

Mary and Love for the Church

Texts by Fr. Joseph Kentenich

(JN – May 2004)

(Undated)

It is precisely love for the Church that called Schoenstatt into being; it is this love that drove it to the concentration camp and prison. This love, too, has urged it to stand before the highest authority of the Church and remain there until its mission is recognized or rejected... Moreover, the inner relationship between love for Mary and love for the Church has been exceedingly clear to us from the beginning. This love determined our feeling of life, our task in life and our practical application¹.

1930 (Conference on Education in Industrial Times)

Our Church today is essentially a giant institution, not a giant body. This is why it is rejected by the most influential socialists. They are often totally noble people. This is why the Church is often attacked and maligned: she is only a giant institution, not a body. Everyone lives in his own hut... How must genuine Catholicism show what it truly is? By really being *one body*.... *One member serves the other, member after member*. Selfless service to one another! We can call it: sisterly [and brotherly] love, love of neighbor. Please notice how many noble people in the Church are totally misguided. They get married in the Church, go to holy communion or give alms here and there – but that's all! How do we truly love? Let us learn to give ourselves a healthy critique.... We must [learn to] suffer with the Church in a deep interior way. After all, we are members of the Church. The Church is an organism. To be members of a giant body is something different from being only a stone in a giant edifice. When one suffers, the [other] members share in the suffering. It is therefore important that we widen our view. Everything must interest us. The entire world with all its suffering must find a place in our heart....²

May 10, 1949 (Letter to Bishop Stein)

Since my imprisonment³ I envision Schoenstatt more in the service of the Church than ever before. For now I consider it my task to bring into the Church principles and methods which have proven useful to us. Until now that was my main concern. I left the care of Schoenstatt and its justification largely in the hands of Our Lady.... In the debate about Schoenstatt I always advised my co-workers not to try to justify Schoenstatt, but to make the principles embodied there understandable and available to the Church. I was so persistent in following this course that even when Schoenstatt became... the subject of renewed debate in the episcopate, I was not swayed to abandon my reserve. From all sides I was advised... to visit the bishops in order to establish a rapport with them in the interests of smoothing the troubled waters. I answered either with silence or refused

¹ (Naumann) "Es ist ja gerade die Liebe zur Kirche, die Schönstatt ins Leben gerufen hat, diese Liebe ist es, die es in Konzentrationslager und Gefängnis hineingetrieben hat. Sie ist es auch, die es anregt, sich dem kirchlichen Amte in seiner höchsten Instanz zu stellen und dort stehen zu bleiben, bis seine Sendung anerkannt oder abgewiesen worden ist ... Von Anfang an war uns zudem die innere Beziehung zwischen Marienliebe und Kirchenliebe überaus klar. Sie bestimmte unser Lebensgefühl, unsere Lebensaufgabe und unsere Praxis." Cited in J. Schmitz, "Pater Joseph Kentenich und Gehorsam in der Kirche," *Regnum* 19, 1 (1984): 3-12, here 6.

² (Naumann) *IRFr* (1930), 98-99.

³ Fr. Kentenich's time in prison and concentration camp, 1941-1945.

altogether. I calmly left Germany... My collaborators were in at a complete loss. Presupposing my consent they visited –at least at the very last moment – the one or the other bishop before [the meeting of] the [German Bishops’] Conference. To this I responded that they had disturbed my plans and hindered the triumph of the Blessed Mother.... For me the division of labor is very clear: I care for the Church, a matter near to Mary’s heart, and the Blessed Mother will care for Schönstatt. She has done so in an outstanding way and will continue to do so....⁴

1951 (Conference on Education)

Allow me to examine today’s pastoral life for a moment. Even in those Catholic circles in Germany where Mariology was relegated to obscurity, it has gone through a gradual reawakening since the proclamation of the dogma of the *Assumption*, but in an onesided way. Certain liturgical circles which are too idea-focused, proclaim the image of Mary today more strongly than they once did, but not for who she fully is, rather only for what she stands for: the Mother of God as symbol of the Church. In this way Marian love is largely robbed of its educational strength and power. What is left is then nothing but a visual illustration of abstract ideas⁵.

Feb. 1951, Chile Terziat

{81} Wir stehen am Ende einer 500 jährigen Geschichte. Der Herrgott will die Kirche an ein ganz neues Ufer führen. Er hat seine Absicht mit der Entwicklung der Kirche. Normalerweise sucht er diese Absicht zu erreichen durch die Gegner. Vielleicht sind wir zu stark an alte Formen gebunden, so daß der Geist nicht genügend wirken kann. Auch die Kirche hat, bei aller Achtung der Autorität, als Träger Menschen. ... Die Kirche ist in einer gewissen Revolution, die wir alle miterleben, wissen aber noch nicht recht, wohin es geht. Wie sieht die kommende Zeit aus, für die wir noch keinen Namen haben? Wie sieht die Kirche aus am anderen Ufer? Antwort kann ein Metaphysiker geben und ein Prophet. Der Metaphysiker, der sich bemüht, die Kirche zu sehen in ihrer {80} wesentlichen Substanz und in ihrer historischen Form. ... Der zweite, der eine Antwort geben kann, ist der Prophet, d.h. der Mensch voller Gottergriffenheit, Sendungsergriffenheit und Zeitergriffenheit.

Entterritorialisierung der Kirche. Morgen, ja heute schon, gibt es keine Abstände mehr. Was

⁴ (Naumann) Fr. Kentenich's letter of May 10, 1949 to Auxiliary Bishop B. Stein of Trier: " (...) Bei der Discussion um Schönstatt habe ich meinen Mitarbeitern immer empfohlen, nicht Schönstatt rechtfertigen zu wollen, sondern die Prinzipien, die dort eine Inkarnation gefunden, klar heraus und der Kirche zur Verfügung zu stellen. So rücksichtslos wurde dieses Ziel von mir verfolgt, daß ich auch zur Zeit, als Schönstatt im Episkopat erneut.... Gegenstand der Diskussion wurde, nicht aus meiner Reserve herauszubringen war. Von allen Seiten wurde mir geraten... die Bischöfe zu besuchen, um ein Vertrauensverhältnis zu ihnen herzustellen, und dadurch den aufgeregten Wellengang wieder zu beruhigen. Meine Reaktion war entweder Schweigen oder Ablehnung. Ruhig verließ ich die Heimat.... Meine Mitarbeiter waren in großer Verlegenheit. Sie glaubten, meine Zustimmung voraussetzen zu dürfen, und besuchten– wenigstens im allerletzten Augenblick– vor der Konferenz noch den einen oder anderen Bischof. Meine Antwort war, sie hätten meine Pläne gestört und den Triumph der Gottesmutter gehindert.... Für mich war die Arbeitsteilung eine überaus klare: Ich Sorge für die Kirche, das Herzensanliegen der Gottesmutter, und die Gottesmutter sorgt für Schönstatt. Sie hat das in vorzüglicher Weise getan und wird es weiter tun.... " Cited in Monnerjahn, "*Stehen in göttlicher Sieghaftigkeit.*" *Der Vierte Meilenstein und das Zweite Wunder der Heiligen Nacht in der Schönstattgeschichte.* Vorträge zum 15. September 1990, 29-30.

⁵ (Naumann) *PTg* (1951), 56-57: "Bestimmte liturgische Kreise, die so ganz stark ideenmäßig eingestellt sind, künden heute stärker als früher das Marienbild, aber nicht in seiner vollen Eigengesetzlichkeit, sondern nur in seiner Symbolhaftigkeit: die Gottesmutter als Symbol der Kirche. Damit wird die Marienliebe zum großen Teil ihrer erzieherischen Kraft und Macht entkleidet. Dann haben wir ja nichts als einen Anschauungsunterricht von Ideen."

man heute drüben hustet, das pustet man morgen hier. Die Kirche muß in irgendeiner Form sehen, wie sie sich der Zeit anpaßt und das Überzeitliche hinüberraet. Es gibt keine gesicherten Territorien mehr.

... Fast mag es einem Angst werden, die Dinge so in ihrer krassen Deutlichkeit zu sehen. Und wir leben zwischen beiden Stühlen, an den Ausläufern der Zeit, die elementar ringt um eine neue Form. ... Es hat also einen Sinn, wenn wir uns neu orientieren. Was ist das Leitbild der Gesellschaft, dem wir mit allen Mitteln zustreben {82} müssen?

October 4, 1964 (Sermon at St. Michael's)

{158} Why do we want to be Marian maximalists? Who among us – here I always turn to our thinking and feeling as ordinary Catholics – has ever felt a fervent, deep, all-embracing love for Mary drive us from Christ or from God the Father? Who! Is it not exactly the opposite? Must we not admit that love for the Blessed Mother helps us express our love for Jesus and the heavenly Father? Is it not a means, the most excellent means, and a safeguard {159} for our love for Christ and the heavenly Father? Naturally, if I do things like the Protestants...! They see Mary's gifts as being of a merely private nature: Mother of the Savior – that's okay with them – more or less like my mother is my mother. Then I [as the son] can make a name for myself far greater than my mother – that they accept. Merely private in nature. No, we Catholics are convinced that Mary has an official position! By virtue of an office she has a task in the Church, namely, the Church to bind together as profoundly as possible, to bind the Church to Christ, to God the Father, to the Triune God! We want no more than that! It is not as if we ordinary Catholics know how to put that into scientific terms, but when we kneel before the picture of Our Lady... if she were only a simple woman – even if she had done great deeds – would we kneel this way before her? If we did not know what it means that she has this central task in the Church according to the plan of the Eternal God – who of us, I ask, would be so tenderly fond of Our Lady? Then we would say as the Protestants do: Mary? She's okay.

Moreover, isn't it true, my friends, if I may use another image to show how fundamentally healthy we are: Let us suppose that I have a wonderful relationship with my father and mother. And then I say tomorrow or the day after: "Begone! You are in the way! My love belongs to Christ alone!" But these [two loves] do {160} not negate each other! After all, Christ wants us to love our parents! Of course it would be different if my love for father and mother were so strong that I would follow them even if God demanded something different of me and my parents were telling me to sin! For all of us it goes without saying: My love for father and mother are an expression of my love for God, an expression of my love for Christ and for the heavenly Father; it is a means by which I reach God more deeply. For us healthy-thinking Catholics it is self-understood: we do not tear the Mother of God mechanically out of her context. We don't do that! Inside of ourselves we keep together these things which belong together.

Dear friends, we are talking with each other as if over the garden fence. But do we understand the earth-shaking implications of what we are saying so casually? Think it over well. We are now going to dig as deep as we possibly can. To which I can say: For us Catholics, Mary – in accordance with the plan of God and the tradition and teaching of the Church – is not only a lovely adornment in our churches – nice, pleasant, becoming, but optional. No, the way we see it and the Church has seen it for centuries – for millennia! – according to God's plan, Mary's place – and now you must listen carefully – is *at the center* of Christianity. Not {161} as if she were the center, but she is *at the center*. What does this mean? She is not the center the way Christ is the

center, but her place is at the center and she has the task to lead to the center, to Christ. In the Church we have always believed that.

And when we now study the current situation of the world, then, my friends, we must say and admit: The whole world today is driven by a desire for world unity, stronger than any since the beginning of the world. World unity! But if we contemplate this unity in the light of God and the light of history, we must distinguish between two kinds: a diabolical – I must be very blunt in saying in that way – and a divine. Or, in other words, a mechanical and an organic-Catholic unity of the nations⁶.

What does the mechanical, diabolical unity look like? The Bible gives us an example. It is the tower of Babel (Gen 11, 1-9). What did the peoples of that time want? Mechanical unity. World unity without God and against God. We must never forget this! And what did God do? Once the nations believed that their tower had nearly reached heaven, God came down and destroyed it. The same thing today: struggles and efforts to achieve a mechanical unity, a world unity without God, a world unity against God. Is it not so?

{162} A learned Spanish philosopher⁷, a genuine Catholic, once concluded from his studies: Today's world is at the zenith of unbridled arrogance. An unbridled arrogance is seeking to unite the world and the nations without and against the living God. Anyone with a little insight into history and looks into the world – we only need to do so in our workplaces – will find... what? To be sure, a driving desire for unity, unity with one another, unity among the nations, occident and orient. Everyone wants unity. Unity with one another. Exchange! Exchange! But, in the background, this unity is largely a unity without and against God!

What does the God-willed unity look like? We called it organic and Catholic. Organic: it is a unity which gradually integrates the whole from a center-point, a unity whose origin is a root from which, bit by bit, a tree, a world-tree is formed and takes shape. And what does this root look like? From the merely natural point of view it is Adam. Adam, the root of the whole human race. From Sacred Scripture, the Word of God, we know that it was the plan of God the Eternal Father for Christ to subsume in himself Adam, and in Adam the whole human race⁸. Our learned {163} Catholic theologians know how to describe it: Just as at the Incarnation the Divine Word took on his individual human nature, conceived of Mary – in a similar way, but not with the same depth, the whole human race is meant to be united with the body of Christ. What does this mean? St. Paul made it clear: He is at the highest point. Who? The God-Man. He is at the pinnacle of human society, and everything, totally everything is ordered to him (cf Col 1,15-20).

Nowadays we, especially we Americans, are proud to call ourselves a political nation. But if we let our political ideas unfold and expand contrary to the world order of the Eternal God, then, I think, we must admit that we are among the most unpolitical nations which world history can imagine. Unless politics takes up the task of making Christ himself [and in and through him] God the Eternal Father the head of human society, unless it serves Christ the head, then we are striving for a unity which is not organic.

But I must also add a second essential point. What is the Blessed Mother according to the Eternal Father's plan of salvation? What is she? She is mother of the whole {164} Christ! What

⁶ See also similar thoughts by Fr. Kentenich on the organic Christian social order built on Christ as head and Mary as heart in: *Mary, Our Mother and Educator* (Waukesha, 1987), p. 109-111.

⁷ Probably Juan Donoso Cortés (1809-1853).

⁸ Cf. Rom 5,12 – 6,11; Eph 1,3-10.

does that mean? She is the Mother of Christ in his humanity. And she is also the Mother of Christ in his divinity, based of course on the singular connection between the Divine Word, the second person of the Godhead, and his individual human nature. Thirdly, she is Mother of the Mystical Christ. What does that mean? In the course of these Sundays, I hope to make clearer to you all of these great, but less-known, truths. What does it mean that she is the Mother of the Mystical Christ? [She is] Mother of all mankind, especially of the members of Christ. What consequences does this have? This is very important! For centuries it has been the habit of the Christian people to put it this way: If Christ is the head of humanity and therefore especially head of the Church, then Mary is the heart of the Church. No one can create unity in the world or in the Church by eliminating Christ, nor can unity be achieved by eliminating the heart, by taking away Mary!

My friends, what consequences must we draw from this? Please remember to know the difference: We will let the council fathers determine the expressions and terms, but I think that the right which is acknowledged as ours [i.e., proper to the Christian faithful] – to hold fast to the Catholic way of thinking – is something that we not only want to affirm, but want to penetrate anew. There will be no unity between ourselves and the Protestants, no unity between ourselves and the other religions [and] Christian {165} denominations, if we, for tactical reasons – I do not want to say suppress – hide, as it were, such central truths. To the *God-willed* striving for unity it is essential that human society revolve around the head and ultimately and deeply around the heart of the Church: around [Mary,] the heart foreseen for human society by the plan of the Eternal God.

December 20, 1964 (Sermon at St. Michael's)

Both stand side-by-side: Mother Church and Mother Mary. The Church is the quintessential image of the Mother of God and the Mother of God [is] the quintessential image of the Church⁹.

August 15/September 8, 1965 (to Cardinal Ottaviani)

For me love for the *Mater Christi* and for *Mater Ecclesiae* or *sentire cum Maria* and *sentire cum Ecclesia* was and is always identical: analogous to how Mariology and ecclesiology depend on and support each other. The degree and extent and quality of love for the one determines the degree and extent and quality of love for the other¹⁰.

December 8, 1965 (Talk to Leaders of the Schoenstatt Movement)

A second consideration: What God has given Mary, he gives likewise to the Church. We remember this today, whether thinking of our family or of the conclusion of the council¹¹. The Blessed Mother is to be solemnly named or acknowledged as *Mother of the Church*. We therefore acknowledge Mary as Mother of the Church.

This says two things: She is Mother of the Church and she is Mother Church. What does it mean to say, “she is Mother Church”? She is the Church’s ideal. This is why the Church is so very interested in the person of Mary, for everything which God has given her and which the Church has said about her applies, *mutatis mutandis* [with the necessary adjustments], to the Church herself.

⁹ (Naumann) December 20, 1964. *AGI*, Vol. 15: 144: "So stehen beide nebeneinander, Mutter Kirche und Mutter Maria. [Das will besagen:] die Kirche ist das *Inbild* der lieben Gottesmutter, oder die Gottesmutter [ist] das *Inbild* der Kirche."

¹⁰ Quote found in both versions of a key letter of introduction to Cardinal Ottaviani from Milwaukee: August 15, 1965 (long form) and September 8, 1965 (short form).

¹¹ This was the day of the solemn conclusion of Vatican Council II.

The image of Mary is the image of the Church. The two are essentially united¹².

January 3, 1966 (Talk for Schoenstatt Priests)

{100} From the dogmatic standpoint we could now draw circle after circle around the inner connections between *Mater ecclesia* [Mother Church] and *Mater ecclesiae* [the Mother of the Church]. It just comes naturally to the Church, to the Catholic Church: [to look to] Mary as her model. Because of this and the laws of set down in her way of existence, the Church cannot distort the image of Mary. If she would allow it to be distorted, she would distort her own image. This may help us understand why Protestantism is unable to come to terms with the image of Mary. Even Protestantism instinctively identifies its own image with the image of Mary. And because this image is absolutely irreconcilable with the features of the Blessed Mother the way *we* see her, Protestantism is unable to accept our love of Mary in its full-blooded form. Hence, if we want to help bring about the post-conciliar mission of the Church, we must not forget: *sub tutela matris* [to place it under the patronage of our Mother]. We also want to have the courage – and today it requires courage, even in our own circles, even among priests – to speak a heartfelt yes to the position of Mary, especially under the title *Mater ecclesiae*.

If I now look back on the past years – after all, we Schoenstatters have been involved in all the battles (...) – what a time it was when love of Mary became so controversial after the first World War! What battles they were, that we {101} fought to defend the honor of Our Lady! And if we owe it to our dear Blessed Mother that she has glorified herself in our family as a part of the Church, then it will always be our task to make sure that Our Lady is acknowledged in the Church, and not only that she is acknowledged, but that she be for the new times the great Christ-bearer, Christ-server and Christ-bringer¹³.

(After Vatican II)

Because Mary is the innate portrait of the Church, any change in the image of Mary will effect change in the Church's own image, therefore, as Fr. Kentenich says, “we must thank the Council Fathers, especially the present pope [Paul VI] that... absolutely nothing was changed, in view of the irenistic confrontation with Protestantism, in the original image of the Mother of God¹⁴.”

¹² *Rom-Vorträge* 3, 138 (Dec. 8, 1965)

¹³ (Naumann) "Jetzt könnten wir vom dogmatischen Standpunkte aus Kreis und Kreise ziehen um die inneren Zusammenhänge zwischen *Mater ecclesia* und *Mater ecclesiae*. Das liegt im Blute der... katholischen Kirche: in der Gottesmutter hat sie ihr Modell. Darum kann die Kirche nicht, schon allein aus dem Gesetze der Eigenexistenz, das Bild der Gottesmutter verzeichnen. Wenn sie es verzeichnen ließe, würde sie ihr eigenes Bild verzeichnen.... Deswegen, wenn wir helfen wollen, die nachkonziliare Sendung der Kirche zu verwirklichen, dann wollen wir nie übersehen: *sub tutela matris*. Wir wollen auch den Mut haben– und heute gehört Mut dazu, auch in eigenen Kreisen, in eigenen Priesterkreisen – ein herzhaftes Ja zur Stellung der Gottesmutter, zumal unter dem Titel *Mater ecclesiae* zu sagen... [Das wird] immer unsere Aufgabe bleiben, dafür zu sorgen, daß die Gottesmutter in der Kirche anerkannt wird... daß sie für die neue Zeit die große Christusträgerin, Christusdienerin und Christusgebärerin ist." *VrPrMünster (1966)* in *Propheta* III, 87-101, here 100-101.

¹⁴ (Naumann) *WegwGr* I, 104-105: "...müssen wir auch den Konzilsvätern, besonders dem gegenwärtig regierenden Papst [Paul VI] danken... daß gar nichts im Interesse der irenischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Protestantismus am ursprünglichen Bild der Gottesmutter geändert worden ist. "