

Reflections

Father Nicolas Schwizer

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The mass-man

Crisis of authority. It has been increasing for centuries everywhere. Luther's rebellion weakens human paternity in the Church. The French Revolution affirms that political authority has nothing to do with God. Freud says that the father of the family is also not a reflection of God.

According to the measure in which paternal authority's characteristic of divine reflection is severed, it loses its direction and ever-so-more enters into crisis.

Father Kentenich, founder of the Apostolic Schoenstatt Movement, observes: "The present literature usually speaks of the death of the father, the assassination of the father. He is not referring to the Father God but, to the fathers of the families. It means: the position of the father in the family is disintegrating. In America, it is common to laugh at the father figure. And frequently, it is established in sociological writings that modern youth has assassinated fatherhood." (Conference for the Family Work, 08-27-66)

Crisis of values. The Christian lives anew among others who, for the most part, are not Christians. This demands very different attitudes from him. That challenge requires a new spirituality. It is a spirituality for the Christian community, for the laity who live amidst the world.

"Where does the success come from the opposing side? Man today has a marked and peculiar receptivity for values of the second category. We have to be careful not to fall into the puddle. Values of the first category are God and the divine..... values of the second, third and fourth categories are earthly values..... sensitive, economical, commercial values. Today, man has greater interest for these values which are not of the first category." (Education at a time of change, 83. Father Kentenich, Chile, 1951)

The mass-man. According to Father Kentenich, something most characteristic of man today is his inability to decide.

It is due to the influence of the great mass-movements, for example, Nazism or Marxism where high officials decide everything, think of everything; and the masses only have to obey and fulfill their directions.

It is typical of the mass-man who is content when others decide for him. For this, Father uses the image of the flock: "*He only reacts to the orders he hears; like a robot which can only be placed in movement from the outside.....; a mass which is diluted into atoms which do not have thickness nor internal consistency; a flock of savage animals which voluntarily surrenders to the knife of its tamers, after having placed itself apathetically at their disposition.*" (Challenges, 21)

It is a strong criticism of man today: he is not interiorly free because he does not know how to decide. He was born to obey and, therefore, leaves his decisions in the hands of others. He feels powerless and without energy. He is not enthusiastic about anything, everything leaves him cold. His favorite phrase is: "What am I going to do, that is the way I am....."

Father Kentenich points out: "Christian obedience does not submit to man, but to God through man. Consequently, the mass-man is not formed, but vigorous personalities, full of God, who are capable of surpassing primitive egoism and cultivate high levels of unselfish love." (Father Kentenich. For a world of tomorrow, 130)

Not only the beginning, but the entire Schoenstatt history has been under the imperative of this great goal: inner freedom to decide and to fulfill what has been decided. Thus the Founder, 40 years later (1952) could say: "*The idea of true freedom has never abandoned us. It was transformed into a key question of our spirituality.*"

Questions for reflection

1. Do I see something of the mass-man in me?
2. How do I see the father figure today?
3. Which are the values in my environment

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Translation: Carlos Cantú, Schoenstatt Family Federation, La Feria, Texas USA 06242014
cantu_carlos@hotmail.com