

GROWTH THROUGH COMPLEMENTATION

Deeper - further - higher

OUR TIMES – CHALLENGE AND OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH

We would like to dare to take a look into our times with you. God works in time and wants to tell us something through our times.

Recently we heard a talk on the subject “**Economisation of Society**”. The social market economy has ended and the free market economy has taken over. The consequence is stress, rush, exhaustion- everything goes faster.

This leads to a rift between the job and family, which increasingly makes itself felt. This balancing act is the source of great stress. The pressure is often increased by the feeling that we don't do justice to our own needs.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* (**about love in the family**) Pope Francis wrote about the pressures brought to bear on the family. He drew attention to the danger that family bonds are increasingly being dissolved, that within the family each one often lives on an **island of their own**, and in this way family structures are lost.

Francis points out that the family receives little support from social structures (society, politics, the economy), and asks: How do we deal with it?

As we know, pressure gives rise to **tension**. We know this also from nature: Pressure or friction, create tension, and this tension is released in the form of storms or earthquakes. This energy is not truly productive, and can even lead to danger and destruction.

However, if one connects two differently charged poles (Negative and Positive), the charges are balanced, and an electrical current flows that, for example, makes an electrical bulb glow, or brings a TESLA to maximum capacity.

Tension is the cause of an electrical current. The symbol of tension is U – derived from the Latin *urgere*, urge, drive, which is definitely productive and full of energy.

Fr Kentenich spoke about the principle of tension (or polarity) that can be followed through the whole of creation, and he recognised it as a divine principle. In Austria he is called the Father with the **AND**, because he did not say “**EITHER/OR**”, but consciously brought things into a relationship, or placed them in a relationship of tension to one another.

Fr Kentenich was convinced that God has created the principle of tension into the individual and the community, and by it wanted to **awaken the free co-operation of free people**. What matters is not to avoid interpersonal tensions, but to make them fruitful. This brings about dynamic life.

Dynamic life also comes about when we combine work AND partnership more closely, oriented them to each other and hence place them in a sound relationship of tension.

For us as a couple this means repeatedly battling for time for ourselves, in order to exchange thoughts, so that a charge balance takes place. Removing the pressure also means struggling together.

Not always easy, but more vital and fruitful.

In a study by the Gallup Opinion Research Institute we found the following quotation:

“Contrary to a widely-held opinion, the most successful teams are not those in which the team members always agree. On the contrary, they are often marked by sound discussion and sometimes also by heated arguments. What distinguishes strong teams from the badly functioning ones is the fact that they are not divided by discussion. In hard times these teams do not become more isolated, they even gain in strength and develop cohesion.”

Precisely this applies to us as a collaborative marriage team.

1/ Friends who are both at work relate that they regularly exchange ideas. The husband said:

“For me a conversation with my wife means: **De-celeration**. Through it I consciously slow down, and that has a great quality. A brake is applied.

When there is a crisis, I write an e-mail and save it as a DRAFT. That way I have let off steam. In the evening I discuss it with my wife and next morning, with new thoughts, the email is sent off. Then it is simply different, better; I often do it.”

2/ Once our diary was overloaded and we were on the go for a number of weekends without break. Because so many appointments had repeatedly come in from outside we had too little time for ourselves as a couple. At the turn of the year we resolved to block one weekend a month throughout the year in order to secure time for ourselves.

We consciously decided, and did it together, so that we were not determined from without, and thus lost our strength.

A word from the Bible: 2 Cor. 4, 7-9: **“We are subjected to every kind of hardship, but not hindered; we see no way out but we are not at a loss ...”**

This also applies to us as a married couple – we are well prepared for this time, because as a marriage team we have a possibility to push back together against being driven by outward forces.

CONCEPT: BROADEN THE FAMILY

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We would like to tell you about a process that has given us a great deal as a couple, as well as a family and at work.

We often notice a clear separation between family and work. Often what is done together is limited only to the time spent together as a family. The wife's job, or that of the husband, can often be felt as life outside, or parallel, to the family.

The father of a family once discussed a difficult situation in the company with a colleague, and asked, "What does your wife have to say about such things?" The colleague replied, "We don't talk about it. My wife only knows which company I work for and how much money I bring home at the end of the month."

During an interview Fr Tillmann Beller once remarked, "Today far more is demanded of families with regard to their work and family lives, BUT the families also have the potential to meet the challenge."

Work AND family – we have in a way extended a process in the concept "family". Not only the time we spend together as husband, wife and children is "family", also the wife's and husband's work are part of it. In this we place an AND, and consciously connect the two.

Woman's character:

By nature women usually see things as a whole. They picture the whole. When this picture, this concept, is limited to the time we bring together, that is: Husband, wife and children, the whole structure is disturbed as soon as the partner leaves this common context.

A woman tries, in her holistic way, to close this hole. **This happens unconsciously.** When, for example, the husband comes home in the evening, and even more when he returns from a longer journey, this whole has to open itself again. This causes friction. Her husband wants to share in the whole picture. This source of friction costs strength. However, if we now manage to extend the concept "family" to include what we share together, by making the working world of the others our own, the following happens: When each partner goes to work, or even sets off on a journey, they constantly move within the whole picture. As a result the sources of friction almost disappear when they come home. This shared vision of making the other person's world of work our own, contains a new potential.

Man's character:

A man often has a certain pressure to justify things: Why must I now: answer the telephone at home, work longer, come home later than planned, etc.?

However, when his partner can share more in everything, a completely different atmosphere is created, it is then suddenly OURS. ... a source of stress falls away ... latent strength is released.

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For this partnership, however, both sides have to take a step towards the other, they have to open themselves – the husband and the wife.

Unless the husband opens himself and communicates, his wife is unable to integrate her husband's working life into her holistic vision. While woman by nature works through things by talking, man by nature is often somewhat more reticent and incommunicative; we men often prefer to sort out things on our own.

When asked: How were things today? A simple "**GOOD**" is often sufficient, a man has then said everything. Women would like to know "more".

This communication costs strength, but it brings greater clarity, mutual understanding and also order in one's own thinking, simply because one talks about it.

Pope Francis talks about feminine genius; about woman who simply sees many things with other eyes so that she complements man's thinking.

When masculine and feminine thinking complement each other, a **partnership between equals** is created.

However, for this to come about both sides need **attentiveness and respect** for each other. We leave each other freedom.

As a result husband and wife acknowledge each other's dignity!

They begin to think with each other, think laterally and new (other) perspectives open up. Our shared vision extends from the world of the family to the world of work, and thus becomes a source of strength for our work, everyday life and partnership. It can then come to a form of coaching the partner.

Openness and interest for the others is important. Sometimes we notice that we even have to shelve our own interests, and disregard them.

1/ My father was a farmer – we felt he was always at home, so that was my picture of a "husband". When my husband had to travel very often for his work, I found it difficult to cope with. We once discussed the situation of the firm, and I noticed that I would have to advise him to travel there personally in order to regulate things correctly. To some extent it was "contra Coeur advice", that is, advising him contrary to what my heart wanted. I was also afraid that he would take it as a *carte blanche* to travel frequently. However, we want to trust each other!

2/ With some family friends we were able to notice the unity between their work and family life through their children. At the time the father, a tax consultant, was having to spend nights in his office in order to complete the annual balance of accounts. When they visited us, their little daughter (aged 3) took along her doll, a writing block and a pencil, and spent a long time scribbling in the writing block. Her aunt watched her for a time and then asked, "What are you doing?" She was promptly told, "I am just filling in the tax return for my doll!"

Complementary exchange brings about new potential – for the couple, their children and work.

THE COMPLEMENTARY LOOK

When both men and women are at work today, there is often too little time to “really” reflect on things. Much is done in a hurry and has to be carried out quickly.

Yet where is the time and person with whom I can exchange ideas and reflect on things? Who casts an objective eye on it all? Who really complements me?

An acquaintance of ours is foreman for a road construction firm. Construction sites are often holes in the road. When he sees a problem, he tells the site foreman, “Get out of the hole. You will then see the problem yourself. When you look at something from the outside, you notice what is stuck. This also helps me in my private life when I discuss things with my wife.”

Fr Kentenich said that because human beings are creatures, they are designed to be complemented (*Hirtenspiegel* #316).

“God alone is sufficient to himself, because he is infinite. Those who are characterised by being created are designed to be complemented in many ways.”

He (Fr Kentenich) consciously appointed Fathers and Sisters in positions of leadership. Masculine, strategic thinking needs to be extended and complemented by woman, with her strongly personal way of thinking and reacting.

Where masculine and feminine thinking complement each other, much is qualitatively better and more holistic. Our field of vision is extended. There is greater sureness of touch in concrete situations.

Fr Kentenich talked about a so-called “federal” view. That is, two independent and autonomous personalities combine and look together at a concrete situation.

A federal view leads to our looking beyond our own fence – we get a sense for the originality of others and rejoice in our differences. That trains us.

Things that occupy us at work can in this way consciously pass through the heart of our partner.

Practical examples:

1/ The training supervisor of a teacher training college related, “My wife is my sharpest critic. For example, when we talk about a staff problem, she sometimes says. ‘In this matter you are no longer objective’. His wife said that she sometimes tests him by taking the opposite view in order to shed light on the matter from another angle.

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He said: it is the most honest feed-back. It is different from a friendly discussion where you are only looking for agreement, and get it, so that one's own position or way of looking at things is confirmed.

2/ A couple are working in the same field, and regularly discuss things. The wife said: We simply **don't talk shop**. We are very different in our way of working and that is a good thing. I don't interfere with him, because each has their own way, and it is good, and they should keep it. When we discuss things we are concerned with people and situations.

There are also professions where it is not always possible to relate things.

For example, the police have official secrets and discretion is important. Or a woman who works as agricultural advisor to farmers throughout that Canton. She is often concerned with family and financial matters that are confidential.

- One solution could be to leave out names and places, and talk about a case as such.

When we "coach" each other in a certain sense, it usually has to do with processes in life.

Our experience: in the process both I and my partner grow into also subject areas about which we had known nothing.

THE CREATIVE RESULTANTS

Joseph Kentenich, "the Father with the AND" saw work and life at work as **sharing in the creative and self-giving activity of God**.

In view of the love of partners, he spoke about four different levels of love that have to harmonise: love of the soul, love of the body, religious love and

Love of the mind: the same interests, good conversations, exchange

Love of the mind can be felt, for example, when we plan and build a house together. Our shared creativity is challenged (furnishing the rooms, colour of the rooms, landscaping the garden, etc.)

Or, when we look at our family and work together and exchange ideas as equals. If we can complement one another in this way, we can discover our own strengths and qualities. Competence and professionalism grow.

Martin Buber: "The I grows through the YOU." ("*Das ICH wird am DU*" – Literally: The I becomes through the YOU)

Love of the mind is a dimension that may not be underestimated. We can feel the Holy Spirit at work. MORE simply becomes possible.

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Fr Kentenich called this the creative resultants.

For us these “creative resultants” became tangible through the practical application of Kentenich’s pedagogy in leading colleagues at work. We began by exchanging ideas and thoughts about the individual staff members. A discussion group with colleagues in leadership roles was started, and the question, “How are our colleagues doing?” became a firm component of the discussion. Who needs something at the moment and what talents need to be trained?

Gradually a strong team was formed and has overcome most serious challenges at work. In the process the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable has always been an experienced reality.

In the meantime we have crowned the Blessed Mother in our home shrine as “Queen of our Family and World of Work in our Father’s Country”. For us she is also the queen of our company.

Ten years ago, together with other supporters, we founded the IKAF (International Kentenich Academy for Leaders).

The IKAF offers leaders a protected area where they can discuss confidential things. This offers them a possibility to grow personally. Based on Fr Kentenich’s pedagogy, we re-think leadership and look for possibilities to apply this pedagogy in practice in leading our colleagues. The aim is that through applying Kentenich’s pedagogy Christian values should enter the economy.

The Mission Statement of the IKAF is:

GENUINE LOVE OF GOD BURNING WITHIN US
GIVES US A NEW VISION, A NEW UNDERSTANDING,
A NEW SOLIDARITY, A NEW ACTION.
FROM THE BEST IN ME
FOR THE BEST IN YOU
FOR A NEW WORLD.

In the IKAF we have experienced that by discussing things together our own vision is extended. The personality grows as well as the cultivation of the spirit for our work. We leave afterwards with new strength, new ideas, a new vision and new action as we go into our workaday lives.

Fr Kentenich said, “What one person did in the past, you must afterwards do as a team” (Milwaukee 1964)

The IKAF is working on various projects:

- “Round table discussion for leaders and business people” (2x a year a weekend from Friday evening till Sunday afternoon)
- “TALK ABOUT ...” – a Jour Fixe for leaders (2-3x a year on a Saturday afternoon with keynote address followed by discussion)

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- “HIRTENCLUB” (Shepherd’s Club) – an evening spent reading texts of the founder with a view to leading staff (1x a month)
- “JUST BREATHE” – silent retreat for leaders (1x a year for 4-5 days)

A publication by the *Zukunftsinstitut* (Institute of the Future) by Matthias Horx is entitled:

Familien: Motor der Erneuerung – Families: Motor of Renewal

Families a looking for a better balance between work and their private lives, and are trying out new working models. They are the ones who manage the complex everyday lives of families, and at the same time, through their commitment at work, are the drivers of social change.

God goes ahead in developing his creation, and we are called to shape it with him. He created both

Man AND woman,
Work AND family,
He says AND not OR.

We are convinced that God wants to tell us something today.

Lived, mutual complementation answers many questions of our times. In this way we can **shape things strongly together** and be motors of renewal.

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