

Fr. Kentenich's Decision of January 20, 1942

Letters from the Carmel Prison: 1942

Excerpt from letter to Fr. Menningen, January 19

“Thank you for your good counsel [that I use the opportunity to not be sent to the concentration camp]. Give me some time to think it over... I didn't mention my lungs at all when I was first examined. It all seems so trivial to me... You will see - there is a higher power over our life directing all things for the best. And in the end the doctor's appraisal doesn't mean much. A priest was recently sent to a camp even though he was declared unfit.

“The main thing is that those of you on the outside continue to live entirely for the Work. I am just beginning to enjoy it. I am so filled with a love of suffering and spirit of joy that I gladly share some of it with you... Can you imagine that I would not quite 'like' it if I did not land in the concentration camp? There are many acquaintances there. And then - the first 4 weeks [in the bunker] were worse than the camp. Long live loyalty!”

Excerpts from letter to Fr. Menningen, January 20 (morning)

“The answer to yesterday's open question just came to me during the consecration [at Mass]. Our priests should take the Inscriptio and Blank Check seriously, especially some of the older ones. I will then regain my freedom. Please understand my decision on the basis of faith in the reality of the supernatural and in the interwovenness of fates of the members of our Family....”

“Therefore, do not take it amiss if I do not accept your counsel, please try to understand me.”

Excerpts from letter to Fr. Menningen, January 20 (afternoon)

“I wrote you the first letter this morning after Mass. The chaplain was here just after lunch and informed me that the doctor would be ready... if I would call in sick... I cannot bring myself to this decision. And now comes one visit after the other in the spire window, making my decision difficult. And all the same: Here I stand... and I can not do otherwise...”

“Please fulfill one request for me: See to it that the Family takes the Blank Check and Inscriptio seriously... Then I will be free. It is always the same answer that comes to me. Am I deceiving myself?”

I know what is at stake, and I think of the Family, the Work... But this is precisely the reason why I must act this way. ‘Seek first the kingdom of God... and all else shall be given to you besides...’ But... the human means? Don't we teach that we should make use of them? Based on everything you have tried, I must conclude that more than enough of what one normally must do has been done...

“Therefore let me repeat my plea: Do not make the decision too difficult for me. Promise to work for the realization of the Blank Check and Inscriptio and - this I believe - I will 'soon' be free again.”

Fr. Kentenich's Recollections: 1948-50

“The 20th of January arrived. I had spent the night struggling with myself in order to understand God's will. At last it was clear to me. I would not sign the application for medical examination. If the choice was left to me, I would choose the fetters for myself, but for [= to gain] the Family freedom. This was my decision. I did not want to be set free by purely human means. If God wanted me to be free, he would have to intervene and this would have to be merited by the heroic striving of the members of the family in the spirit of the Inscriptio. Therefore, during Holy Mass on the morning of January 20 I freely surrendered my freedom.” (*A Movement in Chains*, p. 30)

Talk on January 20: 1967

“We spontaneously recall January 20, 1942, the 25th anniversary of which we celebrate today. Evaluating this day, we perceive it as the axis around which our whole (Schoenstatt) family history revolves. It is well-founded to state that whatever happened before January 20th aimed at this day, and whatever followed is to be considered as its effect. (...)

“It was not only an extraordinary deed of self-denial, a deed of totality, but it was also a deed of freedom. To conquer perfect inner freedom was the objective, to become free from ourselves, free from all selfishness in order to become perfectly free for God and the divine.

“But all of this was necessary to bring about the outspoken supernatural man. This is important, most important. The supernatural man stands in sharp contrast to the man of the world.” (*A Movement in Chains*, p. 30-31)