

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

For the Church

Forty-one Texts

Exploring the Situation of the Church after Vatican II and Schoenstatt's
Contribution to Help the Church on the way to the New Shore of the Times

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Compiler's Note

The following texts have been selected from various talks and writings of Fr. Kentenich after the end of his exile in 1965. The selection is meant to shed light on Schoenstatt's post-conciliar mission (i.e. after Vatican II), especially in light of the legacy of the exile years.

*The main source is the series *Propheta locutus est* (Vallendar-Schönstatt, 1981ff, here abbreviated "PLE"), now encompassing 16 volumes. References to Vol. 1 and 2 are from December 1965, Vol. 3 to January 1966, Vol. 9 to August 1966, Vol. 10 to September 1966 and Vol. 11 to October 1966. Other sources are as indicated.*

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1. Love of the Church

“*Caritas urget nos ... caritas Ecclesiae [Love for the Church urges us on].*” – Fr. Kentenich to Church officials, January 1962

1 {PLE 2, 255} It is absolutely clear that we are at the threshold of a new era in our family history¹. (...) More than anything else I would like to write on the coming years, on the doorposts of the coming years and decades the words I once wrote for the Holy Office: *Dilexit Ecclesiam*². (...) I would like to have these words engraved on my tombstone and to know that they will be remembered in the times to come: *Dilexit Ecclesiam* – he loved the Church, the Church which nailed the family to the cross. *Dilexit Ecclesiam*. And what does this love look like, this love for the Church?

During these days I have been able to tell you – sometimes one way, sometimes another – what I promised the Holy Father on the occasion of my unexpected audience³: In the years to come we want to use every means available, we as a whole family, that is, as the entire family that has been removed from the cross, to help the popes realize the post-conciliar mission of the Church. Thus the words *Dilexit Ecclesiam* are meant to have profound significance: Schoenstatt loved the Church! Our love for the Church urges us {256} to support the post-conciliar mission of the Church as completely as possible in every aspect of life.

¹ Meant is the new era of Schoenstatt’s history ushered in by Fr. Kentenich’s return from exile just days before these words were spoken.

² “He loved the Church.” This is the usual translation, but it can also mean “She/It loved the Church.” In this sense it can also mean Schoenstatt (has loved the Church). In *Propheta locutus est*, Volume 2, p. 31f (talk for Schoenstatt Priests, Dec. 26, 1965), Fr. Kentenich notes that he first used this expression in his private response (early 1962) to the ecclesial penalty issued to him by the Holy Office in late 1961, emphasizing that he loved the Church, even in the face of the Holy Office’s determination that he was in breach of respect for Church authority. The expression *Dilexit Ecclesiam* had its source in the tombstone of Gaspard Mermillod

(1824-1892), bishop of Lausanne-Geneva-Fribourg and later curial cardinal.

³ With Pope Paul VI on December 22, 1965.

a. Our Attitude

2 {PLE 3, 98} If we now consider the past, I think I can repeat what Cardinal Mermillod¹ asked to be engraved on his tombstone: Dilexit ecclesiam! [He loved the Church!] We know that we have loved the Church from the beginning with fervor and tenderness and through sacrificial deeds and sacrificial spirit. It was love for the Church that urged us to begin Schoenstatt. It was love for the Church which urged us to even let the Church nail us to the cross. We show our love for the Church by expressing our thanks (...) [that] the Church has removed us from the cross again.

Dilexit ecclesiam! Yes, we want to express our love for the Church by repeating again and again until the end of our lives – to our bishop here and his successors, and wherever we live and work and strive as Schoenstatt members – that we will try to realize our love for the Church again and again by giving our whole life's strength for the realization of the post-conciliar mission of the Church in the full meaning of the word.

3 {PLE 2, 268} The destiny of the Church will be decided in the shadow of the shrine for centuries to come – not just today, tomorrow and the day after. Listen once more: for centuries! (...)

Truly, Dilexit Ecclesiam! Love for the Church has urged us to call this work into existence, or better: God decided to give us this mission for the Church's well-being. Dilexit Ecclesiam – love for the Church has urged us even to go the Lord's way of the cross, to accept the cross and crucifixion of Our Lord from [the hands of] the Church. Dilexit Ecclesiam!

Dilexit Ecclesiam! Love for the Church now urges us to love with infinite tenderness the same Church which persecuted us, to forget the past, and to now work with all our might so that our family would fulfill its great mission to help the Church victoriously reach the shore of the newest world, that is, to realize the ideal of the new Church, of the Church on the newest shore.

¹ Gaspard Cardinal Mermillod (1824-1892), bishop of Lausanne-Geneva- Fribourg. His final assignment was as a cardinal in the Roman Curia.

b. The Initial Effect of Vatican II

4 {PLE 1, 168} It was St. Augustine who pointed out to us {169} that we should study the trends of the times in order to determine the practical direction of God in the Church. [Then Pope John XXIII declared:] Open the windows! Open the doors!¹ Of course, a great danger currently mixes in with this: that the negative features of the times overwhelm the Church via the open doors and windows, while what the Church has to offer to the world is hardly able to flow out. We must probably expect (please bear this in mind) that we must wait – what should I say? – about fifty years until the side-effects, the negative side-effects of the post-conciliar Church are overcome. We can sense, and at times even see it right before our very eyes, how so many circles in the Church are convinced that at last their time has come. Everything they wanted in the past is now covered with the spirit of the world, with the spirit of the times, but in a way that makes it hard to say if they are adopting the positive or the negative features of the times. (...)

We must expect that it will still take decades until a certain calm returns to the Church regarding the current extremes. Of course, it may then take centuries until what caused the Council to be convened is really carried out. The main thing is not the Council as such, but the Council's after-effects. (...)

{170} This means, of course, that every faithful member of the Church is being called to learn [how to read the signs of the times] and to help the Church be formed and shaped in view of the newest shore of the times, even as we have done from the beginning. Christ is also Lord of the new times! And the Church is riding at full gallop into this time. A time of which we must say, even as the early Church said: Christ will and must be the soul of the newest times!

¹ A main theme of Pope John XXIII in convoking Vatican II.

5 {PLE 9, 236} If you take the view seriously that the first effect of the Council will be a complete confusion of opinions, then you will see that all of these manifestations – everything that we see today – are like someone in their teenage years.

For instance, the relationship to father and mother breaks down. The same thing happens today with the rejection of Mary and of God the Father¹. We hear it mentioned again and again. These are all symptoms, crises of faith common to teenagers.

[In Schoenstatt] God has led us in such a way that we have experienced the entire fullness, in every area of life, of what it means to follow Christ. Because of this we have an extremely important task: to not be shy about facing the times, not letting the times proclaim the Gospel to us, but take in, as one united [family], the tradition of the [Schoenstatt] family, to be educated in our family history in order to become genuinely mature (...). In this way [we want to] pass through the snares and crises of today and present and represent the whole Church in a new way, totally anticipating the great ideal of the Church as God has conceived it for the coming shore of the times!

6 {PLE 9, 121} [A]ll of mankind today is in a new state of adolescence, or more precisely, in a state like the teenage years. If you can follow me on this point, you will notice that this gives you a vantage point which helps one understand to some degree the many, many things in the Church today where we must otherwise stand by helplessly and shake our heads. (...)

{124} Let me stress another point. If we recall for a moment all the extreme positions being taken today by clergy and Catholic intellectuals, then you must admit: One cannot explain it at all by calling it merely some repressed emotion seeking an outlet; no, what is happening today is that everything which had been interiorly accumulating and suppressed over decades, perhaps even centuries, is shooting to the surface in a most revolutionary manner. This, more or less, is how you must view the present situation.

¹ And we might add: the rejection of the authority of the Church.

7 {PLE 9, 237} What should we do? In all areas of life practice the heroism of the divine virtues: standing in divine light, standing in divine confidence, standing in divine strength.

This is the goal. Our objective is not to [merely survive] the present difficult times. We must keep our goal before us: We want to pass through these teenage years of the times as a united [family] and vibrant with the fullness of Christian life, in order to portray for the whole Church on the other shore of the times a starting point for the whole Church so that God can again be part of the coming era.

c. Our Mission: Anticipate the Church on the New Shore

8 {PLE 9, 71} [I]f we remain faithful to what we have wanted from the beginning (...) [we] will save ourselves from reverting to the “teenage years.” If we remain faithful to our identity then as soon as the collapse is overcome, the Church and the Spirit of God will be able to use us as a catalyst, and we (...) will be able to help give a direction to many in the Church.

9 {PLE 9, 121} What is our most original task in the post-conciliar Church? (...) We who have lived the Catholic faith in an abundant, even superabundant fullness of life (...) believe we have the task and mission to make sure that this superabundant fullness (...) is not lost during the Church’s “teenage” years (...). {122} Rather, we must maintain this fullness of life under all circumstances, saving it for the future of the Church, even as God’s wisdom has foreseen it – for the Church on the newest shore of the times.

10 {PLE 9, 160} I can even add: all the terrible confrontations and sufferings which we have been through since about 1940, first being nailed to the cross by the Nazis and then by the Church, so that, humanly speaking, it seemed absolutely impossible that we would ever be taken down from the cross again.

But we have been taken down! What was the purpose of those years? We were supposed to live in advance for the Church the

whole Catholic feeling of life as God has foreseen it for the newest shore of the times! Unless you see it that way, what we have become and what we have been through [will not add up]. (...)

You see, if you accept this premise even a little, then you will understand the past. It was always guided, ordered, animated by the living God[’s plan] for the future. We were supposed to live in advance, anticipate the ideal for the newest times on the newest shore of the times.

11 {PLE11,257}The necessary consequence(...)is this: If we are standing at the beginning of the newest Church (...) and if we have been given an extremely special mission for [this moment], since we were called for it already so many years ago, fifty years and more – what does that mean for us? I think I can say, more than any- thing else: What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!¹ Please do not misunderstand me. What we have inherited, that is, this extraordinarily high degree of the covenant of love between Our Lady, our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, this high degree, this unconditional devotion to the other-worldly, the supernatural reality, indeed this inner freedom from all things worldly, just as we could experience it in these days, this should be the gift that we contribute to the new found- ing of the Church for the newest times².

With this attitude we go forth! Go forth, as we return to our everyday lives, our pastoral responsibilities, everywhere where God has given us a task or may yet send us! If we compare this high degree with where we were in 1914, then we can sense the powerful difference. Yes, in 1914 the newest times were tangibly visible, approaching from the distance. But today they have overtaken us and are erupting into our times! (...)

{259} A second great gift, a great gift for which we owe a debt of gratitude is [God’s] clear direction for the coming times.

1 Goethe, Faust.

2 Emphasis added

I have not yet been able to speak on this subject, but wish to do so later. For now it will suffice to sum it up this way: The direction which [God has given us] since 1939 should determine our course for centuries to come!

d. Vatican II: Church and World

12 {PLE 2, 177} You see, the mission of today's Church is (...) to continue this double mission¹ in the world of today. If you look back on the Council, then you will probably have to admit: What has been worked out thus far is an updated form of the mission of St. Augustine. The liturgy has been called on to save the concept of God once more, inserting God into daily life in a renewed manner.

But it is my view that when it comes to the role of secondary causes as such {178} the Council did not dare to say very much. This is what stood out about Schoenstatt's mission from the beginning – how we unite the Church with the world of today. Our way of saying it is: the Church and secondary causes. You know that in my opinion the Council stopped where the Council really should have begun. In the discussions about the relationship of the Church to the world it was said many times: We are not able to resolve the issues right now; previous Councils have said too little on this. They were therefore satisfied with showing the general features, giving some broad orientation, in order to elaborate the Church's position on the world of today and tomorrow.

13 {PLE 2, 269} Am I not correct when I say that we are in step with the Church?! We always were, only we anticipated the Church. Now the anticipation is over.

When I now speak to you as leaders, I can of course add that what we wanted from the beginning is, in many areas, much, much more

¹ The mission of St. Augustine to secure the reality of God in the world and the mission of St. Thomas Aquinas to secure the place of secondary causes in the objective work of salvation.

than what the Council has sketched out. Questions of the most crucial and difficult kind – about the relationship between the world and Church (Schoenstatt's speciality, where we have seen our greatest mission from the start!) – caused the Council fathers to say: that is more than we can answer right now. Previous Councils did not devote enough attention to the role of the Church in the world, that is, in this world. Which world? This is not the world of yesterday and the day before; this is not the world of the Middle Ages. This is a world which is so new we cannot even guess what it means, a world in which modern man declares: I am the {270} creator of this world. It is not only God's world, it is the world of man. Homo est ipse fabricator huius mundi [Man himself is the creator of this world]. (...)

{272} You know, tomorrow and the day after we will sense that today's Church needs an essentially different method of education than she used in the past. People who want to venture out today onto the high seas of life, how anchored they must be, more deeply anchored than ever in the heart of the Church, in the heart of the Triune God! You see, how important the turn of phrase is: We in Schoenstatt want to and should be the heart of the Church, and we must become it even more so in the years to come!

14 {PLE2,270} We believe we have been called to be the heart of this Church. Which Church? The Church of the years to come.

The heart! And what does it mean to be the heart? To be the profound power of love which overcomes all difficulties. A power of love which conquers the Church, which fills the Church with the heroism of love. The power of love – that is our mission!

What does this mean? How interiorly on fire we must be {271} and how a blazing fire of love must enkindle us more and more! How we must try to unite – member to member, branch to branch – with the bonds of love! The ultimate effect of the covenant of love with our Blessed Mother must be, more and more, a covenant of love with the Blessed Trinity, a covenant of love with one another, a covenant of love with every member and branch of the Church, even a covenant of love with all people in the whole world! The heart – love, the power of love in the Church.

e. The Sickness: Lack of Attachments

15 {PLE 2, 178f} [T]he core issue is this: If you want to understand this reality and study it more deeply, you must realize that in the Western World today the issue is not secondary causes as such, but how the secondary causes have become radically uprooted. How are secondary causes and all things created perceived today? All relationships of every kind are, from the standpoint of attachments, being torn apart. Loss of attachments in every area of life.

16 {PLE 2, 153} The world today is characterized by the most absolute lack of attachments. Even the word “freedom” practically means lack of attachments. And a universal lack of attachments can certainly not be the human ideal. {154} Our entire nature as created persons protests against it. It is a necessary demand of my being as a creature that I be ordered to another, to someone who complements my shortcomings through a completely different fullness of life.

17 {PLE 2, 215} When we speak today of the great sickness of our times, the sickness of the revolution [the wanton abandonment] of all attachments, that is, the modern lack of attachments, what does this mean? In [modern] man {216} the individual attributes and faculties no longer bundle together to form an organism. Hence the breakdown of interior attachments [leading to] lack of attachments. You see, if this lack of attachments is not overcome, the way is completely blocked from creation (now lacking any attachments, attachments broken down) leading back to God. Again and again, the central problem is: man and God; creation and God.

f. The Remedy: Healthy Attachments

18 {PLE2,216} Our task is to overcome the interior break down of all attachments in the human soul.

19 {PLE 2, 180} The breakdown of all attachments must be complemented by a renewal, a reenforcement, a deepening of attachments. (...)

[Transference¹:] God transfers his rights to creation. [He transfers] rights proper to him – for instance, his attributes: wisdom, power and things like that – to his creatures. But he only does so in the best interests of the child, to give one example. Let me clarify this using the fourth commandment. God governs through the law of organic transference. To father and mother he transfers rights, abilities, attributes, but in the best interests of the child! What are we talking about here? The attachment between parents and their children. But it can be applied to every area of life; I am only using one example. (...)

{181} This helps us understand: Why is it harder for us moderns to arrive at an attachment to God? This is the same as the great dilemma: What has produced the widespread extinguishing or diminishing of the sense for the life of faith? Why? You see, the reason is probably, and certainly largely has its root in this: that we no longer experience healthy attachments to secondary causes. If I do not learn – to put it simply – to love father and mother in the right way or, vice versa, if I am not shown the proper image of father and mother through a living example, then it is extremely difficult for modern man to achieve the right image of God. (...)

[Transmission:] {182} As a Christian and a Catholic, I cling to my parents not just because they are my parents, but in my parents I also cling to God, even if this factor is more unconscious or subconscious. This is the whole picture. Today everything is so torn apart. (...)

¹ This passage is organized around the concepts of organic transference and transmission, a topic worked out in great detail by Fr. Kentenich. See J. Niehaus, The 31st of May: The Third Milestone (Waukesha, 1995), p. 157-167.

[First conclusion:] This inner attachment, for instance to parents, and through one's parents to God, is permanent. It is not just a passing phase. In other words: It is not only a means to an end, not only a method, but the inner attachment to one's parents and in one's parents to God will remain even when we reach the beatific vision. The whole organism of attachments to persons is perpetual.

[Second conclusion:] Anyone who observes life will notice that this does not contradict the fact that there can, indeed must be a shift of accent. That is: If I am now attached to God in my parents, then the parallelogram of forces will shift, sooner or later, to mean: I am attached to my parents in God. In other words, God moves more into the foreground, without taking the parents out of the picture. This is only one example. You must apply this to all {183} forms of relationship. Perhaps this sheds some light on the problem. This is the psychological interpretation of the law of how God governs the world.

Now come all the other difficult questions: the relationship to father or mother. Hence the call today for the rebirth of the father! The death of the father [in society and in family life leads to] the death of the image of God – they are interiorly related. [What] consequence [do I draw out of this] for me personally – because there are so many people, today more than ever before, who have become incapable of attachments? Do you not see how full doctors' offices have become today? Full of what? People suffering from a lack of meaningful contact, to whom the doctor becomes someone who symbolizes my still being in contact. But when the contact has been established, and the person again experiences an attachment, then it is immediately cut off again, and the person drops back to where he was before. Psychologically speaking, this is only a little piece, an attempt at healing.

g. Attachments as Natural Pre-Experiences

20 {PLE2,183} You have to see: My inner disposition must be such that people can bind themselves to me. We must not be satisfied with [doing it like psychoanalysis]. These are the most elementary, colossal consequences. I must be so firmly rooted in God and totally united with him that everyone who binds themselves to me will also be attached in me to God. Hence the entire significance of fatherliness seen from the psychological standpoint... (...)

You see, earlier [in an earlier generation], when our outlook was purely intellectual {184} or predominantly intellectual, we could be satisfied with saying something like, “Do it this way, do it that way.” One simply assumed that the organism of attachments was still healthy and provided a few guiding ideas. But that doesn’t work anymore today. (...)

Now you can better understand how much one’s effectiveness must radiate through one’s being, {185} not one’s words. Words today are so hollow if my being does not back them up. (...)

I can personally hardly imagine anything [more fruitful] for a priest who really wants to be a priest of the people, who wants to embody the image of the Good Shepherd [than this] – “I know my sheep and mine know me, as the Father knows me and I know the Father; the Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep” (Jn 10,14f). Will he not draw from his care for souls the most profound inspirations that keep him constantly growing, deeper and deeper into God? For my growing into God is determined by the growth of my followers [into me]. In this way we will accomplish significantly more in every area of life through our being than through our words.

21 {PLE 9, 172} If we want to save the family, if we want to save religion, if we want to save the order of the world today, what must we do? We must see to it that people have pre-experiences in the natural order, pre-experiences of someone who is a real father, of someone who is a real mother, and where these pre-experiences [go in deep].

2. Deepest Sources / Fullness of Life

“God chose Schoenstatt from deeper sources of the Church in order to anticipate the great, great task which the Church has taken upon herself [in Vatican II] for our times.” – Fr. Kentenich to the Schoenstatt Family, October 18, 1966

22 {PLE 11, 253} Why is [the Church] suffering [today]? Because she must now make the transition from the old times into these absolutely new times which are so desperately disjointed from the old times, or reject them altogether. The Church begins once more, we would almost like to say, to be born again so that she can give birth to the new times. (...)

{254} Let me repeat: October 18, 1914 signifies a new divine initiative for these times. God chose Schoenstatt from deeper sources of the Church in order to anticipate the great, great task which the Church has taken upon herself [in Vatican II] for our times. (...)

23 {PLE9,130} We took root in tradition with every fiber of our being! (...)

You see, it is this way. If we take a closer look, we will see that we have drawn from tradition, but from deeper sources of tradition than was usually done in our times. From different sources! You see, this is why we can say today that we in the [Schoenstatt] family live Catholicism in a unique, abundant fullness. And we must never let anyone rob us of this fullness! We must victoriously bring this fullness through the new teenage years of the entire Church; we must naturally complete and perfect it, so that we can truly speak of an anticipation of the Church on the newest shore of the times, where the Church stands before us in her radiance, in her glory, and in her new figure, her fruitful figure.

24 {PLE 9, 141} Secondly, of equal if not still greater importance is this: (...) [T]he great milestones in the history of our family ... touch on ... the heroism of faith, the heroism of hope, the heroism of love.

Put in modern terms: Schoenstatt is constantly trying to take possession of the entire fullness of life in Catholicism, and exhausts itself, gives itself as an instrument, so that standing in divine light, standing in divine confidence, standing in divine strength can be lived in a heroic manner!

25 {PLE9,237} The first effects of the Council will probably be largely negative. You can only expect the overall fruit of the Council [to appear] when this next era¹ has come to a close. But when will [the era of confusion] end? When? We do not know. We only know that we must be the watchers on the towers of the times. We only know that the Blessed Mother has called us, and that we have allowed ourselves to be formed by her into vigorous figures who embody the entire fullness of Christian life.

26 {PLE 9, 235} You see, God has led our family in a most remarkable way in the last years². When you later see what went on behind the scenes, you will be amazed at what a gigantic battle it was. In part you have also been involved in the battles, and fought them bravely, such as when you went to see the Cardinal of Cologne³. You see, this is the way I see it: [during the exile] God forced the [Schoenstatt] family to live the entire fullness of Catholic life. And I think that you have the task to save and carry this fullness of life, this entire fullness of genuine Catholic life – with all the daring and risk-taking that this means – into the present post-conciliar era.

¹ That is, the era immediately after Vatican II, encompassing perhaps 40 to 50 years.

² Fr. Kentenich's exile, 1951-65.

³ On January 7, 1962, the lay leadership of the Schoenstatt Family Work was called by Cardinal Frings of Cologne to be officially informed of a decree of the Holy Office of November 20, 1961. In response, these lay men and women clearly stated they would not abandon their understanding of Schoenstatt. Their frankness eventually won the respect of the cardinal ("kraftvolle Gestalten!" "Vigorous figures!") (see *Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 4, p. 179 footnote).

3. Heroic Virtues

“It is my personal conviction that if the Church wants to win the battle after the Council ... then it will only be possible if the Church-to-come forms Catholics who are in their essence heroic..” – Fr. Kentenich to the Schoenstatt Family Work, August 27, 1966

27 {PLE 9, 157f} You know, unless we try again, as the early Church did, to salvage, to carry through [to the new shore] the full maturity of Catholic life – if you can follow what I am trying to say – through to an era of maturity for the whole Church – mature, maturing, matured – unless we do that, attain the heroism of Catholic life, especially of the three divine virtues, then we must reckon, at least humanly speaking, that the Church will decline more and more.

28 {PLE 9, 101} The way which is so often taken nowadays is, unfortunately, a worldly way; concessions are made to the earthly, worldly, modern realities. But this will not save or overcome the world. If we do not, indeed, if the whole Church of today does not wrestle once more, more intensely than before (...) – if she does not live out of the heroism of the three divine virtues – {102} standing, heroic standing in divine light, in divine confidence, in divine strength¹ – humanly speaking the Church will spiral bit by bit into the abyss until the ascent begins, perhaps with a later generation. (...)

But what is even more important is this: a heroic wrestling and striving. Indeed, we are gradually even hearing such expressions cast about in the Catholic press: that the lay people are also required and obligated, today more than ever, to strive for sanctity. {103} Exactly what we have believed and made our own from the beginning.

¹ Terms used by Fr. Kentenich in the final three years of his life to not only describe the divine virtues of faith (divine light), hope (divine confidence) and love (divine strength), but which he also saw in correspondence with the first three milestones of Schoenstatt’s history: October 18, 1914 (divine light), January 20, 1942 (divine confidence) and May 31, 1949 (divine strength).

What am I getting at? Unless we all strive for the heroism of the three divine virtues, then we are not serving the Church, then we are not helping the Church victoriously reach the other shore. Instead, we will be helping her fall from one low to another, and needlessly prolonging the teenage years, the adolescent years, the reckless years in which all mankind currently finds itself. The age of adult maturity of the whole world, especially in ecclesial circles, is still ahead of us. First the universal Church needs and must pass through its adolescence and teenage years. Try to understand everything you see around you today in this light, including the scandals and horrors. You will find that you then have a clear standpoint, a foundation, a point of departure which can help you explain many things which are inexplicable.

29 {PLE 11, 260} If we succeed in securing this high level for the whole family, in other words, if we succeed in securing the mile- stones marking the path, the great path which we have traveled in such a short time, and the individual points of [God's] program [which are written] in the milestones, then the family will be blessed. Only later generations will understand how immensely great the gift is which God has given in the past decades to those of us who lived through them. Coming generations will have all they can do to repeat what God has directed in the individual milestones.

I remind you: The general features of every milestone begin first with being at home, completely at home in the supernatural reality. And the way to being at home is the heroism of the three divine virtues, perfected by the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

a. Faith / Disappearance of Faith

30 {PLE 9, 228} We must not lose sight of (...) this deepest context. For too many the most important thing is where the altar will be moved! This is too exterior. What is the main problem? The flight from God, even in Catholic circles (...). [What is] the deepest reason? Because man today is losing his faith, that is, he is losing the ability to notice God, to sense and grasp him.

31 {PLE 9, 235} [We must] begin again to dare the daring things that faith asks of us! Faith is not some easy chair in which we sit back and relax. No, taking risks is simply an essential part of faith. Please understand what I am trying to tell you. It is my personal conviction that if the Church wants to win the battle after the Council – I am now speaking in purely human terms – then it will only be possible if the Church-to-come forms Catholics who are in their essence heroic.

32 {PLE 9, 140} [W]hat we totally forget – here we touch on the point which is so tragic today – that faith today is sick right down to the roots. In such a static community, static Church, faith must become sick. Why? Because the most essential ingredient of faith is missing – a fundamental willingness to take risks. Verify this for yourselves. I don't know, but I suppose the question has bothered you many times: how feeble the roots are of the spirit of faith everywhere we look today! That is the problem! How can we [promote the faith of] those entrusted to our care? Maybe I am the pastor, fine. What do I do? I only think about which direction the altar should face! I don't know what all else. We can do that, of course, but what is it that really matters? What does my parish's faith look like? Is it still a Catholic faith? Or what kind of a faith is it?

33 {PLE 9, 163} You see, modern man has, in a certain sense, already become the new creator of the world in every area of life. Pay close attention: {164} [he is] the new creator! What has he created? He has transformed the world and is in the process of gaining even more total dominance. You will see and feel that tomorrow. But already today the question is often raised: Do we really need a personal God to explain world events? Why, this question already starts to shake the root of faith the very moment it is posed! You see, this is where the problem lies: “Can the world be explained without a personal God?” The “problem of God” has become so acute that

many of us begin to doubt, deep inside, when we consider, “What a violent world, what an unjust world we constantly have before us and behind us! And a personal God is supposed to be behind this?! Even a Father-God?! Not just a Father-God, but a Father-God of infinite merciful love?!” These are the problems! And these are the problems that interest the masses!

b. Faith in Divine Providence as the Remedy

34 {PLE9,240} Please do not forget that this is the art we must master, [this is] our great goal: We must become heroes of faith again! Heroes of faith: [We must] especially hold fast to the faith, faith in Divine Providence, when on the purely human level everything seems so entangled, when we really get the impression, as we heard it in the “death notice¹,” that God is “out of town,” no longer cares, is dead, or is taking a long nap in heaven. This becomes even more urgent when we realize on the other hand how man today {241} no longer views himself as a mere creature, but takes for himself the part of creation’s powerful co-creator! With all the advances of technology, what all are we not able to accomplish today! It is clear that when man can accomplish all these things with all the technical means at his disposal, he struts his stuff and shouts: Why, all of world history can be explained without God’s intervention!

Faith in Divine Providence! What does that say about ourselves? Everything which happens in our life is a gift of love and an attempt by God to win over our love. To win over our love! And what does that demand of us? The answer of love. We cannot hold fast to all that if we only see world events and the events of our personal lives with natural eyes. It is only possible if we once more become children, heralds and heroes of the three divine virtues – faith, hope and love. You must not overlook this, be it [on retreat] or when you are sitting around the table as a family.

¹ Reference to a cynical parody quoted by Fr. Kentenich earlier in the talk. It was a “death notice” for God, published in *Der Spiegel* (Vol. XX [1966], No. 30, p. 90), one of the major German magazines.

Let me repeat: We must take with us in abundant measure all that we have received as a gift. We want to save all of this and carry it into the following era of Church history, carry it into the era after that one. Then God will see to it that everything which we have been able to take possession of, to receive from above, will all be given to the Church of the future.

Of course, the masterpiece which must be accomplished in this spirit, we know it very well – what is it? To experience God’s fatherly hand – his fatherly hand! – when it lays heavy upon us, when we have prayed and sacrificed God only knows how much, only to receive no answer, to feel that God is dead, that is, it seems that we are receiving no answer. Over time we must let ourselves be educated – in the light of faith and carried by the three divine virtues – to become aware of the tenderest expressions of the Father’s love in all the hard blows of fate in our life. Otherwise we will not master life today! {242} Of course, that demands of us not only a death leap for the mind, but also a daring death leap for the heart and for the will. Wake up and awaken one another!

This is the great task which God has given and wishes to give us.

35 {PLE 9, 101} ...As we all know, Schoenstatt’s origins lie in a pronounced faith in Divine Providence. As we have often said: following the law of the open door and the creative resultant. Talk about that in your retreat. These things are so important that you are restudying them [in your retreat] using historical examples.

The claim that I make is a daring one, especially since I am personally convinced that if (...) today’s Church wants to truly embark on the daring adventure in the spirit of John XXIII to really embrace the world, to go out into the world, the world of today, then it is only possible if she goes the same way we have taken from the beginning!

4. Taking Christianity Seriously

“The mission of the West as a Christian mission always revolves around a personal God who bends down personally to the individual and to all mankind.... What have we done...[to fulfill this mission]? ... [We] have taken Christianity seriously down to its final roots.” – Fr. Kentenich to the Schoenstatt Family, May Opening, April 30, 1968

36 {April 30, 1968} Then a second great mission which we believe we have been given! We like to call it saving the Christian mission of the Western World. The entire greatness and depth of this kind of a mission has only barely begun to dawn on us. Let me at least touch on one thought which is not yet in the general awareness of the [Schoenstatt] family. Whoever has had a bit of an opportunity to ponder the realities of the modern world and to study its currents of thought, especially between the East and the West, will find that the Christian West is now beginning to confront itself with the great classical religions of the East. See what it means to save the salvific, the Christian mission of the West in this context! What the old, classical Asian religions teach us is in complete opposition to our Christian western mission. The mission of the West as a Christian mission always revolves around a personal God who bends down personally to each individual and to all mankind, while everywhere the Asian religions present the image of God and the image of man, everything is totally impersonal. And we can guess, indeed take into our two hands, how these Eastern religions are trying to be every bit the match of the West. What do we expect of the Orient in a merely political and military sense? [But] the question also takes acute form in this way: What can we expect of the confrontation of Christianity with all these old religions? Truly great missions! And when we ask, “What have we done thus far to do justice to this mission?” then we can only give one answer: We have not let ourselves become embroiled in useless quarrels, but have taken Christianity seriously down to its final roots. And we must admit that God has sent our family in every regard great and saintly men and women in every walk of life.

a. A Personal God

37 Even today¹, we still cannot totally comprehend the new way in which the image of the child, of the Father and of the community have become a reality within us [in the exile years], a reality which we, at the same time, expect will stand as a lasting gift in every generation of our family. Now it is not as if we did not already have a clear idea of these three images in the past. (...) We are likewise aware that this threefold image will continue to grow and change in us until the end of our lives. This will continue until it assumes its final form in the beatific vision. But we may not overlook the depth which this transformation has already achieved at the end of the second imprisonment [= the exile].

First of all, this applies to the image of the Father. For us, God has always been the Father of love. (...) Furthermore, we knew that among the most characteristic features of this divine love was God's merciful love. What is new to us, however, is the extraordinary magnitude of this divine merciful love.

If we were more strongly influenced in the past by the concept of just love, that is, by the attitude that we must earn this love through our actions and being, through all sorts of sacrifices of love, today we still cling to this conviction of faith and endeavor as before to please the Heavenly Father in the aforementioned manner. When it comes to the weight we give it, however, we are learning not to exaggerate the importance of our own cooperation.

Only God is important for us – the Father and his merciful love. As we were taught from the beginning of our family history, he does not ultimately love us because we have been good and well behaved; rather, it is precisely because he is our Father, or, because he bestows his merciful love on us most lavishly when we joyfully accept our limitations, our weaknesses and miseries and recognize them as our most elemental claim to his opening his heart to us and pouring his love out upon us. (...)

¹ Fr. Kentenich's Christmas letter to the Schoenstatt Family, December 13, 1965, as quoted in J. Niehaus, *The Exile Legacy Book*, p. 127-130. This passage is central to Fr. Kentenich's own interpretation of the importance of the exile.

With that we also characterize the new image of the child which we have been allowed to live and experience over the past 14 years and which we want to pass on to the coming generations.

Our image of the community contains timeless features which are characterized by the totality of our covenant of love. We have always known that the covenant of love with our dear MTA was to be understood and realized as an expression, protection, safeguard and means for the covenant of love with the Triune God and the covenant of love among, with and for one another. With each passing year we have more deeply experienced the close, mutual connection between these covenants. The degree of the covenant with the supernatural world normally determined the degree of the related covenants among and with one another, and so we can easily see how truly we can say at the end of the second imprisonment: The intimate fusion of hearts with one another, i.e. between father and Mother and children, and among the children themselves, has reached a mysterious depth which can be understood to a certain extent only in the light of faith and on the basis of the in-break of the divine into our family. Today it is a dead certainty for us that we have all entered into an indescribable unity of fates, missions and hearts with one another that would be difficult to find elsewhere. Together we have all carried the same cross, which was foreseen for the father of the family from all eternity and placed upon his shoulders at the appointed hour. Every- one, without exception, offered their shoulders in his or her own way. Once again, it happened in such a way that the cross lost some of its heaviness because no one had to bear the weight alone. So it is that we live together in a spiritual unity – with, in, and for one another – allowing us to understand correctly now for the first time what the image of the new person in the new community looks like.

We are also aware that with this we approach an ideal which the Church of the future, by its very nature, will be interiorly urged to reach out for, so that by right she will be able to apply the words of praise to herself: “See how they love one another” (Tertullian).

b. Why did the Marian Movement¹ of the 1950s Fail?

38 {PLE 9, 148} I think often of the years 1950 and 1954. It seemed as if all of Catholicism were seeped in Marian devotion. But see how little depth it had. What

is left of it today? Remove the masks! The life of the Church such as we have had in the past decades was largely one great, grotesque masquerade.

A masquerade in two ways.

[First:] How much was just glued on! How little it had taken root in the subconscious life of the soul! (....)

[Second:] “One could, one could, one could...” One could do anything, right? “One could...[be totally enthusiastic about Mary].” I remember well how one of my old math instructors put it. He heard us say, “One can [do this], one can [do that]. He often got angry if someone said, “One can...” He would answer: What can “one” do? “One” can stand on his head [for all your big talk and little action]! And it ended the discussion.

c. Not Just in Theory / We Must Shape Life

39 {PLE 9, 162} Yesterday I briefly touched on the way things were in the days of the Marian movement. You know, if you participated in the forms [they had], you will say tomorrow or the day after: Will the liturgical movement not follow the same path? (....)

[You see, our view of the liturgy is] the mysterious action of Christ and the co-action of the Church his Bride². [The advantage of this definition is it] touches on what I personally think is the most important and central problem:

¹ Meant is the vast outpouring of Marian devotion in the mid-20th century, especially stirred by Fatima (especially after World War II), the dogmatization of the Assumption (1950) and the Marian Year (1954). What Fr. Kentenich observes in 1966 is how swiftly it collapsed in the 1960s, for want of roots in everyday life.

² Fr. Kentenich’s definition developed in the 1930s. A more complete version is found in his 1944 treatise from Dachau, *Marianische Werkzeugsfrömmigkeit* (Marian Instrument Piety): “The sacred, mysterious action of Christ as Head of his Church and the sacred, mysterious co-action of his Bride, the Church, in order to overcome sin and transfigure the world and to glorify the Father.”the relationship between Church and world or, to put it in more general terms: the relationship between Primary Cause and secondary causes. This is the main problem facing the world today!

To be sure, the Church's decisions at the Council laid the foundation for all of these questions. But when it began to deal with the problem itself, the Council, or rather, the Council fathers declared: this problem is too new for us, we cannot yet address it.

You see, until now it has been our strength and mission [in Schoenstatt] to dare to tackle this great problem: the fundamental relationship between Primary and secondary causes – applied to us: between religion and life, modern life!¹

d. Making God present by Making Mary present

40 {PLE 10, 134} I just returned from Bavaria, where I laid the cornerstone for the new Shrine². While I was traveling through the countryside, I couldn't help but think: the Bavarian countryside still looks much like rural Germany used to in most places. {135} Everywhere little chapels, wayside crucifixes; everywhere an outward appearance that is a constant reminder of the supernatural world. (...) [But] the signs and reminders of the living God are disappearing more and more in our modern culture today. What must take its place? (...) Persons who make the living God and Our Lady present through their whole being!

Isn't it true that everything we have been discussing here, some- times one way, sometimes another – such as when we talk about our home shrine and heart shrine – is pushing us toward this vast trans- formation? “My Queen, my Mother, I give myself entirely to you. And to show my devotion to you I consecrate to you this day” – in practical ways – “my eyes.”

¹ That is, how to relate God to practical everyday life.

² On September 7, 1966, Fr. Kentenich presided at the solemn cornerstone laying for the Shrine of the diocese of Augsburg (near Memhölz), Germany.

I want to be an image of Mary, and as an image of Mary – you must not overhear this – also be an expression, a living expression of the image of Christ and the Blessed Trinity. What is at stake (...) {136} is the relationship between Primary and secondary causes in the world of today. We have no idea of how far astray we already are by separating the world from God, when the world should instead be a mirror of God.

You see, if I make the Blessed Mother present – for instance, through my eyes, by having Marian eyes – then I make present the living God. (...)

Again: What is at stake? Truly, the most central of ideas! Truly! Especially, if we correctly understand what is meant today by a pluralistic social order, you have no idea of how important everything is that Our Lady wants to give us from her shrines! It is not as if this were something new. This was our thinking from the beginning. It is not as if it were unheard-of. To be sure, it is unheard-of [from one perspective]. Why? Because these things are no longer familiar to- day, because no one understands them anymore. Today the salvation of the world depends on properly integrating Primary and secondary causes, on restoring the order between these two realities.

And when we look back once more on everything which, for instance, the Council has made its own, then we must unfortunately {137} say that where the Council ended is where it really ought to have begun. How clearly did the Council fathers stress that the Council was not yet ready to tackle this problem! This is why it did not dare to propose any clear formulas, but was satisfied with offering a few general guidelines. And we, the simple faithful, we do not know how to talk about such things in a scholarly fashion¹, but what we now hear touches us in the entire core of our Catholicity and humanity.

¹ As Fr. Kentenich mentions elsewhere, he had a great respect for the sound instinct of the Catholic faithful to appreciate the value of popular piety, even if they could not articulate it in theological language. And so the “little people” in the Church are often best able to strike a vibrant balance between Primary (God) and secondary causes (for instance, Mary), and pass it on to the next generation.

e. In the Power of the Covenant of Love

41 {Message,Sept7,1968} Since 1914, through our covenant of love with the MTA, we have grown year by year in our commitment to the content of our motto: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest time. Throughout the past years our gaze has always been directed towards the new shore for the Church and world. This is how we should understand everything that has been written about these times. We know that for a long time we were not understood by certain circles of the Church which took their orientation too much from the old shore.

Our covenant of love obliges both partners. We wanted to surrender ourselves totally to her – Mary – and we desired to be educated by her. And she, the great educator of people and nations, took the duty upon herself to use her shrine to attract us to herself so that she might form us into useful instruments in her hand for the Marian formation of the coming world in Christ, to the glory of the Father.

We know how both partners have carried out their task. We have all experienced it: some more, some less. She has not only proved that she is the masterly educator of the elite and the masses from her shrine, she has shown that she is not only the great missionary who continually works miracles of spiritual transformation and fruitfulness and gives the experience of being at home, she is also the brilliant reformer of human society on a small scale within the many branches of the family, she is the leader in the battle for Christ and against all diabolical powers. (...)

For fifty years we have experienced the importance, implications and fruitfulness of this motto as a fruit of the mutual covenant of love. Therefore we do not find it difficult to repeat it with great enthusiasm, and to orient ourselves towards it in the coming fifty years, despite all the revolutionary tendencies in the Church and world. We are prepared to give ourselves to it, body and soul. (...)

With this attitude let us enter into the dark future. We do so under the motto: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest time!

