

## Chapel-Hour of July 12, 2005 in Nishinomiya, Japan

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*Herein our love is made perfect that we have boldness in the day of judgement: because as he is (that is: Jesus), so are we in the world. There is no fear in love. But perfect love casteth fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

1Joh 4,17-18

Dear professors and students  
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is a great honour for me to have your precious time and to have the chance to address some words to you. I feel very grateful to Prof. Tsuji, who has invited me and has given me the opportunity to share my faith and my mystical consciousness with you.

Let us start with a common experience! Please remember a situation when you had to prepare for an exam. You have books to read, papers to write, information to understand and memorize, and you have to train yourself to answer all kinds of questions about the topic of your studies. Even though you may study hard, you may keep the fear that you are not prepared well enough. With this fear you may increase your preparations to an enormous amount, but yet the stress does not go away, because you keep thinking of this or that which you may have forgotten or left out. The question that will show up sooner or later in such a moment is the worrying question: *When is it good enough?*

This is the question I am concerned about. It is a question that arises in many different ways. You can prepare for a job interview, a difficult meeting or a competition at sport, and you can always have this uncomfortable feeling that you are not prepared well enough.

Besides these stories from daily life this question may reveal a much deeper problem, too. Deeply ingrained in the body of a human being – at least in the body of a Western human being – there is what we can call: the will to knowledge. Michel Foucault, the brilliant French philosopher, who died in 1984 and who has studied the development of Western rationality all his life, has written about this. The will to knowledge is obviously an old story. You might be familiar with the Biblical story of Adam and Eve and the tree of knowledge. It is a story that tells us about this basic will to knowledge that we as humans seemingly have a hard time to resist. It is evident that the will to knowledge includes much more than to generate rational or scientific knowledge: it is rooted in body-centred experience and focuses on extending our sensual perception to embody new information. I guess not only in the Western world is the leisure time filled with this hunger of experiencing new things. And at the same time the latest technologies offer better and better tools to gain greater experiences. Whether it be pills that allow you to dance a whole night without getting tired or medical appliances to extend the time before our death to satisfy our hunger of longer and longer life or electronic tools for experiencing virtual worlds that computer sciences offer.

Let me make myself clear: It is not at all my intention to condemn these opportunities which the will to knowledge has created. My concern is the question: *When is it good enough ?*, or more pertinent: *Is it now good enough ?*, or even: *Am I now good enough ?*

I would like to bring this question into the context of the Christian metaphor of the judgement. I guess you know that the metaphorical scenery of a court is deeply rooted in Jewish-Christian belief as it expresses there the fundamental situation of human existence. Of course, the Biblical authors when using this metaphor were thinking first of all about the real, institutional court of the Jews and Romans. But at the same time this experience offers the metaphorical frame in which human existence is considered before God. The situation at court is metaphorically speaking the situation of a human being before God.

Using this kind of metaphor to express the situation of a human being before God has a strong impact. You may know that with this metaphorical background in Christian history a lot of evil has been committed and still is committed. What is important to me is that the question: *When is it good enough?, Is it good enough now?, or even: Am I good enough now?* is the question we are facing in God's Judgement. When asking this question we no longer focus on the objectivity of good and evil, but draw the attention to the attitude that finds the right measure. Neither a human being nor a thing is good or bad in itself, but it is the attitude with which we deal with life that is good or bad.

It is true: it is frightening to see ourselves in the metaphorical frame of a court when asking: *Is it.../ Am I good enough?* It confronts us with our insecurity, with our fears, with our doubts. And as we often get stuck in the fear that we have not found the right way, we keep thinking and acting and achieving more and more. But instead of dissolving our fears we get more and more greedy and start living out the will to knowledge. We may not even be conscious of it. It just feels that there is something pulling us to do what we cannot stop. Fear drives us to go on and on, but we will have to stop sometime. Nevertheless it may not be because we feel that it is enough, but because we break down. We may feel exhausted and burnt out, and we do not consider it as a good ending. It is a defeat, a failure, a surrender, and we may feel ashamed and guilty. But our feelings of shame and guilt are only the other side of our fear.

In Christian thinking there is an alternative possible. It is the change from knowing to having faith. To have faith does not mean: to take things for granted we cannot know for sure. It means: to transcend oneself into a different level of consciousness. This altered state of consciousness is expressed by the metaphor of love. I do not say love, but the metaphor of love, because it cannot be described in precise terms. But when you really love somebody including yourself, you may get a taste of it. This is the beginning of a different consciousness that happens when you start transcending yourself, transcending from knowing to having faith.

An idea written in the New Testament expresses this very clearly. I would like to read to you from the 1<sup>st</sup> epistle of John, chapter 4, verses 17-18:

*Herein our love is made perfect that we have boldness in the day of judgement: because as he is (that is: Jesus), so are we in the world. There is no fear in love. But perfect love casteth fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.*

As you see in this text, the metaphorical frame of the Judgement is set. It is clear that the day of judgement is coming. But there is no need for us to let us be oppressed by our fears. We can be upright and open and speak boldly there and then what there has to be said. The power that makes it possible, is love. As the New Testament says, love makes perfect in us the boldness in which our fears are dissolved. What Jesus, our master, has experienced, we, his followers, can experience ourselves. Because – this is the main point

– there is no fear in love. Love turns fear and its pain away. This is the offering given to us when we transcend from the consciousness of knowing to the consciousness of having faith in love.

Realizing this won't make our thinking and acting more successful, more powerful, more beautiful. Love does not get rid of the question: *Is it...* or: *Am I good enough?*, by giving us the victory in the competition with others. Instead it is the spirit that enters through the gap between yes it is enough, and no it is not enough.

Whenever we feel insecure as to whether we have done enough or not, there is always this difference between yes and no. Without this difference there is no perception and no cognition possible. There would be only chaos. The will to knowledge is based in the human ability to distinguish and to put a thing into a relationship with another. All mental activities start with distinguishing, with perceiving a difference. And this difference is exactly the space of love I was talking about.

We may experience this, when we manage to step back from asking: *Is it...* or: *Am I good enough?*, and start realizing the space in between. I am not talking about escaping from facing the question. I am talking about realizing oneself in the space between this side and the other side of the question and realizing what life feels like from the power of the space, from the power of love in between.

In the house you are living in the empty space is the most important part. Of course, the walls are needed to feel the empty space. But our life takes place in the space between the walls. As long as we see the walls we feel like in a prison. It is not the house, not the walls, not the bricks that are the essence of our lives, but the spirit, the love that is there in between the walls.

That is the reason why the Bible says that love gives us boldness in the Judgement of God. Love is the empowerment to go beyond the threatening question of the court: *Is it good enough?, Am I good enough?, Did I do enough for the house and walls and bricks?*, and it brings us into life. Realizing this, there comes a personal sovereignty into being and a mastery in our business. We are in touch with what we have to deal with, but we are not ruled by fear and insecurity, but moved by love. We may start with fear, but we end with love. This is how one of the greatest European Christian mystics, Saint Bernhard of Clairvaux, has taught us.

You see: My message is not to forget about being good enough. My message is to ask consciously: *When are we good enough?*, instead of being drawn (and seduced) by the will to knowledge. Asking this question brings up the fear of failing in the Judgement of God. That is true. But this fear is the beginning of wisdom, the Bible says (Prov 9,10), because it calls us back from our egotistical trips and shows us the space between the walls, the space between different options, the space between myself and myself. Experiencing this the door is open to transcend ourselves into the space of love that empowers us to become the masters of our lives.

Let us therefore pray and ask God to give us the necessary fear at the start, and the love needed to end. Amen.