

The Letter from Santa Maria, April 15, 1948

The following text of the letter which Father Kentenich wrote from Santa Maria, Brazil for the founding of the Family League in 1948 is prefaced by a report on the meeting of the families printed in the fall 1948 issue of the newsletter of the Schoenstatt Priests' League (Source: BRIEFE AN DIE PRIESTERLIGA, Fall 1948, p. 19-21).

Our Family Work

In the week of Pentecost (May 19-23) the third meeting for Schoenstatt families took place, with 45 families from 10 dioceses participating. It is meant to become a differentiated community (in League, Federation, etc.) of Schoenstatt families. With it, married people, placed by God into the sacral confines of marriage and family, where everything is ultimately being decided today [for the future], will have their own place in the context of the greater Schoenstatt community. There, under the protection and in the service of our Mother and Queen, they can and ought to unfold and perfect themselves and fulfill the great task which the Triune God has called and consecrated them to in the sacrament of matrimony.

With that the last great gap in the entire work begins to close. The Schoenstatt Family Work is "its foundation and its crown," as Father Kentenich has said.

It is a modest beginning, but a promising one at the same time. The work and sacrifices of our Father Eise, as well as many years of preliminary work through the boys and girls youth are now beginning to pay off. If it is meant to flourish and prosper and become a blessing for the whole family, it will need the active assistance and prayers of our priestly confreres, especially in the sacrifice of the Mass. The families have asked for this, since they realize how great the task is which has been entrusted to them.

Father Kentenich commented on this important event in a letter from South America to the participants at this meeting. It reads as follows:

*C. Chr. urg. nos!*¹
To Fr. Tick

Santa Maria, April 15, 1948

for the Family Work

1. It is good that you have reserved the days of Pentecost for yourselves once again. It is in keeping with the dignity and importance of the work for which you are being used as instruments.

2. If it is already difficult for an individual to place him- or herself under the dominion of grace, it seems nearly impossible for a family to shape itself after the example of the most Blessed Trinity or the Holy Family of Nazareth. This has always been the case. The present time, however, driven on all fronts to uproot existing forms of life across the board, wreaks its greatest havoc in the sanctuary of the family. If the Blessed Mother wishes to form and shape a new human society and a new type of personality from Schoenstatt, she must necessarily concentrate her entire power of grace on creating and increasing the number of sound and strong Schoenstatt families. For this reason we pray in our Schoenstatt Office:

¹ *Caritas Christi urget nos!* The love of Christ urges us on! (2 Cor 5,14), a favorite motto of St. Vincent Pallotti and of Schoenstatt's Apostolic Federation.

3. Your shrine is our Nazareth
where Christ, the Sun, warmly shines.

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This sun, with its clear and radiant light,
forms the history of the Holy Family
and awakens strong and silent everyday sanctity
in blessed family unity.

Through this Nazareth for homeless times
God wants to prepare salvation for families
and mercifully bestow everyday sanctity
on those who dedicate themselves to Schoenstatt.

Mother, let Christ shine in us more brightly
and join us together in holy community,
always ready for the sacrifices
our holy mission may demand of us.

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 eternity. Amen².

4. Anyone who is familiar with life today and is aware of the frightful catastrophes which stand before the Church and world, is deeply convinced that the entire Schoenstatt Family, both as a whole and in its parts, cannot fulfill its task unless all its waters and strength ultimately arise from and flow back into holy islands of Schoenstatt families which join together more and more to form a single, united Family Work.

5. When we quietly contemplate why Our Lord should spend thirty years in the solitude of a family while the world around him was rushing headlong towards disaster, we must sometimes admit that the mystery is too deep for us. We naturally wonder: What all could he have accomplished, had he employed his divine powers earlier and made them available to the world! The solution to the mystery is always but one answer, "I always do what is pleasing to the Father" (Jn 8,29). "I speak the words he places on my lips, and do the works he has commanded me to do" (cf Jn 5,19). This has an immediate impact on the question; it must be re-addressed to our Father in Heaven. The answer is not unknown to us. The Father wanted to secure in an unmistakable manner the immeasurable blessing which proceeds from true Christian families.

6. May then the Blessed Mother in her cenacle call down the Holy Spirit on you all so that you may correctly grasp the great significance of your new God-given task in life which you have freely chosen and embraced; but that you may also receive the strength to practice the moral principles which the Popes have laid down for families in their encyclicals, to work out for yourselves a practical family asceticism and family pedagogy, to perpetuate proven and inspired family customs, and in this way to become vessels from which all the branches of the movement are

² *Heavenwards*, p. 50.

constantly fed and renewed.

7. All of us without exception are interested in this new Pentecostal miracle. Therefore, we unite and beg and petition with great fervor for a new and effective miracle of transformation. Take the picture of the Blessed Mother with you and enshrine it in your homes. Then they in turn will become little shrines where the venerable picture will prove to be a source of grace, create a holy family atmosphere, and form holy family members.

8. When in the Founding Document the Blessed Mother promised to see to it that our fatherland be placed again at the head of the Old World, we know that this is only possible with holy Schoenstatt family islands. The MTA will fulfill her promise if we fulfill the conditions stated there.

9. Heartfelt greetings and blessings to all present and to all whom you represent.

J.K.