

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

Message 1968

**“With Hope and Joy, Confident in the Victory,
We Go With Mary into the Newest Times”**

from Schoenstatt, Germany
to the Schoenstatt Family Gathered in Essen, Germany,
September 7, 1968

Message from Fr. Joseph Kentenich
to the Schoenstatt Family gathered in Essen, Germany
for the 82nd *Katholikentag* (Congress of German Catholics),
September 7, 1968

Translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2008, with passages adapted
from the earlier translations by Mary Cole and Sr. Jane Hoehne.

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Table of Contents

"With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times."

- A. The justification of this motto
 - 1. The experience of the reality of the covenant in our family history
 - 2. The fiftieth anniversary of Joseph Engling's death
- B. The significance of this motto
 - I. With respect to the newest times
 - 1. The features of the newest times as they have been observed and evaluated in the documents our family history
 - 2. Spotlights cast on the situation today
 - Three expressions direct us:
 - a. The newest times
 - b. A tidal wave of restlessness
 - c. Apocalyptic age
 - II. With respect to Mary's mission in the present-day struggles
 - 1. A visionary dream of Don Bosco and its interpretation
 - 2. An important and fundamental dogmatic truth
 - a. The position of Our Lady and her task for the universe, for man as an individual and as a member of human society
 - b. The necessity for her 'fiat' in forming the newest times
 - 3. The fruitfulness and implications of the covenant of love in our Schoenstatt history
- C. With this motto we enter the coming fifty years

Introduction

The Catholic Church in Germany has long had the tradition to gather every two years in a different city for a large gathering called the *Katholikentag* or Catholic Congress. In the course of about a week, thousands of Catholic laity and clergy share lectures, material and ideas, liturgies and music, and spiritual impulses.

The 1968 Congress, held the first week of September in Essen, came at a difficult time for the Church. Some called for a more "critical Catholicism" and others, filled with the euphoria of the years after Vatican Council II (1962-65), wanted more rapid change toward a "new Church." Pope Paul VI's recent publication (July 25, 1968) of the encyclical *Humanae Vitae*, for some a welcome restatement of the Church's teaching on contraception, was for others an outrage and occasion for protest. The Church was becoming more and more polarized and many ordinary Catholics were worried about where it was all heading.

In the midst of this turmoil, about two thousand Schoenstatt members attending the Congress conducted a movement meeting on September 7. Given the tensions in the air, an "internal" meeting was much needed. The atmosphere of the Church had turned very anti-Marian and high-profile theologians belittled anyone who still clung to the "childish ways of Marian devotion." Sad to say, it was only in such a closed meeting that one could hope to speak seriously, unmocked, about Mary's mission for our times. Fr. Kentenich took advantage of this occasion to write a rousing message to put Mary's mission in the right framework. Given the times' strong anti-Marian sentiment, his message of hope and confidence is a remarkable and poignant profession of his conviction that Mary will and must play an essential role in the future of the Church and all mankind. He drew on the wisdom of his whole lifetime to compose this inspiring work.

Although not intended as a testament, his death just eight days later, on September 15, 1968, turned this message into such. It fittingly captures not only the spirit of his life, but his vision of the future and his confidence that, in the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt, the difficulties of our times can be overcome, allowing the "newest times" to become a great new Christian era.

Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2008

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

We make use of the Catholic Congress to gain a deeper insight into the situation of the German Catholics and our part in the mission for the times. The past few days have more deeply revealed to us the conditions of our times. What we have already known for a long time received a manifold confirmation. For this we want to give thanks; but this background also urges us to make an effort to become aware of our mission again. I would like to put it in a few short words:

With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times!

A

The Justification of the Motto

1. If we were to proclaim this motto publicly at the Catholic Congress, we would have to fear that not a few of its participants would misunderstand and reject it. That is why we have decided to gather separately and discuss matters of interest to us in our own language, free from larger apologetic discussions. We take it for granted that we owe the existence and fruitfulness of our family to our covenant of love with our dear Blessed Mother under the title of Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. She has cared for us in the extraordinarily difficult testing of the past years through the authorities of the Church and the harsh Nazi persecution. Now as then, we therefore revolve around the image of our foundress, leader, and educator, and around her shrines. We use every opportunity to deepen our love for her in every way and to surrender ourselves willingly to her wise guidance and education. It does not disturb us that on this account many of the faithful today do not really understand or approve of us.

2. Besides this, every branch of the Schoenstatt Family has been preparing in the last months for the fiftieth anniversary of the death of our saintly Joseph Engling¹, whose process of beatification has already been introduced. It has made us aware again of how his life is a classic example of the motto we just proclaimed: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times! His heroic covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable gave expression to and was a means and safeguard for his covenant of love with Christ and the Triune God, and with all those around him. Countless members of the family have physically walked the very path of his final hours on earth, inspiring them to relive and repeat what he exteriorly suffered and interiorly experienced at the different

¹ Joseph Engling (1898-1918), member of Schoenstatt's founding generation. His cause for beatification was opened in 1952.

places. In this way they have again become aware of the fundamental forces that constitute our family spirit. Not least of these is the truth found in the words of Pope Pius X's Marian encyclical:

“For can anyone fail to see that there is no surer and more direct road than through Mary, for uniting all mankind in Christ and obtaining through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God.” (Jubilee Encyclical: *Ad diem Illum*, February 2, 1904)².

What [St. Louis] Grignon de Montfort says of Mary's apostles in the final days applies to the life of Joseph Engling. He is one of the “great men who are to come, fashioned by Mary at the command of the Most High to extend his empire over the ungodly, the idolators, and the infidels³.” They are “men who like a burning fire enkindle everywhere the fires of Divine Love⁴.” They are “men who are to be viewed as sharp arrows in the strong hands of Mary... purified by the fire of great tribulations and closely joined to the Lord, carrying the gold of love in their hearts, the increase of prayer in their mind, the myrrh of mortification in their body; bringing everywhere the good odor of Jesus Christ to the poor and the small, but the odor of death to the great, the rich, and proud worldlings. They will be thunderclouds that race through the air at the least breath of the Holy Spirit, raining down God's word and eternal life, without clinging to anything, being upset over anything, or troubled by anything... They will be true disciples of Jesus Christ walking in the steps of His poverty, His humility, His contempt of the world and His charity, teaching the straight way of God in pure truth, according to the Holy Gospel and not according to the maxims of the world; unconcerned by the views of others, without favoring anyone, without sparing, heeding or fearing any mortal, no matter how powerful. In their mouths they will have the two-edged sword of the Word of God, on their shoulders the

² St. Paul Editions, *Papal Teachings: Our Lady*, 1961, p. 168.

³ St. Louis Marie de Montfort, *Treatise on the True Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, Fourth Montfortian Edition, 1957, p. 31 (adapted).

⁴ Ibid, p. 30 (adapted).

bloodstained standard of the Cross, in their right hand the crucifix, in their left the rosary, on their hearts the sacred names of Jesus and Mary, and in their whole behavior the modesty and mortification of Jesus Christ⁵.”

The degree to which our young hero knew his education was in Mary's hands and how much he expected from her, is shown by a confession he made verbally and in writing after reading the life of Gabriel of the Sorrowful Mother. It urged him on to compare himself with him. At the end he had to admit: in every way that Gabriel gave evidence of practicing heroic virtue, he had to recognize his weakness, misery, and half-heartedness. And yet he believed that he would become a greater saint than Gabriel. He gave as his reason that Our Lady, his educator, could not deny him this wish. This is how deeply he lived in the Marian atmosphere which made it easy for him to attain an extraordinary closeness to Christ and love for the Father.

After all this it would seem worthwhile to study more exactly the motto: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times. The purpose suggests that we first cast a glance at the newest times, and then at the mission which Our Lady has for it.

⁵ Ibid, p. 30 (adapted).

B The Significance of the Motto

I. With Respect to the Newest Times

What the newest times look like is something we all know from personal experience, from a multitude of observations in life, and from the many things we have read.

1. It began – or so it seems to us – with the outbreak of the First World War, that is, in 1914, because with it began the tumult which has since swept the Church and world and is reaching a certain climax today.

Already on the occasion of New Year's Day 1942, while held prisoner by the Gestapo, I wrote from prison: "On the horizon, gradually coming into view, emerge the great outlines of a new world order; an old world is in flames. We see it all and evaluate it only in the light of our *ceterum censeo*. Our faith, hope and love may be most severely tested, body and soul may be subjected to terrible tortures, but only one thing matters to us – our *ceterum censeo*! Meanwhile the millions stand before us who belong to this generation and those to come. They stretch out their hands to our ark which is meant to bear them safely through the great flood to the heavenly fields... There is and – for those truly sent in such momentous times – can only be one thought: our mission, our family, our *ceterum censeo*⁶."

Already the Second Founding Document of October 18, 1939 stressed:

"How much we would like them (the events and experiences of

⁶ Letter from the Koblenz prison, January 1, 1942. *Ceterum censeo* refers to the cause toward which one untiringly works. The phrase comes from ancient Roman history, where Cato, a Roman senator, ended every speech regardless of the topic with the plea: "*Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam* – Again I insist, Carthage must be destroyed."

our age) to point the way to the future tasks of our family. Indeed, all of us sense that a great world catastrophe and the start of a new era is upon us. We ask ourselves again and again: Is this *the* time for which Divine Providence has built the ark of our family? Or must the flood waters rise even higher and become more devastating?"⁷

For the occasion of the official erection of the Sisters' Family as a diocesan institute on May 20, 1948, I wrote:

"Since 1942 and 1944 our original and concrete version of the great Catholic vision of the future has existed in our ranks with overwhelming and victorious vitality. The Pre-founding Document already captured it with unmistakable clarity and light. All the ensuing periods reveal it with greater clarity, until in the Dachau prayers⁸ – that is, the Third Founding Document in prayed form – it is fully revealed in all its dimensions and breathes and awakens a joyous spirit of victory. Those who are unfamiliar with this vision, and do not live in and out of it with loving self-surrender, will be unable to do much or anything with these aphoristic prayers. The conscious choice of an image-free form and the intentionally bare, direct, inspired total vision runs counter to the modern taste and causes the yesterday-dwellers to object. These verses only speak from and to those whose vantage point, although schooled by the past and present, simultaneously lives in the future; they see it to be their task to shape the approaching amorphous chaos into a new, Christian cosmos.

"Only those who go through life with open eyes know how great this chaos already is today, how far the re-valuation of all values has progressed. The spiritual revolution has already become so universal and radical that hardly any sphere of life remains untouched. Through modern technology people are brought so close together that

⁷ Second Founding Document, October 18, 1939, No. 2.

⁸ The prayers in *Heavenwards*.

the interwovenness of fates is brought to the fore in a way unlike that in any previous era of world history. Everything presses towards an unprecedented egalitarianism and mass-mindedness, placing on the same level, almost overnight, the customs and way of thinking, the outlook on and habits of life of the native in a remote hut and the civilized man of leisure. We are rapidly approaching a uniform civilization and culture. An entirely new image of world and man is being formed. The great question which gives no peace to those who know about it and are in positions of responsibility is always the same: Will it be satanic or of divine powers which leave their imprint on this image?

“Collectivism appears in its various forms and announces that it will be heard. It is poised to leap upon the entire world. Europe is already largely at its feet. In other parts of the world, in spite of every prohibition and counter-measure, it seeks its victorious breakthrough. It, too, is marked by a great vision of the future. This is its secret, apparently under the constant nourishment of diabolical influence and satanic powers. We largely deal with it as if it were a system, and therefore miss the point. We show its errors; it smiles and returns to its agenda, certain of victory. With its entire soul it holds fast to its all-encompassing image of world and society which it embraces with burning love and an admirable will to sacrifice; even when shown its errors, it remains unshaken. It sees, promotes, and demands the sociological reform of world and humanity.

“Under its influence, the problems of modern life – which through the rapid pace of intellectual and economic development produce fissures in the relationships between person and society, person and economy, person and technology, and person and social advancement – concentrate with an incredible violence and crushing density. Its vision rejects a personal God. It deifies man instead. Nonetheless, we can see in it traits rooted of divine revelation, despite the fact that it radically rejects all Christianity... Only vision can overcome vision. Any other method will fail, and rational arguments will achieve least of all. This is shown by the history of Christianity, especially its

early years.

“In the Magnificat, Our Lady expressed the great Christian vision of the future with the memorable words: ‘*Et exaltavit humiles...* – He exalts the lowly’ (Lk 1,52). The Apocalypse returns this theme in its own way, rounding it out by means of brilliant imagery. Consciously or unconsciously this vision lives on, although distorted and as a tiny and insignificant ray, in the collectivistic concept of the world and humanity. Every form of collective ideology aims at giving the dispossessed, the fourth class, a place in the sun, and letting them benefit from the unexpected modern advances in business and technology. Just as the moon is most rapidly removed from view by the rising sun, so the collectivistic ideal, with its meager content of truth, is overcome when we allow the sun of the Christian vision of the future to be seen in all its beauty and glory, as it is depicted for us in Sacred Scripture. The Christian West owes its *shape and form*, and hence its happiness and advancement in every sphere, to this vision of the future. What is now needed is to free it from its *time-bound forms* and to *comprehend its essential elements*, to *proclaim* it fervently, and to give room for *a creative development of its dynamic life* in these *new conditions*. It may often discourage us to see how collectivism with its thin and narrow ray of light unfolds an irresistible ability to shape hearts and determine world history, while we who call our own the full, radiant light of the sun, stand disheartened and helpless before the problems of our times, almost only able to look backwards, avoiding the look forward or only responding with an oppressive pessimism.

“From the beginning, Schoenstatt has meticulously tried to make its own the entire Christian vision of the future, and through its ‘secret’⁹ to clothe it in an original and effective form.

“It, like collectivism, but with a different interior and exterior struc-

⁹ The covenant of love with Mary.

ture that sets it in opposition to it, wants to be viewed as a *universal vision* which embraces time and eternity; this world and the next; the economic, social, political, moral and religious needs of all people, including the marginalized, the masses of the millions. On the basis of the spirit of faith, especially a practical faith in Divine Providence, it lays claim to an *acquired vision*, therefore making no claim to any extraordinary infused light or – as in the case of Don Bosco – divine dreams. Like the Church herself, whose member it is and for whom it seeks to prosper, it has a pronounced *messianic character*, that is, a desire to help redeem the world, not only from earthly troubles, but also from sin and alienation from God, by trying to resolve in a new way the relationship between personality and community, personality and economy, personality and technology, personality and social mobility through the most basic principles of Christianity in the school of the MTA. It proceeds with a great, *mysterious spirit of victory* into the new times, not supported as collectivism is by convictions built on materialism and the conditions of historical development wherein the displacement of the old order by a new paradise is an absolute law of nature, but by the inbreak of the divine, such as we have perceived in the light of Divine Providence countless times in the Family since 1914, and could experience since January 1942 and the ensuing Third Founding Document in unexpected fullness.

“Those who have worked their way into the spirit of *Heavenwards* will not find it difficult to discover on all its pages the basic features of this universal, acquired, messianic and mysteriously victorious vision of the future. The concept of God and man, the concept of history, society and the Church, which it outlines, points expressly to this vision, offers ample material for meditation and study, and can provide effective schooling for the mind, will and heart of a person who wants to keep a clear head and sure hand in such chaotic circumstances. It is easy to find these basic themes in Holy Mass – particularly in the ‘Mass of God’s Instruments’ – and day after day to fall more deeply in love with this vision and allow it to take shape and form in everyday life. The battle over the literary style of these prayers may be fought honestly and openly, without suggestion or

anxiety, in the forum of public opinion, but it must not distract us from essentials, nor diminish our forward thrust, nor weaken our united front. On the contrary, according to the plan of Divine Providence it should re-awaken us all, particularly the foot-draggers who, culpably or not, have failed to incorporate the lifestream of the past years. It should give us a deep insight into the divine plans for the world, fill us with warmth and readiness to surrender and sacrifice everything for the renewed ordering of the world and society along Christian lines, and inspire us with invincible optimism¹⁰.”

The universal concept we have just described, present and essentially formative in every stage of our family history, is based among other things on the faith-filled conviction that the prophetic words of 1929 are true: In the shadow of this shrine the destiny of the world and the Church on the new shore will be essentially co-determined for centuries¹¹.

It is significant that both the history of the family and the first stage of the newest times have a similar structure and, from the start, a parallel development. As a result, in the future both should be seen and evaluated in light of their interdependence, while unfolding their distinctive creativity.

2. It seems advisable to take time to spotlight the conditions of our age. Three expressions point the way.

a. It may have already become evident that I have called our present times the newest times¹², or to be more exact, the beginning of the newest times. Expert know that this is a provisional expression.

¹⁰ Fr. Joseph Kentenich, letter from Nueva Helvetia, May 6, 1948 for the occasion of the diocesan erection of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary as secular institute on May 20, 1948. Also known as the “May Letter 1948.”

¹¹ Words spoken by Fr. Kentenich on April 7, 1929. See Engelbert Monnerjahn, *Joseph Kentenich: A Life for the Church* (Cape Town, 2001), p. 113-119.

¹² German: *neueste Zeit*. Also translated as the “post-modern era.”

Others who are acquainted with our times like to call them the Atomic Age. Still others propose other names in the search for something more appropriate. The diversity of suggestions shows that, although the characteristic life processes behind the objective spirit are more and more clearly manifest, they are still too unclear for an adequate expression to be found. Every suggested term is based on a single characteristic of the times.

The expression “newest times” compares the present epoch with the other generally recognized divisions of history. Until now one has spoken of Antiquity, the Middle Ages and the Modern era. All three share the notion of time as a mighty river where the previous era contains the seed from which the next one springs. Since about 1914 this has changed. The era now beginning progressively rejects any dependence on the previous one. Whatever was accepted yesterday must be rejected today because it originated yesterday or the day before. Whatever is new is accepted because it is new. In Catholic circles there is a tendency to eradicate almost everything that has developed throughout the centuries. They want to return to early Christianity and make a new start with the Gospel, without taking into account the intervening development.

b. When Pope Paul VI recently opened the Latin American Bishops' Conference in Bogota¹³, he compared this newest time with a mighty tidal wave of unrest which shakes the world and the Church to their foundations. Let me quote a few of his statements, but would like to draw your attention to the unabridged text as it has appeared in the newspapers. The Pope said:

“The restlessness – typical of our times and especially for Latin America – breaks over us like a violent tidal wave... The ‘vacuum’ which the rejection of the great masters of Christian thought has left

¹³ Pope Paul VI's historic 1968 visit to Latin America, highlighted by his address to the meeting of the CELAM conference in Medellin (near Bogota), Columbia.

in our schools of philosophy, is often filled with a superficial and almost servile acceptance of fashionable philosophies, often as simplistic as they are abstruse; and these have upset our healthy, balanced ability to perceive the truth. We are tempted by historicism, relativism, suggestivism, neopositivism, which introduce into the realm of faith a spirit of subversive criticism and a false assumption that to approach and to evangelize the men of our time we must renounce the doctrinal heritage which has been administered for centuries by the Church's Magisterium and that, not only through greater clarity of expression, but also by altering dogmatic content, we can shape a new Christianity made to the measure of man.

“Unfortunately there are some theologians among us who are not always on the right path. We have a great esteem for and a great need of the function of good and capable theologians; they can be providential scholars and skillful expounders of the faith if they themselves remain intelligent disciples of the ecclesiastical Magisterium, constituted by Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit to be the custodian and the interpreter of His message of eternal truth. But today some have recourse to ambiguous doctrinal expressions, and others arrogate to themselves the permission to proclaim their own personal opinions on which they confer the authority which they, more or less covertly, disavow to him who possesses this protected and awesome charism by divine right; and they even assert that each one in the Church may think and believe what he wants, thus falling back into that liberty of examination which fragmented the unity of the Church itself, and confusing legitimate freedom of moral conscience with a misunderstood ‘freedom of thought,’ often in error because of insufficient knowledge of genuine religious truths.

”But it seems opportune to Us to recall two doctrinal points in this regard: the first is the dependence of charity towards our neighbor on charity towards God. You know how much this doctrine, which most clearly and incontestably has its origin in the Gospel, is being attacked in our day: Some want to ‘secularize’ Christianity, neglecting its essential reference to religious truth, to supernatural com-

munion with the ineffable and overflowing love of God for men, and to the duty of human response, compelled to dare to love Him and to call Him Father, and to be able thus to call men in very truth brothers. They would ‘liberate’ Christianity from ‘that form of neurosis which is religion¹⁴.’

The other doctrinal point concerns the so-called institutional Church which supposedly opposes the so-called charismatic Church, as if the first – with its hierarchical constitution, visible and responsible community, with its organization and discipline, with its apostolic origin and sacraments – would today be an obsolete Christianity, while the other, spontaneous and spiritual, would alone be capable of making Christianity accessible to the lofty persons of contemporary culture, and of giving an answer to the real and urgent problems of our times...”

c. Some prefer to call the present times apocalyptic. By this they do not mean that the end of the world is at hand. God intends the powerful breakdown and new creation to remain an impenetrable mystery to all mortal beings. Yet the term is meant to express the fact that the newest times, as it has shown itself until now, is uniquely similar to the end times – almost as alike as two peas in a pod. This applies particularly to the immense intellectual ferment and to the enormous decisions that have to be made today. The Apocalypse attributes the spiritual conflicts, which are to shake the world and the Church, to the gigantic battle between divine and diabolic powers. Both are depicted in the symbol of the two great signs. The great apocalyptic woman, Our Lady, symbolizes the divine forces. She appears clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. The symbol of the powers of hell is Satan. He is shown as the great red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems upon his heads (cf. Rev 12:1-4). The dragon vents his fury at the woman, and goes off to make war on the

¹⁴ Reference to a key phrase in a fashionable book from that time which was much discussed in theological circles: Harvey Cox, *The Secular City*.

rest of her offspring, on those who keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus. Both of these powers in the background are searching for instruments here on earth to carry on and complete the momentous battles. Therefore the times resembling the last days show more or less marked tendency to be Marian or Luciferian. At any rate, they cannot be explained in purely natural terms. The powers of God and Satan have chosen the world as their battlefield, and through their instruments they fight for world dominion. This obviously occurs today to an extraordinary degree. Thus, in the light of faith, we can come to an understanding of conditions in the world today.

II. With Respect to Mary’s Mission in the Present-day Struggles

With this we have already touched on the mission of Our Lady in the present spiritual struggles. She is the chosen instrument in the hand of the living God and the official and permanent helpmate and associate of Our Lord in the entire work of redemption. She *in connection with Him* has been given the task to crush the head of Satan, so that the world will finally become God’s possession and offer him the honor which is his due.

1. On one occasion Don Bosco used an image to illustrate this point in an original way. It was on May 30, 1862. As was his custom, the saint gathered his fellow workers and pupils in the oratory chapel in Turin for a talk. This time he contented himself with relating a dream and adding its interpretation¹⁵.

“I want to tell you about a dream. There is a saying that dreams are empty foam, but for your spiritual enrichment I would like to share it. I would even tell you my sins if I did not fear you would take to your heels and it would mean the ruin of my house. Imagine you are

¹⁵ The following translation about the vision and discussion of St. John Bosco’s vision are from an unidentified source. Here translated from Fr. Ken-tenich’s German.

standing with me on the sea shore, or better, on a lonely promontory, and that you can only see the bit of land directly under your feet. Covering the entire surface of the sea are countless ships armed for battle. Their sharp prows are encased in iron, and all are pointing in the same direction. Whatever is struck by these sharp prows is severely damaged or pierced. These ships are armed with many cannons, with whole loads of guns and every other weapon, with fuel and also books. Their course is set towards a ship which surpasses all others in height and majesty. Their objective is to ram this beautiful flagship with their sharp prows, to set it alight, and to inflict all possible damage on it.

“Many little ships accompanied this majestic and extremely well-equipped ship. They take their orders from the flagship and conduct the necessary maneuvers to defend themselves from the enemy fleet. The wind is against them and the choppy sea seems to favor the enemy.

“In the midst of the vast open sea arise above the waves two strong and very tall pillars, set apart by only a short distance. On the one is a statue of the Immaculate Virgin, at whose feet shines a plaque with the inscription “Help of Christians.” On the other, which is much taller and stronger, one can see a Host befitting the size of the pillar, and underneath glitters in gigantic letters the title “Salvation of the Faithful.”

“When the supreme commander on the large ship, who is no less a person than the Bishop of Rome, the Holy Father himself, sees the enemy’s fury and the dangers to which his faithful are exposed, he decides to call a meeting of the captains of his fleet to discuss their strategy. All the captains go to the flagship and gather around the Pope. They hold council, but because the wind and the waves become increasingly dangerous, they are forced to return to their ships to take over command.

“When the weather calms a bit, the Pope calls together the captains

of the ships for a second time, while the flagship continues on its course. But again the storm breaks out with renewed force.

“The Pope is at the helm, and all his energy is concentrated on piloting his ship between the two pillars, from the tops of which extend anchors and strong mooring chains. All the enemy ships hasten to attack the flagship, and do their utmost to halt its passage and sink it. The one uses as weapons the books, writings and combustibles with which it is filled, and tries to throw them on board the papal ship; the others fight with cannons, guns and their sharp prows. The battle becomes increasingly bitter. The bows of the enemy ships violently pierce the Pope’s ship, but their violent attacks and efforts remain fruitless. Again and again they make fresh attempts, only to fail. They spend effort and munitions to no avail. The great ship continues securely and freely on its course. It sometimes happens that it shudders from being rammed, and broad and deep rents appear in its sides. Yet hardly has the damage been inflicted than a breath of wind comes from the two pillars and the leaks close and the holes are stopped.

“Meanwhile the cannon of the attackers, the muskets and other weapons explode and the iron-clad prows burst asunder. Many ships break up and sink. Now the infuriated enemy begins hand to hand fighting with their hands, fists, curses and oaths.

“Suddenly the Pope falls severely wounded. Those around him hasten to help him and lift him up. For the second time he is hit. He falls again and dies. The enemies let out a shout of joy and victory, and one sees great rejoicing on their ships. Yet, hardly is the Pope dead when another takes his place. The meeting of captains elects him so quickly that the notice of the Pope’s death is made known at the same time as the election of his successor. Now the courage of the enemy fails.

“The new Pope overcomes and disperses every obstacle and guides his ship to the two pillars. Arriving between them he attaches the

chain from the prow of his ship to an anchor from the pillar supporting the Host – and with the other chain from the stern he fastens his ship to an anchor from the other pillar on which the picture of the Immaculate Virgin is enthroned.

“Now a great change occurs. All the vessels which had until then attacked the papal ship flee, lose all bearings, collide with one another, ram and sink one another. Some ships, which had fought bravely at the side of the Pope, are the first to arrive at the pillars and cast anchor.

“Many other ships which had drawn back out of fear for the battle, are at a distance and watch from a safe position until the wreckage of all the defeated ships has vanished beneath the waves. Then they also pluck up courage and set sail for the pillars. On their arrival they anchor and float peacefully and securely beside the flagship of the Pope. There is now great calm on the sea.”

This was the saint’s dream. After he had related his dream he turned in his amiable way to Don Rua, who was present and who later became his first successor as General Superior of the Salesians, and asked: “What do you make of this fine story?” He replied: “It seems to me that the ship of the Pope is the Church, of which he is the head. The other ships are mankind, the sea is the world. Those who defend the flagship are those sons who remain loyal to the Holy See, the others are its enemies who use every weapon to destroy the Church. The two pillars of salvation seem to me to be devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary and the Blessed Sacrament.”

Satisfied with this answer the saint added: “You have answered well. Only one expression needs improvement. The ships of the enemy are the persecutions. The Church is entering upon extremely difficult times. What has happened until now is as nothing compared to what must come. The enemies of the Church are symbolized in the ships which aim at sinking the flagship. There are only two means for her to save herself in this stormy era: devotion to the Blessed Virgin and

frequent reception of Holy Communion. Let us exert ourselves and do our best to use these two means ourselves, and then also see to it that they are used everywhere by everyone.”

The story of the dream impresses on us the reassuring truth: If in today’s gigantic battle the Church as a whole and her individual communities and members want to carry out her mission with hope and confidence in the victory, in God’s plan she must – to use Don Bosco’s image – cast anchor at the *pillars of Christ and Mary*. If Mary’s pillar is overlooked, God’s plan for the history of salvation in which Our Lady is seen as the official *permanent helpmate and companion of Our Lord in the entire work of redemption*, has not been understood in its totality. Such neglect must sooner or later avenge itself. A Frenchman said with justification: Innumerable undertakings come to grief in the Catholic camp because Mary has too little place in it.

That is how it has been and that is how it will remain in the future, but to great disadvantage to the Kingdom of God on earth. From this we may understand why we pray in *Heavenwards*:

The permanent helpmate for the salvation of souls
may not fail to be present on your difficult way of the cross.
The Father placed her at your side
just as he once joined Eve to Adam.

An ocean of sorrow wells in both hearts,
but nothing can reverse their decision
to resolutely accept the Father’s will
and *go the way of suffering together*.

As often as the fires of hell flare up,
you want to use the One who crushes the serpent,
shackling through the voice of a Woman
the beast whose dragon-mouth is wide agape.

In union with her you want to save souls,
binding them, like yourself, to the Father’s will.

Mary is and will always be the lure and magnet whom our hearts cannot easily resist¹⁶.

Or:

Let me present *the cross and the picture of Mary* to the nations as the sign of redemption so that the two who stand as one in the Father's plan of love may never be divided.

May Schoenstatt always be your loyal instrument, inscribing your names, together, into human hearts, that Satan's realm may truly be destroyed and in the Holy Spirit the Father's glory be increased¹⁷.

2. The basic idea behind the dream then, is a significant, dogmatic principle, which is a theme in all of salvation history. It is this: The meaning of world history is twofold – it has a divine side and a human side. The divine side consists in *victoriously leading the elect home* to the Father, *through Christ and Mary*, in the Holy Spirit. The human side is concerned with the striving of the elect to return home to the Father through Christ and Mary, in the Holy Spirit. These two aspects are intertwined. In both instances Christ is in the center, but never without his Blessed Mother. This was God's plan from all eternity. All Christians agree that Christ is the beginning, center and end of world and salvation history. All accept St. Paul's standpoint and gladly repeat his confession of faith, "for in him were created all things in heaven and on earth: everything visible and everything invisible, thrones, dominations, sovereignties, powers – all things were created through him and for him. Before anything was created, he existed, and he holds all things in unity" (Col 1:16-17). Therefore God's intention and decision consists in uniting "everything in the heavens and everything on earth" (Eph 1:10).

¹⁶ Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *Heavenwards* (Waukesha, 1992), p 68.

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 90.

Our Lady's Task for Mankind

a. From this it follows that everything in the order of salvation is oriented towards the firstborn of all creation, but, in a certain sense and to a certain degree, also towards his blessed Bride and Mother. *He chose her*, as has already been mentioned, *to be his official and permanent associate and helpmate in the entire work of salvation*. Therefore she is also called "Christ's whirlpool." That is to say, whoever has surrendered himself to her is drawn almost by necessity – as by a whirlpool – into Christ, in order to be led by him to the Father. For this reason the piety of the Middle Ages used to pray: You are pure and undivided, the holy monstrance that bore Christ, the Lord. From this we can understand why he took her up, body and soul, into heaven and made her Queen of the universe. The feast of her Assumption signifies her official enthronement giving her a *share in the King's government and dominion over heaven and earth*. Her Assumption places a seal on the divine principle of government: *Through Mary's universal dominion to the universal dominion of Jesus Christ*, and therefore to the honor and glory of the Triune God. In Heavenwards we pray:

Glory be joyfully given to the Father
through Christ with Mary, highly praised,
in the Holy Spirit full of splendor,
from the universe now and in all eternity¹⁸.

St. Thomas tried to explain the power given to Mary by pointing out her dignity as the Mother of God. He reasons: In God's kingdom the measure of power is determined by the measure of dignity. Mary's dignity as the Mother of God is practically infinite. The same must therefore be true of her power, though always totally dependent of course on the Triune God. We add: It is also true of the world of the macrocosm and the microcosm. The former refers to the universe, the latter to man as an individual and as a member of human society.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 48.

The powerful Virgin may influence God in all three cases. It has been put this way: In these cases she has in her own way a seat and a vote in the council of the Blessed Trinity. However, her special interest is directed to the fate of men because she is their mother, and to that of human society because she was meant from all eternity *to be its heart at the side of Christ, its head*. She is the Mother of men because she is the *Mother of the whole Christ*, that is, not only of the historical but also of the mystical Christ, the members of Christ. Scheeben points out that all of humanity belongs to the Christ's person as his body, though less closely than the human nature of Jesus. We know that a powerful urge towards unity is going through the whole human society today. Depending upon the approach, one speaks of a mechanistic or of an organic concept of unity. The mechanistic approach to unity separates man and society from God. Consciously or unconsciously its ideal is the Tower of Babel. It must expect to meet the same fate: that God – before the project is complete – will descend to discipline and scatter the nations. The organic approach to unity lets it develop from within according to laws given by God to human society. It develops into a community of which *Christ is the head and Our Lady is the heart*.

In 1947, when I promised Pius XII that I would see to it that the Secular Institutes make an essential contribution towards saving the Christian social order from the chaos of increasing social disintegration, this organic or Catholic union of mankind was meant. It is the same union we are trying to bring about between the different formations of our movement. For this reason, Our Lady occupies an important position among us according to the plans of God. Therefore – as in the past, so now and in the future – we uphold the motto: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times.

b. We also do so because the present moment points expressly to this motto. We need only recall the two characteristics we have already discussed in order to understand what is meant.

We called the present times an apocalyptic era and the newest times. According to Sacred Scripture, apocalyptic times are strongly influenced by the great Woman of the Apocalypse. According to our description of characteristics of the newest times, the general tendency is to destroy all bridges to the past and wherever possible to consult the Bible exclusively. Remember that the new creation, the *nova creatura*, did not come into existence without the *fiat* of Our Lady. These newest times must obviously also be dependent on this *fiat*.

The Fruitfulness of the Schoenstatt Covenant of Love

3. Already very early on, we Schoenstatters set for ourselves the ideal to strive as a family – as the Second Founding Document puts it – so “that we will be found worthy to help bring about the time in which the Church may rightly sing *Omnes haereses – etiam anthropologicas tu sola interemisti in universo mundo!* – You have overcome also the anthropological heresies of the new epoch, and brought about a reorganization of Christian society¹⁹.”

Since 1914, through our covenant of love with the MTA, we have grown year by year in our commitment to what our motto says: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times. In all the years gone by, our gaze was constantly on the new shore of the Church and world. This is how everything which we have written about the times should be understood. We know that because of this orientation we were not understood for many years by circles within the Church whose orientation was too one-sidedly on the old shore. Our covenant of love obliges both partners. We wanted to surrender ourselves totally to her – Mary – and we desired to be educated by her. And she, the great educator of the people and the nations, took upon herself the duty to attract us to herself from her shrine so that she might form us into useful

¹⁹ Second Founding Document, No. 84.

instruments in her hand for the *Marian transformation* of the coming world in Christ, to the glory of the Father.

We know that both partners did their part. We have all experienced it personally, some more, some less. She not only proved that she is the master educator of the elite and the masses from her Shrine, she has shown that she is not only the great missionary who continually works miracles of spiritual transformation and fruitfulness and gives the experience of being at home, she is also the brilliant reformer of human society on a small scale within the many branches of the family, she is the *leader in the battle for Christ* and against all diabolical powers. Therefore it is not without reason that she is praised as *terribilis acies bene ordinata* – a terrible army in battle array. The Morning Prayer in *Heavenwards* instructs us to give thanks for this gift with the words:

We give you thanks for all the gifts
which we have received in such abundance:
for choosing Schoenstatt
as the place of Christ's rebirth

and the place where you radiate into the world
the glories of our Mother,
so that streams of love may pour forth
to warm cold hearts²⁰.

And the “Home Song” sings of the readiness of the family to fight, and its confidence in the victory, precisely because of the proven educational wisdom and leadership of the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. It sings:

Do you know the land prepared to fight,
accustomed to victory in every battle:
where God espouses himself with the weak
and chooses them as his instruments;

²⁰ *Heavenwards*, p. 13.

where none build on their own strength
but all heroically trust in God;
where out of love they are ready
to rejoicingly offer blood and life?

This wonderland is known to me –
It is the meadow radiantly lit by Tabor's sun,
where our Three times Admirable Lady reigns
in the midst of her favorite children,
loyally rewarding each gift of love
with the manifestation of her glory
and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness:
It is my home, my Schoenstatt Land!²¹

²¹ *Ibid*, p. 161.

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With this motto we enter the coming fifty years

For fifty years we have experienced the importance, implications and fruitfulness of the proclaimed motto as a fruit of the mutual covenant of love. Therefore we do not find it difficult to repeat it with great fervor and to orient ourselves on it in the coming fifty years, despite all the revolutionary tendencies in the Church and world. We are prepared to give ourselves to it, body and soul.

At the beginning of the second half of the century we would like to repeat in our own way but with equal zeal what Max Brunner solemnly professed at the beginning of the first fifty years: “*Ave, Imperatrix, morituri te salutant!* Hail, empress those ready to die for you greet you!” Just as at that time the first members of the family made the banner pledge as an expression of their consecration or covenant of love: “This is the banner I have chosen, I swear to God I will never desert it!” so now we would like to do the same in spirit. We hope that, like them, we shall hear the answer of our partner in the covenant: This is the instrument I have chosen. I swear to God I will never desert it! This oath applies to the whole family, but also to each member of the family.

With this attitude let us enter into the dark future. We do so under the motto: With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest times! To the extent that we are filled with zeal for it, we will not rest until our dear ones at home and abroad have adopted the same motto. All will then be able to repeat with us:

I firmly trust that no one will be lost
who remains faithful to the covenant of love²².

²² Ibid, p. 139.