



24. The Exile and its Conclusion

The time of the founder's exile ended in a very dramatic way in the Autumn of 1965. For the founder and the Schoenstatt Family it was in very truth a "miracle of the Holy Night."

A few days afterwards, as early as 3 January 1966, Fr Kentenich talked about these events in a series of conferences for Schoenstatt Priests in the diocese of Münster.

This talk is particularly valuable because it reflects in a very lively manner what the founder himself had experienced. So when reading the text we will gladly take into the bargain the interruptions in the line of thought, insertions, and reflections that read like footnotes. Critical historical research could possibly correct various details in the account. Things happened so fast and were tremendously dramatic. The personal experiences of the founder, which clearly reflect his inner distance from events and circumstances in Rome, as well as his personal involvement, keep their special value and are absolutely valid in the way they describe the basic course of events.

In order to provide a better over - view, a few key dates are provided here:

22 Oct. 1951	<i>Fr Kentenich had to leave Schoenstatt. He arrived in Milwaukee on 21 June 1952</i>
31 Oct. 1961	<i>Frank and open letter to Fr [Wilhelm] Möhler, Superior General of the Pallottines, which was answered by harsh measures of the Holy Office, including an ecclesiastical penalty: Fr Kentenich had to undertake a private retreat and could not celebrate Holy Mass for three days.</i>
11 Oct. 1962	<i>Start of the Second Vatican Council</i>
6 Oct. 1964	<i>Decree separating Schoenstatt from the Pallottines</i>
13 Sept. 1965	<i>A telegramme summonsed Fr Kentenich to Rome. The English text read: "In the name of Fr General immediately come to Rome. Burggraf."</i>
17 Sept. 1965	<i>Fr Kentenich arrived in Rome Fiumicino Airport at 1.45 p.m. Fathers in the Pallottine Generalate were totally surprised. No one had sent a telegramme.</i>
18 Sept. 1965	<i>Monsignor Wissing managed to get permission for Fr Kentenich to move from Casa Pallotti, the Pallottine Generalate, to the Generalate of the Divine Word Fathers.</i>
24 Sept. 1965	<i>Fr Möhler, Pallottine Superior General, obtained an order that Fr Kentenich had to return to Casa Pallotti.</i>

11 Oct. 1965	<i>Monsignor Wissing received in private audience by Pope Paul VI. The Pope raised very serious questions: Should not the Schoenstatt Movement be split up and subordinated to two different Congregations of the Roman Curia? Should not the foundation of the new Pars Motrix be rescinded? Should not the founder return to Milwaukee? After the audience Monsignor Wissing was almost in despair. Fr Kentenich interpreted it differently: The Pope wanted to give us an opportunity to answer the initiatives of our "opponents".</i>
20 Oct. 1965	<i>During a plenary session of the Holy Office all decrees against the founder were surprisingly rescinded. The matter was returned to the Congregation for Religious: "Res remittatur ad Sacrum Congregationem de Religiosis". No official communication.</i>
22 Oct. 1965	<i>Cardinal Ottaviani, Secretary of the Holy Office, in audience with the Holy Father. Pope Paul VI confirmed the decision and signed the decree. As a result decisions concerning the "causa Fundatoris" were transferred to the Congregation for Religious.</i>
26 Oct. 1965	<i>Our Father's first visit to the plot of ground on the Via di Boccea, Belmonte, bought for the future Schoenstatt Centre and shrine.</i>
13 Nov. 1965	<i>Fr Kentenich applied to be allowed to leave the Pallottine Society and be incardinated in the Diocese of Münster. He moved to the Generalate of the Mainz Sisters of Providence.</i>
15 Nov. 1965	<i>Fr Möhler, Superior General, and Fr [Alfons] Weber visited the Generalate of the Mainz Sisters of Providence and presented our Father with the dispensation from his promises in the Pallottine Society. With that Fr Kentenich left the SAC.</i>
16 Nov. 1965	<i>Celebration of Fr Kentenich's 80th birthday with leading representatives of the Schoenstatt Family and the Church. Bishop Josef Höffner presented the document of incardination into the Diocese of Münster to our Father. The incardination took place "pure et simpliciter", that is, without a time of probation.</i>
17 Nov. 1965	<i>Start of the "Rome Conferences" for the assembled members of the Schoenstatt Family.</i>
8 Dec. 1965	<i>Solemn closing act of the Second Vatican Council in St Peter's Basilica. Our Father gave a programmatic talk for the "symbolic laying of the foundation stone" for a future shrine in Rome.</i>
22 Dec. 1965	<i>Audience with Paul VI.</i>
24 Dec. 1965	<i>Return home to Schoenstatt: Miracle of the Holy Night. Midnight Mass in the original shrine.</i>
13 Jan. 1966	<i>Return to Rome.</i>
11 Feb. 1966	<i>Final return to Germany without limitations. Bishop Höffner said, "Herr Pater remains 'Herr Pater' and can stay wherever he likes."²⁴⁵</i>

The text is taken from the collection: Propheta Locutus est, Vol III, 121 - 147.

To start with it became clear to us that the fourteen years, 1951 - 1965, were simply years of tremendous battles. We would now like to discuss the meaning and purpose of these past fourteen years. We know that I specifically provoked this time of battle. In this context, because you asked me to do so, I want to say a few words about my audience with the Pope.

²⁴⁵ In Germany diocesan priests are addressed as "Herr Pfarrer/Herr Pastor", or similar title indicating their office. So by making this statement, Bishop Höffner was indicating that Fr Kentenich, who was incardinated into his diocese and hence a diocesan priest, would continue to be addressed with the title of a priest belonging to a religious community.

It is possible to distinguish between two stages in the time of battle.

[Stage 1: 1951 - 1963]

There was nothing but confusion. Every attempt to explain things in Rome and to defuse the situation simply failed – blow followed blow. As I have already said, even when highly influential people took our part, it didn't help. Hardly had they started to do something for us than the good Lord allowed them to die.

Actually I was a novice as regards all the methods that were quite normal in Rome. I always thought that they were just as keen on discovering the truth as I have always been. I left Rome in January 1952 with a double insight.

The first originated with Monsignor Kaas²⁴⁶ who became my friend in about 1915. He was also a friend of the Pope. On one occasion he told me that Pius XII had done his utmost to reform the Roman Congregations, in particular the Holy Office.²⁴⁷ However, he had failed miserably. This was the first time I was allowed to take a quick look behind the scenes there.

A second insight came from Cardinal Lavitrano,²⁴⁸ at that time Prefect of the Congregation for Religious. He was also a faithful friend to Schoenstatt and always did what he could for us. I also kept in contact with him. At the time, the first battle between the Congregation for Religious and the Holy Office broke out on our account. In May 1948, relatively quickly, the Sisters of Mary received their official approbation. They were an institute of diocesan right. It was planned that in the same year they were to become an institute of pontifical right. At the time they even looked for a special title for this and came up with *quasi juris papalis*.²⁴⁹

Then the Holy Office intervened and protested that it had not been asked. "Up there" it is exactly the same as in the nursery. This is repeated in all the circumstances of life. It was the same in Dachau, it is the same everywhere. Wherever there are people you will find human frailties. Cardinal Lavitrano took our part in every way, and when he began to come to our defence, he suddenly died. A general law: Someone had only to do something for Schoenstatt, and he already had his death certificate in his pocket.

From him I took along a statement that is very tragic, but also says a great deal: If I had known how people would treat the law in Rome, I would never have accepted the position of Prefect of the Congregation for Religious.

So those were the two insights I took with me: on the one hand, the tremendous need to reform the Congregations, or at least the usual methods they applied, and, on the other, the way people treated the law.

This impressed on me the thought: Now you must remain in the background for years and collect all the material, so that sooner or later you can place it at the disposal of the Pope for his information. Of course, this presupposed that he wanted and would be able to set to work and attempt to reform the Roman Curia.

So please do not think that I sat there in the background and had not the faintest idea of what was going on. Whatever concerned Schoenstatt in some way was sent directly to me. And I worked through it all. What I wrote in Milwaukee could fill a library.²⁵⁰ These were all responses to topical questions of Church life concerning politics, Church teaching, or pedagogy.

²⁴⁶ There was a lifelong friendship between Monsignor Ludwig Kaas (1891 - 1952) and Fr Kentenich after they were both conscripted to the military in September/October 1916. They had to serve in the reserve military hospital in Trier until both were released from the army. Monsignor Kaas went into politics to start with, and in 1928 became the Chairman of the Catholic People's Party. From 1933 until the end of his life he worked in the Roman Curia.

²⁴⁷ Since December 1965 it has been known as the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith.

²⁴⁸ Luigi Cardinal Lavitrano (1874 - 1950), Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for Religious from 1945 until his death.

²⁴⁹ "As though by pontifical right". The decree of erection was therefore not a *Decretum laudis*, but a *Prodecretum laudis*.

²⁵⁰ Four long documents can be mentioned: In 1954 the *Zwanzigerbrief*, from 1955 the *Chroniknotizen* [Chronicle Notes], from 1957 the *Chroniknotizen fuers Archiv* [Chronicle Notes for the Archive], and in 1956 the letter to Fr Wilhelm Möhler, *Generalsbrief* [Letter to Fr General].

This went on until 1959. Then I suddenly realized: Now you have to defend yourself! Now you have to argue with your main opponents. These were, to start with, the two Visitators – the Episcopal Visitator and the Apostolic Visitator - as well as the Pallottine Superior General.

The two Superiors General of the Pallottines were very different. The previous Pallottine Superior General, Fr Turowski,²⁵¹ staked his good name and did his level best to oppose Fr Tromp²⁵² and everything he undertook. He also had the courage to make a submission to the Holy Office. In it he gave expression to his conviction that although Fr Tromp was an expert in apologetics, he had hardly any knowledge about the things that were at stake. For this reason he suggested that a second Visitator should be appointed. He presented this to Cardinal Ottaviani, the Prefect of the Holy Office, who, although he replied in the affirmative, did nothing about it.

So I briefly drew up a plan to, first of all, confront the three on an academic level. If we could agree on any subjects, we could let the matter rest in peace. However, when we differed, I intended to turn to the Pope and attempt to have a strictly legal process started. So it was never my idea to seek clemency. My goal was always to be fully reinstated by a juridical process.

So I started a discussion with Trier. Following the example of Newman I wrote a brief study. You probably know that he once justified himself in writing, giving this study the title: *Apologia pro vita sua*.²⁵³ So I gave what I wrote the title: *Apologia pro vita mea*.²⁵⁴

With regard to legal matters I always cut as keenly as a sharp knife. This does not mean that I have anything against anyone as a human being. Since at the time everything was balanced on a knife's edge – I was not allowed to associate with any Schoenstatt priest – I wrote to Bishop Michael Keller of Münster, the predecessor of the present bishop. I asked him to read it and then give me his opinion whether the time had come to take the initiative in this way. His answer: He didn't want to say anything on the matter; he would only advise me not to bother at all about these matters. The Holy Office wanted to exclude me completely.

To this I answered: What is at stake here is a natural law! Also the Holy Office had no right to offend against natural law. No one has the right to slander someone. So I definitely would not be acting in opposition to a decision. I would not be opposing a decree, but only defending myself against slander.

Nevertheless I thought: Wait a bit until circumstances have perhaps become more favourable. So I didn't send off the *Apologia*.

Then I did a second thing: I tackled Fr Möhler, the Superior General, who was actually my main accuser. I don't want to go into this at the moment, because I don't want to cast anyone in a bad light. I wrote the letter on 31 October 1961. It will one day go down in history! Once again I pointed out everything with razor - sharp clarity; I described the ultimate connected realities. It was my intention that the letter should

²⁵¹ 251 Fr Adalbert Turowski (1894 - 1959), from Poland, was Pallottine Superior General from 1947 - 1953. Fr Kentenich kept up a comprehensive correspondence with him. The longest letter was begun on 8 December 1952 and covered 922 pages in the two - volume edition edited by Fr Heinrich Hug: *Nüchterne Frömmigkeit* [Down - to - earth Spirituality], Vol 1, and *Vorsehungsglaube* [Faith in Divine Providence], Vol 2.

²⁵² Fr Sebastian Tromp (1889 - 1975), a Dutch Jesuit, became Professor of Fundamental Theology at the Gregoriana in Rome, later advisor to the Holy Office. He was instrumental in formulating Pius XII's Encyclical *Mystici Corporis Christi* [On the Mystical Body of Christ]. In 1960 John XXIII appointed him Chairman and Secretary of the Theological Commission to prepare the Second Vatican Council. So his influence in Rome and in the Church was great until the Council Fathers rejected the document presented by the Roman Curia during the first session of the Council in 1962. In 1951 Fr Tromp was appointed Papal Visitator of Schoenstatt by the Holy Office. From the first, and later together with the Pallottine Superior General, Fr Wilhelm Möhler, he aimed at removing Fr Kentenich and incorporating Schoenstatt completely into the Pallottine work, which implied a rejection of Schoenstatt's essential elements. Although Pius XII ended the Papal Visitation on 3 August 1953, Fr Tromp continued to pursue his policies against Schoenstatt.

²⁵³ A defence of his life.

²⁵⁴ "A defence of my life" (started 11 February 1960), published with the title *Zum goldenen Priesterjubiläum* (For Golden Jubilee of Ordination), Sion Patris 1985, 225 pages.

be passed on to the Holy Office. I did this the whole time. Although I addressed the documents to the Superior General, they were actually intended for the Holy Office. When you read the letter one day, you won't be surprised why the Holy Office was cut to the quick by it.

The reaction: The Holy Office drew upon all its power and hit out in every direction. Our poor Josef Schmitz²⁵⁵ was dismissed from office. Monsignor Roth²⁵⁶ was also dismissed from office. All sorts of other things were attempted at the time, for example, against the Family Movement. I myself was subjected to an ecclesiastical penalty. Blow followed blow. The reason given for the ecclesiastical penalty was disobedience and lack of respect for Church authority.

By the way, I have very consciously seen it as a central task not merely to teach the correct form of obedience, but also to practice it towards the Holy Office. It is an interpretation of obedience that has just been legitimized by the Council. What does *sentire cum ecclesia* mean? You have to feel what are the current wishes of the Church, what are the current opinions of the Church. For centuries, right up until the Second Vatican Council, the Church had seen itself primarily as a *societas externa*,²⁵⁷ all too often in the same mould as civil law, indeed in the same mould as a military organization. So until then the *sentire cum ecclesia* meant practicing military obedience. However, now that the Church sees itself as the people of God, the family of God, what does the *sentire cum ecclesia* require? Another form of obedience, family - like obedience! That is the obedience I have personally always envisaged as a high ideal. Family - like obedience requires a very large measure of frankness! We have to see to it that we practice a mature form of obedience, family - like obedience.

I then showed, and I did so very clearly and unmistakably, that the obedience I had practiced was precisely in keeping with the demands of moral theology, that it was on a high ascetical level and exemplary from a strategic point of view. So it was exactly the opposite to the way the Holy Office saw it. Both sides were hitting hard. For my part this was my conscious intention; it was a distinctive idea that I consciously defended. As with all the other things, its purpose was to exemplify the Church at the other shore in every respect, just as it has now been officially acknowledged in a certain sense by the Council.

In what did the ecclesiastical penalty consist? I was not allowed to celebrate Holy Mass for three days, and I had to make a retreat. Actually that doesn't mean much. I didn't consider it so reprehensible and thought to myself: Wait a bit, at the moment you have more important things to do. The admonition soon arrived: It was high time I carried out the ecclesiastical penalty. So I did it. However, once I had carried it out, I sent the content of my meditation to the Holy Office through the Superior General of the Pallottines. This consisted in describing Schoenstatt's whole history with the corresponding academic interpretation. So it was extremely brazen.

Well, what was I to do? I thought as follows: After I had pondered for a long time on these things, I asked myself the question: Is there any meaning at all in continuing along this way? In the meantime I recognized

²⁵⁵ Monsignor Joseph Schmitz (1900 - 1986), diocesan priest from Münster and since his seminary days a member of the Schoenstatt Movement. He was well known in Germany for his pastoral work with women, and worked in the Central Association in Düsseldorf from 1932. After the association was dissolved by the Gestapo in 1939 he became the President of the women and mothers in Münster. When Fr Kentenich founded the Institute for Diocesan Priests in 1945, he appointed Monsignor Schmitz its first Rector General. Released for this purpose by Bishop Keller, Monsignor Schmitz moved into the Marienau in Schoenstatt in 1952, and served the League and Federation of Diocesan Priests. As Director of the Federation he represented the community of priests in the General Presidium. As a result of the measures mentioned above, he was dismissed from office at the end of November 1962. When the founder returned from exile, Monsignor Schmitz was implicitly reinstated and worked for the Schoenstatt community of priests from the Marienau until his serious illness in 1984 made this impossible.

²⁵⁶ In 1959 Monsignor Heinrich Roth became Assistant General to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary with the agreement of the Holy Office. Because of the tense political situation, the Sisters had tried to find a priest who was well disposed towards them, and who was not a Schoenstatter, because they were afraid that a Schoenstatter would not be accepted for this office. Monsignor Roth, who was really neutral, and who genuinely tried to represent the interests of the Sisters in the General Presidium, was removed from office in March 1962.

²⁵⁷ An external, visible society.

clearly, since I had been allowed to see so much in the background, how little the Pope can act really independently. I saw how he is on the whole chained by those around him. So then I thought: The law of the open door has now become the law of the closed door. So I told myself: The best thing is to wait a while until the Council, which had already been announced, has become a historical reality. You can then expect the Council to justify you, your theories and your teachings.

[Stage 2: The Second Vatican Council]

The Council took place. And in very truth this is what happened. In essentials the Council has co-ordinated itself to us. Indeed, in many things we go much further than the Council.

If we now speak about a mission of the Church before and after the Council, we have reason to say that the post-conciliar mission of the Church was already the pre-conciliar mission of our Family! If we nevertheless say that we want to co-ordinate ourselves to the post-conciliar mission of the Church, this is also true to the extent that through the Council the Church has co-ordinated itself to us in the most essential questions. So we may call our mission post-conciliar, because the Church sees itself in the same way as we have always seen the Church. The great difference between then and now consists in the fact that the contrary opinions of the Episcopacy about the Church have at least in essentials been removed. In principle theirs is the same fundamental opinion.

Actually it would be worth our while to shed light from this vantage point on the most central opinion, or the most central mission, of the present-day Church. In the meantime I have often said that the Council should really have started where it stopped. What does that imply? The Council faltered when it came to the central question that the present-day Church has to answer: the relationship between the Church and the world. The Council confessed that it was not yet prepared to tackle this question, so it made do with offering general directives.

What I expected actually happened. Although the Holy Office had decided to send me back to Milwaukee, it later changed this decision. Even the Pope wanted to send me back. You cannot imagine how chaotic things were in Rome: In the whole of Rome, in all Church circles right to the very top.

Of course, there was a great advantage in this, just as the whole controversy had the advantage, among others, that we became known in the whole world. Everyone knew about us! It wasn't just that afterwards they left me in peace in Rome. On the contrary, I was visited by all sorts of Cardinals and bishops. So there was a completely different climate.

Once everything was upside down – the Congregation for Religious, the Holy Office, any number of Cardinals, right up to the Pope – it was natural that everyone had to go into our case. I don't know any other means, any other way, that would have made us better and more quickly known throughout the world.

Besides this, once it was known what the Holy Office and the Pope wanted to do, a very long, academic and concrete discussion started. Counter currents were aroused. A plenary session of the Holy Office was to take place. So a large number of foreign bishops tried to speak privately to the Fathers who had a seat and vote in the plenary session of the Holy Office. They explained this, that and the other thing. And the result? What one could expect took place on 20 October: all the decrees against Fr Kentenich were rescinded. They gave a strange reason: Since I intended to enter the new Institute, they had considered the whole situation once again and decided to withdraw all the decrees. Imagine that! I hadn't moved a finger, but all the decrees were radically removed!

In order to understand this, I must actually anticipate something. In the meantime a completely different opinion has won through in Rome, especially in the Holy Office. Up to that time they had been as hard as iron. They constantly repeated that it was quite out of the question for me ever to be allowed to return to Germany, or to be reinstated in any way. Now a completely different attitude has won through. Cardinal Bea²⁵⁸ had been officially asked by the Holy Office to negotiate with me. And he has done so. His basic attitude was: You would never have been understood by the Church unless the Council had taken place. So this

²⁵⁸ Augustin Cardinal Bea (1881 - 1968), a Jesuit, was Professor of Old Testament theology and for a time Provincial Superior of his community. In 1949 he became Rector of the Bible Institute in Rome and consultant to the Holy Office.

is an official proof that the Council has made its own all that is so commonplace with us. In essentials it has acknowledged things that we have taught from the first, and for the sake of which I had consciously started the bitter battle.

What I wanted to say is the following: You have heard how Fr Menningen was reinstated shortly before I was. It was simpler for him, because he had not been removed from office during a plenary session of the Holy Office, but only by a simple order, and he was not sent into exile. With me it was naturally more difficult. I don't want to enlarge at the moment on how the total change in attitude came about.

Still, I would like to remind you that after this sudden change the Pallottine Society was completely taken aback. Imagine how the Society, which always felt that it was identical with the Holy Office, and that it was protected and legitimized by the Holy Office, suddenly had to experience that the Holy Office is now thinking and working in exactly the opposite way.

The way in which Fr Menningen was quickly dealt with by the Holy Office was also to be applied in my case. However it was only due to happen in October, because Cardinal Ottaviani's private secretary was on holiday and would only return at the beginning of October. Once I knew what was being planned in Rome, you can understand that I was at first surprised when the telegramme arrived on 13th September. Of course, I had to think: Oh well, everything has been moved by a month.

I don't know whether you know the story of the telegramme. For the time being it is still a secret. Later I will tell you more about it. It is enough if you see the general outlines. The telegramme was absolutely clear: In the name of Father General I had immediately to come to Rome. Signed: Burggraf. It stated: immediately. Since it contained the word "immediately", and since those in Rome had constantly been annoyed by my understanding of obedience, I instinctively thought: Stop! The telegramme says "immediately". So you have to see to it that it happens immediately. Otherwise they will say: Woe to your obedience!

So, on the one hand, I asked the telephone operator to send me the telegramme in writing. She agreed to do so. When she told me that a telegramme had arrived for me I still made a joke. If a telegramme arrived in German, the Americans naturally had a hard time passing it on in German – they spelt it. So I made a joke: It will be lovely if you have to spell it! No, she said, the telegramme is actually in English. So I said very specifically: Please send it to me. Question on the other side: Is that the correct address? Yes, that is right.

Why "immediately"? As I have said, the word "immediately" rang in my ears, otherwise I would never have asked them to send me the telegramme in writing. At the time it often happened that they passed on a telegramme, but then didn't send the text afterwards. "Immediately" – So I immediately sent the Provincial Superiors of our overseas provinces²⁵⁹ a telegramme. I had promised them that before I returned to Europe I would visit them. However, in order that I could not be accused afterwards of overlooking the word "immediately", I had to go back on my promise.

So I arrived in Rome and went to the Generalate, and I thought I would be welcomed in one way or another. Instead they were completely shocked. We haven't sent a telegramme! No telegramme! At first I told myself: For heaven's sake, they are playing with you, they're acting! It's like this, when you are constantly battling, in the end you put a question mark behind everything. But it sounded so genuine that I nevertheless had to accept that they had in fact not sent anything.

At the same time a second telegramme arrived in Milwaukee. It also came from Rome, it was also signed by Fr Burggraf. The second part of the telegramme was literally identical with mine. Only the first part was different: Fr Bernardino Trevisan was to come "immediately" to Rome, that is, not first to me in Milwaukee.

Which telegramme was correct? It was clear to me that the word "immediately" appeared in the telegramme sent to me. So I had to travel immediately. I packed my belongings quickly in order not to be accused of disobedience yet again. So I suddenly appeared in Rome! Can you imagine how everyone was amazed?

In 1959 he was made a Cardinal. During Fr Kentenich's exile he dealt with the Schoenstatt question on a number of occasions, and tried to mediate in it.

²⁵⁹ Of the Sisters of Mary.

Then the question was asked: Where did the telegramme come from? Of course, they at first suspected I had instigated it myself. Or else that my friends had done so. The discussion went to and fro. The Pope was even of the opinion – he referred to it later – that I was so excited when the telegramme arrived that I didn't even question it, but simply shot off blindly in order to get out of exile. I never even thought of it! I was always so completely above all these things that they never even touched me. So it never occurred to me!

Of course, the whole telegramme is a mystery, it really is! I will explain it to you later. So the discussion went to and fro.

In addition, a letter arrived from Cardinal Ottaviani's secretary. Another official letter arrived from the Holy Office. This official letter encouraged me to hand in what I wanted to present to the Holy Office. You can see that it is all like a novel. On the one hand, it was planned that the matter should be settled privately: I should not approach the Holy Office officially. Ottaviani wanted to arrange it privately. On the other hand, again from an official, I was encouraged to hand in what I wanted to present to the Holy Office.

Only two drafts remained after all the upheaval.

One day if you ever see what a huge collection of decrees I received in the course of my stay in Milwaukee ...! It always happened like this: If a decree left a hole open – I don't know if you can understand this – I would have seemed like a criminal to myself if I had not used that hole. My interpretation was always completely in line with moral theology. I always told myself: The people in Rome know the rules governing interpretation, so do I. If they want something else, they have to be explicit in what they say. Of course, my opponents, especially the Pallottine Society, repeatedly pointed out that I had slipped through a hole. The hole was then closed, but a tiny hole always remained, and I used each one of them.

Of course, it required tremendous courage, because I knew – I had experienced this during my world tours – that even the highest Church authorities trembled when the Holy Office spoke.

So I have to repeat – it may sound like a joke, but it was a very serious matter: To me it was absolutely clear that I had to show how someone could remain frank towards the Holy Office despite all reverence, obedience and adaptability.

Later, when Cardinal Frings of Cologne rode into battle against Ottaviani at the Council, I wrote this down and also sent it off: If the Cardinal of Cologne, and the whole College of Bishops as a whole, had been more frank towards the Holy Office, it would not have been necessary to reform the Holy Office, nor would this public campaign have been necessary. I am only telling you this so objectively so that you can see that I always pursued a very clear course. And I always did so intrepidly.

Now let us return to the two accusations that remained.

The first question: What about my obedience? Can it be justified?

The second: What about my attitude to [my] charism? The accusation was that I had stated and would justify my actions to official authorities on account of my charism. I have never done this in all my life. You will never find in any text that I have said something about my charism.

According to two bishops Pope Paul VI also accused me of this.

You cannot imagine how many bishops all over the world have been informed about Schoenstatt. We have become public property! So many visited me afterwards and took my part immediately, but without my doing or saying anything, or even justifying myself to them.

Yes, at that time the Pope told Cardinal Silva of Santiago de Chile privately, and then Bishop Manziana – a friend of his whom he had made a bishop – that it was all well and good, but they had to ensure that the charism subjected itself to the office. He didn't say it directly, but he implied, that this was my mistake.

At any rate, those were the only accusations that still remained.

So I prepared myself, and brought along the relevant material, although there was very little that was relevant. I thought to myself: Why on earth do you want to take all that stuff along with you? I left my whole library – all that had been written down and duplicated – in Milwaukee. Yet all the things that needed to be

discussed in Rome had to be resolved. So I had prepared myself for a long discussion, first of all in private with Ottaviani, and then with a plenary session of the Holy Office.

Please recall the two dates. All this had been planned for the beginning of October. Then, at the beginning of September, the telegramme arrived. And then all of a sudden the conference took place on 20th October. And the result? I was set completely free! There was no confrontation. There was no discussion: What about obedience? What about charism? You will notice that these were central questions that had been dealt with at the Council. So there were no questions that had to be conjured out of thin air. These were precisely the central questions. The result: All the decrees were rescinded, all of them!

When did the Pope sign the document? On the 22nd October. It was on this day in 1951 that I had had to leave Schoenstatt and go into exile.

I have said that an incomprehensible transformation took place in the thinking and feeling of the highest authorities. One of the secretaries, who later as an Archbishop became a consultant to the Congregation for Religious, then admitted: No one at the Holy Office still believes in the accusations. So there are no accusations. And I was exiled for fourteen years because of them! I went into exile on 22 October 1951, and everything was rescinded on 22 October 1965!

The developments continued. Now I have been placed under the jurisdiction of the Congregation for Religious. You have heard the reason that was given for the complete lifting of the decrees: because I want to enter the new 'pars motrix'. Strangely enough, Fr Möhler, the Superior General, said he was very disappointed that I wanted to join the new Institute. Can you imagine how someone can be disappointed? For me it was the most natural thing in the world.

The Congregation for Religious immediately adapted itself. They were extremely friendly. They only had one reservation – it hadn't been expressed in the decree, but it had been said – that I should be careful about returning to Germany for the present. What was the tactical reason behind this? You must remember that the whole German Bishops' Conference had also banned me, and this applied especially to Trier. You can guess what Trier must have said. So the reason was only tactical. You can imagine it to yourselves as something like when Noah came out of the ark. Before he left the ark, he sent out a few doves in order to see if they would remain outside. So this was also a first attempt. The dove was allowed to fly free in order to see what the reaction of the German bishops would be.

[The audience with Pope Paul VI]

I wanted to tell you something about the audience with the Pope. All that I have said until now is only a preparation for this. I had personally intended to apply for a private audience with the Pope, but not immediately, because it would have followed the normal course. For me an audience would only have been meaningful if it was connected with a fundamental discussion. However, all the authorities I have mentioned, and many others, including the Secretary of State, who had banished me and demonized me in the past, were now tremendously keen for me to have an audience with the Pope. I didn't want it at all and made no effort at all to bring it about. So it happened without my volition – I will not say that it happened against my will. So it is obvious that other powers were at work. Human, tangible powers, without doubt, but divine powers were also at work!

They had thought out the following: Because of the situation in Rome they said it was impossible for the Pope to give an audience before 29th December. There were so many Cardinals and bishops who wanted to speak to the Pope before they left for home.

Then, it was the 22nd December, I was told: Audience with the Pope! All the authorities had tried to bring about such an audience. However, the only possibility was that it wasn't a private audience, but a particular audience. You probably know as little about all these mysteries as I did. It is a world on its own, just as the diplomatic world is a quite different world from the world we know. It is a world with its own laws, emphases and norms.

So, in spite of everything, there was to be an audience on 22nd December. There is a mass audience, a private audience – one is alone with the Pope – and a special audience in which bigger or smaller groups meet

the Pope, and then a particular audience. In this instance the only possibility for me was a particular audience.

In the background the Congregation for Religious was thinking: At Christmas we will try to find out how the bishops react if the dove flies over to Germany!

So please note the great benevolence everywhere. It wasn't as though just any exile or criminal was standing there. The only thing that was possible in the circumstances was a particular audience. At first I didn't know what that was, or what would happen. So I prepared myself to comply with whatever everyone else was doing. We gathered in the audience chamber. I had reckoned that there would be a small number of people present. However, I think that there were about 75 people all told. A particular audience is an audience for men and women who have rendered a service to the Church and deserve to be specially recognized by the Pope. The former "criminal" joined this group!

How was the audience conducted? I don't want to go into details. I was given a place in the front row. You must picture it to yourselves, the ceremonies are precisely laid down. A place in the front row. Hardly was I standing there than one of the officials came to me and told me to go up after everyone else. So I had to leave the front row. I sat down again at the side. Hardly had I sat down than one of the monsignori who surround the throne – Monsignor Wuestenberg, whom I knew – greeted me formally and asked me how I was, and similar things. That disrupted the whole ceremonial completely. I told him: I have to go at the end. Yes, he said, because the Pope wants to say something special to you, something private. He then added: Because the Pope doesn't speak German well, he wants to do it in Latin. It didn't take long before another gentleman approached me – the one you can see in the photograph. He is Tacoli, the Pope's valet, who served three Popes and kept each of them informed about us. There were a whole lot of people there, including Nuncio Bafile from here, who did a tremendous lot for us. It is a world in itself. If the machinery of diplomacy had not been strongly employed in the background, it would all have been impossible, humanly speaking. You may not overlook that I never raised a finger in that regard. For that my thinking is too straight. I didn't prevent it, but I didn't promote it either.

Then things took their course, very simply and quite differently from what I had imagined. The individuals approached the throne, knelt down, kissed the Pope's ring and received his blessing, and moved on. It did happen that a number of people formed a small group – obviously a Dominican community of four or six people – and they knelt down together. This then took a little time. The Pope said a word here or there. It all happened very quickly: one, two, three, smile here and there, receive the blessing, again a smile in this or that direction, then that was the end of it. That was the solemn recognition given for services to the Church.

They all left the room. At the end I was completely on my own in the middle of the large hall. The Pope sat there, and around him stood his entourage who were present partly to translate if necessary, and partly to increase the solemnity of the occasion. I knelt, kissed the Pope's ring, then I stood there – you probably remember it from the photo – with a little box in my hand. You can see it in the photo. I wasn't very bent, nor was I very worn out, but just the way I am, unabashed. The photo is particularly significant, because it was not an official one. As far as I know, the Pope usually poses as does the other person. So the photo was taken quite off the cuff.

I like the photo, if you really look at it. If you know the background, it is in truth a very original ending to a tremendously powerful, tense and dangerous time of battle.

Allow me to point out once again how much people prayed in the course of the years for the Pope to be given "the Schoenstatt vision" – it is a technical expression²⁶⁰. He was! The audience is in fact the answer to countless prayers in the course of the decades.

²⁶⁰ German, „Schönstattschau“. The historic basis for this concept goes back to 2 February 1942, Candlemas day, when Fr Kentenich received the inner conviction that he would be set free. He called this the "Candlemas vision" (*Lichtmessschau*) and composed the hymn "The fetters have fallen" (*Heavenwards*). He was not set free, but on that day the Gestapo decided he would be sent to Dachau rather than Mauthausen. At the end of the 1940s the concept was changed

The Pope then asked me in a very friendly way, “Which language?” Answer, “In Latin.” Firstly, I had prepared myself for that, and secondly, it was natural, because he found it difficult to speak German. However, I did not know what was to follow. He turned round and was given a relatively long sheet of paper. In German! You can see it in the photo. He read it out very solemnly, as though it was an encyclical. I stood there and listened quietly. However, if I had to repeat it to you, I would be able to say very little. Do you know why? It was one long eulogy. You can imagine how little I am moved by a eulogy today. Nevertheless, I became aware that it was more than the usual eulogy. In the context, where everything is so very official, and where everything is considered any number of times, it was in fact a very unusual legitimization and reinstatement.

He finished reading and I answered in Latin. Essentially there were three thoughts:

Firstly,

on behalf of Schoenstatt I wanted to thank most sincerely for what had been done so abundantly for Schoenstatt during his reign, and especially that he had reinstated me. So it was clearly put. I must also admit, I would never have accepted an amnesty. Please forgive me if I put it so bluntly. The good name of the Family demanded it. It had nothing to do with an amnesty. It had to be an official and juridical act of reinstatement.

Once the problems had been solved in such a way, and once Cardinal Ottaviani was the first to congratulate me on my birthday by sending me a telegramme – just imagine that! – it never occurred to me to visit him in return. I merely thanked him in writing. Can you understand why? I also never gave him a gift. In every other instance I am passionately “weak” in this regard. So if you want something like that from me and I have it, you can have everything I have got. The only thing is, you may not demand it as a right, because then you won’t get a penny from me. That is my principle; I never did it, although I gave other men something out of gratitude, because they had involved themselves in my reinstatement. Later, after the Cardinal had admitted solemnly to Tacoli – something really lovely – that he was genuinely sorry that, without having personally stained his conscience in a subjective sense, he had been the instrument that had done such dreadful injustice to me for years, I would have been able to visit him. However, the case is closed. There is such a thing as a sound sense of justice. You aren’t there just as an individual, you are there as a representative of the Family.

Secondly,

I promised the Pope on behalf of the Family that together with the Family I would do all in my power to ensure that the post - conciliar mission of the Church would be carried out as perfectly as possible. Then a discussion started. That is to say, I had deliberately added, *sub tutela matris ecclesiae* – under the protection of the Blessed Mother as Mother of the Church. This is obviously his favourite idea. He remarked, “Yes, *matre ecclesia*.”²⁶¹ “No,” I said, “oh no! I said, *sub tutela matris ecclesiae!*” He replied, “You are right”.

Thirdly,

to confirm and perpetuate this promise I wanted to bring him this chalice – you know the chalice – as a gift for the new church that is being planned under the title *Matri ecclesiae*. I then added, *a matre ecclesia, in matre ecclesia and pro matre ecclesia*.²⁶²

This did not bring the audience to a close. So you can see, compared with everything else that had happened, it was quite unusual. As I presented the chalice – you can see how the Monisgnori around him were in a hurry to see it. Naturally I took this at first as a diplomatic gesture, but within the framework of the whole event it still has a profound meaning. He began to speak very quietly and remarked that I knew Bishop Manziana. He was a friend, an Italian, who was in Dachau. I had saved his life at that time. When I returned

to become the “Schönstatt vision”; the prayer being that the Church, especially the Pope and bishops, would be granted a deeper understanding of Schoenstatt’s spirituality and goals.

²⁶¹ He probably said, *sub matre ecclesia*, which would mean that the Council should be carried out under the protection of the Mother of the Church.

²⁶² From the Mother of the Church, in the Mother of the Church, and for the Mother of the Church.

home from Dachau and planned my world trips, it was impossible for a German at that time to leave Germany. At the time Manziana had got me a Vatican diplomatic passport from Montini, later Paul VI, so that I could travel round the world.

“Yes,” I replied, “I know him well”. “And”, the Pope went on, “he spoke in such high terms of praise about you.” He related it in detail. Then the audience came to an end.

I was ushered out as the last. Outside many people were waiting for me.

That was on 22nd December. On 23rd December Cardinal Antoniutti had a private audience with the Pope. He returned, called me on the phone – in a very friendly way, so not through intermediaries, but personally – and told me that he had had an audience with the Pope and I should listen carefully: the Pope gave me permission to return to Germany. The only restriction, which had only been made for tactical reasons, was thus removed by virtue of the direct power of the Pope. So I was able to travel, but I was to remain dependent on the Bishop of Münster. That again was a normal diplomatic move. They wanted to shift the responsibility to some other authority. So I should do my business in dependence on the Bishop of Münster. I could also return to Rome. Since I do not want to have much to do with diplomatic matters, I quickly asked: How is that meant? “Can” or “should”? At the same moment I recalled: You have to talk diplomatically; and then I said, because he did not understand me immediately, yes, I will return a week after Christmas, that is, after the feast of Epiphany.

That was the end of the matter.

Do you now know everything? It was only meant as a small relaxation for you, otherwise I would have described it far more systematically.