

United in Mary—on fire, we go forward!



2019-2020 COVENANT RENEWAL REFLECTIONS

What the Blessed Mother was for Christ, we want to be for the Church!

In April 1929, Father Kentenich used an expression that went through the Schoenstatt Family like fire: "...in the shadow of the shrine, the destiny of the Church will be essentially co-determined."

More precise, he said:

In the shadow of the shrine, the Church's destiny in the coming years will be decided. A grave and significant statement. It sounds almost like madness. And yet I repeat and intensify it: In the shadow of this shrine the Church's destiny will be substantially decided in the coming centuries, in Germany and beyond (quoted by Father Monnerjahn, *A Life for the Church*).

The reaction from those who deeply appreciated and followed Father was one of surprise and admiration. From those who held a questioning mind toward him, it was one of doubt. It could give the impression of being arrogant.

However, later that same year, he interpreted these words by speaking about the Schoenstatt Family completely in reference to the Blessed Mother and to her place and intercessory powers within the Church. What she was for Christ, we are called to be for the Church. We must stand up for it, and under its cross – to this day!¹

- Questions for discussion:
 - What does our parish or diocese need most at this time?
 - What could we be or do for our parish or diocese (for the Church) that Mary would have done for Christ? Mention some examples.

Recover Catholic Identity in Modern Times

For Father Kentenich, we can do a valuable service to the Church by helping its people recover its Catholic identity.

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...(Father J. Kentenich, Rome, 1965).

¹ July 4, 1929, in a homily at the first Mass of three younger confreres and on October 18 in an address to a group of Sisters of Mary on the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the founding of the Schoenstatt Movement (Monnerjahn, *Ibid.*, 102).

- Questions for discussion:
 - What elements of the Schoenstatt experience have helped you grasp our Catholic identity in a deeper way? Mention at least two elements.
 - What happened on October 18, 1914?
 - Why can we say that the covenant of love is something that anticipates the great task which the Church has in our modern times?

Father Kentenich continues:

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!

- Questions for discussion:
 - Do we recall the four milestones of Schoenstatt's history? They are four. Can you mention them?
 - What can we learn from each of these events? How did Father Kentenich rely on the covenant of love with the MTA when faced with conflict, confusion, and chaos?

What Mary did for Christianity, we are called to do for Catholicism, today and in the future

This year, we want to unite in Mary. When we stand together, next to the MTA, as she serves and helps Christ and the Church, we can do so much more. But, first we need to have set the goal clearly before us. Father Kentenich's words give us this clarity and the goal.

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. (...)

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 Cologne². 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 (Father J. Kentenich, Rome, 1965).

- Questions for discussion:
 - What does it mean that Mary embodied the fullness of Christian life?
 - What does it mean that we are called to embody the fullness of Catholic life?
 - How can we unite more deeply in becoming for the Church what Mary was for Christ?

² 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).