal. Here, too, we began by reminding ourselves where and how {138} the Personal Ideal is set down in our statutes. There we find no mention of them because they [the statutes of the federation] are a juridical document. Indirectly we might be able to infer them from the demand that [members of the federation] strive for the highest possible degree of sanctity befitting one's state in life.

The starting point is set down in the soul. The Personal Ideal answers a multi-faceted need: the need for identity and harmony, the need for healthy, organic development, and the need for a healthy ownership of one's individuality.

Now we can take our task in hand and study the Personal Ideal.

But that is not enough. Because the Personal Ideal is looked at here as the point of departure, a second point must also be considered. We must show how we can unroll the interior forces of the movement from the starting point of the Personal Ideal. For without that we can neither unroll the Personal Ideal as such, nor the Personal Ideal as starting point. (...)

The Modern Soul and the Lack of a Catholic Atmosphere

{139} It is currently popular, including in practical everyday life, to ask what differentiates the modern soul from the medieval soul. I can pick out of this question an issue of some importance. One says: the modern soul is subjective, the medieval soul objective. Or: the modern {140} soul is anthropocentric, the medieval was theocentric. If we put this in the way we understand best as pastors of souls, we would have to consider the character of the fundamental attitude of the soul, then and

now. During the Middle Ages this attitude was religious and Catholic. Today we must admit: the fundamental attitude is no longer specifically Catholic.

We would probably need to distinguish the attitude of the soul from the individual acts and practices of the soul. The fact that we still practice certain religious devotions is by no means a guarantee that we have a religious basic attitude. And if the individual does have such an attitude, it is by no means a guarantee that the public atmosphere is Catholic. The Middle Ages lived in a specifically Catholic atmosphere; we live in a specifically pagan [secular] atmosphere. In an analysis, one will exaggerate to some degree and stress the extreme positions. Here, too. (...)

Ninth Conference

The Importance of Cross and Suffering

{184} After all, you all know how our roots have been made sick by original sin. The fangs of our nature must be broken, our inclinations must submit to the extent that we commit no more serious sin. Hence, battle against serious sin, and against voluntary venial sin. You see, if for instance I prefer cross and suffering: do you not notice how this breaks the fangs of our nature? I am greatly concerned that you remember the following:

Whoever does not strive for the final stage, for love of cross and suffering, will not become a moderately successful priest. For all of life today is so filled with opportunities to accept crosses and suffering. Just consider your work as pastor in a parish. If I do not have the attitude, “I rejoice that this and that causes me suffering,” how one will break down!

Here love of self must be seen again and again in connection with love of God. Anything else is unthinkable, abnormal. Our fundamental attitude must become: Thanks be to God that I have cross and suffering, that I experience set-backs, etc. When directing devout {185} souls, one must place most weight on these things, otherwise it will not work. In our work in the confessional we must pay special attention to the levels of love of God and ennobled love of self. What we tell our people in the confessional must always characterize in some form these two things: to endure our suffering out of love of God! The form does not matter; only the elements must be there. What I say specifically depends on the person. But I must mention the principles. For years I must first increase charity, then turn it around and mortify the passions. Even the new teaching plans systematically direct us to do this.

When we went through this dogmatically, we called this the material stages of suffering [1](#). (...)

{189} Thirdly, I must make sacrifices for God. It seems to me that this is a starting point which we can use with most people today. Make sacrifices for God! Here is the great remedy for our times. How shall we make our youth pure again, bring marriages back to the Church? By giving in? No, by making sacrifices. We must throw a great love into the hearts of people, then making sacrifices will be self-understood. For a priest making sacrifices must be self-understood; being a priest means being someone who makes sacrifices! I must be willing to do things even if they cause me suffering, even if others cause me suffering, even if everything causes me suffering. Suffering and mortification must be done like an athlete – although it must be applied in the right way or it will accomplish the opposite of what we intend.

FOOTNOTES

[1](#):

German: *Gau* . The Federation was organized into districts, which tried to organize regular workshops.

1:

In the original transcript the word “community” is unclear. Regarding the importance of Marian devotion: see the key developments of April and May 1914, when the Schoenstatt Marian Sodality was founded and when genuine Marian devotion first caught fire among the students under Fr. Kentenich’s direction. From this point on it became clear that Mary would be essential to whatever would develop among these young men. See J. Niehaus, *New Vision and Life* , Chapters 5 and 6.

1:

The Pallottine minor seminary in Schoenstatt is meant, which was located on the bluff looking out over the valley where the Shrine was located.

2:

This correctly portrays in a few short words the development of the capital of grace among the boys in Schoenstatt in 1915. It transformed everything into a gift of love with apostolic character using the image of the “capital of grace,” namely “investing” “everything which happened up in the house” – namely the ordinary events and struggles of daily life – in Mary’s Shrine for her objectives.

3:

Professor Arnold Rademacher (1873-1939), German diocesan priest and professor of fundamental theology in Bonn, and early pioneer of Catholic youth ministry.

1:

A stone memorial installed on the right-hand wall interior of the Original Shrine in April 1919, honoring those who belonged to Schoenstatt during World War I.

2:

The *Mater ter admirabilis* magazine or “MTA” which began publication in March 1916 and continued into the 1930s.

3:

The Pallottines (=Society of the Catholic Apostolate).

1:

The then groundbreaking work by German Pallottine Fr. Eugene Weber: *Vinzenz Pallotti, Ein Apostel und Mystiker* (Limburg, 1927), later translated into English: *Vincent Pallotti, An Apostle and Mystic* (Staten Island, 1964).

2:

The Pallottine Minor Seminary in Schoenstatt, the house community to which Fr. Kentenich and the students belonged.

3:

The identity of this work and Dr. Hammer had not been determined.

4:

Fr. Karl Gissler, General Rector of the Pallottines from 1909 to 1919.

5:

According to available sources, this episode took place at the train station in Ehrenbreitstein on or about September 23, 1915.

1:

More specifically, the Limburg Province.

2:

Namely the *Bundesheim* (Covenant House or House of the Federation), the first retreat house of the movement which was under construction at the time of this course and dedicated a few months later on August 15, 1928.

3:

The Pallottines Minor Seminary in Schoenstatt dedicated on December 8, 1912.

1:

Bartholomew Holzhauser (1613-1658) founded the "Institute of Diocesan Priests Living in the World" in 1640.

1:

That is, the Hoerde statutes (August 20, 1919) of the Apostolic Federation and the statutes of 1920 for the Apostolic League and the Apostolic Movement.

1:

Sermones a.M. Denis editi 19,5. “ Ita tamen hoc extremum universi corporis compage detinetur, ut si in ipso loco spina calcetur, ad auxilium spiae eruendae omnia membra concurrant. ”

2:

German: *Seinsgesetz des Apostolates* , translated here as “ontological law of apostolate.” Instead of ontological one could also say metaphysical. What is meant is the underlying principle upon which all apostolate rests. The effort to find this and similar principles is in the interests of having greater clarity in what an Apostolic Movement like Schoenstatt must be and do.

1:

It is not clear which particular “apostolic prayer” is meant.

2:

This was also one of the positive aspects of the liturgical movement, for in many cases the renewed interest in the liturgy was driven by the new interest in lay apostolate in the 1920s.

3:

Adolf Cardinal Bertram of Breslau (1859-1945). In his book *Im Geiste und Dienste der Katholischen Aktion* (Munich, 1929, p. 287) he wrote: “Lay apostolate is the ardor of a quietly burning, never-resting fire.”

4:

St. Peter’s Seminary in the Black Forest, since 1842 the major seminary of the diocese of Freiburg, Germany.

1:

That is, without any supernatural motives.

2:

The director of German Catholic Charities (*Caritas*) in those years.

1:

That is, in the parish (the ordinary setting) and in other settings like movements, special youth or family groups, retreats, pilgrimages, initiatives, etc.

1:

That is, with a caution that the practices not become empty routines; in other words, with an accent on promoting the right attitude more than the form itself.

2:

German: *Geistpflege* .

1:

German: *Materialstufen der Passio* .