

COUPLES DAY at MOUNT SCHOENSTATT

A christian life of charity and faith is the most effective form of Evangelization Schoenstatt, a way of life!

o. Introduction

We, as couples branch, have the call to be workers and promoters of Evangelization. We help the church to bring and to make Christ and his Kingdom present in our world. That is call is important and have life implications for everyone of us.

Let us recall what Pope Francis told to the leaders of the ecclesial movements in Rom in the last Pentecost Vigil in may 2013:

I shall return to the idea of “witness”. First of all living out the Gospel is the main contribution we can make. The Church is neither a political movement nor a well-organized structure. That is not what she is. We are not an NGO, and when the Church becomes an NGO she loses her salt, she has no savour, she is only an empty organization.

We need cunning here, because the devil deceives us and we risk falling into the trap of hyper-efficiency. Preaching Jesus is one thing; attaining goals, being efficient is another. No, efficiency is a different value. Basically the value of the Church is living by the Gospel and witnessing to our faith. The Church is the salt of the earth, she is the light of the world. She is called to make present in society the leaven of the Kingdom of God and she does this primarily with her witness, the witness of brotherly love, of solidarity and of sharing with others. When you hear people saying that solidarity is not a value but a “primary attitude” to be got rid of... this will not do! They are thinking of an efficiency that is purely worldly.

Times of crisis, like the one we are living through — you said earlier that “we live in a world of lies” — this time of crisis, beware, is not merely an economic crisis. It is not a crisis of culture. It is a human crisis: it is the human person that is in crisis! Man himself is in danger of being destroyed! But man is the image of God! This is why it is a profound crisis!

At this time of crisis we cannot be concerned solely with ourselves, withdrawing into loneliness, discouragement and a sense of powerlessness in the face of problems. Please do not withdraw into yourselves! This is a danger: we shut ourselves up in the parish, with our friends, within the movement, with the like-minded... but do you know what happens? When the Church becomes closed, she becomes an ailing Church, she falls ill! That is a danger. Nevertheless we lock ourselves up in our parish, among our friends, in our movement, with people who think as we do... but do you know what happens? When the Church is closed, she falls sick, she falls sick. Think of a room that has been closed for a year. When you go into it there is a smell of damp, many things are wrong with it. A Church closed in on herself is the same, a sick Church.

The Church must step outside herself. To go where? To the outskirts of existence, whatever they may be, but she must step out. Jesus tells us: “Go into all the world! Go! Preach! Bear witness to the Gospel!” (cf. Mk 16:15). But what happens if we step outside ourselves? The same as can happen to anyone who comes out of the house and onto the street: an accident. But I tell you, I far prefer a Church that has had a few accidents to a Church that has fallen sick from being closed.

Go out, go out! Think of what the Book of Revelation says as well. It says something beautiful: that Jesus stands at the door and knocks, knocks to be let into our heart (cf. Rev 3:20). This is the meaning of the Book of Revelation. But ask yourselves this question: how often is Jesus inside and knocking at the door to be let out, to come out? And we do not let him out because of our own need for security, because so often we are locked into ephemeral structures that serve solely to make us slaves and not free children of God.

I. Schoenstatt’s way of Evangelization. A culture of life, of love and of faith

What we want and what we offer when we go out at the service of the new Evangelization? We offer our specific charisma. It means a new image of couple and family.

Fr. Kentenich presents marriages his vision of the new family required by today's times:

“We have frequently said: we wish to be a family from Nazareth that embodies the face of these newer times, of the newer Church.” Remember that the family's basic traits are described in “The Home Song” HW p. 158 called the canticle of family love, which is our Family hymn.

We speak of the organic family, where the natural is interwoven with the supernatural, and is therefore a vigorous, attracting, strong family. It is a family that is conscious of its identity and richness, nurturing, and open to changing social needs.

1. **Family united in love:** a noble and wholesome love that unites all members, and opens the family to seeking the well-being of all others.
2. **Wholesome family:** based in natural law, respecting the wholesome needs of all persons, not only united in love, but also in truth and justice.
3. **Family rooted in the supernatural world:** Providential, that cultivates the encounter with the God of Life, adopts his will, and strives to build with Him as His instrument.
4. **Missionary Family:** it is necessary that the fundamental cell of the Church, the Christian family, be evangelized, and so, in turn, become an evangelizing family.

1. Family united in love

“Do you know the land so warm and dear... where noble hearts beat with affection,

and bear with each other in the joy of sacrifice; where they glow and shelter one another

and flow as one into the heart of God; where streams of love well forth with might to quench the thirst of the world for love? HW p. 158

Father Kentenich proposes a model for marriage and family, modeled after the Holy Family of Nazareth, of holiness. Holiness is the vocation to which all Christians are called, each according to his state. The value and novelty of Father Kentenich is that he lays out a path to holiness, a spirituality that is specifically based in matrimony and families, different from that of religious and priests.

The question now is ***How can we sanctify ourselves through marriage and family life? Or How can we this couple and family united in love?***

We have three steps to go.

First step: Learn to make each other happy.

“Our mutual spousal love invites and demands, first and foremost, that we make each other happy... Be aware that the realm of love in all its forms is a realm of learning to love.... All love is selfish in its beginnings... At first, self-satisfaction and self-happiness are primarily placed; later, as the marriage matures, the happiness of the other moves to the place of primacy.”

To mutually grow in love is to cultivate the attitude that: my first concern is the good of the other.

In expressing one’s love, one must certainly take account of tenderness, spontaneous communication, deep dialogue, the small details that bring joy to daily life, small gifts and services, a phone call, and the

outings that rekindle affection.

Second step: Help each other to make progress on the path to perfection

Father Kentenich tells us:

“All love represents a “perfecting” of man. Therefore, our married life must essentially guide us to a path toward greater perfection. For us married people, everyday married life offers many opportunities to advance on the path to perfection, and to help our spouses on the same path. For example, when we are constantly at each other’s sides and experience each other’s faults, it becomes so difficult to maintain respect for each other! What a sacrifice and art it is for spouses to keep silent in front of others about the spouse’s failings!

When we must stand our ground, do we do it heatedly or with proper respect? When we must call certain faults to our spouse’s attention, how do we do it? Do we Yell, or do we try to understand, with tact and respect, the other’s failings, striving to patiently help them to overcome them? We must not focus our matrimonial love on sexual love, but must carefully cultivate all ways of loving, up to the level of heroic love. Thus will our love mature, and the conjugal act will become a spontaneous and joyful expression of

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personal and spiritual communion.” (OME 20, p.117)

Third step: to crown the maturation of our matrimonial love with total and mutual fidelity.

“That our conjugal love be crowned with the diadem of unbreakable fidelity”

What is fidelity? It is the maintenance, with much care, of the purity of our first love. Or also, the pure, flawless, and tried conservation of our first love.

“Infidelity refers not only to going with another man or woman. No, I am unfaithful when I no longer give my heart generously and totally to my spouse, when I no longer have time for my spouse, when, instead of spending time with

my spouse, I spend my time on my favorite activities, when I am interested in everything else besides my own spouse and children.” (OME 20, p.139)

Faithfulness, then, is positively defined as the daily cultivation of conjugal and family love in the areas discussed above. Father Kentenich adds that

“we cannot remain faithful without religious practices, meaning without assuring ourselves of prayer time, nor receiving the Habitual Sacraments (Eucharist and Reconciliation), nor failing to try to make our love life a life of sacrifice (in whichever way this is needed). (OME 20, p. 140)

Teaching and serving the original life of each child:

Children occupy a central position in the ideal Family of Nazareth, as was the position given to the life of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. They must be nurtured by the community of love and rearing, formed by mother and father. Parents are the root of the family, and all else depends on their qualities. Therefore it is essential that their relationship be wholesome and deep, strong and stable. Without these goals and their cultivation, a wholesome family will prove impossible. As parents and teachers, they must seek to reflect the paternity and maternity of God; for this task they need to support and complement each other. They should appear and act together to the children, with mutual standards and objectives in child rearing.

To achieve this unity, they must necessarily speak often about the children, their way of being and their development, what each one needs to be taught, how they need to be supported... effective weapon in the raising of their children is their own example. They must first achieve in themselves, by teaching themselves, what they seek to teach and transmit. The cultivation of a close and permanent contact with their children is what makes this exchange of life and transmittal of values and attitudes that shape a person possible. Confronting, together with the children, life's difficulties and situations that affect the entire family is an enormous help in the development of their values and will wake, in the children, a responsibility for their home

life. In this environment, children will feel valued and supported by their parents, and will learn to share and to be in solidarity with them.

2. Wholesome family attachments (Relationships)

We recognize the importance of cultivating a wholesome, harmonious, and attractive family life.

The family is the place where we are privileged to live personal love, since here we find all types of personal relationships: man/woman, wife/husband, father/mother, among children, siblings, etc. One learns to have wholesome personal relationships in the family.

We want to consciously cultivate a **wholesome family environment**, without destructive tensions that rob us of joy, and are causes of physical and psychological maladies (such as depression, trauma, complexes, etc.). We also wish to cultivate a cozy environment, happy, free, where each one can bring his or her originality, and their God-given talents. We wish to cultivate wholesome human relationships.

It is vitally important to respect the **wholesome needs of nature** such as: the needs for rest, entertainment, vacations, growth; **development of talents:** intellectual, athletic, artistic, etc.

As a family, we must find the paths that help us to develop all the creativity and means for our family to be entertaining, joyful, and attractive to each family member.

We also stress the importance of our family being open to others, with concern and care for our extended family and the world in social matters. Service to others, to the community, and to the less fortunate, is a great help to our wholesome growth.

We must grow in the consciousness of being able to positively influence our environment for the fostering of new ways of more wholesome entertainment and greater social commitment. All of this

becomes an “insurance policy” for our children to be forgers of a better future, and to protect them from abuses such as alcohol and drugs.

We seek a definite balance between freedom, justice, and love.

Freedom: For example, respecting each one’s way of being, personal space, interests, hobbies, etc.

Our Founder compares justice and love to a net, where **justice** is like the threads, and **love** is like the spaces in between.

Justice: Is the proper balance between the time given to work and the time given to family. It is the establishment of clear limits and sticking to them: a **line in the sand** commonly agreed to and respected by all.

Love: Must be expressed with concrete loving actions and gestures.

3. Family rooted in the faith

We believe and promote active couple and family prayer life at home and to live with the God of our life everyday as an especial grace from our home shrines and covenant of love.

Our family does not grow wholesome and in harmony merely because we respect natural law and is united in mutual love, but because both of these are sustained by God, who is Father, who loves and protects the family.

Our Founder says of this:

“We rejoice in natural law, we rejoice in the successes and progress of technology and medicine. But we must not forget that natural law is not the ultimate and definitive norm of our thoughts, works, and lives.

I repeat the invitation: let us reaffirm ourselves, with both feet, on the foundation of faith.”

(On Monday Evenings [OME], p. 55)

Perhaps many of us need to conquer, or reconquer, our relationship with God. We wish to know Him in order to love Him, and to follow His loving plan. Precisely because our faith is not sufficiently deep, nor sufficiently strong, we must pray for its growth. We must often tell God “Lord, I believe. Help my unbelief.” (Mk 9:24)

For this, there is no other path other than learning to pray, to speak with Him, and to have confidence in she who can teach us the most effective way to pray: **Mary in her Shrine.**

If we call on her, she will take us by the hand and guide us to her Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. She will teach us to make God part of our life, for all our life; He who is not an abstract being, to whom certain rules apply.

We must much more often look upon the God of life. He is **behind everything** and He **comes** to encounter us through events, people, and especially our spouse and children. Yes, He always comes to encounter us, to tell us that **we are his children, and He loves us so that we can be happy.**

He also pursues his particular plan through the crosses that we bear and through our suffering. Perhaps He wishes us to come to Him, to trust Him?

We must learn to carry out that phrase “pray continuously.” That is, we must be in frequent contact with God. We must not measure our piety according to the number of prayers we recite, since we cannot accomplish much; rather, we must be in contact with Him throughout the day. We must learn to discover all that He gives us daily: a noble spouse, the healthy growth of our children, the fact that we are well fed... God also created the natural world for me; He created the stars, the sun, etc. Therefore, being with God is my joy because I can find Him in every little thing.

A story is told of a missionary who had grown accustomed to seeing God in everything, even in the most difficult to accept. His response to everything was “**just what I wanted.**” It is the art of seeing God’s will in everything that brings me to always say, “it’s just what I wanted.

This is precisely what Father Hurtado constantly repeated; “Happy, Lord, Happy.” Let us remember that the Lord tells us that even should a mother forget her child, He will never forget us.

We are invited, therefore, to be Marian families, focused on both the natural and supernatural worlds.

4. Missionary family today

We awake the consciousness of the undeniably apostolic dimension of our Matrimonial and Family piety.

Holiness and Family Life to Give to Others

We invest in the building of our families so that we may help other families. We aspire to, and fight for, family holiness so that we might sanctify others. It is vital to develop this consciousness, and to **take advantage of all of the spirituality and teachings of Schoenstatt to shape ourselves as holy families, holy families that revolve not around ourselves, but rather as families that are called to mission, to radiate the life that we have.**

Our learning has an apostolic goal. Holiness is never for one alone. Holiness is a participation in, and is collaboration with, the holiness of the Church. Each couple, according to their spiritual commitment (ascetic practices, holy hour, particular commitments, etc.) strives to live their faith in the midst of the world, so that their holiness may bring life to others.

This is why it is important to develop a consciousness that our life is meant for giving it, it is for sharing. This becomes concrete through our apostolic activity: through word, work, or actions. It is the light of our lives that attract other, who ask us to share the Word and actions that we live. Each family will carry this out according to the apostolic commitment that they have made in front of God and the Mother Thrice Admirable. It is normal for one’s life testimony to speak louder than the testimony of our words and actions. These are two different, yet inseparable, elements. The prior is a condition for the latter.

The Church needs the vitality of the family dedicated to the Church's renewal in our country.

“The family is one of the most important treasures of our people, it is all of humanity's inheritance. Therefore, we must adopt it as a transversal axis of the Church's evangelical actions.”

The church requires our testimony and committed participation in the ecclesiastical community. This participation takes shape in parish life, attending local Church convocations, becoming aware of its orientation and calling, and being attentive of its needs. From the Sanctuary we are sent as apostles, evangelizers, and witnesses to the joyful encounter with Christ.

In order to form apostolic families in the spirit of Schoenstatt, it is important to remember certain primary characteristics of the apostolate of our Work of Families. This permits us to grow according to these characteristics, and to strive for adequate spiritual formation, seeking the means that allow us to configure ourselves to these characteristics.

Family Participation in the Life of the Church:

Characteristics of the apostolic families of Schoenstatt:

An eminently lay apostolate:

The apostolate of Schoenstatt Work of Families is an eminently lay apostolate. As opposed to priests and others whose lives are consecrated to the Movement, the members of the different Work of Families communities carry out their mission specifically in the world and from the world. This has to do primarily with the professional working field, but also in general with a consciousness of social responsibility, from a commitment to building a world in accordance with the values of the Gospel.

An apostolate as a couple:

The apostolic activity of the married couple is one in which each complements the other, each helps the other, and each supports the other, whether it be in joint or separate activities. In either case, it should be an activity that, through sharing and dialogue, becomes an matrimonial growth element of

An apostolate with a family charism:

Our primary apostolate is to our family, the children and spouses, but beyond that, its focus is families both in and out of Schoenstatt, in and out of the Church. This apostolate must be family oriented not only in the sense of working directly with families (including the engaged, groups of married people, etc.), but in any social action (legal, judicial, social, political, ethical, educational, etc.), the perspective and commitment is for family values in accordance with the Magisterium's vision.

The idea is to be attentive to what we can do as Schoenstatt families in every sphere of life in which we exist to contribute to healing, supporting, and invigorating the family as the base of society.

In conclusion, we are essentially an Apostolic Family since our beginnings. In accordance with the spirit of our Father and Founder, Fr. Kentenich, this apostolic character must radiate through a coherent and authentic lifestyle, to be an irresistible invitation for other families. Our aspiration to sainthood serves to build small domestic churches that enrich the life of the Church and contribute to the forging of a new culture.

3. Final conclusion

