



Places to meet Father

Rome – Belmonte



8 September 2004

“To bear Schoenstatt into the heart of the Church means bearing its charism into the heart of Christendom, and contributing with its tradition, its pedagogy, its spirituality, to creating practicable ways for everyday sanctity, and making available living examples of life lived radically according to the Gospel. The motto of the shrine is: All for the Mother of the Church!

This world 'all' reminds us of the comprehensive calling of the great founders of the Orders, such as, Francis of Assisi, Theresa of Avila, Ignatius of Loyola. It reminds us of Fr Kentenich's vision, which he repeated constantly: 'All for Schoenstatt, Schoenstatt for the Church, the Church for the Triune God!' It reminds us of Joseph Engling's vision, which he revealed in the personal ideal he chose using the motto 'Omnibus Omnia'; it reminds us above all of the vision of the Apostle Paul, who admonished Christians to become 'everything to everyone'."

Cardinal Camillo Ruini at the dedication of the Matri Ecclesiae Shrine.



16 November 1965 – Belmonte

To start with I am thinking of all that has happened in the Family since 2 February 1942: a "Schoenstatt vision"! As we put it later, we want to pray that the Holy Father will be granted the "Schoenstatt vision". It is a thought that since that time, since 1942, has never died in the heart of the Family. The greater the difficulties, and the more Rome began to occupy itself with us, the stronger the urge became: Go to Rome, we want to pray for the Holy Father to be granted a Schoenstatt vision!

(Joseph Kentenich on 16 November 1965 at Belmonte)

In the course of our pilgrimage to the houses connected with our Father, we have arrived at Belmonte. The “*Domus Pater Kentenich*” is being built at the moment. Its construction inspired us to undertake this type of pilgrimage to the houses connected with Father in this Father Year.

In 1965 and 1966 when our Father visited the “property on the Via di Boccea”, as it was called at that time, on three occasions, there was nothing there. Yet the “building” for this place had long become a reality within our Father. It was his vision in the spirit of the “Candlemas Vision”: The longing that the Church at this place would understand the contribution Schoenstatt can make for the renewal of the Church.

These words could remind us of the Pope’s vision at the time of St Francis. We are familiar with Giotto’s fresco in the upper church of St Francis in Assisi: A Church that is tottering on its foundations. Francis is standing in the place of a pillar. He and his movement became an important support for the Church.

In the days and weeks when the earthquake in Japan cost the lives of many victims, and the lives of many were greatly endangered, this image can speak to us in a new way. The suffering of this people affects us deeply; our global solidarity is called for – particularly from us Christians.

However, the earthquake can also make us aware that Schoenstatt itself is a “child of an earthquake”. It was born at the start of the First World War, which can be compared to an earthquake, and was formed in an essential way by the earthquake of National Socialism (Nazi ideology). So at an early date our Father asked himself what sort of community, and hence what image of the Church, would in a certain sense stand up to an earthquake and grow through crises and challenges. It would be a renewed form of the Church that would not collapse under the shock wave either because it was too lightly built, or because it was too rigid. It would, on the contrary, have to be a Church that is solid and at the same time dynamic. This is the only way it can absorb the shock wave and at the same time preserve its own form and identity.

What does that mean in practice? At present a great deal is being said about “nuclear meltdown” as potentially the greatest threat resulting from the damage to the nuclear reactor. For our Father a

very different “nuclear meltdown” was the fruit of the “earthquake” mentioned above. He formed a community through “a fusion of hearts”. It was this that he envisaged as the future for the Church. Precisely in a pluralistic society the inner bonding of people to the organism of the Church will depend greatly on the extent to which each heart is open and can bond to places, visions and people who take responsibility for the future of the Church.

Whoever spends some time in Belmonte will experience that the hearts of very different people are opening for our Father and his mission. Each one has an opportunity to become a “supporting pillar” in his house. The Pope’s vision becomes a reality. Each of us is called to help support the house of the Church in an original way. This can become very practical in the “our Father’s House” in Belmonte. Let us consider: What is my practical contribution at the moment; through my prayer, sacrifice or actions where am I supporting pillar for the Church?

Michael Gerber



The *Domus Patris* in construction – 10 March 2011