

Secondary Causes

Reading Material

"For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Phil 2:13).

From the Catechism of the Catholic Church

Providence and secondary causes

306 God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures' co-operation. This use is not a sign of weakness, but rather a token of almighty God's greatness and goodness. For God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan.

307 To human beings God even gives the power of freely sharing in his providence by entrusting them with the responsibility of "subduing" the earth and having dominion over it.¹⁶⁸ God thus enables men to be intelligent and free causes in order to complete the work of creation, to perfect its harmony for their own good and that of their neighbors. Though often unconscious collaborators with God's will, they can also enter deliberately into the divine plan by their actions, their prayers and their sufferings.¹⁶⁹ They then fully become "God's fellow workers" and co-workers for his kingdom.¹⁷⁰

308 The truth that God is at work in all the actions of his creatures is inseparable from faith in God the Creator. God is the first cause who operates in and through secondary causes: "For God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure."¹⁷¹ Far from diminishing the creature's dignity, this truth enhances it. Drawn from nothingness by God's power, wisdom and goodness, it can do nothing if it is cut off from its origin, for "without a Creator the creature vanishes."¹⁷² Still less can a creature attain its ultimate end without the help of God's grace.¹⁷³

Words from Father Kentenich:

Forming the New Person, Conferences, 1951, 32

God transfers to secondary causes – in our case our parents – a part of his attributes: something of his omnipotence, his love, his wisdom. While transferring these to the parents he is thinking of the child. Hence, the law of organic transference. In educating themselves and others, humans should take the same law as their guideline; they too should apply the law of organic transference. The reverence, love, and obedience we owe ultimately to God, we should transfer to secondary causes, to our parents or to authorities similar in nature. It is, however, a law of organic transference, i.e., while loving father, mother, and siblings, we simultaneously love God and our Blessed Mother. That is a matter of course; it is the fundamental Catholic perspective. With this we have touched upon a basic law; countless times during this convention we must take a closer look at it.

God transfers qualities, rights, something of his power to a father and mother. That is why a father, for example, participates in the procreative power of God through fathering. In the interest of the child, God transfers some of his power to the parents. According to the feeling of the people, the living God has transferred some of his power to the Blessed Mother – not merely something, but as much as possible. The people sense that, and, with precision, they apply God’s method: They transfer reverence and love to Our Lady, yet they know that, ultimately, everything belongs to God. When they give reverence and love to Mary, they are aware that they are giving it to God. She is the living curtain with which I communicate.

Other Texts:

Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 200 Questions of Schoenstatt, #188

What are “secondary causes” and why are they important to the 31st of May?

Secondary causes are all created persons, things and forces of nature, referred to as “causes” because they help shape the world and history. As the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches:

“God is the sovereign master of his plan. But to carry it out he also makes use of his creatures’ co-operation. (...) God grants his creatures not only their existence, but also the dignity of acting on their own, of being causes and principles for each other, and thus of co-operating in the accomplishment of his plan (No. 306).

These causes are “secondary” because they have been created by God, the Primary Cause, but this does not detract from the genuine freedom which God grants to certain of his creatures, including man.

The mission of the 31st of May puts into sharp focus the importance of respecting and defending the role of secondary causes in God’s plan. This importance becomes especially clear in the positions of Mary, the Shrine, Fr. Kentenich and ourselves as instruments of God.

- *Mary* is an instrument of God whose unique ability to draw us to Christ adds warmth and depth to the Christian experience. Part of the mission of May 31 is to defend her contribution from many attacks, even within the Church, from those who feel she obstructs the way to Christ, when exactly the opposite is true.
- *The Shrine* is an instrument of God helping the soul set down roots in the reality of His covenant through a physical place filled with what it means to have and live a vibrant covenant relationship with a heavenly partner, in this case Mary. This local attachment is defended by May 31 as an important bridge between nature and grace.
- *Fr. Kentenich* grew to be an instrument through whom many people began to experience the real and personal love of God the Father. The effect this had in changing lives was sometimes so astonishing that it caused his opponents to denounce it as “suggestion” or “personality cult.” This was a central aspect of the controversy around May 31 and led to his testing by the Church. The testing showed that his role as instrument of God was not tainted by suggestion or self-seeking but by a genuine ability to be a transparency of God’s fatherly concern.
- *Ourselves*. We, too, are called to be transparencies of God. By the way we live our lives as God’s instruments, we can manifest the presence of Christ, Mary and God the Father to the world around us. In fact, this is an important feature of Schoenstatt’s instrument spirituality.

Questions for Discussion:

- Mention at least three areas of your work as a Schoenstatt leader where you clearly see how God uses you as an instrument.
- How can we form ourselves into worthier collaborators of our Heavenly Father, as his secondary causes?
- Make a list of the people you guide to God and the people that lead you to God.
- Why is the Blessed Mother and the covenant of love with her so important?
- How can we help the members of our groups, branches, and circles to recognize the importance of a healthy relationship with God and with people, especially in our times?
- Discuss the thoughts in this paragraph. Try to identify three words that summarize how *we are called to represent* God through our leadership.

God transfers some of his perfections to secondary causes and we transfer our love and surrender which ultimately belong to God to secondary causes. This transference is mutually organic because God thinks of us when he transfers his qualities to his secondary causes (for example our parents); and we do not separate the secondary causes from God; but rather, we consider them to be his representatives.