

Good Shepherds for our Times I
The Being and Mission of a Schoenstatt Leader

1 Called to become shepherds in accordance with the heart of Jesus

- + A new commission with new challenges
- + It is a calling
- + We accept because we are needed
- + Jesus, The Shepherd : All leadership depends on Him and receives from Him its prototype and ultimate ideal.
- + Thus says Fr. Kentenich:

The object to which we dedicate our efforts is the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt. We assert, and we repeat it often, that this labor is, above all, an educational labor. Therefore, whoever works in the Movement must be an educator. However, we cannot achieve this on our own. We require immense grace: the grace of education. We, therefore, turn to Mary, with open hands, to ask for this gift, telling her: give us this grace of the charism of education. We must assure that of ourselves we also may be able to say, "I am the Good Shepherd. I give my life for my sheep..." What is the result of this grace? The answer is quite simple: we wish to be like Christ. Christ is the ultimate educator; He is the Good Shepherd. Therefore, if we ultimately await the grace of transformation in Christ, then we await it as the grace of transformation in Christ, the Good Shepherd and the Good Teacher. (Polesine, Brazil 1949)

2 Key features of this "being shepherd" as Schoenstatt leadership

- + Acute awareness of mission
- + Instruments in the hands of God
- + Confidence in Mary, our Covenant partner, as permanent companion and helpmate
- + Generous giving and serving from him/herself to those entrusted to him/her
- + Loving attachment to the followers and entourage

3 Christlike essential characteristics of the Schoenstatt leadership

- + Pastoral Love: knowing each person and gathering them into one's heart
- + Faithfulness: being always father and mother to the people entrusted to us. We are responsible for them always
- + Loving Care: the leader will always pull the community to the heights. He or she focus on fomenting their spiritual lives and true christian and human values

4 Preventing distortions of the image of a true leader

Jesus, the Good Shepherd is the Ultimate Ideal of all leaders but sometimes we forget it. Thus we avoid the following forms of false leadership:

- The Ideologue
- The Organizer
- The Boss
- The Little Dictator
- The Democratizing leader
- The "Anemic" Leader

We affirm: in the long run, without true, comprehensive, exalting and respectful leader's love, leadership becomes impossible. It may be a love for the task, but it must also be a love for the person.

Good Shepherds for our Times II
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1 We are sent as leader to a challenging real world with real people with real issues

- + We live and move in a "global world". We are able to get interconnected communicate fast but we are heavily apart

- + We are immersed in a “technologize world”. Robots are replacing the human being
- + We are under the overwhelming influence of a “mediatized world”. The media are the rulers of the present society
- + Life goes on a quick pace and is absorbed by external activities, events and by the pressure of keeping the job
- + Lack of money and the needed things to have a worthy life
- + Many marriages and families in crisis
- + Violence and terrorism
- + Value of life questioned: abortion, euthanasia, unworthy work
- + Crisis in the Church and discrediting institutions
- + Lost of faith
- + Immigration and refugees issues

The list is long but we don't get discourage. We use to face challenges confidently knowing that God, the Creator is behind every circumstance and is always at work.

Divine Providence will show us the right way how to act and embrace our mission. The call is to become good shepherds for our times, here and now, not tomorrow.

Nonetheless we recognize that our work as leaders is tough and full of hardships.

2 Our strategy to become leaders in the present world situation

- + A Schoenstatt leader works possessed of a deep consciousness of mission
- + As Christlike leaders we do everything in deep love, filial dependency and unity with the Father
- + In becoming good shepherds and sharing responsibilities we will produce fruit: Jesus incorporates us His own in His mission
- + Learning from the Lord. As Master, He explains His own everything. He made His friends disciples of Him. He appeals to the magnanimity of His own and demands much of them
- + Fr. Kentenich tells us: ***There exists a great danger that we might not only feel that we are instruments of God, His representatives, but we might feel that we ourselves sit on the throne. We must always be a mere wayside. The normal thing is for us to walk together toward God: “I in you and you in me, and together, one in the other and the other with the one, in God.”***

3 The content of the Schoenstatt leader's mission

- + The leader is called to embrace and to reveal the Schoenstatt secret or Mystery
- + The secret is not other than the Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother. Today it means promoting and creating Covenant culture with everyone and everywhere
- + It is about the spiritual fruitfulness of the connection between Divine Work and Free Human Co-operation: Nothing without You - Nothing without us
- + In this context Fr. Kentenich tells us: ***Let's kneel down, kneel down in spirit. I do not know which prayers are embedded the most by grace in your hearts. But this should only have one accord. Sooner or later it should ring out from all our hearts: Mother Thrice Admirable, let me understand more fully your and our great Schoenstatt Mystery.***

Mother Thrice Admirable, form me fully into the embodiment of the great Schoenstatt Mystery either as a follower in true allegiance or as a leader of a great entourage.

Mother Thrice Admirable, form me into a universal proclaimer of the great Schoenstatt Mystery wherever and whenever my feet lead me.

I think we now need to close this holy hour. It should be a holy atmosphere, shrine atmosphere which fills our little community. And I think we can hope, even expect that we

experience something of the atmosphere at the end of our celebration, like the Pentecostal celebration of Our Lady. We can see poor people surrounding the most blessed among women. We can see how helpless they were, like butterflies, shallow people, subhuman creatures, inhuman! The spirit of God comes over them. Something breaks within their souls. They are transformed. They have the qualities I have just mentioned. A nova creatura has been created in them. Now they go out to conquer a new world as leaders for Christ, for the Triune God.

Do we not want and expect for us a similarly, deeply grasping grace from this blessed hour?

***It may form us into messengers of light for the new times,
it may form us into a source of strength for the new times and
it may form us into seeds of wheat for the new times
(The Schoenstatt Mystery 1933)***

4 How does work a Schoenstatt leader?

- + In close relation to the person of our founding father Joseph Kentenich and his spiritual family
- + Guided always by a practical faith in Divine Providence
- + Living in exemplary way his/her own Covenant of Love towards everyday sanctity
- + Using Jesus' method: building community, creating attachments everywhere, building up the Schoenstatt family with its branches and different communities and commitments

5 Let us close with a word of Fr. Kentenich

Our ideal of sanctity is always a struggle for the ideal; it is not the possession of that ideal. Hence our greatness: to always have the courage to begin again. So also our struggle and effort for the ideal of community shall never become a full possession. Today we must have a consciousness of leadership that is much clearer than that of others. This is true in the first place in regards to our branch and group leaders. If they do not have this acute consciousness of leadership, their followers will not find in them the support that they expect. The leader must always be at his post, take his job seriously and be willing to sacrifice everything for his people. I can care for my own, but not with a convulsive preoccupation, not with a mundane preoccupation, but with that holy concern, the concern of God that we wish to develop in ourselves. That calm and permanent concern which asks: how can I safely help, serve and conduct this carriage, this ship of our Movement or of the school, through the pitfalls of life today? Whoever wishes today to remain at his post must be a saint or wish to be one. Today's rootless man needs to be bound to a leader. This is why a leader must be a person who is worthy of confidence.

