



# Places to meet Father

## Cologne

*“Unless we keep the image of God the Father as the merciful Father-God in mind, and unless the image of the child is also changed, for example, as the image of the weak and wretched child of the Father, we will all begin to flee from God as time goes by, because we will not be able to cope with life.” (J. Kentenich 1966)*



“On 30.10.1966 in the Cologne Schoenstatt shrine the founder solemnly entered into a covenant of love with God the Father on behalf of the whole Schoenstatt Family, and presented the Father Symbol. By doing so he showed that the goal of the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother has always aimed ultimately at a covenant of love with God the Father.” (Peter Wolf: United with our Father, p. 102)



Pater Kentenich bei seinem Vortrag am 30.10.1966 in Köln

In the talk he gave on that day, the founder enlarged on what motivated him to undertake this important act:

*“So how do we arrive at the covenant of love with the heavenly Father from the covenant of love with our Lady? I shall list three thoughts very quickly:*

- *the Father willed it this way,*
- *our hearts long for it,*
- *the Family depends on it.”*

*“...The Father willed it this way. What did he will? That the covenant of love with our Lady should lead us on the quickest and surest way to the covenant of love with him. ... We now want to enter solemnly and together into the covenant of love with the Father which was proclaimed last year. How? By putting up the symbol of this mutual covenant of love – the FATHER symbol. The solemn constitution of the covenant of love with the Father for the whole Family.*

*... We ourselves long for it. Why? We need only recall that people today are fleeing from God in a strange way. ... You feel how much we need not just a picture of God that we can hold onto firmly, nor just a picture of a justly loving God the Father, but a picture of the merciful Father.*

*... And thirdly, the Family depends on it. Please do not forget that if the Family as a whole does not give us support in the present situation, it really has lost its meaning, as is so often the case with such communities today. They are just messing around. Today we all need support – support in three definite points, in three life-processes:*

*Support in a sound and markedly religious community. One of the features of a markedly religious community, since the world is fleeing from God, is that it constantly centres on the Father.*

*We have to seek support in clear knowledge. From all the gifts presented to start with we can gather how our religious knowledge, our Schoenstatt knowledge, has grown. ...*

*And finally, support – I think we may and must say this – also in strong characters who exemplify the ideal of our family in a very practical way.”*

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What motivated Fr Kentenich to undertake this act in the Cologne shrine of all places? I do not have any information in this regard. However, allow me to mention a few facts that could possibly have suggested this decision.

Cologne was not just any old city to Fr Kentenich. Even as a child he had heard about it. His grandfather had a horse and cart and sold fruit, vegetables and potatoes in the Cologne market, so he would have talked about Cologne. In 1893 Joseph's mother took a job in Cologne and lived there until her death in 1939. Her son was allowed to visit her there in the school holidays (his mother negotiated this with her employers). Later during his studies and his priestly activity he took the opportunities that offered themselves to visit mother.

A further factor is the blessing of the MTA picture in a side chapel of the Cologne “*Elendskirche*” on 14 October 1934 by Fr Kentenich. On this occasion he spoke those significant words, “A branch house, a second Schoenstatt should come into existence here. ... As from today a river of grace should flow into the city, into the whole Archdiocese. As from today this place should become a quietly effective place of grace.”

However, I again became more deeply aware of the extent to which the covenant of love with God the Father leads us into the heart and centre of the salvation event during the past weeks of Lent and Easter. The Biblical texts remind us insistently how completely Jesus lived and worked in loving union with his Father, and how the Father, in his turn, confirmed and glorified the Son. This covenant of love is truly the axis of the entire salvation event.



Enthüllung des Vatersymbols im Kölner Heiligtum

In this context I am reminded of the motto chosen for the visit of Pope Benedict. In relation to the covenant with the Father entered into in Cologne it could just as well be phrased, "Where God the Father is, there is the future!"

Let us be his untiring heralds.

Felix Kreuzwald

The complete talks in Cologne, with an introduction, have been published as, "*New Life for a New World*", Schoenstatt Publications, Cape Town.