



37. Shrine Building Site

In the three years following his exile the concept “shrine building site” became a technical term for Fr Kentenich. It was inspired by a spiritual current in the Women’s Federation as they built their shrine. Looking back on Schoenstatt’s founding history, and his own life, he noticed how the “shrine as a point of contact” had become a whole organism, which had developed into the daughter shrines, the home shrines, and – as their climax – the heart shrines, and had become a “building site”. It is our task to extend it and continually work at imbuing it with heart and soul.

The following text on the subject “shrine” has been taken from the Rome Conferences (21 & 22 November 1965, pp. 138-180). It is a characteristic of the Rome Conferences that Fr Kentenich began a subject, and repeatedly returned to it, but in between incorporated many and varied associations from other elements of his spirituality in the flow of thoughts. This makes it difficult to reproduce a text on a definite subject. In this instance we have omitted a number of digressions on other subjects. Some that seemed of particular interest to this circle of readers have been retained. The overriding point-of-view for the selection of this text is the way in which the founder evaluated the original shrine and its extension into daughter shrines, home shrines and heart shrines.

[Our Family history as a procession or pilgrimage]

As far as the application is concerned, we have paused to consider the one idea: Shrine building site. Perhaps it is not superfluous to emphasise once again that this is a distinctively supernatural view of our whole Family history. We have presented it in the image of a procession. It is obvious that a procession includes a number of altars, a number of stations. And only at the end of each station is the announcement made, “*Procedamus in pace in nomine Domini! Amen.*”¹⁶⁷¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Let us go forward in peace in the name of the Lord. Amen.

At each altar the Gospel is read, the good news is once again proclaimed. It is always the good news of our Schoenstatt secret.

We always remain with the same, central mystery: Our entire pilgrimage, our whole procession, always centres on the divine. We again want this to be impressed upon us: We will understand Schoenstatt, we will take in Schoenstatt's atmosphere and emit it, to the extent that we have found a home in the supernatural, other-worldly reality. We encounter this supernatural reality in a concrete form in our shrine, whether you consider it in its intrinsic value, or, what is naturally more important, in its full symbolism.

We have to see Schoenstatt's history in the framework of the history of a revolution, the history of war, the history of Dachau. In this everything centred on our Schoenstatt secret, the shrine building site.

Let us recall Fr Menningen's scholarly work in this regard, because it is very important: The Schoenstatt secret in the framework and context of the points of contact. It has actually always lived in the Family as a function, and was also upheld reflexively here or there.

At this point I would like to stress one thought I formulated on another occasion. Now that our Family has become universal in structure and goal to an unprecedented degree, we are constantly in danger that universalism will become nihilism. This is the case today more than ever before. At that time I coined the play on words that is designed to impress the thoughts more deeply: Universalism without particularism becomes nihilism! Particularism means making things concrete and practical. This process of making ideas practical can be found in our three points of contact – in our Schoenstatt secret, or our covenant of love. They all refer to the same thing.

So if we now hold onto the truth that we are an organism, that our origin is a life process, and our development a powerful stream of life, it is obvious that if a stream separates itself from its source, it will soon cease to exist. So it must always be our greatest concern: How can we help our stream to remain connected with its source? That is our *ceterum censeo*: What are we doing to ensure that those who come after us always centre on this particularism? You will be able to note that if we start to cultivate our universalism in every respect, without at the same time cultivating this particularism more and more strongly, we will find ourselves at the beginning of the end.

[The structural and vital importance of the Institutes: To work as custodians]

This is where the great mission of the Institutes begins. They are meant to be custodians. Think of our history. I must repeatedly mention our Sisters of Mary, because they have been in the foreground in this regard. Think of how many custodians grew up in the course of the years in the individual courses: Custodians of the shrine in the most varied forms. Here you can again feel God's breath. He saw to it that this service of being a custodian never stopped in the confusion of the past years. It was as though an army or fighting fleet had gathered around the shrine in the various groupings. The closest circle is composed of the Institutes, wider circles are formed by the Federations, and still wider by the League formations, and even wider still by the Pilgrims' Movement. We may not overlook that this is how everything in the Family came into existence. And what has come about must also be maintained. "Conquer what you have inherited from your forefathers if you are to possess it!"

According to the law of singular instances, it has to be the specific task of the Institutes to implement the most central task and to take it along with them as a mission. Let the Institutes tell you

what they are doing to train themselves, and to root their members more deeply in Schoenstatt. This will then have a wonderful effect on the whole Family later on. Securing the Family lies in the hands of the Institutes. If I now have to say which is the strongest, my answer can only be: Normally those Institutes must be and remain the strongest and most sustainable that have a *vita communis*. This does not mean undervaluing the others. This is what our new *pars motrix*¹⁶⁸ and our Sisters are meant to be. This does not mean that we have to find the most noble-minded people there. It is only said in principle, it is only seen strategically. It could well happen that God will choose elite people from every formation [of the Movement]. However, we must uphold in principle that the highest demands must be made on those formations that have a corresponding foundation. Seen as a whole the greatest blessing must go out from them. So we must also take the time, and muster the strength, to complete the organization of the two Institutes I have mentioned, and to give them the vital education they need.

[...]

Let us return to our subject. Our Family history is a procession. Think of how long the procession halted at the altar called the war, or the concentration camp at Dachau. What was the good news sung there? A brilliant hymn of praise to the fruitfulness of our Schoenstatt secret, our covenant of love! Let me repeat what I have already said a few times as a consequence that follows from that: The covenant of love must be the basis for our entire lives, it must be the goal, the way of life and lifestyle for our entire lives.

Here let us ask ourselves in retrospect: What has come about? We have coined the concept of cyclical development. We now find ourselves at the end of a cycle, at the end of the second imprisonment, not just my personal imprisonment, but also the imprisonment of the whole Family. May we not also say here: *Procedamus in pace*?¹⁶⁹

We have paused at the Station of the past imprisonment. Now we have to proclaim the gospel. It is always the same gospel: Shrine building site!

What set its stamp on our Schoenstatt secret in the past years? I would have to repeat everything we have said about the three contact points. It always revolves around the fact that whoever has fully and completely recognised and acknowledged the shrine building site, and lived accordingly, has grown and grown into our Schoenstatt world. If the building site was not, or was only somewhat attended to, the separation of spirits took place. In a certain sense all of us have endured the trial with greater ardour and greater daring at the building site. You must examine this for yourselves later: Which imprisonment was more important to the individual person, to the whole army, the first or the second? Depending on the answer, you will also have answered the other question: How can we describe the work on the shrine building site? We have made headway, we have built, we have laid the foundations more deeply and extended the structure of the building.

Everything has grown upwards towards heaven. Shrine building site! Here we have to incorporate all that we have come to know about Dachau and the time of exile.

The divine dispensation has added building sites. We have discovered other different and yet similar building sites. Divine Providence revealed them to us. Which building sites are meant? First of

¹⁶⁸ At the time the Schoenstatt Fathers had just been founded.

¹⁶⁹ Let us go forward in peace.

all the large building site of the daughter shrine, then the building site of the home shrine and heart shrine.

Allow me to say a few words about each of these building sites. You can immediately feel that we could again have a whole new world revealed to us, we could look back more deeply to what God has given us.

May God grant us the grace that we are always given someone in the background who is able to point out the singular guidance and dispensations of almighty God and the Blessed Mother, and to integrate them into the context. If we don't have such a person, if we allow everything to develop as a function in the Family, without some intellect behind it who tries to discover reflexively what God wants to say to us through this irrational, functional, undulating life, it will be extremely difficult to lead our sort of Family.

If I see things correctly, the Church as a whole will in future be led in a similar way after so many outward forms have fallen away. Think of the well-known concept: a pluralistic social order. All Chinese walls have fallen. Just as cloister walls are increasingly being torn down, so also – I would like to say – will and must the walls of the Church be torn down. I am not saying that we want to have the churches as they were before, but the Church as a whole is increasingly ceasing to be an enclave. Everything merges. The less protection we have in outward forms, in houses, the more security we have to have in people who are given the grace to gather souls, to permeate them and lead them to a goal without the security of walls. Of course, I am generalising; we naturally have to see to it that we also have walls, but we can no longer build them so high. So we have to acquire a completely new way of thinking, a completely new way of governing.

[The daughter shrines]

Allow me to say a few words about the three shrine building sites I have just highlighted. The first building site is the daughter shrine. If someone wants to conduct a course about them, he or she would have to describe the reasons we have for our conviction that in the daughter shrines the same graces await us as in the original shrine. What are the conditions we have to create, what effects may we expect, if we place the daughter shrines so strongly into the foreground?

Can you imagine how difficult it is for our members in other countries who have no daughter shrines? Take Chile or Brazil, for example: What is the importance of the shrine, especially because the Romance peoples are so dependent on sense impressions? It is difficult anyhow to orientate someone to Schoenstatt only on an intellectual level. From that you can guess how decisively significant our teaching on daughter shrines has been.

Once the teaching was increasingly understood by our Sisters in other countries, the Sisters coming from Germany trembled quietly. But it was only a very quiet tremble. It was easily solved, because we were always keen to ensure that the daughter shrines were as far as possible patterned after the original shrine. As a result, the experience of being at home was easier through association.

It always gave me great joy when, for example, Schoenstatters from the four corners of the earth came to visit Milwaukee. The shrine was there. Their reaction: There is absolutely no difference! It is just as though we were at home!

[Co-ordination and identification with the original shrine]

That was also the reason why we always upheld that as far as possible there has to be co-ordination, but also identification with the original shrine. What is meant by co-ordination? Outwardly everything the same! Identification: Dependence on the mission of the original shrine. We are integrated into the mission. It is a masterstroke in the long run if we manage to use the same term for life processes. This gives rise to metaphysical certainty. So not just co-ordination with and in the head of the Family, but also co-ordination and identification with and in the place. Whoever is metaphysically focussed will learn in this way to think through trains of thought to the end, and to reproduce them in a few words. So it happened automatically that we spoke not only of being co-ordinated and identified with the 20th January, but also with the 31st May. I think that in this regard we all have to dig far more deeply.

Here we again see what an advantage it is that we have a community that regards this as its central task, so that the findings of studies can be passed on to others later. It is also most important, when we have introduced it one day, for the leaders of the individual Branches to come together from time to time. It is easier to illustrate this using an example: The governments of the Sisters of Mary, the Ladies of Schoenstatt and the Women's Federation should meet from time to time. What they discuss together is not binding. The meeting should take place so that the moral, not the juridical, unity can appear more clearly. Juridically the individual sections of the Movement have to remain autonomous, but the moral unity must be secured. Think of how many things could be worked out together! It would be a great relief for the leaders! Discussing things together is also one of the most valuable means to dissipate any possible tensions that might arise, so that enmity does not result. God will simply have to help us to complete the whole edifice still during our lifetime, so that it can go through the centuries in this form.

I have already stressed the other point-of-view a number of times: National differences could be overcome if each nation, each people, had its own daughter shrines or central shrines. The central shrines naturally have the character of a daughter shrine. Those shrines will become central shrines when God and the Blessed Mother have designated them as such through practical life.

In the course of the years it has shown clearly that a daughter shrine cannot exist in the long run without a training centre. The inner connection is this: We not only want to be educated by the Blessed Mother, we also want to be inspired to educate ourselves. All this has a historical foundation. From this we should deduce a principle, and carry out that principle in practice in the course of time. This is how things developed everywhere. If I think of Milwaukee, for example, the situation changed immediately when we had a sort of training centre beside the shrine – of course, it wasn't big.

We should consider whether the things that have developed historically do not contain a principle. What a profound turning point it was when our Ladies of Schoenstatt had their own shrine! It is quite different from when one has to beg everywhere. Josef Schmitz will remember how strongly I advised the Institute of Diocesan Priests to get their own shrine, even though our original shrine is very close to the Marienau.

If through present difficulties we are somewhat restricted from using the original shrine, it doesn't matter if it is temporary. It could even be an advantage, so that we can highlight the daughter shrines, or the Provincial shrines. What matters each time is to penetrate with our minds all that God sends us through circumstances.

In all probability someone will again say with a smile: There you have the four words: observe, compare, analyse and apply. You can use them everywhere.

In all these matters there must be someone in the background who traces everything back to ultimate principles. It would be even better if there were as many as possible to do this. Such reflection is not everyone's cup of tea. It would naturally be the task of the leaders in a moral unity. How much easier our work would then be! If this doesn't happen, each Institute will have to do it on their own. Even though it is possible in principle, and in certain circumstances must also happen in reality, that each section of the Movement can elect its leaders, or also its educators, from the one above, you must normally reckon that a community with a sound sense of identity – even if it is the League – will try to govern itself. It is the same with training. It isn't necessary for educators to come in again and again from all sides. As far as possible, each community should train and educate itself. However, because this isn't possible in practice in the long run – otherwise we would have to make a huge number of people available – it shows the sociological necessity for having a *pars motrix et centralis*. This is also the case now. I believe that if the need in the Family hadn't become so great, some sections of the Movement would say: We don't need a *pars motrix et centralis*. It is simply a certain completion of the whole organization, a certain crowning of the whole organism.

[Home Shrine]

Let us return to the line of thought we have already started. What has most recently developed in a special way is what we call the "home shrine".

If you are interested to get to know the related thoughts better, and to understand them more deeply, then please ask those who have occupied themselves with it in greater detail already. I want to save myself [from having to do so].

In order to show its significance for our present times, I would like to start with an example.

Our priests in Australia have written to me. They feel a growing need to pursue a completely new pastoral policy. The basic cell of human society is the family. So also the most basic cell in the Church must ultimately be families with a religious colouring, who are also trained in the religious life. In the course of the years, however, the development in America and elsewhere has taken a course that has resulted in the education of the children being almost completely taken out of the hands of the family. Who has done this? On the one hand, the State, on the other, the Church.

In Australia they discussed whether they should continue working with the Church associations, that is, maintain the organisational network as it stands. Fr Archbold¹⁷⁰ must be a very noble-minded man, deeply religious and spontaneous. He has taken up every spiritual impulse in our times. He heard about Schoenstatt. Now you have to see the idea behind this. He wants to build up a completely new type of parish through Schoenstatt, basing himself on the idea: Back to the most basic cell! His primary task: The renewal of the family!

¹⁷⁰ In the 1960s Fr Archbold was asked to build up a parish in a new residential area in the Sydney area fairly close to the Provincial House of the Sisters of Mary. He enthusiastically took up Schoenstatt's way of working with families and tried his best to introduce this as a fundamental pastoral principle in his new parish. This failed, because he introduced the Schoenstatt way of doing things in an exclusive sense and under pressure.

Our Sisters in Australia have in principle taken over the task in this parish. They could have a shrine, and were given absolute freedom to build up everything in the way Schoenstatt considers right.

I still wanted to say in this context, that we must naturally be very careful not to force the whole parish into the shrine, or try to make them all Schoenstatters. We have had enough experience in this regard. Think, for example of Alois Zeppenfeld.¹⁷¹ If he wanted something, it had to happen: his whole parish a Schoenstatt parish! We may not do such a thing; it is a violation. We can at most say: The one in Schoenstatt's spirit, the other really for Schoenstatt.

What we call a home shrine is actually nothing new; it is ultimately nothing else than a "Schoenstatt corner". It has only been extended, and we have drawn the conclusion from the concentric circles surrounding the shrine: What applies to the daughter shrine, applies under the same circumstances to the home shrine. So, all the conditions or requirements for Schoenstatt graces to flow at the original shrine and the daughter shrines have to be fulfilled also here. Vice versa, we may also expect the same effects. There are six expectations and six promises on either side.¹⁷²

So can you understand the sociological and pastoral advantage?

How do we understand the home shrine? A section of the Ladies of Schoenstatt has given me what is perhaps the most valuable birthday present. They want to see to it that the home shrine becomes a vital force and not empty words. I like to say: Don't proclaim something to others until we have lived it ourselves! What we say in theory will not awaken life. We may do this to start with in order to point to something, but unless there is a vital force behind it, it will soon come to an end. I took up Schoenstatt's way of working with families and tried his best to introduce this as a fundamental pastoral principle in his new parish. This failed, because he introduced the Schoenstatt way of doing things in an exclusive sense and under pressure.

In Schoenstatt the home shrine has established itself with elemental force in many groups. The ground was well prepared but still covered over. It only needed a small hole to be pierced through the cover for the stream to break through.

In North America it isn't just a home shrine where the Blessed Mother is enthroned and dwells, but a living home shrine. For example, the father has a certain symbol, the mother another, ... In some instances the father and mother observe the spiritual daily schedule together. Of course, in the beginning many things go over the top, but that regulates itself over time.

[...]

"Procedamus in pace!" A procession! On the one hand, this is the supernatural attitude, but, on the other, it is the interpretation of what we experienced in this time of exile. We expressed it pitifully in the one concept: Shrine building site! At the time of my first imprisonment the original

¹⁷¹ 171 Alois Zeppenfeld was one of the first seminarians who joined Schoenstatt as a soldier during the First World War. He played an essential and leading role in the foundation of the Federation at Hörde.

¹⁷² Cf. *Kentenich Reader* Vol 1, Text 13, p. 115ff.

shrine was the focal point. Today – now you can examine how richly God has in the meantime filled the concept “building site shrine” – we have the daughter shrines, the home shrines, the heart shrines.

Allow me to ask you again to place all that we have said about the home shrine in the context of our present-day social order, and the total helplessness of our pastoral work today. Compare them with each other. In Schoenstatt one circle after another is permeated by the idea “shrine building site”. So I am surrounded, steeped and permeated by the atmosphere of the shrine at a time when hardly anyone wants to know anything about the shrine, God and the divine. In a pagan climate I am wholly encompassed by the divine. A shrine atmosphere, when I think of the Church, the shrine, when I am at home!

As a result the entire supernaturalisation of family life is integrated into life today. Of course, this is only conceivable since we have had daughter shrines. Our experiences there are then transferred by association to our family. The great concern is that the family today must again become the most basic cell of human society, as well as the most basic fact in our entire education, in keeping with the order of being. Also in this regard we can say: Return to the original sources! All that has increasingly departed from the family – which is understandable given the sociological restructuring of society – has now to be reconquered. If I may use an expression of Pope Pius X, the family must become the seminary for priests. By this we are not thinking only of a seminary for the ministerial priesthood, but also a seminary for the lay priesthood.

Please consider what all this means for the education of father and mother!

Please examine what it means for the renewal of the world. Recall how I promised Pope Pius XII at that time that we would give our all to ensure that the Secular Institutes would do as much to re-Christianise the social order, or to renew the present-day social order, as the ancient Orders achieved in the past. Examine how God wants us to interpret those words in a prophetic sense, as it were, and how in the background he has turned world history in such a way that they became a reality. What I am now saying was not constructed rationally, it developed bit by bit. From this perspective you will be far better able to understand what is meant when I say that Schoenstatt is a new divine initiative for the Church as a whole today! We must only remain united.

Let me repeat: In the light of the universalism of our Family think of how important this particularism is for our stability! You must always keep in mind that universalism without particularism will become nihilism tomorrow. In this context, look at the significance of the three points of contact, our Schoenstatt secret. Of course, it is a concretisation, and it seems like a restriction. However, it is the root of our being. We cannot exist without this restriction.

That is just the point: people today are so universal in their orientation, and through the opening brought by the Council, far more air from outside is entering the Church than is flowing out of it. The great question will be the extent to which we will manage to let air from the Church – from Schoenstatt’s perspective: “air from Schoenstatt” – flow out through the open doors and windows into the world.

So let me repeat: Look at the importance of the home shrine! That is a great world! What we have harvested as the exceedingly plentiful fruits of the teaching about the daughter shrines, must now be seen in a new way as the valuable fruits of the past years from the point-of-view of the home shrine.

[The heart shrine]

A final thought to bring our train of thoughts to a conclusion: Now the heart shrine has to be cultivated in a similar way. That may sound strange, even like a certain contradiction. Consider all that we have passed on as formulations in the course of the years. We have proclaimed the God of life with an unparalleled organic one-sidedness. Now we suddenly add the God of our hearts. It is equally essential for our present times.

Recall what you have so often read in the papers, and what probably caused you to smile, that the Russian astronauts declared jubilantly: We never met God anywhere! Today the world is intellectually and spiritually chaotic.

But in the near future it will be a serious problem for the masses of the people: Where is heaven? How naïve we were in the past when our grandparents imagined if it rained, that the angels were emptying the tubs up there! The world is down here. Think of all the things people have imagined, even though they should not have done so. Where could heaven be? Always “above”, hell is “down below”. We have to have a concept for these realities.

However, God sees to it that the Church is thrown into chaos. For the people it is a serious problem. It is possible that we don't experience it at all, because we have been trained theologically, but the masses of the people are drawn into the turmoil. When things have settled down one day, when the intellectual revolution that is careering through the world today can be digested, you will see how difficult it is. Actually, where is heaven? The answer: For me, for the Triune God, heaven is in my graced soul.

You see, until now we have been way ahead of our times, not because we are so special, but because God has given us the grace to read his wish and will out of our times. Also in this regard our times are speaking. These are all new problems that open up before us. So in our education we have to emphasise far more that we have to experience more strongly that we ourselves are a church of the Trinity, a shrine of the Trinity. That is why it is so important for us to have a symbol of God the Father in our shrines, or a dove as the symbol of the Holy Spirit. By the way, you may not overlook that until now we have seen the Blessed Mother as the most classic symbol of the Holy Spirit. I don't want to substantiate this at the moment.

The present spiritual currents demand it.

My heart is a shrine of the Blessed Trinity! I must only see our shrines in connection with the Blessed Mother.

From the beginning the Blessed Mother has been the balance of the world for us. From the Blessed Mother the thread leads directly to the Triune God. It wasn't intended in this way from the beginning; these things have developed, as has everything else. As soon as we thought that we had understood the finest and tenderest roots, we held onto them without wavering. This also applies to the Sisters of Mary, leaving aside the dogmatic vision. When I see it sociologically and psychologically I have to say: The Blessed Mother is the balance of the world. There we have the key, the root of the matter. In her this world and the next are united in a most classic way according to the law of shining examples. Try to discover how quickly such formulations arose with us. Don't imagine that someone in the background thought it out day and night and in all detail. It was always selected from what God showed us through our times and the order in the world.

So what does a **little church of the Blessed Trinity** now mean? My shrine, our shrine has to become a little church of the Blessed Trinity. If I am a little church of the Blessed Trinity, I bear the whole Church, the whole order of salvation, in my heart. In practical terms this means: Inhabited by the Blessed Trinity and totally surrendered to the Blessed Trinity!