

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

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Called to Be Apostles

Santification is the foundation of the apostolate. The degree of self-santification should correspond to the degree of apostolic activity and vice versa. So, “*he who wants to be an apostle to the core of his being, must reach the highest possible degree of self-santification*” (General Principles, p. 91). And this is the case for the members of Schoenstatt.

But it is not only about educating ourselves and sanctifying ourselves for the universal apostolate, but also to educate ourselves and sanctify ourselves through the apostolate. That is: the apostolate is also a powerful means on the road to sanctity. In conclusion, we can say that the best apostle and the one best prepared for the apostolate is the holiest one.

As members of Schoenstatt, we are all called to be apostles and to have a marked apostolic spirit. It is our vocation to the universal apostolate.

In 1928, Father gave a definition of the apostolic man. He said: “*The apostle is a man who, coming from a profound attachment to God, permanently endeavors – and with all means – for the salvation of immortal souls*” (General Principles, p. 86).

God, source of our apostolate

In this definition, there is something essential for the Christian and Schoenstatt apostolate: the attachment to God. All apostolate must have its source in the love of God. Love for one’s neighbor should be enkindled in the love for God. It is a projection, an extension of the love for God.

This reminds me of an incident I read once: Abbot Pierre, a famous French priest, had founded an organization to help those most in need – the rag-and-bone men. He visited Argentina in the 1960’s. And it happened that on the journey from Buenos Aires to Montevideo, a boat sank in a great accident. He was able to save himself because a woman extended to him a pole which was floating and thus he remained adrift for several hours. The next day, the reporters asked him what he had thought about with the possibility of impending death:

“Look – he said to them – I have spent my life with one hand extended toward others and I was sure that having one hand extended to others, my other hand was held by God.” I think it is a marvelous response on behalf of one of the great apostles of our time. And at the same time it is like a symbol of what we are talking about: the true apostle has one hand extended toward God and the other extended toward his brothers and sisters. We should ask ourselves if the source of our apostolate is truly God. Or if our apostolate is more because of a natural tendency toward activity, or because of an urge to show off, or because of pure activity. In such cases, we would be building on sand and not on a firm foundation.

The salvation of immortal souls. The apostle endeavors for the salvation of immortal souls. This zeal for souls characterized the great apostles of all times. St. Ignatius said: “If I could die a thousand times a day, I would gladly die to save one soul.” And also his great disciple, St. Francis Xavier, when he baptized a dying baby once, commented: “This already compensates me for the long and difficult journey I had to make to arrive at the Indies.” St. Catherine of Siena, who because of her apostolic activity made an extraordinary good for the Kingdom of God, said of herself: “My nature is of fire.”

That reminds me of words which Father often told us in this context: “You cannot start a fire with a piece of ice.” Do we bear within us a fire which enkindles other hearts? Father Kentenich had, undoubtedly, this nature of fire. Once he assured: “Throughout my entire life, I have been guided by one great ideal: God and souls. Everything else is secondary for me. It is consequently subordinate to this one great idea of my life.....day and night.....thus it can be said with reason – I have lived and worked in my secret workshop exclusively for souls.....”

Questions for reflection

1. Am I an apostolic person?
2. Can I enumerate my apostolates?

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Translation: Carlos Cantú, Schoenstatt Family Federation, La Feria, Texas USA 09042014
cantu_carlos@hotmail.com