

8. **Matri Ecclesiae**

*Talk by Fr. J. Kentenich
Rome, December 8, 1965*

On December 8, 1965 the Second Vatican Council came to a solemn close. On that day Pope Paul VI blessed the cornerstone for the church "Matri Ecclesiae," a church to be built in Rome in honor of Mary, the Mother of the Church.

*This day was also chosen by the Schoenstatt Family for the erection and blessing of the MTA wayside shrine on a piece of property which was purchased for the future Schoenstatt Center in Rome¹. This act was considered to be the symbolic cornerstone laying for the Schoenstatt Shrine in Rome. Many representatives of the Schoenstatt Family gathered around our father and founder to perform this solemn task. His words reflect the importance of the historical moment: At the closing of the great Council, Father speaks on the mission of the Church on the new shore. In his own life it is backed up by the lived *Dilexit Ecclesiam* of 14 years of exile now completed, and directs his family to take up its great task for the post-conciliar Church.*

*This title of this talk is a Latin phrase with a double meaning: **Matri Ecclesiae**, "to the Mother of the Church," and "to the Mother Church."*

My dear Schoenstatt Family!

If I have accepted the suggestion to already give my talk now and not at the celebration itself, it is only because I am later expecting a visitor. No other obstacle would have prevented me from taking part in this great and solemn act.

While we are together in this way, just at this time, at this solemn moment, I think I may say that I do not see you now as individual persons, but as symbolically representing the whole family here on earth, as well as — if I may use the expression — all the members of the "heavenly Schoenstatt" and those whom we suppose to be suffering in purgatory. It is therefore a large company that is gathered here. In spirit, then, all of us, all without exception, may feel that we are present here, and when I repeat, "My dear Schoenstatt Family!", all without exception should feel addressed.

The act which we are preparing to make is, as I have already said, of extremely great importance. Outwardly it is insignificant, but its weight is enormous when we try to grasp its deeper meaning. If I may say more exactly why it is so significant and important, I think I may point out:

What is at stake is an identification and integration, an identification and integration, after our own fashion, with and in the solemn closing of the Second Vatican Council.

¹ On the Via di Boccea and Via di Santa Gemma in Casalotti, five miles west of the Vatican. This planned Matri Ecclesiae shrine is not to be confused with the Cor Ecclesiae (Heart of the Church) shrine of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, dedicated October 22, 1990 on the Via Aurelia Antica about a mile southwest of the Vatican.

What does this final act look like? It is the solemn cornerstone laying [for the church *Matri Ecclesiae*] in the form of the blessing of the cornerstone.

We can immediately see that there is an exterior identification here, a similarity. We, too, want to bless and lay the cornerstone, at least symbolically, for our shrine. And if the inscription on the cornerstone which the Pope will lay and which he has blessed is *Matri Ecclesiae* — if the new Church is therefore to be dedicated to Our Lady as Mother, we understand that it is quite natural for us to give the new shrine, our MTA shrine in Rome, the title *Matri Ecclesiae*.

There is therefore a certain identification and similarity between the two acts. The difference, seen exteriorly, is largely this, that we only have our little shrine while in the other case we are obviously dealing with a great church.

But for us it is not enough to identify with, we also want to integrate our whole hearts into this act, making the Church's life our life. This already outlines for you the main thoughts I want to share with you today. They are two.

I. The Pope's Act

First, we want to consider: What does the Church look like which is being dedicated to Our Lady?

Secondly: What does the motherly function look like which Our Lady is to exercise in this new Church? This concerns the act itself which some of you attended at St. Peter's.

A. The New Image of the Church

What should I say to the first question? **What does the Church look like?** It has quite different features from the Church of yesterday or the day before. What does the Church look like?

When you later get an opportunity to meditate on everything the Council achieved in its decisions and declarations, you will soon find that the Constitution on the Church stands out as the focal point of it all. Everything else that was discussed, advised or decided, is found in at least the essentials in the Constitution on the Church.

Why a new attitude to the Church, a new self-concept of the Church, which to a great extent differs from that of yesterday and the day before? This is the great question: How does the Church see herself today? This does not only mean: What are the absolute and unchangeable fundamentals of the Church? The question does not touch upon the metaphysical concept of the Church, but on the great question of how the present-day Church sees herself.

We know how hotly and at what great length the new features of the Church were debated at the Council. And now we ask: How does this Church appear to us in comparison with the image of yesterday and the day before?

The answer? It is an unusual Church:

It is a Church which, on the one hand, is deeply and inwardly animated by its ties to tradition, and on the other hand incredibly free and detached from overly rigid traditional forms.

It is a Church which is united by a truly profound sense of brother-and-sisterliness while at the same time hierarchical and truly guided and governed in a fatherly way.

It is a Church which has the mission to become the soul of the culture and world of today and tomorrow.

1. A Dynamic Church

Would it now be worth our while to go into details? I do not know what I should stress in particular. Should I remind you that old images of the Church are receding in the face of the new features of the Church? It is of particular importance to us that the Council, in describing the Church, liked to use the expression:

the present Church sees herself as the pilgrim Church — not as the Church which is complete in herself, not as the Church which is self-contained, but as the pilgrim Church.

What does this mean for the Church to be on pilgrimage? She must take into herself the most varied elements she encounters on her pilgrim way, in her pilgrim existence, on the pilgrimage of her historical existence, and she has to see to it that these elements share in the essential forming of her features, her time-bound features. A pilgrim Church.

What then are these features? How does the Church see herself today? If I may use images: We are used to regarding the Church as an immovable rock. The Church has been founded upon a rock. *Tu es Petrus, et super hanc petram aedificabo ecclesiam meam.* "You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church" (Mt 16, 18). The Church today is also a rock, but we want to and we may — for the Church does so herself — explain the image of the rock very differently. Formerly the nations were invited to seek and find their way to this rock. Today this rock is in constant motion. If I may use a seldom-used image, I would like to say that this rock is a *pilgrim rock*; it is on a pilgrimage through the nations, it is on a pilgrimage through the times, it seeks people, souls, it invites them to come, and does not wait until they come of themselves.

I think we would much rather use the other image: the Church — a ship. The concept of a ship includes this ability to move, this dynamic life. The Church is a ship riding the swells and waves of the sea. The waves may rise to heaven, and may even endanger the ship to such an extent that it appears as if it will be swallowed up in the abyss. The image of the Church: This is how the Church sees herself and experiences herself. Do we now grasp the great difference between yesterday and the day before, between today and tomorrow? From this vantage point it should be much easier for you to understand the discussion which surrounded and even raged around the image of the Church.

Let us try to find some other images. This is just the first characteristic of the Church as we see

her today — she is a pilgrim Church, a pilgrim rock, a ship sent out onto the high seas. In comparison with the earlier concept it is an extremely *dynamic Church*. Therefore: Away with, or at least in the accentuation, let us not stress so much the static but rather the dynamic power and strength, the dynamic character of the Church. This is what the Church looks like — a new image of the Church.

2. A Church of Brothers and Sisters Under a Fatherly Hierarchy

A second characteristic is this: The Church wants to be united in an extremely tender, deep and close *brotherliness and sisterliness*, although in such a way that at the same time there is a hierarchical government and leadership.

If we again compare this second characteristic with the image of the Church of yesterday or the day before, we know what the Church used to look like, and know how we ourselves have largely experienced her. It was not brotherliness that united the people among themselves and to the leaders of the Church. Instead there was, on the one hand, a rigid overlordship, a hierarchy which had all the responsibility, all the power and, on the other hand, a people who, I might almost say, were consumptive, who had too little responsibility, shared the responsibility too little. Thus there was a sharp contrast. This character was imprinted upon the Church by early Christianity, by the patriarchal society of those times, and later, since the time of Constantine the Great, by the laws of the state. Since that time there has been the sharp distinction in the Church between "above" and "below".

And now in contrast, the Church sees herself from a single standpoint: she sees herself simply as the *people of God*. This people of God has a single point of contact. All without exception, whether the hierarchy or the people, meet at this one point. What is it? A mutual brotherliness and sisterliness which enables souls to grow together. Therefore, I repeat, the new self-concept of the Church, the feature which she recognizes as her own, is this outstanding brotherliness and sisterliness, from the point of view of what is common to all, to the people of God. This people of God is internally united, also with the hierarchy, by an all-comprising and penetrating responsibility. There is no longer a lack of responsibility; each member in his proper place bears responsibility for the total image of the Church. This is the new image of the Church.

And the hierarchy? Of what importance is this official leadership in the Church today? First of all we must see the community. What unites all is the idea that the hierarchy, too, is the people of God. From this follows the responsibility of the hierarchy. Its responsibility is not for "groveling subjects," but for the people of God. What does this mean? Once again a much closer rapprochement between "above" and "below". What does this mean? A hierarchical orientation, a hierarchical government, is a government which proceeds, as we have said so often in these days, from an outstanding fatherliness which is anchored in the supernatural. All in all, then, this is the second characteristic of the new image of the Church.

3. The Soul of the World of Today

And the third characteristic? Later you should try to see that I am not discussing something I

might have made up on my own, but something which has been stressed again and again in all the pronouncements of the Council, first in one way, then in another.

This Church should be, as she was in early Christian times, and as she should always have been, *the soul of the entire world culture of today*. Thus, there should be no separation between the Church and culture, nor between the Church and the world. No, the Church should be the soul of culture in its totality — a culture which is confused, extremely worldly, and influenced by the devil. This is how the Church sees herself.

I stress once more — when you later meditate on the discussion about the features of the Church, you will realize how bitter the battle about this self-portrait of the Church was. If there had only been a question of the metaphysics of the Church, it would naturally have been simple to find the answer.

Yet what is of special importance is a word, a process, which we should consider most carefully. Since on the whole the world today is affected by the idea of evolution, then the Church, too, wants to be seen under the aspect of a sound evolution. The Church is not a finished product, she will never be complete here on earth. The Church changes, as do her different life processes. Of course we must remember — I already took this into account when I started — that the Church should be and will be bound to her tradition.

If you now meditate on this short description of the new Church, the new self-portrait of the Church, and then look at life in the world, whether this concerns the clergy, the episcopate or the individual believer, you will be able to discover fairly quickly which opinion an individual person upholds. The one leaves tradition behind altogether, so that he sees only progress and evolution, while another sees only tradition and refuses to acknowledge any development. This results in the great confusion of our times.

I think we will have to wait a very long time before the detrimental side-effects of the Council have been overcome in the Church at large. Experts tell us that it will take centuries to reap the fruits of the first Vatican Council. Today we must first overcome the detrimental symptoms, the unnoticed and unexpected uncertainty about the new image of the Church in the widest circles, whether we think of the hierarchy, the clergy or the laity. Once this is overcome, at least to a certain extent, the Council will first begin to become fruitful.

With this, I think, I have shown you the new image of the Church. Now the Church for which the Pope is laying the foundation stone is to be dedicated to the Mother of the Church. Of which Church? Of *this* Church! You must never overlook this point — the Mother of the *new* Church, the Church with these new features.

B. Mary's Function as Mother

Which brings us to the second question: What is Mary's function as a mother for this Church? Here, too, let me remind you how heated the debate was at the council about the function our Blessed Mother has in this Church. Sometimes it seemed as if they did not want to recognize the

function of a mother; sometimes it seemed as if the idea of equalization and unity — that is, the idea of the people of God — was seen in such a one-sided way that Our Lady was at most considered and acknowledged as the most perfect member of the people of God. It seemed as if there was no longer any antenna, any thought for motherhood. From this you may be sure that the discussion did not concern the formal metaphysical penetration of phenomena, but rather the living image which the Church has of herself — in this instance the Marian aspect. How does the Church see the function of a mother, that is, how does the present-day Church, how do the faithful, the Council Fathers as representatives of the present people of the Church — how do these representatives see the Church's mother-function? In the same way as before we ask: How did they as representatives of the people of the Church see the essence of the Church, the image, the features of the Church?

The answer: There was great uncertainty, great and heated discussion. Many were of the opinion that we were on the way to seeing Marian devotion from a Protestant standpoint. We were on the way to distorting the image of Mary to such an extent that the new Church could recognize no motherly principle. Yet clarity was reached to an ever increasing extent. And for this, I think, we can thank the Holy Father very specially.

Increasing clarity of thinking was reached in regard to the relationship of Mary to the Church in general, and her position in the Church of today. Our Lady is doubtlessly *the most perfect member of the Church*. This has been recognized on all sides as a tradition, a heritage, which the Church has always upheld, and which Protestantism has also partially adopted.

Yet is she *the Mother of the Church*? That is to say: Is she a mother in the full meaning of the word, and is she also the model of the Church? The Church has increasingly realized that the old concepts are still very much alive within the Church.

The Blessed Mother is the *model of the Church*. What does this mean? Our Lady is indeed Mother of the Church, but the Church is also a mother. Thus she is Mother of the Church, in the same way the Church is a mother. If she is Mother of the Church, she is not only the model of this Church, but also a mother who has power to conceive and give birth to this Church.

If you remember these three points, these three expressions, you will understand many things more clearly.

1. Mary's Function as Mother in General

Let us now ask: In what does her function as mother actually consist? What does dogmatic theology tell us? This is not even the main question. The main question is rather: How does this idea of her function as mother find expression in the modern Church?

From the dogmatic point of view we could recall all that we have said in the past on these matters, that is, we could recall that as Our Lady is truly mother of the individual believer, so she is also the Mother of the Church as a whole. We may distinguish here between the conception of the Church, the birth of the Church, and a certain completion and perfection of the Church.

These are truths which should be explored and examined anew today. It must also be seen whether or not they are really alive in the consciousness of the children of the Church, and in the Church herself.

When was the Church *conceived*? Dogmatics expresses the truth which is alive in the Catholic people: She was conceived at the same moment that Christ was conceived. Seen in this light, we may no longer see Christ only as a historical person, but also as a mystical person. Thus the Blessed Mother is not only the mother of the historical Christ, but also of the mystical Christ. I do not intend to repeat everything that dogmatic theology has taught us through the centuries, yet it would do us no harm to have a clearer picture of these matters.

When, according to the feeling of the people, and where and when, according to dogmatics, did the *birth* of the Church take place? At the moment of Christ's death. There is a well-known saying: The Church issued forth from the heart of the God-Man. *Stabat Mater Jesu juxta crucem* (The mother of Jesus stood beneath the cross). She repeated her 'yes'; it is here, then, that she proved herself a mother, when she cooperated in making the birth of the Church a reality.

And the completion of the Church took place at Pentecost: *et erant omnes unanimiter cum Maria Matre Jesu perseverantes in oratione*. "And they all were gathered around Mary, the Mother of Jesus, in prayer" (Acts 1,14). Thus, as the Church has felt from the earliest times, Mary is in the truest sense the Mother of the Church.

2. Mary's Function as Mother of the Church Today

And now: What is the function of Our Lady with regard to the Church of today? It is the same motherly function which she has always exercised in the Church. The most important thing we can say is that the new image of the Church must always be seen in the light of faith, but also in the light of evolution, as well as in the light of dogmatics, in the light of God's plan. It is and will always remain God's plan that the Church cannot exist, and that the Church today cannot be born, cannot be conceived anew, cannot be completed, without the Blessed Mother. Recall here, please, a thought which we have often used in our family: How was Christ born, how was he conceived? We have before us the great thought: of Mary as the Christ-bearer. For this reason she also bears all Christians, and finally, she bears the *Corpus Christi Mysticum*, the mystical body of Christ. The Creed tells us the same truth: The only-begotten Son took flesh "by the power of the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary."

We know how the mystic Grignion de Montfort interpreted this. We don't want to dwell on this a long time. We only want to hear the thought again, because it is so precisely what we have always emphasized and lived in our Family.

It is like this: If Christ is to be born again in the individual Christian — and what applies to the individual Christian applies to Christianity and the Church as well — if the Church, if even the present-day Church is to be born again, it can only happen through the Holy Spirit, but in union with the Virgin Mary. That is to say, and this is the pronouncement and depth of the thought of Grignion de Montfort: Where the Holy Spirit finds Our Lady in a soul, the great dogma, the

great truth can be realized in an outstanding way — "He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary."

When Grignion pondered further and considered why in some eras the Church brought forth so few saints, why Christ was so seldom born again in a perfect way, he answered, and we can well understand him: because the Holy Spirit too seldom found the Virgin Mary in souls. Wherever he finds her, however, he cannot help descending and becoming active. *Et verbum caro factum est* — "And the Word became flesh" (Jn 1,14). Then Christ is born again. This is the great law that is valid both for the Church of today and the Church of the future.

We can see and cast light on this thought from another angle. We say, and the old theology confirms this, that if we want to be sufficiently prepared to give a home to the Eternal Father, to the Triune God within our souls, the so-called *potentia oboedientialis*, the power of obedience must be fully developed. *Potentia oboedientialis* — that is the readiness to receive the divine. Was Our Lady not open for God? If she lives and works in us, it is the most natural thing in the world that she lets us share in her *fiat* (cf Lk 1,38). As often and as long as we say our fiat, we may suppose that the Holy Spirit, that the Triune God, takes possession of our soul, so that these words may come true in an outstanding way: *Et verbum caro factum est*.

All that Teilhard de Chardin has to say about evolution is in its intention doubtlessly very valuable. The whole world should finally be nothing but a *Corpus Christi Mysticum*. This teaching only begins to err when, if what some maintain is true, evolution is applied to grace as within the framework of nature, so that nature of its own accord becomes capable of containing grace as something natural to it. If the *potentia oboedientialis* is always kept in mind, we cannot imagine a greater or more beautiful aim for the world than that the whole of creation — not only men but also inanimate nature — forms one great *Corpus Christi Mysticum*.

What have I explained to you? Nothing but the one thought: What does the *Matri Ecclesiae* look like, or rather, what does the Church which is newly consecrated, and will be newly built, physically newly built, as a symbol of the Church on the new shore look like? What does her mother-function look like? The general answer has been given.

II. Our Act

Now at the beginning we said that the act which we have prepared and are about to make has a deep meaning and significance. Through it we want to identify with and be integrated into this great act [of the Holy Father] which has taken place with such great solemnity.

A. Identification

Let us now see what the *identification* consists of. What does it mean? The question must really be divided into two:

1. What does the identification look like with regard to the image of the Church?
2. What does the identification look like with regard to Mary's function as

Mother?

1. Identification With the Image of the Church

When we now think of the *image of the Church*, then those of us who know Schoenstatt and have studied it and lived it will probably point out the difficulty: Isn't the image of the Church which we have just outlined in the spirit of the council the image of the church we always had! We have never known any other image of the Church! So the difficulty that you will make or at least feel to a certain degree is this: We shouldn't say that it is our identification with the council's image of the Church but that it is more like the council's image of the Church identifying with us! (. . .)

May I pause here for a moment? At this point I think I must say that the battle of the last [fourteen] years was ultimately a battle over the image of the Church. The Church of yesterday did not understand our image of the Church. The Church of yesterday tried to pull down our image of the Church to the level of the exaggeratedly traditionalistic view.

How did we arrive at our image of the Church? If I may summarize this — it is meant to be an impulse for further study — I think I could say:

- a. Our image of the Church welled up from deeper than normal levels in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. From deeper levels.
- b. It has always been inspired by and been oriented on the newest shore of the times, i.e. on the shore which is so hotly debated today.
- c. And it is constantly permeated by a mighty fullness of graces. (. . .)

What have I been able to tell you? What does the identification look like that we want to renew by laying the cornerstone for our new shrine of the MTA? We want to identify with the image of the Church that the Pope has in mind as he lays the cornerstone for his "shrine."

2. Identification With Mary's Function as Mother

Second, what does the identification with Mary's function as Mother look like?

From our perspective it is an identification. But here, too, we must really say that when it comes to conscious life, to conscious dependence on the Blessed Mother, to conscious attachment to her, then we think we can say that it is really the other way around; the council is on the way to identifying with us.

At this point, too, we could go on for a long time, and we really ought to. It is a great task that we have seen from the very beginning: Our image of Mary — as we have proclaimed it from the very beginning — is so far ahead of its time! When we ask the popes, they could later see how we did this step for step from the beginning: Our Lady, the official permanent Helpmate and

Companion of Our Lord in the entire work of redemption; the Blessed Mother, the Educator. What does she want to form as educator? The new Catholic. To what does she want to educate? To a new image of the Church! That is everything we have expected and asked of her over and over again.

With that I have sketched out at least a few brief lines. To return to our original statement: What does this simple act mean that we are undertaking? An identification with and an integration into the solemn act which brought the council to a close. It is an identification.

B. Integration

And if we now speak of *integration*, how is integration meant to be seen?

I think, now that the Church, through the council, has been essentially placed on the same ground that we stand on — whether it be the question of the image of the Church or of Mary's function as Mother and Educator — we must not forget that for us the concept of integration is of particular importance.

It is not as if this were something new. What do I mean by integration in this case?

It is an integration, an embracing of the mission of the hierarchy; it is [Schoenstatt] taking into its heart the mission of the Church and the mission of the hierarchy.

Here again I would have to unfold this topic at much greater length, but I won't go into it now. Just think of how long we have already been struggling for this integration! To start with, when I told you that the Church has made an identification with our image of the Church and our view of Mary's function as Mother, you must not forget that this is entirely possible. We were never outside the Church; we were a member of the Church. And this is quite normal, especially if we apply a sound doctrine of evolution to the development of the Church. It is entirely conceivable, even verifiable, that on numberless occasions the Church as a whole has brought herself into line with a part that had been nourished from deeper sources, and remained true to the great trends of the future. Therefore we may not be surprised. But we have also always tried to adapt ourselves to the image of the Church we found before us.

You see, this is the reason for the continuous urge: Reach out to the Pope, reach out to the hierarchy! Think only of a few common expressions:

All for Schoenstatt,
Schoenstatt for the Church,
the Church for the Triune God!

What do we mean when we say: "Schoenstatt for the Church?" As a member of the Church we always want to penetrate, permeate and be a leaven for the whole Church. "My all for the Church" means and must mean: dependence on the hierarchy, in particular on the Pope.

Think one step further. We have called ourselves and wished to call ourselves and live by the well-known expression:

In the shadow of the shrine the destiny of the Church will be essentially co-determined for centuries to come.

In which sense? In the deep interior transformation of the Church — or if you like, although it sounds rather strange — in the sense of the Church's identification with Schoenstatt. But it ultimately also means: In the shadow of the shrine the destiny of the Church! And an essential part of the Church is the hierarchy. Repeated efforts have therefore always been made to contact the hierarchy.

And what do we want to be when we call ourselves, as we have begun to call ourselves more recently, *the heart of the Church*? The Church must always be seen not only from its inner, but also from its outer essential structure.

Now this is most beautiful, indeed. I cannot forget to mention the other fact: The meaning of the two visitations, as I saw it, as we saw it, was ultimately nothing else than a union, an integration of ourselves, our thinking and willing, an integration of our new vision of the Church, with the [traditional] image of the Church, in so far as its essential features were concerned. And for this reason we wanted to be dependent on the hierarchy and on the Popes.

When you now see the latest lifestreams in our family, you must admit — indeed it has given me personally the greatest joy — that especially the leaders of our priests' branch have a strong and instinctive urge to go to Rome, to the Pope, to the hierarchy. By the way, when we recall what we always wanted, we must answer: We always wanted to be the "bishop's order." We have never forgotten the hierarchy, we have always seen it clearly. The bishop's order! And the *Pars motrix et centralis*²— the "Pope's order".

Integration! The deepest meaning of the act we are about to undertake [the symbolic blessing and laying of the cornerstone for our shrine in Rome], must be seen not only as an identification with, but also an integration of ourselves into the Church as we have just explained it. Therefore, our little shrine so close to St. Peter's Basilica. What is the significance of bringing the shrine near to and into the shadow of St. Peter's? We wanted to come to Rome and help carry out the mission of the Church, the post-conciliar mission of the Church from here. Let us not forget, however, that the post-conciliar mission of the Church was already our pre-conciliar mission. We can therefore readily explain what we are now doing in this regard. Now we stand on common ground, have the same way of thought, the same feeling as the Church, as the public opinion in the Church. Therefore it will be much easier for us today to penetrate the Church and fulfill our task. We shall be better able to do so, because in all probability the hierarchy will be more open for us in the near future.

² Literally the "moving and central part," namely the community of the Schoenstatt Fathers together with all who work with the Schoenstatt Movement as their full-time profession.

Great questions remain to be answered! Just think of everything we said about the uniting function of brotherliness within the Church, and the father-function of the hierarchy. These are things that are practically unknown to us even today. It may be that much will be written on these topics, but until the episcopate understands the meaning of the words: My people are also my brothers and sisters, they share my responsibility, each one bears responsibility for the whole Church in his own sphere, until this has one day become a reality. . .! These are things which until today we have tried to realize in every respect. Thus, when I think of the post-conciliar Church, we have one great advantage because we are ahead in our thinking, acting and feeling, but we also have a great task.

You have all probably heard that I recently promised the Bishop of Münster that we would try to make his diocese a true family. What does this mean? When we use the expression 'people of God', the unifying bond between the episcopate, the Church and the people is seen. Thus the great question for the future remains open: How will each diocese, each parish, become a family of God? And how do we see the father in this family of God, how do we see the child? (. . .)

Integration! What does it mean? The shrine is to be consecrated. What task do we undertake with the consecration of this shrine? Integration into and identification with the great act the pope carried out this morning. (. . .)

Conclusion

Now I would like to say a final word. It is not by chance that this simple and yet so meaningful act which brings our family history to a certain close and tangibly ends the whole history of the visitation, has taken place on December 8.

It was one of Scheeben's favorite thoughts: There is a connection between the Immaculate Conception and papal infallibility. I do not want to enter into what this thought includes in detail. What is the connection between these two — infallibility and the Immaculate Conception? The Immaculate Conception includes intactness of the entire personality; infallibility, intactness of the head. Intactness, what does that mean? Infallibility.

May Our Lady therefore help us who, as we heard this morning, have striven so hard and continue to strive for her Immaculata spirit. This Immaculata spirit is the mother soil of our family. It should also help us to submit to the Pope. We know, we also guess, as St. Augustine once said, what great good fortune is ours because we belong to the Catholic Church, because in so many questions the Church guides us with her authority. We experience today more than ever, even through the council, that many questions would have remained unsolved had not a final authority existed, had not the Pope finally spoken infallibly "*ex cathedra*."

Let us therefore ask the Blessed Mother to deeply impress this day upon us, so that we see it not only as a great gift but also as a great task; a task that inspires us to look back and see the great connections, and to look forward and offer our entire lives to the family, and in the family through the hands of Our Lady to the Church and the Triune God. So, at the close, let us sing once more: "Hold the scepter in your hand . . ."