

Carmel Letters

Father Kentenich called the events around 20.1.1942 the Second Milestone, the “axis event” of Schoenstatt’s history, which validly interpreted all the previous events and formed the basis for all the events that happened afterwards.

What happened on this day began with Father Kentenich’s arrest on 20 September 1941. This was followed by four weeks of imprisonment in the dark in one of the safe deposit sections of a former Bank, which had been taken over by the Gestapo. This period of imprisonment in the dark ended on 18.10.1941. Father Kentenich was transferred to a cell in the Koblenz city prison, which was popularly known as the “Carmel Prison”, because it had been set up in a former Carmel Monastery. The cells of the monks became prison cells. The church next door, along with its tower, was still used for services. (During the war the whole building complex was destroyed by bombs.)

Father Kentenich’s circumstances changed very quickly. On 21 October he was able to send his first letter to Schoenstatt. Since the prison warders were not convinced Nazis, he was able to win the cooperation of two of them – the “tall” and the “short messenger” – in taking his letters with them to the nearby St Joseph’s Hospital, which was served by the Sisters of Mary. The messengers were also prepared to smuggle letters into the prison. An active exchange of letters began.

The messengers not only smuggled in letters, they also brought in writing materials and what was needed to celebrate Holy Mass. On 13 December Father Kentenich celebrated the Eucharist for the first time in his cell.

Resourceful Sisters also found out that it was possible to look into the prison courtyard and the windows of the prison cells if they climbed half way up the church tower. When Father Kentenich looked out of the window one day, he was surprised to find the collar and face of a Sister of Mary in a little window in the church tower. When he climbed onto the table in his cell, also his face became visible from the window. This started the “visits to the tower window” during which communication was only possible through signs.

The letter contact gave rise to its own literature, the “Carmel Letters”. These letters are an incalculably valuable documentation that bears witness to the way the founder matured to take the decision of 20.1.1942. On that day he decided not to take any natural steps to prevent his being sent to the concentration camp. The letters also testify to the way he made his freedom depend on his followers living the Inscriptio, and the way he tried to lead these followers to this point.

The following texts are a selection from the Carmel Letters. They have all been taken from the collection entitled “Texts on 20.1.1942, Section 1, Schoenstatt 1973.”

Letter to Fr Friedrich Muehlbeyer, 21 Oct. 1941

Carissime Confrater¹,

Since “letters from prison” are often relegated later to the acts of the martyrs, I am not keen to write. However, in the end I have to do so if you are not to remain totally without word from me. So, briefly and to the point, a few notes.

Tell everyone who is interested that I am fine. During the first four weeks I could pray with the Creed: “descended into hell”², but since the 18th October “ascended into heaven”, that is, to lighter regions where I now lead the contemplative life of a Carmelite monk. Body and soul have quickly adjusted to the change. All in all, there is no reason to create legends and horror stories. On one point people do me more honour than I deserve. I

¹ Dear Confrere

² That is, the “underworld”, the prison Bunker

count as “the” intellectual head of Schoenstatt. If, by Schoenstatt, they mean a coherent system³ of a psychologically orientated asceticism, their assumption might be correct, because in 1919 I tried for the first time to give the system an academic foundation. However, if by Schoenstatt they mean the religious current of the M.G.O (Marian community of prayer and sacrifice⁴), I have to share the praise with countless others, in particular the many Fr Kentenichs who worked in the M.G.O. in the past and to some extent are working in it still today.

When the opportunity presents itself you could give the Sisters two sayings of our Lord for meditation:

1. Why did you look for me? Did you not know that I have to be doing my Father’s business? (Lk 2, 49).
2. Greater love has no one than to give his life for those he loves (cf. Jn 15, 13).

In addition, when Paul asked what he had to *do*, he was given the significant pointer as an answer: “what he has to *suffer* for my name’s sake...”

Our Lord himself did not redeem the world through his miracles and sermons, but through his death.

Those who want to seek and visit me will always find me in the heart of God and the Blessed Mother. All who have inscribed themselves in these hearts are constantly with me and in me. So I don’t lack conversation.

Now I have come to the end of what I wanted to say. One more thing, I may not forget it. Please thank all who have done my laundry so carefully. May the words of the beatitude apply to them: Blessed the merciful, for they shall have mercy shown them (Mt 5, 7).

In every direction, from above and below, to the right and left, heartfelt greetings and every blessing! So let it be, we shall remain faithful!

See you soon,
Faithfully, Yours, J. Kentenich.

Letter to Sr. Anna, 28.10.41⁵

Gruess Gott!⁶

It has been a long time since I was able to break the bread of God’s word for you, and I do not know when it will be possible again. How fortunate that the soul is a spirit and is not dependent on outward closeness; how fortunate that God keeps access to the human heart open for himself, and personally determines the climate in which it can carry out its main calling⁷ most quickly and surely; how fortunate, finally, that we can not only speak to people about God, but also to God about people. I make a great deal of use of this possibility, just as Paul did (Gal 4, 19).

³ German: “Wissenschaftliches System”. Fr Kentenich is not using the adjective “wissenschaftlich = scientific” in the generally accepted sense of research and reflection carried out according to strictly scientific and methodologically exact rules. By “scientific” he meant a thoroughly thought through survey of truths that are solidly founded, and hence can lay claim to be taken seriously in academic-university circles.

⁴ The title given to Schoenstatt as a camouflage during the Nazi period.

⁵ Sr Anna was the Superior General of the Sisters of Mary. This letter went by legal channels.

⁶ There is no English equivalent for this greeting: God greet you!

⁷ German: “Hauptberuf”. The German word refers to both the main job by which a person earns a living, and a spiritual calling. Their “Hauptberuf” is their main occupation, in contrast to what they may do on the side. Fr Kentenich often said that it is our “Hauptberuf” to love and learn to love. Cf. USA Tertiarity (1952) I, 132.

As an October gift I pray that you may be given strong growth into the “full stature of Christ” (Eph 4,13), to maturity and independence and daring in Christ. With Paul I pray, “I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name. I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3, 14-19). The way to this re-orientation leads via internalizing and living the Inscriptio spirit more deeply.

What Augustine called Inscriptio is described by Ignatius in that highly recommended prayer, “Accept, O Lord, my *entire* freedom, my memory, my intellect, my *entire* will and my *entire* heart. You have given everything to me, I give everything back to you without reserve; do what you please with it. There is only one thing I ask: Your grace, your love, your fruitfulness. Your grace, so that I may submit joyfully to your wish and will. Your love, so that I may always believe, know and at times feel that I am loved as the apple of your eye. Your fruitfulness, so that in you and the Blessed Mother I may bear rich fruit for our common work. Then I am more than rich, and I want nothing more”⁸.

For us, a deeper internalization [of the Inscriptio spirit] consists in never separating the Blessed Mother from our Lord on our way to the Father, and never separating our Lord from his Mother, especially when we renew the Inscriptio act and spirit. In practice this means that, together with the Blessed Mother, we want to make Golgotha, the altar and tabernacle our favourite place. Or, to experience the reality of Golgotha, the altar and tabernacle in their hearts, and so, heart in heart in holy three-in-oneness, to go to the Father.

Living the Inscriptio happens in everyday life. We don’t want to be one of those who in prayer have a lot to say about total self-surrender, but who collect all the horses in the world to retrieve the coach when God begins to take our prayer seriously and does what *he* wills with us. This applies in particular when he takes us into the school of suffering. Paul takes it for granted that as members of Christ we have to become like him in his suffering, and that suffering includes not merely the breakdown of all human forces, but also, and above all, the breakthrough of divine forces, and hence the rich fruitfulness of our life and work (Col 1,24; 1 Cor 4,9).

May the grace of Inscriptio make itself felt in the coming months in the spirit of the feast of Christ the King: *Omnia opera mea Regi crucifixo et glorioso!* [All that I do is for the crucified and glorified King].

Heartfelt greetings and my blessing to all, J.K.

Letter of 28.11.1941

... You may not allow temptations against childlike trust to come up. On the contrary! You should be proud and grateful that God is giving *me* the opportunity to sacrifice myself in this way for him and his cause, and tries *your* childlike trust so seriously. So he is presupposing a high degree of childlikeness in you.

All of us can now prove whether we have understood the Inscriptio and Blank Cheque correctly. We are nowhere more secure and sheltered than in the darkness of faith and trust. How lovely it will be when we are later able to see the ways along which God’s wisdom has led us in this time.

So make use of the difficulties in order to grow more deeply into the world of childlikeness. Thank God that contact is still possible.

Heartfelt greetings to all and thanks for your loyalty and D.

Letter of 21.12.1941

⁸ Cf. also the prayer: Accept, O Lord, ...” in Heavenwards, Part II. This prayer can be found in “The Spiritual Exercises of St Ignatius of Loyola”.

That was a surprise! I had just written my Christmas letter and given it to ... I looked out of the window and there – that was my first great Christmas joy. You can see how human I still am despite all growth into the spiritual and divine world. I am sure you would have liked me to open the window. If only I could have done so! The limitation of freedom here includes the tiniest detail. “Peter, the time will come when another will gird you.” That time has come. But I don’t find it difficult, because everything is secondary. The main thing is God [working in] your souls until they grow to the full stature of Christ [Eph 4, 13]. That is my greatest joy of all. —

Could you see me as clearly behind the window as I could see you? You will have noticed that I am fine. I again know better how you are. – Now remain faithfully united – each at her place – and serve the Sisters with sincere kindness and love. I would like to love all of you very much. You have to do on my behalf what I cannot do.

Heartfelt Christmas wishes!

Letter of 22.12.41

To start with ask the circles⁹ for training two questions:

1. Why is cultivation of the spirit the key and vital question, the question that will decide the fate and future of the Family?
2. Should those responsible for the cultivation of the spirit in the Family¹⁰ replace the confessors or spiritual directors, or make them superfluous?

[Thanks]

In addition, until now I have not thanked you and all your helpers for your very many Martha services. I did not do so, because I did not want to encourage further services. You can imagine that it is not easy for me to accept the many gifts, because they are only possible as a result of the personal renunciation of the Sisters, and because in principle I do not try to avoid any difficulty presented by life. On the contrary, I want to grow through them. So, with Paul (Phil 4, 11-14) I can also say, “I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.”

If I was alone, I would have hooped it long ago. However, I have a confrere with me who greatly depends on material things. So I let you and others go on. But now allow me to thank you for all the love and sacrifice connected with the gifts – first of all, on behalf of the priest, and then on my own behalf. Let me say with Paul, “You have acted well in sharing in my need” (cf. Phil 4, 16).

In that regard my need is not particularly great. We are given the minimum we need to live. Beyond this I don’t have many needs.

Must I now fear that my thanks will be interpreted as a request? You may not do that. At any rate, the Sisters may not be harmed. And if, beyond this, you want to give me an opportunity to make the hard lot of the priest beside me, and others, more bearable, you will have done a good work. In this spirit please thank all involved ...
[Interweaving of destinies]

Our Sisters may not become restless because I have been away for so long and their prayers and sacrifices do not seem to be heard. On the contrary, my destiny is far too strongly connected with that of the whole Family. The battle fought on my account and against me is the battle of the devil against the Family. (Think of Job). My liberation, therefore, also means the liberation of the Family. On the other hand, people think that by fettering

⁹ This probably refers to the so-called “circle of leaders” of the Sisters. It was composed of the superiors, educators and course mothers.

¹⁰ Fr Kentenich was mainly thinking of the educators and course mothers.

me, they have fettered the family. In the background – you may visualize this to yourselves – a bitter battle is raging between the Woman who crushes the serpent and the serpent. There is no doubt who will win in the end. It is fitting, and it is a great honour, that I should be the buffer. However, you can observe how God always makes use of this imprisonment for the best of the individual and the Family as a whole. That is also how he wants us to make use of it. So we have to be careful to ensure that we do not disturb God's plans in the least. It follows that the Sisters should not worry so much about me; they should care more about the growth of love in their souls and in community life. Your prayers and sacrifices will be richly heard, indeed they have to a large extent already been heard. Otherwise I would not be in such complete control of the situation, nor would I be able to do so much good in various directions. Otherwise the Family would not try so soundly to acquire God-willed independence in every regard.

Of course I would rejoice humanly with all my heart to be able to see you and all who belong to me again. You noticed this on Saturday¹¹. Actually it would be easy to make this possible in some way. Yet, for the course and outcome of the bitter battle it would be better for both parties to continue making the sacrifice of renunciation. As soon as the situation makes another course of action advisable, I will tell you. In the meantime, in the spirit of the Inscriptio, let us visit each other all the more deeply and lovingly in the two Holy Hearts.

I offer up Holy Mass every day for the Family. Make a special intention each day.

Please do not forget to thank God because we are able to remain in constant contact. Consider whether it would not be a good thing to inform the "Circles" and the superiors of the bigger houses in and outside Sch. [Schoenstatt] constantly about the course of events. This will create calm and a sense of responsibility, and will have an educational, clarifying and encouraging effect.

You know how I am. I could not have had a better holiday than I have had here. I have so much peace. Other spiritual leaders have gone into solitude before important stages in their lives. God had to force me to do so. So I don't want to leave it until he again sends me out. You will see, I will be there [in Schoenstatt] again at the right moment, newly equipped and ready for the battle – unbroken in body and soul. See to it that the Family will also have grown, so that it can run along God's paths with me. To all, in particular the "Circles" and superiors of the large houses, sincere greetings.

At Christmas I will be with you. And thinking of each other and remembering each other in prayer will make us happy and inspire us to love others greatly and give them joy.

All want to and should try to grow with me through circumstances, and to mature to the full stature of Christ. This is what God wants. So we want it as well. The Blessed Mother, who loves us as her favourites, will help us to do this with her blessing, intercession and example.

All for our Family. Now I have unburdened my soul somewhat at great speed. I wish you as much calm, security and contentment and joy as God has given me as a permanent possession: in answer to your prayers and sacrifices.

Christmas Letter for 25.12.1941

A 61-year-old priest is sitting next to me... He is sobbing like a child, "I could burst with fear and suffering. – Christmas in prison, and besides that my poor relatives and my parish. –" This is how the poor man is suffering under the loss of freedom.

[The spirit of the freedom of the children of God]

¹¹ Fr Kentenich is referring to a visit to the church tower window.

With all my heart I gladly give God the loss of my freedom. I am ready to bear it in all its conceivable forms until the end of my life if as a result I could purchase continued existence, fruitfulness and holiness for you and the whole Family until the end of time.

What we are striving to attain with our Family, and what we want to achieve, is to dizzyingly high that only an extraordinary measure of grace can enable us to bring it about. You may never forget this! Those who love the Family will therefore consider themselves fortunate if they can give their all for it.

The most precious possession of human beings is their freedom. With sincere and glowing love I sacrifice this freedom, so that God may give you for all time the spirit of the freedom of God's children, which I long for so ardently.

There is nothing that so resembles God as a noble-minded woman who, with noble spontaneity and simple, God-filled self-possession, can call this spirit of controlled freedom her own, that is, as a Sister of Mary, a Sister of the Blessed Mother, whom I would so much like to give to the Church.

My wish and prayer for the Family for Christmas is a high degree of this spirit of the freedom of God's much loved children, and as a return gift I yearn for your promise of faithfulness to the Family and the spirit of the Family. At the same time I want to thank you all for the seriousness, faithfulness and depth with which you have stood to the ideals of the Family until now.

[Make correct use of my imprisonment through faithfulness and Inscriptio]

My being here is a greater trial for you than for me, just as my fate is the fate of the Family. I am not in prison on my own account, or because of some stupidity, but because of the Family – both in the narrower and wider sense. So the Family is imprisoned with me and in me. So also you must make full use of my imprisonment, as I do, as a personal lot and fate. You will do this if you consume yourselves as until now with unswerving loyalty to the ideals of the Family, even when new trials come.

I hope to God that I will be able to catch many of the blows of fate foreseen for the Family, and be allowed to carry them alone. But, but – I won't be able to do it completely. So prepare yourselves! In noble competition we want to try to be worthy of one another, and to become ever more worthy of God and the Blessed Mother, so that they can erect the great building with us, which they want to build. In practice we cannot do better than to cultivate, live and love the Inscriptio spirit. Pray that I may be given this spirit, just as I pray for it for you and for all coming generations.

Now rejoice with all your heart like a happy child in a richly blessed Family. I rejoice with all my heart with you.

Greeting and blessing!

Letter of 26.12.1941

You may not allow yourself to be sad on my account, first of all because I am where God wants to have me – and that is always the best place – and also because for the moment I can serve you and help you from here far more than outside.

[The loveliest place in the world]

Finally, you may not forget what I told you in the past: There is no more beautiful place in the world than the heart of a noble-minded person who loves God fervently. Look at how richly God has given me such places. See to it that your heart becomes increasingly noble, pure, strong and filled with fervent love for God, then you will have prepared a comfortable home for God and also for me. And who is better off in the entire world than I am, who has a more beautiful home than I have, despite this prison?

[Freely willed self-surrender of freedom]

Before he set out on his way of suffering, our Lord prayed, “No one takes my life from me, I give it freely, because I want to” [Jn 10,18]. I do the same. No one is depriving me of my freedom, I give it freely, that is, because I want to do so, or more precisely, because God wants me to do so! “My food, my favourite task is to carry out the wish of him who sent me!” [cf Jn 4,34].

[A communion of love and destiny]

There is only one thing that could make my outward distance difficult – that awareness that you are no longer striving for the stars. That would cause me tremendous suffering. Everything else, including what the first four weeks cost, is just a game, a pleasure, because God wants it for your best. I am convinced that you will do everything to spare me this suffering, even more, that you will do everything to allow God to govern you completely in the way required by the Inscriptio. What a surprise it will be for me when I return to find you so rooted in God that I will have to do my utmost to keep up with you! That is how it has to be. That is genuine love: it never says, ‘I’ve had enough!’ The measure of love is immeasurable. And our relationship to each other has to lead us deeper and deeper into this measure without measure, into our eternal, infinite God.

In order to confirm us in these endeavours, let us renew the Inscriptio together at Christmas. I will join you.

Let us consciously extend the close communion of love and destiny that chains us unbreakably to God and one another, and carefully cultivate it with our poor Sisters in the missions. They too are approaching serious crises when the contact they have had until now with home has become impossible. There is only one thing that can solve all problems completely and perfectly: the Inscriptio – to surrender ourselves without reserve to Eternal Love, uncreated divine Wisdom and infinite Omnipotence, in the hearts of our Blessed Mother and our Lord.

Letter shortly after Christmas 1941

[Prison – a God-given school of heroism]

We, you and I, have to be prepared for all sorts of things. *Non sine sanguine*. A great work cannot come into existence without much blood – in a spiritual and actual sense. Therefore, in the first four weeks, when they tried to use modern torture, I felt extremely well. Clemens of Alexandria said: To be close to the sword is to be close to God! This must always apply to us. To have been given a great mission by God is certainly an act of trust that can make us very happy, but it is also a call and obligation to die constantly in a mystical and real sense. What Paul said about God’s word – that it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow (Heb 4,12) – also applies to those words that he speaks to little people through such a calling.

What applies to the two of us, also may and must also be said to those who are called with us. Such a calling is not just a pleasure, but also a divine burden. It has to be. And those who are called may never ever feel happier than when the great law of God’s kingdom has become a reality in them. It is something extraordinarily great that our Family is making the Inscriptio. Join me in thanking God because I am the first who is allowed to live it. My present actions and way of life is a single great act of daring. Much light and warmth goes out of my room. I have a task here. We want to know but one goal, one love, one passion – to take the Inscriptio seriously. The development of the Family until now convinces me again that the saying about the shadow of the shrine will come true... And heroes are growing in our ranks. God is educating them for himself and will sooner or later use them for his purposes. This is how the many prayers sent up for me have been heard. So please go on praying and sacrificing in the spirit of the Inscriptio. Until now my absence has only brought a blessing everywhere.

Besides this, God uses the prison and concentration camp as a school and training for heroes. Unfortunately many are not mature and able to co-operate with God's chiselling. Those who live quite simply from the spirit of the Inscriptio will always overcome the world and the devil, because divine powers are alive in them, and they will rejoice in this chiselling¹².

So, let us be happy, and thank, live and suffer for our Family in the spirit of the Inscriptio. The standard-bearer is nothing, the standard everything! Long live Jesus and Mary in the souls of our children!

Letter to the 'Artusrunde'¹³, 1.1.1942

At the start of the New Year I am sure I can dispense myself from the usual New Year's letter. However, that does not mean that I don't have reason and material to thank for and wish you.

[Thank you for your faithfulness]

There are probably few people who can and must say 'Deo gratias' [Thank God!] so sincerely and so often as I can: *Deo gratias* for God, *Deo gratias* for the Blessed Mother, *Deo gratias* also for you and for your great faithfulness to our work, our spirit and the foreman¹⁴. You know how sensitive I am to such faithfulness. Hence also my wish and prayer for 1942: So let it be! We will remain true ... May the Blessed Mother tell you all that I want to place into those simple words.

Now let me "dream" a little. Could I call the many thoughts, that surge through my soul with majestic calm like the waves of the sea, *lumina*¹⁵? Is it a good thing to entrust them to paper? I gradually want to pour out at least a few drops for you. The subject of all of them is our Family as a whole (including the PSM¹⁶) with its mission and its spirit.

[Faithfulness and disloyalty to the mission: the dimension of salvation history]

I will begin with our **mission** ... We have so often called ourselves the "chosen work and instrument"; we have compared ourselves with the Chosen People of salvation history, and said: We have to see to it that as the chosen people we do not become a cursed people.

Have you ever asked yourselves what course salvation history would have taken if the people and leaders of Israel had accepted the Messiah with faith and love, and worked as his messengers inviting other peoples to acknowledge him? Think not just of this people's extraordinary gifts and ability to offer sacrifice, but also of the rich supernatural graces of a mission given to them.

Would Christ have died ...? Would he even have needed to die if, on top of Adam's fall, the first fall in world history, the second fall of the Jewish people in salvation history had not taken place ...? In this case, would not the paradisaic state have filled and governed God's kingdom as the prophets of old had envisaged in connection with the coming Messiah? Read the brilliant description in Isaiah 11,1-9. There the calf lies down next to the

¹² God is like an artist when he is forming and educating people he wants to prepare for a mission. He is like a sculptor who chisels away so that a block of raw marble will increasingly become a masterpiece. Fr Kentenich often used this image for the process of God's educational activity.

¹³ The Fathers and Priests working in the Movement from the Retreat House in Schoenstatt formed the 'Artusrunde' (Knights of the Round Table). The concept was taken from the Saga of King Arthur, who sent out his knights from his round table to do good deeds. When they came back, they told the others in the "Circle", a short form also used by Fr Kentenich.

¹⁴ German: Werkmeister, which translates as foreman. Fr Kentenich means himself. He saw himself as a master builder who, together with his confreres in the *Artusrunde*, tried to carry out God's will and our Lady's mission as they worked in the Movement.

¹⁵ Literally: "Lights". What is meant are enlightenments, inspirations.

¹⁶ PSM: *Pia Societas Missionum*, Pious Missionary Society. This was the title by which the German government recognized the Pallottines as a missionary society and gave them permission to make foundations in Germany.

lion, the lamb plays with the wolf, no stain can be found in the streets, and knowledge covers the whole land like the sea. These are all images that describe what we have for years called our ideal state, our ideal realm¹⁷, for the realization of which we have striven with more or less success. Guardini¹⁸ is of the opinion that if the second fall had not taken place, our Lord would not have needed to die, and Isaiah's description would have become a joyful and complete reality. However, the people and leaders of Israel rejected their Messiah; they did not accept him with faith and love, and they did not go out into the world as his messengers. From the moment this fact appeared in the Gospel, our Lord began to speak about his suffering and death. Since, in Israel, the world for a second time refused to submit to God – the first time it happened in Paradise with Adam – the Son of Man offered reparation to the Father by submitting to suffering and death to an extreme, and as a result became the Redeemer of the world.

[*Love for our mission: concrete consequences*]

I like to meditate on *our mission* while looking into this mirror. If we carry it out with faith and love, the Family will be a blessing with us and through us for countless people. Otherwise – if we add a third fall – it will wreak havoc. This applies to all the formations of our Family, starting with the PSM. We and they are again offered a glorious mission. God is good. He likes to make long-term changes. Otherwise he would have had to take away our mission long ago – especially from the PSM. Of course, in contrast to Israel at that time, if we are to carry out our mission, warm faith and fervent love are not enough. We are living in the order of the cross. So faith and love have to be espoused to heroic love of the cross. All three factors have to reach up to the God-willed ideal realm of a redeemed Family of God. Now that the second fall has taken place we will never reach this ideal in the full meaning of the word while here on earth. Since then [the second fall] God's kingdom has been in constant fluctuation and battle, in coming and going, in appearing and disappearing ...

Have I been able to help you understand, however inadequately, what I see and want to say? May God make up for what I am unable to put so quickly into words.

I can guess what you are thinking, and what comparisons you are making. Does not what has been said, you will be thinking, apply to every religious community with a distinctively great and divine mission? Why not? Hence also the tragedy because of the failure of these communities. We have to feel all the more responsible for our mission's heavy burden.

What follows from this? You know that as well as I do. I want to touch upon three points briefly:

Firstly: Boundless, passionate *love*, combined with a strongly sacrificial, all-consuming self-surrender to this Family and its mission – no matter whether its individual formations have any number of wrinkles, blemishes, weaknesses and miseries. For us there may be only one *Ceterum censeo*¹⁹ that we constantly repeat with elemental force and organic one-sidedness: our Family! On the horizon, slowly becoming clearly recognizable, we see the great structural lines of a new world order. An old world is burning. We see it all and evaluate it only in the light of our *ceterum censeo*. Our faith, hope and love may be subjected to the most severe trials, body and soul may be subjected to violent tortures – for us there is only one thing: our *ceterum censeo*. Meanwhile millions from present and future generations stand before us and reach out their hands to our ark to save them and carry them over the great flood to the shores of heaven ... In such fateful times only one thing can and may exist for true ambassadors: our mission, our Family, our *ceterum censeo*.

¹⁷ Hitler wanted to make Germany an "ideal state", a model for all other states. Fr Kentenich took up the incentive contained in this aim and defined Schoenstatt's goal to build up an ideal state, and ideal realm, as a model for a new Christian social order.

¹⁸ Romano Guardini (1885-1968) was famous as a student chaplain and pioneer of liturgical renewal. His Biblical and Christological meditations were published as "The Lord". In it he spoke of the "third fall" and our redemption through Christ's death on the Cross.

¹⁹ It is related that Cicero ended every speech in the Senate with the words, 'Ceterum censeo' [Carthaginem esse delendam] – therefore I say that Carthage has to be destroyed! Fr Kentenich took up this saying to signify unyielding concentration on a single goal.

So, secondly, according to the law of the open door – as Paul would put it – or as we would say it, God’s wish expressed through present circumstances is that we have to collect and deepen the forces of the Family, and unite and train ourselves in the spirit of the Blank Cheque, Inscriptio and motto for the year. So we work for *our* priests, etc. etc. Exceptions prove the rule. All have to be gripped by this faith in our mission, and glow with it in practice, otherwise we will become and create spiritual vagabonds. ... Not new thoughts, but taking the old seriously – that is our slogan. Solid training takes its bearings from Everyday Sanctity and the Schoenstatt secret, and the corresponding literature. Visiting the individuals will deepen what has been heard and help them to live an upright life in keeping with our style ... Those who are unable to join in, can join another formation of the Movement (League). “*Sint ut sunt, aut non sint*”²⁰. At the beginning of our Family I was able to visit our priests and help them along. A. is doing something similar at the moment with his young priests, and R. with his faithful ones²¹. In order to discipline everything and put heart and soul into it, the old “meetings of leaders” should be re-introduced in Schoenstatt for 2-3 months. Long live action ...

Thirdly, the early Christians went under the legal umbrella²² of Judaism for decades, so were not subject to the ban on a ‘*nova religio*’. Only under Domitian did it begin to insist publicly on its independence also in relation to the state. That is when the terrible persecutions began. It was wise to again place the M.G.O. under the protection of the old Church associations. This may work for a time. But what then? There I am touching upon the question I have often raised, but have not yet really reflected upon with you. ... Of course, we are only dealing here with a title that can be adapted to circumstances and hence cannot be attacked, not with a change of content. I use an expression, but don’t explain it, and I am even less inclined to expound its ideas. Examine it for yourselves. The expression is this: Affiliation with an ancient Marian fraternity that has been approved by the Church. The outward affiliation does not have to rob us of our independence. ... We are dealing here only with a legal title. It is necessary to hurry up with the new name, because we have to protect F. above all. If he can say that since the new year he has not been the leader of the MGO, because it no longer exists, it is probable that they will no longer pester him. However, we may only change it once we have looked at the matter carefully and thought it through thoroughly. I did this plentifully in the first four weeks. For tactical reasons I will keep in the background for the moment – in order to encourage your independence. So consider it, pray, and then let me know what you have discovered. Perhaps your discussions will turn up better means and ways. At any rate, our mission-consciousness has to inspire us to prepare for whatever happens, so that we can than guide the ship of our Family victoriously through the winds and waves.

Now I must close. I am writing very quickly in primitive and difficult conditions. I hope you can read my writing.

In heartfelt communion of destinies with the whole circle, together with a greeting and my blessing,

Letter to the ‘*Artusrunde*’ after New Year 1942

Since I know that you are together as a Family in these days, I want to join you for a bit, this time not to “dream”, but to chat about personal things in a personal way – just as our relationship to one another justifies and demands.

[Importance of living the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio]

Have you ever considered what an extraordinary spiritual height²³ we have climbed with the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio? Think of how many noble-minded people of both sexes have taken up the watchword and live accordingly! We may not forget to thank for this. Such noble-minded and highly striving people tear us along

²⁰ St Ignatius’ famous saying when the Roman Curia wanted to force his Society to pray the Office in common: “Either we are what we are, or we shall cease to be”.

²¹ The reference here is probably to Anton Engel and Rudolf Klein-Arkenau.

²² German: Rechtsfaehigkeit.- Christians were seen as a Jewish sect, and because the state accepted Judaism as a legitimate religion, Christians were also recognized as such. They could do business legally and enter into legal contracts in the same way as the Jews.

²³ German: “eine geistig-geistliche Hoehenlage”. It may be that with these two adjectives Fr Kentenich is referring to ascetical heights (dominance of the intellect and will over the lower drives), and the spiritual heights given by the Holy Spirit as unmerited grace.

with themselves to the heights, and strengthen our optimism and our trust in our mission. It is a big question whether our followers have to thank us the most, or whether we have to thank them.

I have been told that of the 95 priests who have passed through here [the prison] in the past years, 99% were inwardly embittered, paralyzed and broken. My own experiences make it easy for me to understand this harsh judgement, because no small percentage of our priests has to leave behind a middle-class²⁴ outlook on religion and life. If you have not tried very seriously in the past to live a life according to the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio, you will usually not be able to cope here. Exceptions prove the rule. So you are well advised to work towards this attitude in some way with all the courses and circles. It is a disgrace – both for our priestly state and for Christianity – if we are so little able to cope with life in prison. There are priests who “descend into hell” at every retreat, and who would not like to have a retreat without a meditation on hell, but in the most simple, everyday things they break down as soon as life is no longer “middle-class”.

Such observations and considerations should help to strengthen us in our goal and method. ... Elsewhere the experiences may be different and better!

[Mastering imprisonment in the cellar through the Inscriptio spirit]

Yesterday a priest, who is unable to cope with life here despite all his good intentions, asked me whether I did not have difficult hours at times. I could honestly answer: Not only no difficult hours, no, not even a difficult second – not even when I was imprisoned in the cellars, with their extraordinary mechanism to wear one down.

He simply could not understand that. You, and all who live according to the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio – I am convinced of this – would have had just as easy a time as I had. At the time people made a big thing out of my four weeks in the cellars. The Rector remarked that no one had borne it until now; a priest who broke down within three days still shudders and gets goose flesh at the thought. Priests who were told about it privately were convinced that if I got out of there alive, I would definitely be physically and psychologically broken for life. So everyone was surprised that I was fresh, flexible, proud and strong as I came up out of the cellar. He walks around, they said, as though he wanted to say, “you can do what you like, the future [world] belongs to me and my ideas.’ The Gestapo themselves declared to men of note that until now no one has borne it all so calmly, contentedly and happily for such a long time. (B. Jos. and Alb. never got to know the cellars. In general it does not come into question for priests – or only very rarely – at least here —)

All these things really never touched me at all. They were simply insignificant details when I think of Paul’s catalogue of suffering (2 Cor 11,19ff). I took everything so much for granted that it only dawned on me later, through comparing conditions up here and down there, what the above statements implied. This is because I have for a very long time allowed myself to be borne on the wings of longing to what I have experienced and much worse. So I seemed to myself to be like a wanderer who after a long wait had at last arrived at the land of his longings and secret dreams. That is the meaning of the Inscriptio. Add to this the many prayers and sacrifices of the whole Family, and the awareness that I was allowed to give this chosen Family the strength of my suffering, and you will understand that since 20th September my soul has been swimming in light, that the radiance and warmth have constantly increased – and that I am not able to think seriously of “liberation”.

One thought has been going constantly through my mind in the past few days. A comparison between imprisonment at the time of Paul and today shows that at that time people worked more with physical torture; today, however, they use a cleverly worked out system of comprehensive limitation of one’s freedom. I consider the latter more difficult to bear than the former. Think of how much freedom to communicate with Christians and pagans Paul enjoyed despite being a prisoner.

²⁴ German: “buergerlich”. This is a socio-cultural concept. Connected with it is a lifestyle that was interpreted by the Zwinglian Protestants in such a way that if people are financially well off and successful in their business undertakings, it is a sign of God’s special election. Affluence, avoiding risk-taking, doing one’s duty, the loss of larger perspectives, mediocrity in making personal demands, are the marks of this lifestyle.

Yes, the limitation of freedom! It emphatically brings to mind the strengths and weaknesses of our family – in spirit and form and organization. How strongly we emphasize freedom! This places us on the same ground as Paul. ... Now comes the serious question: Will later generations of our Family manage to understand and use this freedom correctly? Paul demanded freedom, but at the same time also that we hand ourselves over completely to the *Pneuma Christi*²⁵. We say for this: freedom from obligatory downward ties has to be complemented by generosity and constant fineness of hearing and obedience, by heroic total self-surrender to God's wishes! Blank Cheque and Inscriptio!

To repeat: Will we manage to secure the correctly understood spirit of freedom for all time? A very serious question!

When I think of the communities Paul founded in southern Galatia, and fertilised with his blood – today all have vanished – the question becomes even more serious. After all, we don't want to be dreamers living in a fantasy world, we don't want to hunt after idols.

Of course, we also have moderate organizational and personal obligations ... However, the most important thing is and remains this spirit of correctly understood and used Christian freedom. Through circumstances God shows us new ways to secure it.

I gladly and consciously sacrifice my freedom in order to help plead and sacrifice for this spirit for the Family. That is the new way. Wherever you have the opportunity, encourage all fellow sufferers to adopt a similar attitude and practice, to walk and use the same ways. The more strongly we love the Family, the easier it is to bear such limitations. Perhaps we will serve our work more and more effectively in this way than through using other means. We may never lose sight of this common, great direction of our lives. Otherwise we will resemble an express train that has been derailed... Everything only for the Family! In this way our own soul will remain fresh, alive and ready to grow. And our work will flourish!

[Cultivation of the spirit through circumstances]

“Do not extinguish the spirit!” How difficult it could be in the long run to find men and women who are prepared to commit their entire life and strength to such cultivation of the spirit. How fortunate those who, through giving up their freedom, are able to help pray that we will be given people²⁶ who are free from all inner hang-ups, and all dependence on outward things, and who are willing and able to form such heroic followers that put heart and soul into everything.

Perhaps in his kindness and wisdom God will consider more of us worthy of giving up our freedom for the same great and essential goal. You are all very welcome!

The precondition will be and remain: taking the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio seriously in *everyday life*.

Please observe our followers in everyday life. Again I touch upon a point I have mentioned a number of times already. At any rate, we have to protect ourselves and our people from using empty words ... So for a time let us help and promote the individual in everyday life through personal contact wherever they are. The same applies *mutatis mutandis* to all the circles: priests, women, men. We need not and should not on that account lose sight of the whole, vast picture. The [coming feast of the] Epiphany reminds us again and emphatically of our mission for the world. First a small group has to be consolidated and secured. Then its members can go out in their own way, keeping the whole wide world in view, but also warming their hearts for all Schoenstatt's interests and its Mother – but in life keeping firm hold on clear, tangible and concrete individual goals.

So – now I must close. Over to you! All for all out of love!

Letter to Fr Muehlbeyer after New Year 1942

²⁵ Spirit of Christ

²⁶ Educators, leaders, multipliers.

I would love to write each confrere a personal letter. However, since I don't know whom I would reach there, you will have to be satisfied with a common letter of good wishes. What should I wish you?

Recently a confrere burst into my room unexpectedly. His face was distorted, his eyes horrified, and as he threw himself down before me he called out in despair: I am afraid of harming the Church. Please pray that it doesn't happen. I have to leave immediately – please bless me! As he left his eyes were radiant. — Perhaps we will meet again soon over there where a number of friends are awaiting you.

So I would also like to express a wish: May none of us harm our Family and its ideals. Even more: May the Blessed Mother form us in such a way that our Lord can use us for the Family's great mission. In us may she love the Cross and the Crucified in her heart as though in a sanctified room, and teach us to worship him courageously and heroically. In the New Year we may lead the Family under the cross, allowing it to be nailed to the cross, and watch it bleeding, and bleeding to death: *Omnia opera mea Regi crucifixo*²⁷.

We ourselves have to stand under the Cross and hang on the Cross, we have to die a painful and miserable death: freed from self, freed from our ego in the spirit of the Inscriptio; but with the *Rex gloriosus* we must even now also bring about the reality of the qualities of our Lord's transfigured body in our souls: *mobility* (the mystics describe it as pliability, adaptability, receptivity for God and the divine like soft wax), *spirituality* (Paul says instead: *Conversatio verstra in coelis*), *constant joy and immortality*.

May each one of us become a little *Rex gloriosus et crucifixus* after the image of the only begotten Son.

May the Blessed Mother intercede for this pilgrimage grace for us and the whole Family.

Then we will be prepared, the Inscriptio will have become a reality, the Family will have surrendered itself unconditionally to God and will set out on its flight into endless distances and depths. If we want to make use of this new year so earnestly and profoundly for ourselves and our community, we will have to give the few remaining forces wholly to our own Family. Otherwise the foundations will become fragile ...

Conference for the Consecration of the Sponsa Course²⁸ on 5.1.1942

In her dreams a Sponsa child heard me giving an enthralling talk for their consecration. I can do nothing else than see to it that her dream comes true, at least to some extent. However, I only got the inner inspiration to do so in the last hour. I want to act immediately, but my hand and pencil do not follow my flying thoughts quickly enough. In addition, I am writing in very primitive conditions without documentation. So you have to be prepared for me to be forced to break off in the middle of my thoughts. ...

What I want to say to you can be put very simply: With all my heart I congratulate you on the *time of your consecration* and the *content of your consecration*.

Your consecration is taking place at an extraordinarily *fateful time of suffering and blessing*.

[A fateful time]

1. We all know and feel that we are living in a fateful time for the world, the peoples and the history of the Churches and families. My fate may be seen as a symbol of our Family's fate. My removal indicates similar intentions with regard to the Family. My pendulum-insecurity reminds us of the same insecurity of the Family. My security in God and the Blessed Mother is a pledge for the same pendulum-security of the Family. Such

²⁷ All that I do for our crucified King.

²⁸ This refers to a course of Sisters of Mary with the Sponsa ideal = Bride, Spouse. The course was preparing for their consecration. While he was in prison the founder wrote them a treatise on their ideal, the "Sponsa Thoughts", and the talk for their consecration, which follows here.

situations destroy all middle class and gentrified attitudes, actions and habits. They either awaken the hero or the harlot, the saint or the sinner. They separate the spirits. Heroes and saints do not act out of habit, or because they are copying someone, or out of weakness. They take each word, each act, each decision, very seriously, and are ready to stand up for their words and decisions even in the most difficult circumstances – or to give their life's blood if this is required of them.

Long ago we arrived at an *inner* decision; we are totally on God's side. The times impel us increasingly to this radicalism, and to overcome all half-heartedness. However, they also impel us to act. So we may consider ourselves fortunate because we are approaching the altar at such time, not in calmer and levelling times.

Each word, each request, each promise now has a fuller resonance, and our whole personality, with its entire strength, force and fervour, is behind what we say. Later we may be allowed to stand the test in extraordinary circumstances – for the moment our battleground is loneliness²⁹, and silence our time of trial. Also here there are sufficient opportunities. The more we look at the circumstances and needs of these times, the better and more heroically we will make use of these circumstances to show the Blessed Mother that she can rely on us now and later.

'Those who will one day have much to proclaim,
must be very silent and introspective;
those who will have to enkindle the lightning,
must be a cloud for a long time.'

So I am justified in congratulating you on your consecration.

[A time of suffering]

2. However, it is not just a fateful time, it is also a *time of suffering*.

The clouds are gathering more and more around our Family – again in much the same way as around my head. The same thing happened to our Lord in his lifetime. When the cloudburst, thunder and lightning, and collapse followed, he appeared as the great Victor over the devil and the world, the glorious redeemer of the world.

Can we also expect such thunderstorms with similar results? What has happened to us until now was not unexpected and did not find us unprepared, although that does not mean that they were less painful as a result.

a) Whoever knows the history of the Family will know that jubilee years have always been years of suffering and trial for us. In 1935, the year of my Silver Jubilee of ordination, the battle with Church authorities and the PSM was raging, but the thunder was rumbling in the distance from another side. In 1939 it came so close that we could expect it to break out at any moment. Since then the clouds have gathered more strongly and continuously. Think only of the words: College, Movement Centre (Bundesheim), Wildburg ... Controversies with the Gestapo until the great battle in July. The main attack then followed in September. When we celebrated *our* jubilee, dark shadows clouded the features of the Family.

b) But only for a short time ... We were sufficiently *prepared* ... The Family answered each blow with deepened and more trusting self-surrender: first, through the Blank Cheque, then through the crowning, and most recently through the Inscriptio. When our Family as a whole gave the latter, we may expect to be taken by our word.

c) The 20 September and the events that followed mean not only for me, but also – and even more – for the Family, a special sign that we have been taken seriously from above, and that it is being taken seriously from below. When someone admitted: I could never have imagined that the suffering of a child could be so unspeakably deep, it gave expression to the general experience. Whoever knows about our relationship to one another, and how every least fibre of the Family is rooted in me, will understand the magnitude and depth of this

²⁹ In the Closed Novitiate the novices, in order to form a community of their own should not have contact to the outside world.

suffering. ... In addition, there is the awareness of the symbolism of what happens to me in the framework of our Family history. Finally, the manifold uncertainty about the way things will develop ... Who can count the tears that have been shed silently and secretly since the 20 September, who can measure the heartfelt suffering gnawing at the most noble-minded of the children since then!

[Time of Blessing]

3. Now, however, we already see with increasing clarity how this time of suffering has become, and increasingly promises to become a *time of blessing* to an extraordinary degree. Involuntarily I am reminded here of two Biblical events.

Our Lord declared: The devil has demanded to sift you all like wheat³⁰ ... And the apostles were sifted – during our Lord’s passion and at the time of their own martyrdom.

On another occasion God’s opponent appeared before God, pointed to Job and demanded the freedom to torture, test, persecute and tempt him. God gave him permission to do so. We know what happened. Let us read it once more in the Bible.

And yet, both Job and the apostles (with the exception of Judas) passed through the trial, bringing endless blessing upon themselves and their followers. In both instances God overcame his enemy with his threats and attempts to blind and destroy them; these attacks became the source of light and life. “I have prayed for you,” our Lord said, “that your faith may not fail; and you, once you have turned back, strengthen your brothers”³¹. Also we have been so greatly strengthened by Christ and the apostles, that we are justified in saying that the whole Church rests on these two foundations – the foundation of Christ and his apostles.

So also our suffering is exceedingly blessed – both for ourselves and our followers and those who come after. Should I characterize this blessing briefly?

In our way of saying things I would have to put it this way:

Here it means that my love is now losing what is primitive in it, so that *amor concupiscentiae* has become *amor benevolentiae*³².

There: I could never have imagined that distance would so strongly awaken the spiritual closeness and fervour and warmth of love.

Someone else confessed: I am longing for infinite love, infinite humility and infinite suffering.

And again: Until now I have not been able to include in my Inscriptio the thought that God might do what he wills also with you. Although I know that you are safest with him, such an act was too difficult ... Now that God has spoken so seriously through the 20 September, I am ready to do so – even if my heart must break as a result. What God does is always good. In his love you and I are most securely sheltered.

Finally: We have prayed and sacrificed together a great deal... No answer came from heaven! I almost lost faith in God’s fatherly kindness... Now, however, I see that everything is an answer to the Inscriptio. Now I gradually begin to guess all its implications... With all my heart I repeat it – borne by the unshakeable conviction that what God does is always good... I will allow myself, you and the whole Family to fall into the abyss of God. There we are all in good hands. ...

³⁰ Cf. Luke 22, 31.

³¹ Cf. Luke 22, 32.

³² Needy love has become generous love.

Can you understand what all that implies? When I survey everything that I know and do not want to reveal here, I am deeply moved and shaken by, and grateful for God's wonderful deeds in the souls of our Sisters – the warmth, purity and fervour of their feelings, the clarity of their purified idea of God and experience of God, and their strong, intensified and heroic self-surrender to the Family as God's work and our co-operation..., so much so that with Paul I can only stammer in amazement: Ro 11,33-36: "O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counsellor? Or who has given a gift to him, to receive a gift in return? For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen."

Until now your fate has always been united with mine. However, perhaps nothing has so promoted the progress of your souls as the present event. My restriction becomes the means for you to attain the full freedom of God's children; my suffering gives rise to the fuller unfolding of the glory of God's children in you.

Do you know what that means?

At Christmas you were awaiting the "Miracle of the Holy Night". Just as God miraculously released Peter's fetters, so you expected my cell to open suddenly.

The Miracle of the Holy Night has taken place long ago – and day by day it becomes a greater reality... Can you understand me?

Early Christianity had to fight a bitter battle against paganism, which was fed and borne by magical influences and powers. That is why Christ gave it the charisms (1 Cor 12,4-12), which the apostles made good use of in the controversies of that time (cf., for example Acts 13, 1-12).

Today Christendom has another opponent: worldliness, enslavement to this world and mass-mindedness. ... If it is to work miracles today, it has to educate supernatural, morally strong, courageous and *holy* people and communities.

Can you now understand what I am trying to say when I state that the Miracle of the Holy Night has taken place and is constantly repeated?

Every person in whom Christ and Mary appear is such a miracle. With what great longing we look out for this new type of person, and how long have we already been working to bring it about.

Yes, the 20 September and the events that followed have become real miracle workers, and become more so day by day. Long live the Miracle of the Holy Night! It carries out our most daring hopes and expectations in a way we could not have imagined.

And you, my dear Sponsa children, may give yourselves in such a fateful time, in such a time of suffering and blessing, to the free community of our richly blessed Family...

Have I a reason to congratulate you on your good fortune? I do so with all my heart.

Brief note of 16.1., arrived 17.1.1942

I have been examined to see whether I can go to concentration camp. Result: Fit for the camp. Now, no one may worry. The only thing everyone can and should do is to live the Inscriptio. Use this opportunity to encourage them to do this.

19.1.1942

For your efforts with the doctor many thanks to you and ... Please do not take it amiss if I do not follow through the threads you have spun. I know of only one means to become free: the Family must take the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio seriously.

Letter to Fr Menningen of 19.1.1942

It was a great joy for me to see you briefly yesterday and the day before (at the tower window). In spirit I have in the meantime cast my “prophet’s mantle” around your shoulders. Wear it with dignity. – For the present I will wear another mantle. – I gladly do so, because I am convinced that I can serve my work better this way...

I have just written 52 pages again. By now there are about 340³³. — I hope they have been passed on. The closing sentences tell you in a hidden way what I think about the future.

Thank you for your good advice (to use the means offered to save himself from being deported to Dachau). Please let me think about it. ... When I was examined, I said absolutely nothing about my lungs. Everything seems so unimportant to me. ... You will see, there is a higher power over our lives, which will direct everything in our best interests. By the way, the doctor’s judgement doesn’t mean much. Recently a priest was sent to the camp who had been declared unfit.

The main thing is that you out there live wholly for our work. Only now does life become good. There is so much love for suffering and cheerfulness in me – I would gladly share some of it with you. ... Can you imagine that it would not really suit me if I did not go to the camp? Many friends are waiting there. And then – the first four weeks were worse than the camp. Long live loyalty!

To Fr Menningen on 20 January 1942, morning

Just now during the Consecration I got an answer to the question we left open yesterday. Our priests have to take the Inscriptio and Blank Cheque seriously, in particular some of the older ones. Then I will be set free again. Please understand this answer through faith in the reality of the supernatural and the interweaving of the destinies of the members (children?) of our Family. It is easy to bear what is demanded of me here, easier than the attitude ... That has been a suffering for me since 1930. Everything else is trivial.

Please see to it that our PSM acts in the same way as we do. Then it will win the battle. In this way the forces opposing God are aroused and annoyed, but also overcome.

So please do not take it amiss if I do not accept your advice. Try to understand me.

To Fr Menningen – 20 January 1942, midday

I wrote the first letter this morning after celebrating Holy Mass. Just after lunch the Director came and told me that the doctor was prepared ..., if I registered sick. ... I cannot decide to do it.

Now visitor after visitor comes to the tower window and makes my decision difficult. Nevertheless, here I stand ... and cannot do anything else ...

Please fulfil one request: See to it that the Family takes the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio seriously. ... Then I will be set free. – There is always the same answer in me. – Am I deceiving myself? I know what is at stake, and I am thinking of the Family, our work ... But just on their account I believe I have to act in this way. Seek first the kingdom of God ... everything else will then be given to you.... But ... what about the human means? Don’t we teach that they have to be used? From all that you have attempted, I have to conclude that what we would normally have to do in that regard, we have done in rich measure.

So let me repeat my request: Don’t make my decision too difficult. Promise to work towards the realization of the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio, and then, so I believe, I will “soon” be set free again.

³³ This probably refers to the “Sponsa Thoughts”. Fr Kentenich was writing on small pieces of paper, hence the large number of pages.

To Fr Menningen – 20 January 1942 – afternoon

Now come the letters – they are a martyrdom ... But I can't do anything else.

22.1.1942

Thank you for understanding my seemingly incomprehensible actions. By the way, the doctor didn't examine my lungs at all – or my heart.

To Fr Menningen on 23 January 1942

Now a weight has fallen from my soul. – I was afraid that with your very sensitive heart you would feel that my actions were ungrateful to you. – Thank you very much for understanding me... You will do so better later on. — Last Tuesday the fortress was stormed time and again... It was and is and will remain – God willing – invincible. Anton can tell you what it was like. By the way, I have already written to you about it. ...

At the end of an epoch of our Family history, let me thank you again most sincerely for all your efforts and all your loyalty. – The power of the devil has been broken for the time being. If we all try seriously to live the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio, he will have got the opposite to what he wanted. ... After this new situation, I believe that I will soon be free. Of course, the condition has to be fulfilled.

Letter of 9.2.1942

You now know why, since 20 January, and despite all my readiness for the opposite, I am expecting to be set free. ... God wants us all completely for himself through the heroism of the theological virtues – as the “new person” has to embody them. We have to learn them in the present practical situation. Your and my fate has been inseparably united for years. ... You could grow through me, and your growth is this time the ransom for my freedom. So, although I may seem to be in the foreground, if you look at it closely, you are the object of God's attentions: your growth. Of course, your growth is my happiness and my pride. We are simply inseparable in our life and fate. This also shows because this time you may see me far more than usual as a symbol of the whole Family.

I am here for the Family. And my freedom is the freedom of the whole Family. ... For these two reasons I thank you with all my heart for all your loyalty, which is expressed in the crowning and the renewal of the Inscriptio. “Long live the new person.”

In February 1942

I can't stop worrying that the disappointments will make our Sisters tired. So it will be a good idea for you to meet with the ... to discuss the situation and show them ways to banish not only unholy restlessness, but to grow more deeply into the three theological virtues. I have already given NN some hints. I am making the above suggestion in order not to have to write to each one personally. Discuss with them

1. Why, in contrast to before, I most recently reckon with great calmness, but also certainty, with my release.

2. What conditions have to be fulfilled,

- a) living the Inscriptio,
- b) the special heroism of the three theological virtues.

3. That the main thing is not freedom, or fruitfulness, but God, God, God.

All that is not an obstacle to us, on the contrary, simply on that account (because God is everything to us) we are prepared to be imprisoned forever in the cellar if that is what will please God. My liberation is so difficult, because it is synonymous with liberation of the whole Family.

To Fr Menningen, 13 February 1942

Yes, we are surrounded by things we cannot understand. It has always been this way. We suspected it and understood it a little – but only a very little. Although we believed — yet our faith was not sufficiently alive and deep. Only now does everything grow into the immeasurable. This had to happen if the Inscriptio was not to be empty words. The heroism at work in this self-surrender awakens the heroism of faith, which, however, has to be there at least germinally. This is the pedagogical significance of the present situation for our Sisters. Their fate has been connected with mine from the beginning. Therefore also the whole supernatural and natural world takes on a tangible form for them in connection with me. That is the reason why I consider it prudent – and God-willed – to cultivate faith and hope in them in addition to the heroism of self-surrender. However it is a masterpiece. If faith and trust are separated from self-surrender, they make us restless. The harmony of all three creates Marian characters. “*Beata, quia credidisti...*”³⁴. That is the root of their greatness. The more we embrace the supernatural, which we cannot understand, with faith, the more we will become genuinely Christian.

³⁴ Blessed are you because you have believed (Lk 1,54).