

Words of the Founder

*on the occasion of the consecration of the Adoration Church on Trinity
Sunday, 9th June, 1968*

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

I regret as much as you do that circumstances make it impossible for us to meet, particularly on this most important day when we celebrate the consecration of our Adoration Church. Yet you will surely accept my words of welcome and my wishes for God's blessing on you, even though they take this form.

My message will be short ... I would like to express very briefly my wish for you. It is this: A deeper understanding of the significance of today's solemn act for the entire Schoenstatt Family. The large numbers who have come here today show that you are already aware of this in its essentials. Yet, if you would like to dig somewhat deeper, it will be helpful to hear of the preparations for and consequences of this solemn act.

The *preparations* include the whole of the early history of our Adoration Church. It was planned a long time ago. In general we could trace its origins as far back as 18th October, 1939, at the outbreak of World War II. At that time we wanted to offer Our Lady a memorial in thanksgiving. We asked her to lead us victoriously through the approaching world war in the same way as she had protected the Schoenstatt Family during World War I. A number of possibilities were suggested. On New Year's Day, 1940 the decision was finally made: our Sisters of Mary would build our Adoration Church as a monument in gratitude for Our Lady's assistance. Once Schoenstatt had triumphantly survived the war, the Sisters of Mary officially and solemnly took on this task in 1945.

It should not surprise us that they found it a heavy burden. It took exactly thirty years to carry out. Today the building is completed. Involuntarily one asks for the secret behind such a development. It occurred at a time when the Sisters' Family was on the verge of being dissolved by the authorities in Rome. Nevertheless these dangers did not confuse them. They lived and strove, they acted, planned and worked as though they were absolutely sure they were right. In addition, this development occurred at a time when the provinces were planning and building their large Provincial Houses. Here, too, we notice an admirable intuition, an unshakable confidence in the reality of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. The motto, which became the favourite saying of the whole family, is: *Mater perfectam habebit curam et victoriam!* (The Mother will care perfectly and be victorious!)

In the course of the thirty years of preparation, trends again and again drew attention to the seriousness of the promise they had made. During the 1950's Schoenstatt was most thoroughly tested by the Church. If the conflict with National Socialism had been a matter of life and death, it cannot be compared to the dangers the family had later to

face. From this we can understand why attention was again drawn to the promise also outside the Sisters' Family. This trend became ever stronger, and as time went by it became so powerful that today we look with wonder at the completed work.

Since God and Our Lady deserve the chief recognition, we gratefully join Our Lady in praying: "For he that is mighty has done great things to us, and holy is his name."

Our task in future is to prove ourselves worthy of this divine activity at all times. The special graces for which we should pray in order to reap the full consequences of this solemn act are: that our Schoenstatt Family may more than ever before become as perfect a colony of heaven as possible, may unfold an all-comprising creativity, and become a fortress of God for the world and Church.

The expression "colony of heaven" is essentially taken from St. Paul.

It is contained in his admonition: "Your thoughts should be in heaven" (Phil. 3:20). This was obviously a standing expression of his. He had derived it from another well-known expression used in everyday life at the time. It was said: The way of life of the individual provinces of the Roman Empire should imitate the customs and practices of the court at Rome. The question naturally arises at this point: What are the customs or ceremonies of heaven? A clear answer to this question is of no little importance to a family which would like to exemplify most closely in everyday life the ceremonies that surround the throne of the Triune God. The Apocalypse gives us a very vivid description:

"Every time the animals glorified and honoured and gave thanks to the One sitting on the throne, who lives 24 for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before him to worship the One who lives for ever and ever, and threw down their crowns in front of the throne, saying, You are our Lord and our God, you are worthy of glory and honour and power, because you made all the universe and it was only by your will that everything was made and exists!" (Apoc. 4:9—11). This places an immeasurably great picture before our spiritual eyes. The twenty-four ancients mentioned in the reading are a symbol of the whole of mankind before God in heaven. They wear ceremonial garments and have golden crowns on their heads. They rise and prostrate themselves on the ground, casting their crowns at the feet of the One on the throne. Up in heaven they live the act and attitude of adoration continually. Of course they are also well aware that God is worthy of this adoration. This presupposes that he is not only the absolute Lord over life and death, and they in total dependence on him, but that God is also infinite kindness, worthy of all love and most lovable, If God were not infinite kindness, this act of casting oneself into the dust as a sign of inner adoration would be unworthy, because it contradicts the dignity of the human person.

Adoration of God's person in heaven is always connected with adoration of the divine will.

From all that has been said we can conclude what the features of a family are and should be, if it wants to exemplify a colony of heaven. The Old Testament had two primary ways of expressing adoration, of which God alone is worthy: prostration in the dust as an expression of human smallness, and the kiss, as an expression of self-surrender and acceptance. Human smallness bows before the infinite greatness and omnipotence of the living God. Self-surrender is the answer to the wooing of the loving God. The word 'adoration' comes from the Latin word *adoratio*, which is a compound. It means literally: bringing the lips or the entire person into contact with the beloved object in a sort of kiss. From the very beginning the Schoenstatt Family has been striving towards the ideal of the Colony of heaven. This was always seen from two points of view: the first is the adoration of the divine will. Our marked belief in Divine Providence has always kept us aware of this divine will, and has urged us to repeat in every situation: "Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum." Therefore we pray in "Himmelwaerts": "We have but one longing: Lead us according to your wise plans."

Adoration of the Divinity, particularly of the Blessed Sacrament, has been present in the Sisters' Family from its earliest years. From there the adoration movement, in the actual meaning of the words, developed in every direction. It found adherents and was used as an instrument to inspire and powerfully motivate the entire Schoenstatt Family. Today a mighty adoration movement is part of the entire Schoenstatt Family. The consecration of the Adoration Church should be seen as a symbol of this movement. We are justified in expecting the family, in keeping with its development until now, to become more completely and more deeply a colony of heaven. It should not be necessary to draw your attention to the significance of this fact when we consider that certain circles within the Church attempt to become a colony of earth, while other communities are proud to be a colony of hell.

Our Adoration Church looks like a castle. Therefore it is also called "God's Castle". This title points to the past and admonishes us to maintain and carefully foster under all circumstances whatever is valuable from the past. In this castle of God, the living God reigns, not least under the form of the Blessed Sacrament, as our sacrifice, our meal and the object of our eternal adoration. From here he would like to transform the whole of creation, but in particular mankind, into a castle of God. And he wants to do this at a time in which man seems to be proud that he is constantly fleeing from God. For years the Schoenstatt Family has spoken not only of the mother shrine, of daughter shrines or home shrines, but also of the shrine of our hearts. By this is chiefly meant the human heart as the dwelling place of the Triune God. From this comes the old ideal, which should again be emphasised when we see the Adoration Church as God's castle: each human heart must become a Church of the Trinity, i.e., a church in which the Triune God dwells and which is consecrated to him.

With this we again touch upon a favourite idea of the Apostle Paul, expressed as an admonition to the Corinthians: "Glorificate et portate Deum in corpore vestro!" — "Glorify God and bear him in your bodies" (1 Cor. 6:20). We are concerned here with adoring the Triune God in our hearts. Nor do we find it difficult in this regard to understand another admonition of St. Paul:

“Didn’t you realise that you were God’s temple and that the Spirit of God was living among you? If anybody should destroy the temple of God, God will destroy him, because the temple of God is sacred; and you are that temple” (1 Cor.3:16-17) When we summarise all that has been said, a bright light is shed on the great ideal which Schoenstatt has to proclaim to the world and exemplify: the ideal of the new man in the new community. We could also say: the ideal of the person without vows who strives after perfection, in a community which does not require vows, but which strives after perfection. May our Church of the Trinity be a constant incentive, inspiring us to carry out our great mission more perfectly than before. May our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, intercede this grace for us from the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

From “Himmelwaerts” we pray:

“May all Schoenstatt, thine own place, Full of zealous love and grace Lead God’s workers in the strife, Strength’ning the apostle’s life. Christ’s own torch in glowing flame, Brandishing on high his name, Till the world, one flaming sea, Burns before the Trinity. Amen.”