

IN MARY'S SCHOOL OF FAITH TODAY by Danielle M. Peters, S.T.D.

Introduction

The Year of Faith opened by our meanwhile Pope emeritus Benedict XVI and continued by Pope Francis aims at the transmission of the faith in our secularized world. God's providence foresaw a striking dynamic for this year commemorating the 50th anniversary of Vatican Council II. From October to February we could attend lectures given by Benedict XVI. He taught us the content of faith and how to penetrate it with heart and mind. It appears that Pope Francis wants to send us to the areopaghi¹ of our times in order to become witnesses to the faith.

A few days prior to the solemn opening of the Year of Faith the XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops was launched. Synods can be likened to a graduate seminar, a think tank for the realities of the universal church. Last October the participants deliberated on how "The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith" can succeed in our time. At stake is not simply boosting Mass attendance or advocating regular prayer; although a sound spiritual life was, is and will always remain at the heart of being Christian. Yet, evangelization aims at engaging broad social and cultural challenges² through a distinctively Christlike lens. In other words, faith is authentic and attractive "when, through our actions, words and way of being, *Another* makes himself present."³ Ultimately, such a transformation is a gift of grace supported by an educational process.⁴ With this paper we want to consider the Meaning of the Year of Faith from a Pedagogical Perspective.

1. We ask how the transmission of faith takes place.
2. We reflect on the receptivity for faith of people today; in other words, our in-house theological arguments, including those formulated at this symposium, cannot leave aside the culture they want to profit.
3. We consider the Blessed Virgin Mary as our Model and Teacher of Faith.
4. Finally, we want to identify the methods and lessons applied in Mary's School of Faith.

The literature I have selected focuses above all on the texts publicized for the Year of Faith:

- The Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*⁵
- The *Instrumentum Laboris*, *Lineamenta* and Proposals of the Synod of Bishops with the theme: The New Evangelization or the Transmission Of The Christian Faith,
- Homilies, Audiences and Speeches of the two popes during this Year of Faith
- And the encyclical letter for the Year of Faith: *Lumen Fidei*⁶ – written by "four hands."

¹ Synod of Bishops. XIII Ordinary General Assembly. The New Evangelization or the Transmission of the Christian Faith. *Instrumentum Laboris*, Vatican City, 27 May 2012, 62. Henceforth cited IL.

² Among them are secularism and relativism, a "hedonistic and consumer-oriented mentality," fundamentalism and "the sects," migration and globalization, the economy, social communications, scientific and technical research, and civic and political life. See: IL13ff.

³ Benedict XVI, Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation *Sacramentum caritatis* (22 February 2007), 85: AAS 99 (2007) 1.

⁴ See: Synod Of Bishops. The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith. *Lineamenta*, 20.

⁵ Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter "*Motu Proprio Data*" *Porta Fidei*, for the Indiction of the Year of Faith. October 11, 2011. Henceforth cited PF.

⁶ Francis, Encyclical Letter *Lumen Fidei*. June 29, 2013. Henceforth cited LF.

To highlight aspects of Mary's school of faith I have also drawn from texts of Father Kentenich, founder of the Schoenstatt Family, who considers the Blessed Virgin Mary explicitly in her perennial mission as Mother and Educator.

1. The Meaning of the Year of Faith from a Pedagogical Perspective

On a slope above the cave of Massabielle a small monument is erected and only noticed by few pilgrims. It commemorates the blind stonemason who was the second⁷ to receive healing from the miraculous Lourdes water. Commissioned by an Italian pilgrim who came to Lourdes with the hope of regaining her eyesight, the words chiseled into the base of the statue read about her: "I came here to regain my eyesight; I have found the vision of faith (instead) - this light is more."

The Light of Faith

We admire a person who has crossed the threshold of faith whereby his "thoughts and affections, mentality and conduct are slowly purified and transformed through love, and thus receive a new criterion of understanding and action that changes the whole of his life."⁸ Through the dynamics of such a faith "the eyes of the heart"⁹ are opened "to a lively understanding of the contents of Revelation."¹⁰

Evidently, our Lourdes pilgrim has received this light of faith allowing her not to give in to disappointment or bitterness due to the loss of her physical vision. Rather, instead of natural eyesight she expects that God will grant her a superior gift: the vision "of the totality of God's plan and the mysteries of faith, of their connection with each other and with Christ, the center of the revealed mystery."¹¹

The Catechism of the Catholic Faith¹² teaches that the assent of faith is "by no means a blind impulse of the mind;"¹³ rather it is the submission of the dimmed light of the intellect to the certainty of the divine light which is greater than the light of natural reason alone.¹⁴ People with this vision are daring and courageous, because they have ventured the leap of faith and surrendered themselves to God, His will and values (cf. GS 24). Ultimately, they are victorious since their citizenship is in another world; but being blind to the lures of this world they are at times considered strangers.¹⁵

Content and Act of Faith

To be a person of faith, to have the light of faith, two aspects have to converge:

1. faith in the **content** of faith (fides quae creditur: the faith which is to be believed) and
2. **the act** of having faith/of believing (fides qua creditur = the faith with which is to be believed).

⁷ Louis Bouriette, born 1804 was cured in March 1858 at the age of 54.

⁸ Cf. PF 6; cf. Rom 12:2; Col 3:9-10; Eph 4:20-29; 2 Cor 5:17.

⁹ Eph 1:18

¹⁰ Cf. LF 1ff; CCC 158.

¹¹ Cf. CCC 158.

¹² Cf. CCC 156f.

¹³ Dei Filius: 3: DS 3008-3010; Cf. Mk 16 20; Heb 2:4

¹⁴ Cf. LF 35. St. Thomas Aquinas, STh II-II 171, 5, obj. 3. Cf. CCC 163 Faith makes us taste in advance the light of the beatific vision, the goal of our journey here below. Then we shall see God "face to face", "as he is" (1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2). CCC 164 Now, however, "we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor 5:7).

¹⁵ Cf. PF 6.

In his Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei* Benedict XVI emphasized this “profound unity between the act by which we believe and the content to which we give our assent.”¹⁶ Thus that “knowledge of the content of faith is essential for giving one’s own *assent*, that is to say, for adhering fully with intellect and will to what the Church proposes.”¹⁷

From a pedagogical-pastoral point of view the interrelationship of content and act of faith is of central importance. Our teaching, preaching and ministering take their bearing from a particular statement of faith. At the same time we need to find ways and means to demonstrate how “the *redditio symboli*, the handing over of the creed”¹⁸ can be integrated in the particular situation of life and thus become the motivation for faith-inspired acting. The effectiveness of both aspects depends on the fundamental and personal question: in **whom** do **I** place my faith? The sincere answer crucially hinges on the so-called “preambles to the faith.”¹⁹

Presuppositions of Faith

Certain presuppositions, which can be grasped with the light of the intellect, are necessary for a person to obtain faith in God. These are not articles of faith but they constitute the *praeambula fidei* for 1. the existence of God; 2. his authority, or right to be believed and 3. His revelation in and through Jesus Christ.²⁰

While intellectual knowledge of God is essential for faith to awaken and grow, it alone does not suffice to safeguard the light of faith. The purely rational insight needs to be complemented with experiences for the affective life as well. Father Kentenich proposes, next to the Thomistic *praeambula fidei rationabilia*, which are necessary for the assent to the content of faith, to also take in account the *praeambula fidei irrationabilia*, i.e. *pre-experiences*, which motivate the act of faith. He distinguishes three kinds of pre-experiences.

1. The affective pre-experience²¹

The psychological ground work for the faith is laid when education imprints on the soul certain virtues relative to the dignity of the human person. Fostering a sense for purity, truth, reverence or respect, for example, awakens receptivity for the purity and truth of God. Without reverence for self and others, love ceases and faith cannot take root. Lacking courage it is hardly possible to witness to the faith.²² The experience of longing and homesickness opens the soul for the ultimate home in God. Moreover, Benedict XVI proposes:

¹⁶ PF 10.

¹⁷ PF 10

¹⁸ PF 10. Cf. St. Augustine, *Sermo* 215:1.

¹⁹ PF 10. Generally, a person does not gain access to faith through a formula but through a Person. In view of faith formation this means: Christian education must aim at a personal encounter with Jesus Christ! Cf. John Paul II. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* to the bishops, clergy and faithful at the close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. January 6, 2001, John Paul II. Apostolic Letter *Novo Millennio Ineunte* to the bishops, clergy and faithful at the close of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000. January 6, 2001. Henceforth cited: NMI. 29.

²⁰ Cf. CCC 27ff

²¹ Cf. Kentenich, Joseph. *Pädagogische Tagung 1950*. Published as: *Grundriss einer neuzeitlichen Pädagogik für den katholischen Erzieher*. Vallendar-Schoenstatt 1971, 58. Henceforth cited: Grundriss.

²² Cf. Grundriss 58. See also: Papst Franziskus. *Mein Leben, mein Weg*. El Jesuita. Herder 2013, 31.

Instilling in someone from a young age the taste for true joy, in every area of life – family, friendship, solidarity with those who suffer, self-renunciation for the sake of the other, love of knowledge, art, the beauty of nature — all this means exercising the inner taste and producing antibodies that can fight the trivialization and the dulling widespread today. Adults too need to rediscover this joy, to desire authenticity, to purify themselves of the mediocrity that might infest them. It will then become easier to drop or reject everything that although attractive proves to be, in fact, insipid, a source of indifference and not of freedom. And this will bring out that desire for God of which we are speaking.²³

2. **Ascetical pre-experiences**

The relationship between human beings and God does not erase the distance between Creator and creature. Experiences of contingency, of moral weakness or spiritual dryness are crucial in order to learn "to abandon oneself" to the Truth and to humbly recognize one's dependence on God.²⁴ The acknowledgement of guilt and sin is a particular challenge for a time which is inclined to suppress, deny or rationalize culpability and fault. Benedict XVI emphasizes the educational value of acknowledging and accepting shortcomings and wrongdoing. "In this way we will learn to strive, unarmed, for the good that we cannot build or attain by our own power; and we will learn to not be discouraged by the difficulty or the obstacles that come from our sin."²⁵

3. **Experiential prerequisites**

Experiential dispositions for the faith come about through the example of those who "give witness of the beauty of faith."²⁶ It is a well known fact and common experience that "modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses."²⁷ Our pope emeritus suggests: "... let us feel like brothers and sisters of all men, travelling companions even of those who do not believe, of those who are seeking, of those who are sincerely wondering about the dynamism of their own aspiration for the true and the good."²⁸

These preambles open heart and soul for the gift of faith. In his Apostolic Letter for the Year of Faith Benedict XVI emphasized:

Knowing the content to be believed is not sufficient unless the heart, the authentic sacred space within the person, is opened by grace that allows the eyes to see below the surface and to understand that what has been proclaimed is the word of God.²⁹

And in *Lumen fidei* we read:

Because faith is a way, it also has to do with the lives of those men and women who, though not believers, nonetheless desire to believe and continue to seek. To the extent that they are

²³ Benedict VI, General Audience. November 7, 2012. Henceforth cited Nov 7.

²⁴ Cf. Grundriss, 58.

²⁵ Nov 7

²⁶ Benedict XVI, Opening Homily for the Year of Faith, Oct 11, 2012.

²⁷ IL 158.

²⁸ Nov 7.

²⁹ PF 10.

*sincerely open to love and set out with whatever light they can find, they are already, even without knowing it, on the path leading to faith.*³⁰

From a biblical point of view the heart is the center of the personality. God speaks to the heart and expects an answer from the heart. We are to profess our faith with our total personal existence: "... with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength."³¹ The heart as the inner core of the person has an integrating function: intellect, will and affection meet here and influence the decision in whom or in what a person puts his faith.³² For educators this insight is valuable and challenging at once since being truly human entails the ability to receive and accept love. *Credere*, to believe, is at times derived from *cor dare*, to give the heart. A free and loving surrender to God, his will and values,³³ is above all a reaction to the personal experience: God has loved me and gave himself for me!³⁴

The reciprocity of love becomes the foundation and summit of each personal Credo, which we are encouraged to formulate and profess during this Year of Faith.³⁵

But who are the faithful of our time? A careful evaluation of those who approach and have crossed the threshold of the door of faith today is crucial to begin with, in view of the methods and lessons to be implied in Mary's School of faith.

2. The faith of Christians today–Preliminary Considerations for Mary's School of Faith

It was no coincidence that the Year of Faith began with a Synod of Bishops entitled: "*The New Evangelization for the Transmission of the Christian Faith*"³⁶ The *Instrumentum Laboris* emphasizes: "The evangelizing mission received from the Apostles, ... is today facing social and cultural changes that are profoundly affecting a person's perception of self and the world, and consequently, a person's way of believing in God."³⁷

More than three weeks the Synod Fathers reflected on "the responsibility to devise new tools and new expressions to ensure that the word of faith... be heard more and be better understood, even in the new

³⁰ LF 35.

³¹ Dt 6:5. Cf. DCE 1. DV51

³² Cf. LF 26. Also see: Cf. Joseph Kentenich, *Das Lebensgeheimnis Schönstatts*. vol II. Bündnisfrömmigkeit. Vallendar-Schoenstatt 1971, 210-212. Henceforth cited LSch II. "With the heart we take in, grasp and work through, or digest, religious truths. Christian philosophy tries to clarify what is meant by "heart". It calls it the harmony between the higher and lower appetites. The heart reveals the fundamental attitude with which we react emotionally and with our wills to the values or objects we encounter. It presupposes that the intellect and will have judged them. The word 'heart' draws attention to the person who is giving expression to a fundamental attitude of soul with relation to things, goods and values. So we can define the 'heart' as the essence of all the powers of soul and mind that are combined in each individual person to bring about a unique character and order. Normally we human beings are far more led by what the heart unconsciously desires than by what our wills want. That is why we do not talk about a fusion of wills, but a fusion of hearts. It is the heart that ultimately makes us eloquent, great or weak. Cf. National Conference of Catholic Bishops *Behold Your Mother: Woman of Faith*. A Pastoral Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary, 21 November 1973, 69. Henceforth cited: BYM.

³³ Cf. GS 24

³⁴ Gal 2:20

³⁵ Cf. PF 8 Cf. Prov 23:26

³⁶ The *Instrumentum Laboris* speaks of: The New Evangelization or the Transmission of the Christian Faith.

³⁷ IL 6. See also: Joseph Kentenich, *Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt*. Eine Nachschrift der gleichnamigen Tagungen in den Jahren 1927, 1928, 1929. Manuscript. Published as *Ethos und Ideal in der Erziehung. Wege zur Persönlichkeitsbildung*. Schoenstatt Verlag 1972, 50ff: „Das ist ja vielfach die Tragik unserer katholischen Pastoral, unserer katholischen Aszese und Pädagogik, dass wir jeweils Menschen zu erfassen suchen, die schon nicht mehr existieren (...)“

deserts of this world.”³⁸ What are the typical earmarks of this new “universal culture”? How do they impinge on a person? Which criteria are potential points of contact for Our Lady’s School of Faith? Let us consider these questions.

2.1. Social and cultural changes

It is undisputable that today’s social and cultural upheaval is mainly caused and promoted by the digital revolution. As we are well aware, the digital network, "web", has developed rapidly over the last 20 years.

Digital Natives vs Digital Immigrants

Those who fully identify with this culture are the so called digital natives. They find their information in an instant through Google; prefer graphics to texts and function best when online. Their greatest problem are the digital immigrants, i.e. those individuals born before the existence of digital technology.

We observe substantial differences between digital natives and digital immigrants, in terms of how they are accustomed to access information, value relationships and view institutions. A huge intergenerational challenge that needs to be addressed in the school of faith are the digital immigrant instructors, who speak an outdated language (that of the pre-digital age) and struggle to teach a population with an entirely new lingo.

Netting and Sharing

We can identify some striking changes in life and lifestyle designated through the digital culture. The Synod Fathers speak of "our new religion" thereby indicating that “the sickness, virus, symptoms which infects the modern person and society has also made inroads into our own souls.”³⁹ They identify “new forms of gnosis” with “an almost magical approach to life ... promising prosperity and instant gratification.”⁴⁰ In particular two catchwords have had an impact on society: Netting and Sharing.

- In many ways netting has taken the place of the family, clan and parish.
- Frequently, the network functions as substitute for transcendence.
- The flood of indiscriminate information implies a subtle shift of truth. Digital users seek and share orientation by choosing what suits them.
- A network is spread far and wide but has no roots or depth.
- Sharing, - from file-sharing and car-sharing to time sharing, secret and code-sharing -, has become a universal trend and can be summarized with “access over ownership.“ By renouncing the claim to ownership sharing implies indirectly withdrawal from responsibility.

Acceleration and Innovation

Closely connected to the media culture is the acceleration of life’s processes. We observe an overwhelming and continual sense of urgency to accomplish more in less time. A fast moving and changing world creates a new culture. The catchword in this world and culture of innovation is ‘flow.’ It postulates a new style of life marked by dynamic stability. Michael Hochschild provides us with a

³⁸ IL 8. See also XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops 7-28 October 2012, Message, 2.

³⁹ Joseph Kantenich, *Pädagogische Tagung 1951*. Published as: *Dass neue Menschen werden*. Eine pädagogische Religionsphilosophie. Vallendar-Schoenstatt 1971, 63.

⁴⁰ IL 58.

fitting sociological diagnosis of time: "The cards of society, *all* cards are just being reshuffled. Not only the cards of religion. In a sense, the card game is being reinvented. Such is the profundity of the crisis."

2.2. Consequences for a person's perception of self and the world

Characteristic for post modernity is the questioning and collapse of traditional identities. There is virtually no longer any concept of life which is exempt from being scrutinized. Individuals have perennially to clarify for themselves: Why do I live this way? Could there perhaps be yet another, a better, a more gratifying way for me? This permanent "identity work" of self and others leads for many, digital natives and immigrants alike, to "a deeply, self-centered attentiveness to individual needs only ... an excess in holding to one's individual thinking and a gradual reduction of ethics and civic life to appearance only."⁴¹

Zygmunt Baumann⁴² characterizes the type of person generated in our present culture as *flâneur*, vagabond, player and tourist. Naturally, there could be other ways of typification but Baumann's characters capture well the educational needs of those approaching the door of faith in our age.

The **flâneur**, meaning "stroller", is a literary type from 19th-century-France who suits this type of person: he prefers to stroll incognito; he masters the art of seeing without being caught looking. The flâneur is not **a**-social — he needs the crowds to thrive — but he does not blend in, preferring to savor his solitude. He is a stranger among strangers: he remains on the surface, avoids lasting commitments, bathes in events, information and contacts which change quickly. "The ultimate freedom is screen directed, lived in the company of surfaces, and called zapping."⁴³

The acceleration of life's processes leads to an acceleration of the pace of life. People are continuously driven, rushing and anxious. Zygmunt Bauman has named this rushed and unsettled type of person **vagabond**. Vagabonds are tempted to do more things in less time. They take advantage of fast food and even speed dating, try power naps or cut breaks. They are experts in multitasking! However, many confuse outer activity and achievements with inner (trans)formation and maturation. Psychologists diagnose this state as "hurry sickness", the precursor of a burnout. Interestingly, for some spiritual authors, today's restlessness reveals a deep longing of the soul for a fuller life. Since the notion of eternity is virtually non-existent to vagabonds, including even in the mind and heart of those who consider themselves Christian, fulfillment has to be hunted for in this world. Today's vagabond is not a passionate master-less tramp or roamer; rather he is driven to it because the "places" of his identity disappear. "The vagabond decides where to turn when he comes to the crossroads;"⁴⁴ he has no choice but to put up with the condition of homelessness, of which the "profound transcendental homelessness"⁴⁵ is the most devastating.

A fast moving and changing world creates a new culture. The synod Fathers observe that
Its charm and seductive character, has also enabled it to enter the lives of Christians and Church communities, becoming not just an external threat ..., but one inherent to everyday life. Traces of a

⁴¹ II, 62.

⁴² *Life in Fragments. Essays in Postmodern Morality*. Cambridge, MA. Basil Blackwell, 1995.

⁴³ Baumann, Zygmunt. *From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity*. 28. See: <http://www.nyu.edu/classes/bkg/tourist/Baumann-pilgrim-tourist.pdf>

⁴⁴ Baumann, Zygmunt. *From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity*. 28.

⁴⁵ Benedict XVI. Homily in Munich, Germany. September 10, 2006.

*secular understanding of life are seen in the habitual behavior of many Christians ... (and) have given way to an unproductive, hedonistic and consumer mentality, which leads to a highly superficial manner in facing life and responsibility. In this way, faith runs the real risk of losing its fundamental elements.*⁴⁶

The Synod draws attention “to a weakened sense of the spiritual in many persons and an emptiness of heart.”⁴⁷ Crises are a permanent phenomenon in a culture which refuses to rely on truths from yesterday and where the experts and scientists of today contradict each other in almost all major existential questions. It becomes apparent that “by necessity, the changes ... influence the way people express their sense of religion.”⁴⁸

Zygmunt Bauman identifies this type of person as **player**. He writes,

*...in the life-game of the postmodern consumers the rules of the game keep changing in the course of playing. The sensible strategy is therefore to keep each game short ... (and) to beware long-term commitments; to refuse to be ‘fixed’ one way or the other. ... Not to wed one’s life to one vocation only. Not to swear consistency and loyalty to anything and anybody.*⁴⁹

Stability and trustworthiness of human relations are rare; instead they “can be entered and terminated, more or less at will, by either partner at any particular point.” In fact, players can best adjust to new situations by inventing new rules. The present trend of Gamification leverages people’s natural desires for competition, achievement, status, and self-expression by engaging them through game thinking to solve problems in a non-game content.

The synod Fathers point to the “*phenomenon of the great migration* which is causing an increasing number of people to leave their country of origin to live in urban settings, resulting in a meeting and mixing of cultures and contributing to the erosion of basic reference points to life, values and the very bonds through which people build their identity and come to know the meaning of life.”⁵⁰ In order to succeed in the work place many need to frequently relocate, retrain and re-learn. Consequently, personal roots of being at home with friends, a parish or community can hardly grow.

Baumann compares these nomads to **tourists**. A tourist is driven by the desire for new experiences. He seeks the charm of new and exotic adventures with no intentions to settle. Many people today behave like tourists in a foreign country: they consciously accept no responsibility and make no commitment. Unlike the vagabond, the tourist is afraid of being too home-bound, of being tied to a place and barred from exit. He feels at home in the mainstream and only there. “Solitude, loneliness, silence, calm are the greatest crosses, unbearable burdens from which he flees.”⁵¹

⁴⁶ IL 53

⁴⁷ IL 60.

⁴⁸ IL 63.

⁴⁹ Baumann, Zygmunt. *From Pilgrim to Tourist – or a Short History of Identity*. 24f.

⁵⁰ IL 55.

⁵¹ LSch II, 193-200.

2.3. Consequences for a person's way of believing in God

The volume of information circulating on the Internet and other media means a lot of competition for the School of Faith.⁵² To rise above this racket experts tell us that Christian rituals, sacred words, creating a sense of belonging, authenticity, consistency, symbols, mystery and sensory appeal are our most effective statement to faith.⁵³ In spirit we see flâneurs, vagabonds, players and tourists of all traits and cultures approaching the *Porta Fidei*. The way that leads them is an entirely personal one.⁵⁴ Yet, at the Door of Faith they should be welcomed and receive “assistance in understanding the intense content of (their) fundamental human experiences.”⁵⁵ The synod Fathers propose that “encountering these people in search of truth ... is a real incentive for us in our duty to live and witness to the faith, so that the true face of God can be seen by every person.”⁵⁶

Indeed, “the human element is the natural point for faith to enter.”⁵⁷ Benedict XVI has proposed a human ecology, which seeks to understand the world and the development of science and at the same time takes into account all the needs of a person.⁵⁸ Like pope emeritus, Father Kentenich proposed that the present cultural and social upheaval calls for a new type of person who can combat the phenomenon of mass mentality, as well as a society without roots and of depersonalization. The founder of Schoenstatt observes that in general “our entire education including how we teach and learn the faith is excessively intellectual.” In his opinion this is a key problem in the approach to education today since the separation of idea and life kills the living faith.⁵⁹

Do not all flâneurs, vagabonds, players and tourists suffer from loneliness and the loss of meaning of life because of an overly critical intellect, a will submerged in the main stream and underdeveloped heart?⁶⁰ This insight is valuable when considering methods for a comprehensive formation.⁶¹ If it is true, and we have confirmed this before, that faith is initiated with an encounter of love⁶² then a pedagogy of faith needs to teach above all the ability to receive and accept love.⁶³ Pope emeritus alias Josef Ratzinger confirms: “The organ for seeing God is the purified heart.” And he continues:

It may just be the task of Marian piety to awaken the heart and purify it in faith. If the misery of contemporary man is his increasing disintegration into mere bios and mere rationality,

⁵² In 2011 around 300,000 books were published in the United States, 1,000 movies were released, and 60 hours of video were uploaded to YouTube every minute.

⁵³ See: *John Flynn, LC interview with Phil Cooke*, a Hollywood producer, author and advisor to many faith-based organizations with a doctorate in theology, *Getting Your Story Heard. Considering How Christians Can Get People to Listen* Zenit.org May 10, 2013.

⁵⁴ Pope Benedict XVI, *Salt of the Earth*, 1997. Cf. LF 29ff.

⁵⁵ IL 145. Effective communication does not mean being reactive to the culture, it means being responsive to the culture and presenting effectively the story that has transformed so many generations before us.

⁵⁶ IL 54. See also: IL 100: *The Pedagogy of the Faith*.

⁵⁷ IL 54

⁵⁸ Cf. Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter *Caritas in Veritate* (29 June 2009), 51: AAS 101 (2009) 687. Cf. Francis, General Audience June 5, 2013.

⁵⁹ Cf. Joseph Kentenich, *Mary, our Mother and Educator*. An applied Mariology. Waukesha WI 1987, 397. Henceforth cited: MME. The citation refers to Daniel-Rops (Petiot, Henri). *Das flammende Schwert*. Wien 1948, 322. „Here we deal with a “terrifying torso of a society without a goal, without consciousness, yes even without fear, in which human beings bound by their instincts like insects, mix with one another, battle with each other and kill each other.”

⁶⁰ Cf. MME 1954, 397. Also see Father Kentenich’s diagnosis of the time in *Grundriss*, 65. Joseph Kentenich, *On Monday Evening ... Speaking to families*. Talks given to couples in Milwaukee WI between 1955 and 1964, Waukesha WI 1998ff. vol. XXI, 184-197.

⁶¹ His feelings lack depth, permanence and warmth, and are constantly changing. Mind and will no longer provide a healthy clarification and regulation of the emotional impulses, while the feelings insufficiently captivate the mind and will. *Dass neue Menschen* 63-69

⁶² Cf. LF 30, 32ff.

⁶³ Cf. MME 1954, 396. See also: Oda Schneider’s publication *Er ordnete in mir die Liebe*. Wien, München 1954, 98.

*Marian piety could work against this 'decomposition' and help man to rediscover unity in the center, from the heart.*⁶⁴

Let us therefore turn to

3. The Blessed Virgin Mary, Model and Teacher of Faith

In a unique way Mary has crossed the door of faith and in doing so has opened the door to her and our Redeemer. Mary's freedom from sin and the greatness of her mission indicate that in her person the natural and supernatural fullness of life have reached the highest possible degree obtainable for a human person. Through the fullness of divine life abiding in her and her cooperation with grace, "there was no opposition of her drives to the spiritual or divine!"⁶⁵ From this point of view, Mary's faith is unsurpassed and unique. We can assess three prominent features distinguishing Mary's faith from ours:

1. The first criterion refers to the measure of God's love for her. It is measureless because all obstacles to Love, i.e. "sin, egoism and egocentrism" are non-existent in Mary. She belongs undividedly to Him.
2. The second criterion refers to Mary's mission; the most sublime mission ever given to a human person.
3. Thirdly, as the handmaid of the Lord Mary is personified humility. Lowliness and exaltation are two contrasting states which paradoxically belong together. She is empty of self and therefore God can completely replenish her with the fullness of His Love and Life!

Hence, explains Benedict XVI, in virtue of her receptive listening and of her faith-filled Yes "she is inserted into a history of faith ..., which constitutes the fabric of her existence."⁶⁶ Highlighting the Marian dimension of the Year of Faith, we will now pay "a double tribute to Mary's faith"⁶⁷ and reflect on the lessons of faith Mary learned from her Son.

3.1. *Mary believed in the content of the message:*

The encounter with the Angel challenges Mary's faith in multiple ways; we want to consider three in particular:

- "By faith Mary had to let go of all natural understanding and security, giving her assent to the promise that "with God nothing will be impossible."⁶⁸ The handmaid of the Lord was faced with the incredible novelty that "the glory of God is not manifested in the triumph and power of a king, it does not shine in a famous city, in a sumptuous palace, but dwells in the womb of a virgin; it reveals itself in the poverty of a child."⁶⁹ In the strength of her supernatural sight, she dared to embrace the mysterious ways of God, receiving "within herself the radical 'newness' of faith."⁷⁰

⁶⁴ *Communio* 30 (Spring 2003). © 2003 International Catholic Review J.Ratzinger, "Thoughts on the Place of Marian Doctrine," 160.

⁶⁵ Grundriss, 258. English translation in: *Sign of Light for the World*. A collection of Aphorisms. Constantia, S.A. 1980, 18.

⁶⁶ Benedict XVI, General Audience December 19, 2012.

⁶⁷ BYM28, also see 69.

⁶⁸ Cf. CCC 148.

⁶⁹ Benedict XVI, General Audience December 19, 2012.

⁷⁰ John Paul II. *Redemptoris Mater - Mother of the Redeemer*. Encyclical Letter on the Blessed Virgin Mary in the Life of the Pilgrim Church. March 25, 1987, 17. Henceforth cited: RM.

- A careful reading of Luke's text shows that the angel's words to her contain the hitherto unknown and "inscrutable mystery ... (of) the Triune God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit."⁷¹ Against all intellectual understanding and without any sign or proof, the Virgin believed.
- Finally, she was asked to believe contrary to natural law that she would be simultaneously Mother and Virgin. Added to this is her previous commitment to Joseph. It is hard to fathom the anguish tearing this young woman's heart. Yet, it is her virginal faith "'unadulterated by any doubt,' ... (that made possible) her undivided gift of herself to God's will."⁷²

The key to Mary's faith is receptive self-surrender. Mary is "blessed because of her belief in the promise of salvation"⁷³ whereby she abandons "every human idea and faculty."⁷⁴ From the Annunciation to Pentecost she was not spared opportunities to walk by faith repeating her surrender "of heart and body as well as of mind and intellect."⁷⁵

3.2. *Mary's act of faith: fiat!*

Mary is not our Mother of Faith solely because she believed in the message but also through her "maternal 'yes,' ... her act of faith."⁷⁶ Considering the unheard of content of faith her *fiat* expresses the transparent disposition of her heart to place herself wholly in the service of God's plan. In her "let it be done to me" we encounter the faith of the little ones, the *anawim*, of whom Mary is the smallest. Giving "full expression to the longing of the poor of Yahweh,"⁷⁷ and given the fact that she cannot rely on her own strength Mary's answer to the Angel is no self-assured *volo – I will do it*; rather acknowledging her nothingness before God she dares the leap of faith in the self-abandonment of her *fiat- let it be done unto me*.

Benedict XVI suggests: "Faced with all this, we can ask ourselves: how was Mary able to live this path beside her Son with such a strong faith, even in the moments of darkness, without losing full trust in the action of God?" And he concludes:

Mary does not stop at a first superficial understanding of what happens in her life, but is able to look deeper, she allows herself to be questioned by the events, processes them, discerns them, and gains that understanding that only faith can provide. It is the profound humility of the obedient faith of Mary, who welcomes into herself even what she does not understand of the action of God, leaving it to God to open her mind and heart.⁷⁸

Mary's act of faith deprived her so to speak of all earthly security making her endlessly pliable for God's plan with her. Aligning herself to the will of God she makes of herself a gift to God, abandoning and consuming her total self in the service of salvation. Blessed JPII described Our Lady's act of faith as "perhaps the deepest *kenosis* of faith in human history."⁷⁹ Benedict XVI reminds us that "Mary's faith is a 'journeying' faith, a faith that is repeatedly shrouded in darkness and has to mature

⁷¹ John Paul II, *Litterae Encyclicae*. Letter to All Consecrated Persons Belonging to Religious Communities and Secular Institutes on the Occasion of the Marian Year, 22 May 1988, 4.

⁷² CCC 506; cf. LG 63; cf. 1 Cor 7:34-35.

⁷³ LG 57

⁷⁴ DV 51

⁷⁵ Cf. BYM, 69

⁷⁶ BYM28.

⁷⁷ *Tertio Millennio Adveniente*. Apostolic Letter in Preparation for the Jubilee of the Year 2000. November 10, 1994, 48

⁷⁸ Benedict XVI, General Audience December 19, 2012.

⁷⁹ RM 18.

by persevering in the darkness.”⁸⁰ Let us briefly shed light on the educational dimension of her journeying faith.

3.3. *Educated in her Son’s School of Faith*

We observe that the Mother who educated the Child was likewise the disciple who, in her Son’s school of education, grew in faith. Thus on her journey Mary could gradually mature for her position and mission in the plan of salvation – because she believed! Benedict XVI summarizes as follows the main lessons her faith had to undergo:

- She must accept the precedence of the true Father of Jesus;
- she must leave that Son, whom she generated, free to follow his mission.
- And Mary's "yes" to the will of God, in the obedience of faith, is repeated throughout her life, until the most difficult moment, that of the Cross.⁸¹

In sum, Mary’s faith journey is centered on God with every fiber of her being. Not she, her thinking, willing, feeling or loving, is the object of her life, but He! The exceptional Credo of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Model of Faith and Mother of all Believers, is a constant point of reference for us. Let us highlight but a few aspects:

Mary’s exceptional Credo

The first time we encounter Mary, we get to know a young woman in dialog with an Angel. Before she gives her faith-filled fiat she courageously seeks more insight to the overwhelming message just delivered to her. The Handmaid of the Lord presents herself in full possession of her dignity and nobility. She knows herself uniquely loved and called to freely cooperate in salvation. Mary’s sincerely spoken *credo* implies the belief that she and in and like Mary each person is loved by God and graced with a unique mission. Appreciation and consciousness of this election includes at the same time a radical rejection of any inferiority.⁸²

Furthermore, Mary’s *credo* speaks of her attitude of serving as expressed in her *fiat*. Accordingly, Christian service is ultimately rendered to God and in dependence on Him to others.

Mary’s *credo* points also to the bridal character of creation. As *Sponsa Christi*, Mary represents all of creation in her bridal union with the Lamb. For Father Kentenich this means that the human person is wedded to Christ “through and in Mary” because for Christ only “*una est columba mea, una est sponsa mea!* (SoS 6:9).”⁸³ This interpretation points to a profound spiritual union between each human person and Mary, a fusion of hearts, in and through which we can experience this loving union with the Eternal Word.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ Josef Ratzinger, *Jesus of Nazareth, The infancy narratives* Prologue New York, Image Books, c2012, 125.

⁸¹ Benedict XVI, General Audience December 19, 2012.

⁸² Cf. Joseph Kentenich, *Brasilienterziat*. Santa Maria, Brasilien, vol I, 159ff.

⁸³ Joseph Kentenich, *Oktoberwoche 1950*. Vorträge vom 16.-20. Oktober 1950 an die Schönstattfamilie, 158f.

⁸⁴ Cf. Joseph Kentenich, *Dankeswoche*. 15. - 21. Oktober 1945, 194.

Notwithstanding her exalted vocation and degree of faith, Mary is the Model and Mother of all believers in virtue of the *analogia entis*, i.e. Mary's similitude to Christ,⁸⁵ and derivatively to God, the Church and to the image of the human person desired by God. Although less universal and decisive, each and every human person created in the image and likeness of God, is personally called to a unique relationship with God. Within this singular reciprocal encounter, each person has a unique Annunciation Hour inviting him or her to make a contribution in the here and now as partner and instrument.

Still today, Pope Francis reminds us, "the Lord entrusts us to the Mother's hands, full of love and tenderness, so that we feel her support in dealing with and overcoming the problems along our human and Christian journey."⁸⁶ The invitation to enter the School of Faith of this divinely commissioned Mother and Educator is extended to us all.

4. Lessons and Methods of the School of Mary

The modern technological advances bring with them the frightening prospect of a 'running on empty' of the interior life. For the superficial observer the resulting confusion of body and soul manifests itself as indifference and uncertainty. Yet, those who look more closely speak of the bacillus of the mainstream as the root of the disease. It deprives the person of his dignity to act of his own volition thereby gradually losing the ability of participation in the creative and self-giving activity of God. From pope to toddler, it appears that nobody is completely exempt from this depersonalizing influence and its leveling effect.

Encounter at the Door of Faith

On account of this grave anthropological crisis⁸⁷ the human person is "tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine" (Eph 4: 14). Thus we see many flâneurs, vagabonds, players and tourists skeptically, hesitatingly, mockingly and yes, also curiously approach the Door of Faith. Their disorientation has made them vulnerable, distrusting and doubtful "of all that has been passed down about the meaning of life" and hitherto either unwilling or incapable "to adhere in a total, unconditional manner to what has been revealed as the profound truth of our being."⁸⁸ Consciously or not their search is accompanied by the yearning of being healed and of being motivated to walk by faith instead of being a follower of "a false concept of man's autonomy."⁸⁹

At this crucial crossroad the church is aware of her mission to welcome and share the gift and mystery of faith. Yet, observes Benedict XVI, this "educational emergency ... increasingly demands ... truly qualified teachers" capable of "providing an anthropological and metaphysical basis to today's challenges."⁹⁰

⁸⁵ Cf. Joseph Kentenich, *Childlikeness before God* - Reflections on Spiritual Childhood. Waukesha WI 2001, 85. Regarding the doctrine of the *analogia entis* see IV. Lateran Council (1215). DS 806. In a 1952 study Father Kentenich suggested that in accord with the *communicatio and quasi communicatio* references made to Jesus Christ can be applied though on a lower level to His *sponsa et consors*. For example the feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and of the Immaculate Heart of Mary or of Christ, the King and Our Lady as Queen. The reason is the *praedestinatio perpetua, perfecta, mutua, absoluta* of Jesus and Mary. Also see: Scheeben, Matthias Joseph. *Handbuch der katholischen Dogmatik*. Freiburg 1954, V, 661, 1771.

⁸⁶ Francis, Visit to Mary Major, May 4, 2013.

⁸⁷ See: IL 153

⁸⁸ IL 7; cf. IL 104.

⁸⁹ Benedict XVI, Discourse at the LXI General Assembly of the Italian Bishops' Conference (27 May 2010), L'Osservatore Romano: Weekly Edition in English, 27 June 2010, 3f.

⁹⁰ Benedict XVI, *Discourse at the Inauguration of the Convention of the Diocese of Rome* (Rome, 11 June 2007): AAS 99 (2007) 680. Cited in IL 149

“Is it not time,” asks Father Kentenich, when “many of the proven methods of the past ... have become unworkable or ineffective ... to call on Our Lady, showing her ... and presenting her as the great educator in God’s plan?”⁹¹ One intervention and the final propositions of the synod seem to support this proposal by advocating the BVM as “the protagonist of a New Visitation to the homes of our people”⁹² and as “the ‘Missionary’ who will aid us in the difficulties of our time and ... open the hearts of men and women to the faith.”⁹³ John Paul II has brought it to a point: “the Church ... particularly at our time has need of a Mother.”⁹⁴ And in the same vein he added: She is the “Most Holy Educator.”⁹⁵

Mary as Educator⁹⁶

Just as she did 2000 years ago, also today Our Lady “walks through the world as the great educator of peoples. She wants to give birth to Christ everywhere...”⁹⁷ Mary’s involvement in the life of the Church and of the faithful as Educator has several dimensions. Since she “has gone before us”⁹⁸ she is able to teach the Church to walk by faith and is simultaneously the paradigm of this attitude. Add to this that Our Lady’s method of education “exactly follows the rules and principles of God’s educational wisdom which she became acquainted with and learned to live and love in the workshop of the divine Educator as the science of the saints.”⁹⁹

The acknowledgement of Mary’s educative duty is especially critical in our time when anthropological heresies wreak havoc. Already in 1932 Father Kentenich identified them as a threat for the organic growth of the person and community. He explains: “Formally and immediately, the heresies we face are of gigantic proportions, and humanity, human nature, is directly at issue...”¹⁰⁰ He is convinced: *Omnes haereses, etiam anthropologicas, tu sola interemisti in universe mundo.*¹⁰¹

Thus, committing to Mary’s educational activity does not lead to an infantile subservience. Rather, attending her School of Faith, our vision is sharpened for God’s plan of salvation and our participation therein. Mary’s pedagogy “mirrors the loftiest sentiments of which the human heart is capable. The natural and supernatural bond of love uniting Mary and her spiritual children creates an experience of reciprocity and of being at home. It’s like in any love relationship.

Recall Henry Higgins who realizes he has grown attached to Eliza to a degree that “her smiles are second nature to me now... like breathing out and breathing in.” He ponders: “I was serenely

⁹¹ *Second Founding Document* of October 18, 1939. In: *Schoenstatt - The Founding Documents*. Waukesha WI 1993, 77f.

⁹² H. Exc. Rev. Mons. Catalino Claudio Giménez Medina, deiPadri di Schönstatt, Bishop of Caacupé, President of the Episcopal Conference (Paraguay).

⁹³ Final List of Propositions of the Synod 2012, 58.

⁹⁴ John Paul II, *Redemptor Hominis*. Encyclical Letter at the Beginning of his Papal Ministry. March 4, 1979. 22.

⁹⁵ John Paul II. *Greeting to the Polish People after the General Audience. September 29, 1982.*

⁹⁶ Fr. Kentenich asserted that it may take time until Mary’s educational office will be recognized and properly applied to the pastoral ministry of the Church. See for example: Laurentin, René. *La donnée dogmatique fondamentale: Marie, mere, donc éducatrice*. Manuscript. Dayton, June 17, 2003, 1. “The subject assigned to me, Mary as educator, is not much studied, and is apparently of marginal interest. There is a risk (Mariological) of constructing an artificial superstructure on what is uncertain or of wasting one’s time on what is insignificant or of minor interest. Nevertheless, the subject has some dogmatic bases that are hard to challenge. If Mary is essentially mother, she is also educator. But in what sense?”

⁹⁷ LSch 1952, II, 264.

⁹⁸ RM 5.

⁹⁹ MME (E) 1954, 184.

¹⁰⁰ Joseph Kentenich, *With Mary into the New Millennium*. Selected texts about the Mission of the Blessed Mother. Waukesha WI. Nd., 97.

¹⁰¹ Cf. LSch 1952, II, 209.

independent and content before we met; surely, I could always be that way again - and yet..." Ideally seen, students in Mary's school have "grown accustomed to her look; accustomed to her voice; accustomed to her face." In this atmosphere of reverence and love habits of the heart are cultivated and separation inevitably results in homesickness.¹⁰²

The encounter with Mary's "faith working through love" (Gal 5:6) presents us with a new standard for understanding the message of faith and for acting upon it, thereby changing every aspect of life (cf. Eph 4:20-29).¹⁰³ The uniting and assimilating power of love attunes the soul to the language of Mary's heart, and as a result a profound, inner transformation will take place: Faith can sprout and grow when it is communicated as an experience of grace and lived as an experience of love.¹⁰⁴ Still, there are degrees of Mary's activity depending on the openness and receptivity of the faithful.

Mary's school is particularly fruitful in the domestic church, in Marian shrines and through the religious traditions of societies, cultures and nations. In this context John Paul II spoke of "a specific *geography* of faith and Marian devotion."¹⁰⁵ This worldwide dimension of Mary's school perpetuates "the maternal presence of her 'who believed,'" which in turn effects "a strengthening of ... faith."¹⁰⁶ Mary's pedagogy becomes fruitful through her maternal mediation and example which invites to imitation.

This school of Mary is all the more effective if we consider that she teaches by obtaining for us in abundance the gifts of the Holy Spirit, even as she offers us the incomparable example of her own "pilgrimage of faith." As we contemplate each mystery of her Son's life, she invites us to do as she did at the Annunciation: to ask humbly the questions which open us to the light, in order to end with the obedience of faith.¹⁰⁷

Mary – personified *Praeambulum Fidei*

As Mother and Educator, Our Lady is the personified *praeambulum fidei* and thus the preferential entry to the world of faith. In her the truths of our faith are personalized and symbolized. She radiates inner harmony, peace and a gratuitous love which attracts like a magnet. Her personal integrity, her receptivity for God and her motherly disposition are natural and supernatural points of relationship. Is it not the sensitivity of a mother that takes seriously the subjective needs of the individual? She can touch layers of the heart which cannot be fully known to the intellect. "From her believing ... (and) maternal heart flows living water which purifies and heals."¹⁰⁸ Patiently she tends the wounds of lethargic hearts, helping them to recuperate from their various disappointments and losses. She knows that unless the soil of the emotional and irrational life is lovingly nourished and tilted, spiritual and religious values cannot take root¹⁰⁹ and the heart's capacity for perception and dialoging is curtailed drastically, endangering its ability to love.

¹⁰² Such being at home with one another is according to Father Kentenich the prerequisite for any education See: Joseph Kentenich, *Pädagogische Tagung 1951*. Veröffentlicht als: *Daß neue Menschen werden*. Eine pädagogische Religionsphilosophie. Schönstatt 1971, 185. Cf. Lersch, Ph. *Der Aufbau der Person*. J. A. Barth München 1970, 28

¹⁰³ IL 121.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. PF 7

¹⁰⁵ RM 28. Emphasis by author.

¹⁰⁶ RM 28.

¹⁰⁷ *Rosarium Virginis Mariae*. Apostolic Letter on the Most Holy Rosary. October 16, 2002, 14.

¹⁰⁸ Benedict XVI. Eucharistic Celebration for the Sick. *Lourdes*, September 15, 2008.

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Kentenich, *Studie 1949*. Antwort auf den Bericht über die Kanonische Visitation der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt vom 19. - 28. Februar 1949, erstattet durch den Visitor Weihbischof Dr. Bernhard Stein. Manuskript, 311. "I am trying ... to make you aware of how little the religious life has penetrated to the subconscious. The religious life is something that has been stuck on. That is the

The key to unlock

Just as at the Wedding at Cana, Mary turns to her Son on their behalf telling Him: they have no more wine of true faith! And she directs us to “Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith:”¹¹⁰ encouraging us: “Do whatever He tells you!” In virtue of her intercession, “it is possible also in this age, seemingly so blocked to the transcendent dimension,” to enter through the door of faith. For the “one who does not yet believe and ... the one who has already received the gift of faith”¹¹¹ love is the magic key which unlocks hearts even when the religious organ of the heart seems to have died.

Elementary School of Faith

In the elementary school¹¹² of faith, our Mother and Educator perceives of the wounds of the flâneur. She helps him understand that pretense and non-commitment leads to isolation and profound unhappiness. Her lessons aim at recognizing the freedom and dignity of a human person in Christ. She teaches him to think, deliberate and decide in a personal way; the opposite of which is the danger of losing touch with self and of becoming a slave to what the media dictate. Through her motherly attention the flâneur’s longing for depth and loyal ties is awakened. If he can overcome his suspicion, he can dare to trust her message of being personally valued and loved by God. He learns to appreciate his dignity and self-worth and as he becomes receptive for religious truths the idols lingering in his heart gradually begin to topple.

Our teacher and missionary meets the ceaseless and restless vagabond by offering him the permanent home he lacks. His chase after experiences and enjoyment finally meets the finish line in her school of gratuitous love. There he learns God’s measure of pace which “will run and not grow weary; will walk and not be faint” (Is 40:31). The encounter with Our Lady helps him understand that exterior homelessness can be less frightening when rooted in faith. Even in the presence of something utterly unprecedented each journey becomes a pilgrimage supported by these roots. His displaced hope for permanence, stability and meaning is voided with the eschatological promise.

Our immaculate and royal educator introduces the Player to the main actor of the world’s theater. Instead of hedonistic games dictated and directed by the idols of pleasure and obsession, she proposes the Game of Love, classically portrayed in the Song of Songs. Just as in the biblical story so “also in the course of each life story the mutual hide and seek is meant to cast aside the interference of all self-centeredness, to overcome all rigidity, fears, and annoyances which arise from false claims to power, possession, and pleasure.”¹¹³ Indeed, the game of love is faith’s gamification to seek, find and love God in all persons and events.

great tragedy of Christians today. Our concern is the faith, a deeply rooted faith. Faith is only rooted if it has sunk into the subconscious and permeated the subconscious regions of the soul.”

¹¹⁰ CCC 165; Heb 12:1-2.

¹¹¹ Benedict XVI, General Audience November 7, 2012.

¹¹² As with any training or learning the choice of a school and of a teacher for the spiritual life is of crucial importance. Not only must the educator possess the qualities necessary to lead (*e-ducare*) his subjects to the appointed goal, ideally seen, the teacher should also be the embodiment and transparency of the goal. John Paul II saw in the Blessed Virgin Mary the teacher *par excellence* who “guides the steps of believers on their journey to heaven.” Cf. John Paul II. *Culture and holiness: a winning combination*. Address to the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart on November 9, 2000. In OR(E) November 22, 2000, 7. What John Paul II said of teachers in general pertains above all to Our Lady. “I am convinced that if teachers desire to be true ‘educators’ they must be so ... as ‘teachers of life.’” Cf. John Paul II. *Mary represents the first stage of our pilgrimage in faith*. Homily in Corrientes, Argentina, April 9, 1987. In: OR(E) May 18, 1987, 3f. John Paul II. *Mary awaits us in heaven*. Angelus Address. November 1, 2000. In: OR(E) November 8, 2000, 5.

¹¹³ Niehaus, Jonathan. *Schoenstatt’s Covenant Spirituality*. Waukesha WI 1992, 47f.

Finally, the Hodegetria directs tourists entering new territory by “listening to their questions and inspiring their search for truth, goodness and beauty.”¹¹⁴ She can show the conscious and systematic seeker of novelty the lands of joy and freedom where God’s children abide. Tourists in turn may be attracted by the authenticity of her journey of faith and eagerly ask for directions to “set out on a journey that lasts a lifetime.”¹¹⁵

The Need for Continuous Education

The initial attraction and interest to the world and values of faith need to be cultivated and strengthened lest our fledgling believers succumb to their previous comfort zones. The synod Fathers observe: If the transmission of faith is to succeed, it cannot take place apart from continuous education.¹¹⁶ Thus, begin our classes in the Middle and High School of Faith. There the process of education depends even more on a mutual give and take or as pope Francis suggests, a ‘culture of encounter.’¹¹⁷ It challenges flâneurs to establish ties; vagabonds to invest time; players to be checkmated and tourists to explore the land of their interior world.

Consecration

Gradually and organically, Mary’s gratuitous love and education will generate in some faithful a yearning for ever greater refinement and commitment.¹¹⁸ They may enter a concrete form of intense learning and growth through a Marian consecration. The rich tradition and variety of Marian spiritualities and devotions are concrete ways to personalize one’s consecration to Mary and at the same time “an effective means for Christians to live faithfully their/our baptismal commitments.”¹¹⁹ We distinguish various forms of consecration, affiliation or entrustment to Mary. The Schoenstatt family venerating Mary specifically as Educator speaks of a covenant of love, “that is, a ... mutual exchange of goods, interests and hearts ... It includes a perfect mutual giving up of self, giving of self to the other, and being at home in the heart of the other.”¹²⁰ Mary is our model but in this process she is also our Mother and Educator who creatively aligns our heart to her own heart. The strong personal character of the consecration deals a mortal blow to the widespread religious impersonalism of our time. When such pronounced consciousness of mutual being given and accepted is alive in the person and has even taken a hold of the subconscious levels of a person then the eyes of faith receive a vision that sees God in, through and above all. In the words of St. Augustine it is an effective rendering of faith in action:

*You have received it (Faith, DP) and recited it, but in your minds and hearts you must keep it ever present, you must repeat it in your beds, recall it in the public squares and not forget it during meals: even when your body is asleep, you must watch over it with your hearts.*¹²¹

¹¹⁴ IL 104

¹¹⁵ PF 1.

¹¹⁶ Cf. IL 147

¹¹⁷ Francis, Homily at the Vigil of Pentecost, May 17, 2013.

¹¹⁸ Cf. *Benedict XVI*. Eucharistic Celebration for the Sick. *Lourdes*, September 15, 2008.

¹¹⁹ RM 48.

¹²⁰ MME 110f.

¹²¹ PF 9; cf. St. Augustine, *Sermo* 215:1.

Drawn into Mary's mission

The most important mission which has been entrusted to Mary's education according to Father Kantenich is not a matter of pious exercises and exterior forms of veneration. Rather, Mary has a permanent mission in which others are drawn as well. This means, those who enter Mary's school are simultaneously sent in their concrete daily life where they should provide an encounter with Jesus Christ. This was Mary's way of evangelizing, of transmitting the faith. It was the most efficient method then and continues to be so also today- with the help of those who have been formed and are continuously being formed in her school! In other words: The Queen of faith sets high aims for her students. The lessons we learn equip us to welcome and lead seekers through the Door of Faith! In this vein Pope Francis encourages us:

*We have to make our faith ... a culture wherein we find brothers and sisters, where we can talk even with those who do not think like us, even with those who have a different faith ... Everyone has something in common with us: they are made in the image of God! ... We must go out to meet with everyone without negotiating about the faith we belong to.*¹²²

Conclusion

How can one live one's life like and with Our Lady as pilgrimage of faith "if the shrines and sanctuaries are moved around, profaned, made sacrosanct and then un-holy again in a stretch of time much shorter than the journey to reach them would take?" How can one invest one's faith in someone or something, "if all acquired rights are but until-further-notice, when the withdrawal-at-will clause is written into every contract of partnership, when all relationship is but a 'pure' relationship, that is a relationship without strings attached and with no obligations earned, and all love is but 'confluent' love, lasting no longer than the satisfaction derived?"¹²³

Indeed, it is a challenge and crucial question for the church, i.e. each one of us, to find entry to the hearts of seekers. But, challenges us our pope emeritus, we "must ... lead people out of the desert, ... towards friendship with the Son of God, towards the One who gives us life, and life in abundance."¹²⁴ "What makes the desert beautiful," said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well . . ." We know that this applies also to the "interior desert"¹²⁵ of flâneurs, vagabonds, players and tourists.

Benedict XVI is confident that "the people of today can still experience the need to go to the well, ..., in order to hear Jesus, who invites us to believe in him and to draw upon the source of living water welling up within him (cf. *Jn* 4:14)."¹²⁶ Amid the decay of ideologies, their thirst may lead to the Door of Faith. "It is up to us today ... to multiply the wells where thirsting men and women are invited to encounter Jesus, to offer oases in the deserts of life."¹²⁷

We are not alone: Powerful witnesses of faith have preceded us and have passed impressive tests of faith. Above all; the Blessed Virgin Mary, who represents the beginning and ideal of the faith of the church our model, companion, mother and educator on our pilgrimage of faith. She intercedes for us; she

¹²² Francis, Homily at Pentecost, May 18, 2012.

¹²³ Baumann Z. Tourists and Vagabonds. Heroes and Victims of Post-modernity. Political Science 30, March 1996, 11.

¹²⁴ Benedict XVI. Homily for the beginning of the Petrine Ministry of the Bishop of Rome (24 April 2005): AAS 97 (2005), 710.

¹²⁵ IL 43; cf. Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *motu proprio Ubicumque et semper* (21 September 2010): AAS 102 (2010) 789.

¹²⁶ PF 3.

¹²⁷ Synod Message 3.

educates us to the 20/20 vision of faith and brings the desert of our hearts to bloom. To her we entrust “in a special way, the journey of education and witness of this Year of Faith.”¹²⁸

Mother, help our faith!

*Teach us to see all things with the eyes of Jesus, that he may be light for our path. And may this light of faith always increase in us, until the dawn of that undying day which is Christ himself, your Son, our Lord!*¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Benedict XVI, Homily at Vespers with University Students: "Believing Means Entrusting Our Life to the Only One Who Can Give It Fullness in Time," Dec. 2, 2012.

¹²⁹ LF 60.