

United in Mary—on fire, we go forward!



REFLECTION FOR COVENANT RENEWAL

Without self-education, we cannot go forward!

Our motto stresses the unity in Mary, but also the desire to go forward with the fire of our founder's charism. The following words from the 1950 Pedagogical Conference states what is needed to accomplish unity or for creating community. We need love and love demands self-education—the willingness to shape my character in such a way that I draw others upwards to God.

How do we create community atmosphere and what does this demand of us? We look into the teachings of Paul the Apostle and reflect on his Cantic of Love.¹ It shows us the goal of self-education and education of others. The great stream of love of neighbor should flow from love of God. True love of God, a fire that should be burning in all of us, gives us new vision, new understanding, a new closeness and a new way of acting. These are goals for self-education and education of others (Father J. Kentenich, 1950).

- Questions for discussion:
 - How can self-education and education by others give us a new way of acting?
 - God educates us through the people closest to us. What are some simple ways in which God accomplishes our education through others?
 - When others challenge us in a positive way, how do we tend to react?
 - When we are challenged by others in a negative way, do we see God's education behind it, or do we reject it? Why?

Purposeful legwork

At the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Federation, in Germany, Sister M. Nurit, a Schoenstatt Sister of Mary, presented on the type of personality demanded by the founding of the Federation. The Hoerde² Type she called it.

She stressed the fact that Catholicism still had a significant presence in the life and history of the country. But, as the upheavals continued to rise, Father Kentenich saw the need to found Schoenstatt in such a way that it could stand the test by fire. She said:

[Father Kentenich] set up Schoenstatt for the future which depends on the strength of the individual Christian personality, because the Church as an institution will lose its influence. For this reason, he spoke in connection with Hoerde about the renunciation of a "mass movement,"³ he pleads for "purpose-filled legwork"⁴—"legwork on the heart and soul," whose

¹ 1 Cor 13.

² Place where the meeting for the founding of the Federation took place, August, 1919.

³ J. Kentenich, Letters, 6.11.1919.

⁴ Ibid.

aim is "a profound moral-religious renewal of the individual-human person and the entire cultural basis of humanity."⁵

- Questions for discussion:
 - What do we understand by this “leg work” that Father Kentenich refers to?
 - What does it actually look like in our work with Schoenstatt groups, events, and community experiences?
 - Are we always concerned about the numbers or rather about leading those we know upwards, heavenwards?
 - What would a “purpose-filled legwork” look like? Give some examples.

Sister M. Nurit concludes her train of thought by stating:

In those early years, he himself did "the legwork on the heart and soul" of each individual leader in order to introduce the proper educational means. He goes to the very limits of his power and being in order to be available to all. At the same time, he leads the groups to experiment with concrete educational means and to provide each other with help through a mutual exchange. In the course of 1920, he held six meetings in which he introduces the education system, at that time when he was seriously ill with a lung disease.

The following anecdote from the mothers branch shows Father Kentenich’s readiness for a demanding legwork:

I was able to describe my disappointment to Fr. Kentenich about the first meeting of our group. “Of the seven mothers who belonged to the group, only three turned up. The others gave really weak excuses for their absence. And I prepared for such a long time.”

Fr. Kentenich spoke very quietly, “That doesn’t matter. Exactly the same thing happened to me in the beginning. I travelled great distances for a single person, and I spent a lot of time on the way. You may not be sad on that account. Our Lady blesses the small beginnings.”

- Questions for discussion:
 - To invite people to the shrine can be frustrating at times. Drawing others to events that help them grow in their faith is not always easy. Share some practical ways in which we can take up Father Kentenich’s challenge to give up working in a way that focuses only on numbers.
 - If the contact we have with individuals is so important for our education as members and as leaders, how important it must be that we remain attentive to what our friends and relatives are searching for. Do we keep an eye out for those wanting to grow in their faith and see it as an opportunity for me to grow as a Schoenstatt saint?

⁵ Ibid.