

And now-one of our own padres talks to us

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AND NOW - ONE OF OUR OWN PADRES TALKS TO US

Patriotism is not enough, and it would be a mistake to think that we Swiss are top of the world as it would see us right at the very bottom. Man is a funny mixture of good and bad; it is, therefore, difficult to see always the dividing line between virtue and vice, honour and shame. On our National Day let us feel proud to be Swiss, shadow and light, and, with a happy smile say: "Sorry, I am Swiss but can't help it!"

Our hero William Tell who, at the birth of our Nation, stands out as a great character and symbol of what we would like to be, was probably not a hero all his life. But the arrow through the apple on his son's head and the second through the heart of Gessler has remained full of meaning throughout the centuries to the present day.

His marksmanship has remained more than sport but rather an aim for freedom, independence, courage and life. This is certainly a reason why we Swiss have still a special love for this national sport and are so proud to hit the bull's-eye.

But we also cherish our antiheroes, the people of Seldwyla, about whom we relate many stories. Once, it was said, they had built a new shooting range and, for this occasion, had announced a festival with a shooting competition.

Its highlight was the Love-Cup

presented by the most beautiful lady in the village. The best marksmen prepared themselves at the new range for a go at the targets A and B, as is usual with the Swiss.

But, unfortunately, they had already feasted too much and shot only zeros. That could not be, so the markers were instructed to fix the results. Soon, the competitors became proud of their results. Alas, the story leaked and there were bitter arguments. It came to blows. But during the fight a marker ran off with the Love-Cup, and the Lady.

I hope you will not take it amiss if your Padre for the last nine years says a word about the hero and the antihero to celebrate the First of August and looks at the deeper meaning of our life. He too, after all, wants to be a crackshot now and then. But his main job is to be a "maker" and therefore will put in a few good words for all his colleagues.

For our real life God has given us a target which is not of our own choice. He wants us to have a share in his own freedom, love and life. As Christians we have accepted it and it lies deeply embedded in our Federal Constitution and in our heart. But it remains a target and our life can be compared with a shooting competition where the Love-Cup is the highest trophy.

For that we need good markers

who need not necessarily be crackshots, but know the target well and have good eyes. They are the ministers of the Churches who so often are treated with undue awe, respect and even fear. In the past few years the Chief-Marker, in the person of Pope Paul VI, has come under serious attack and criticism for speaking out on the occasion of the Love-Cup Competition.

Of course, his instructions were first and foremost for the target B, but everybody felt attacked and criticised by him, since too many markers had gone slack and have shown too much understanding and sympathy towards the marksmen.

Seldwyla must not be repeated, he thought and gave instructions: On masturbation he said calmly that it is too low and deserves a wave with the Zero-Disc. And homosexuality, that is far too high, a Zero too. Artificial birth control is too much on the left and is a Zero on the target B (for target A a 1 or 2 is possible). On premarital sex he was annoyed: "By Jove, it is the neighbour's target, it may be a bull's-eye for which no marker can give credit, up with the Zero-Disc." But he fell into silence when asked about having as many children as possible - looking at the target, still looking for the mark - probably a shot into the air. He did say some strong words about the population, but to the marksmen: "Please, keep aiming at the Centre, it is forbidden to miss the target, there are too many people about who could get hit."

You know he simply wanted us to see the target right and clear but in the quarrel that broke loose among the marksmen over his words, it could well happen that a marker will run off with the Cup and the lady. This is the logic of the shooting competition and clear to everyone. It should be clear in our daily life as well. Why do we fear, mistrust and criticise the churches and their ministers who try to do their job and show us what we have to aim at? No decent marksman blames his bad results on to the marker.

The trouble in this world is not the target, it is deep within ourselves. For far too long we have been used to point an accusing finger at anyone who missed the target. This is unsportsman-like. And God has forbidden it time and again. This should be stopped. God does not expect from us to hit the bull's-eye all the time. But some will do it more, some less, some perhaps never. What he expects for all of us is that we keep on trying hard and never throw the gun away - or aim it in disgust at our neighbours right or left. This would be a crime. Be a good sport, it is the way of peace and leads to mutual understanding and respect - even to real love.

So we still like our William Tell (whatever some historians say about his non-existence) and try to be like him - but we have some friendship left and a good smile for the people of Seldwyla too, since that is how we are when caught off guard.

Paul Bossard

Wir versammeln uns als kleine Gruppe von Christen

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ein! Swiss Evangelical Brotherhood

Jesus sagt:
Ich bin der
Weg, die
Wahrheit und
das Leben.
Joh. 14, 6