



6. Silver Jubilee of Ordination

At the beginning of Schoenstatt, it was Fr Kentenich's declared principle that he wanted to remain totally in the background. As far as possible he avoided having his photograph taken. When he spoke, he always spoke about "Schoenstatt", not of himself, even when he was talking about his thoughts and actions. He even testified that at this time his awareness of himself almost disappeared and became one with the shrine and the Blessed Mother. He saw the Blessed Mother's work and the effect of the source of grace in the shrine as so all - important that it was as though what he did disappeared into them

This attitude only changed with the "axis event" of 20 January 1942. Through the events on that date and in the time that followed, Fr Kentenich recognized God's plan according to which he had to place himself in the foreground, and proclaim the many and varied attachments of his followers to himself as a model. This point had not been reached in 1935.

So we can understand why his followers were surprised by Fr Kentenich's readiness to allow a celebration on the occasion of the Silver Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. The address he gave on this occasion, which is reproduced here with very few omissions, interpreted the celebration in a way that went far beyond the usual framework. Although it focussed on the founder, it at the same time testified so strongly to his union with his followers that it shed new light on Schoenstatt's founding process and the specific originality of Schoenstatt's spirituality – the interweaving of destinies and the organism of bonding.

The work of grace in others through him, Fr Kentenich, was later expressed in the phrase, "The founder is the third point of contact".

The jubilee was celebrated on 11 August 1935, not on 8 July, the actual day of his ordination. The text of the talk given here is taken from a publication of the Secretariat of Schoenstatt Mothers.

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

[Why this Jubilee celebration?]

When the invitation to this jubilee celebration was sent out about a week or two ago, a whisper passed through the ranks of our old sodalists, who have worked with me from the beginning, "Can miracles still happen? Is it possible? How did the people in Schoenstatt manage to get such a celebration going?" And when some of the eldest arrived, their first question naturally was, "How was it possible?" They got the answer, "Because it serves the cause; that is why he agreed."

I don't know if that was the ultimate reason why I not only allowed the celebration to be arranged, but even urgently asked for it. It is true, I have often used the harsh saying, "I shall die where I stand!" Or the other harsh saying, "The standard bearer is nothing, the standard is everything!" If they apply to you, they also apply to me. We have to serve the cause while personally staying in the background; each one of us has to give whatever serves the cause.

I know and have experienced how our family celebrations have strengthened our family bonds and nurtured our loyalty to our common cause, to our Mother Thrice Admirable, but also to one another. Have we realised that we need the obligation of this profound community membership even more than before,²⁹ because the circumstances of our times rend people apart to such an extent, and because the dark and difficult future will most probably give rise to further thunder storms? It could well be that difficult times are approaching. And it is true, the more difficult the times, the more closely we must be united, the more we must form a single, large Family that has been called by God, if we are to consume ourselves in hard times for God's Church, for the kingdom of our Blessed Mother.

All this is justified, but it wasn't the final and deepest reason why I said a joyful yes to this celebration, and even wanted it to take place.

[The real reason for this celebration: It is a common jubilee of our loyalty to the interweaving of our destinies]

What really moves me personally has already been said in jest. I am celebrating the jubilee with you. I am thinking of all who have worked with me in the course of these 25 years. I invited you in order to celebrate your jubilee. Isn't it true that what God has foreseen from all eternity has gradually become a reality? I don't know whether there is any other community today in which the main leaders have so directly connected their destiny with that of the leader of the Family as is the case with us. *Quod Deus iunxit homo non separet* – What God has united, let no one separate. So you can understand that I accept with inner emotion all you have expressed as a hymn of thanksgiving, in particular what you have said about simple faithfulness, but also pass it on to the person for whom it was intended in the first place. I am thinking of her, our dear Mother Thrice Admirable.

[1. The jubilee celebration – thanksgiving for co - operation in the work of the Blessed Mother]

Why should I thank? Whom should I thank? I thank all Schoenstatt children.³⁰ I thank the dead, I thank the living, and I thank the generations to come.

[1.1 I thank the dead]

I thank the dead! In the same way as this morning's celebration set the mood, so we want to let it come to a close in the same way. Our deceased are not dead, they are with us today. The work that has been created here is just as much the work of those who co - operated with me. I am inconceivable without you. My whole work cannot be explained without your most personal and profound co - operation. This applies in the first place to our dead.

[1.1.1 I thank the hero sodalists³¹ and deceased Sisters]

Should I remind you of our hero sodalists? I don't want to mention them all by name so as not to do an injustice to anyone. Of course, our deceased from the ranks of the Sisters are also meant here. They are all with us today; it is their work that has developed. And if ever hymns of thanksgiving rise up to heaven, we don't want to forget to whom they are addressed. Did not our hero sodalists and our deceased Sisters give their lives for our common work with boundless, selfless loyalty? Did not many of them soak Schoenstatt's ground with their blood? Many now reap the benefit of their holy lives and the selfless oblation of their deaths.

Our departed work on through their heroic example; they work on because they embodied, sometimes in an heroic way, what we see today as a great idea in the heavens of our lives. We hope to God, and admit with great gratitude, that they work on through their intercession, through praying for us together with the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt. Yes, the hymns of thanksgiving have to rise to a crescendo far more than they have done until now.

²⁹ Hitler had already been in power for two years, and his intentions, also with regard to the Church, could be clearly seen. Many suspected that Germany was heading for war.

³⁰ Since Schoenstatt was always seen as a family, the founder called all its members children. Childlikeness is a hallmark of its spirituality.

³¹ The members of the Sodality who fell in battle in World War I.

[1.1.2 I thank Vincent Pallotti]

We want to and have also to sing a hymn of thanksgiving to Vincent Pallotti. He, too, has to be counted among the departed who are at home here in Schoenstatt. After all, he founded the community in which the thoughts and goals to which we have committed our entire life and strength have been more or less consciously alive. Through his life and sacrifice he has placed a tremendous number of contributions into our capital of grace. This river of grace continues to influence our Family.

So let me repeat, I want to summarize all the gratitude you have sent up to heaven, and direct it into eternity to those who have died for us, and who continue to live in eternity for us.

[1.2 I thank the living for their co - operation in our common work]

However, I may and must also say a word of thanks to the living. I am thinking here especially of all those who have connected their entire lives and destinies with mine, either throughout the past 25 years, or at least through a major part of them. Let me say again, try to find another community today which is so much the spirit of the spirit and flesh of the flesh of the individual members as is the case with us! Or am I exaggerating? Am I trying with a few tactical measures to shrug off or pass on all that I actually find unpleasant? No, it is my conviction. My whole work as it has developed is equally your work. I don't know where to begin. Since the whole celebration has more the character of a family celebration, you will not take it amiss if I now speak more in the first person than I usually do.

[It started with a graced personal encounter]

Please take note and examine it for yourselves. Think of all who bear responsibility in the Family, think of the oldest and middle generation, of the Schoenstatt Priests, of the women, of the Sisters of Mary. By far the majority – perhaps with a single exception – have for decades connected their destiny with mine. Am I mistaken when I state that it can be proved that their calling to Schoenstatt was always connected with a personal meeting with me? I would be grateful if you would examine such statements for yourselves, because I am anxious that we should feel inwardly united in the way the Triune God has wanted it from eternity. “Quod Deus iunxit homo non separet” – What God has united, no one may separate.

This mutual faithfulness becomes all the deeper, all the stronger, the more we see how God has connected human destinies in a unique way. When and where did these meetings take place? It would be tactless to lift the veil from so many mysteries in this public gathering. When I think of the first generation and of all who are now working directly with me, it is obvious that their childlikeness received an answer from me. Their whole lives have been united with what I thought and wanted.

If I think of the first generation of our Schoenstatt Priests, or of our Sisters, I know that the first meeting usually took place during a conference, or a private conversation. I believe I could even prove to the individuals in detail: That's where grace started to work, that's where we came into deeper contact, and from there our relationship has become extremely fruitful. Yes, my dear Schoenstatt Family, that is how it is. This first contact has on the whole been uniquely and profoundly alive and active in the time that followed. The whole, widespread work, before which we now stand with wonder, has grown out of this united work in the depths of your souls on a personal and community basis.

[This encounter gave rise to knowledge and warm love]

Will you take it amiss if I try for once to describe your share in this work very briefly? I will have to admit, to start with, that you have personally had an extremely strong influence on my own, personal development. What was said just now as a joke is really true; what one of our members said at that time is true – he is one of our “conference hunters” who tries with every means at his disposal to get hold of every transcript. And when I once said that the talks might not be passed on, he said, “He knows all this only from us!”

The book in which I have read is the book of our times, the book of life and the book of your holy souls. If you had not bared your souls to me so completely, most of my spiritual - intellectual achievements would not have been discovered. You can't get these things out of books; you can only get them from life. One of our Sisters of Mary was correct when she remarked a few days ago, “Because we were so dependent on you, so much has awakened in you that in all probability would not otherwise have been awakened.” If the

first statement applies more to my spiritual - intellectual insights, the second refers more to the unfolding of the abilities of my heart.

Last night one of our older members reminded me that at that time, when they were in the war,³² I must have had a warm heart for them. I quietly and unobtrusively got hold of all sorts of clothing – something to protect the head, a warm vest, etc. It is true, I developed a very warm heart for our youth at that time. But this development continued towards all the people God has given me and who have made demands on me.

If you want to know the secret behind what is almost over - abundant fruitfulness, I can tell you: it is to be found in our deep, reciprocal union in the depths of our souls. In answer to the question that was posed just now, "Where does this richness of heart and mind come from?" I can tell you that a person who loves, who has ultimately placed his love in God's heart, shares to a certain extent in the immeasurable riches of God's love. If there is anything that doesn't make us poor, it is love, the giving of the warmth of one's heart.

You may tell yourselves – all of you who have made demands on me, sometimes loudly, sometimes quietly; all of you can tell yourselves that without you I personally would not be what I am today. You may not underrate this train of thoughts. Let me repeat, if you want to know the source of the riches of my mind and heart, you have it here! My wish and prayer to God is that he will give all future generations the same possibility to serve human souls quietly in the background as I have had. Great riches then flow back to those who try to place themselves with all their abilities at the service of souls.

[Upholding great goals – openness for partial goals]

Yet this is not enough. What I was able to read in your souls in this way gave me the direction for the partial goals we were striving for each time. An objective historian must be able to prove one day through critical research that seeing the ultimate great goals, and consciously holding onto these great goals, was my primary task in the last 25 years. However, the individual partial goals that had to be achieved, the way we held onto and discovered these partial goals, as well as the enlightened striving to achieve them, is simply inconceivable without you, my dear Schoenstatt Family. It is here that a deeper linking of what we did and aimed at, of our life and love, began. These things are so alive in me that I can usually tell you how this or that came from him or her, it is a bit of what was alive in his or her soul. It is here that we find the mysterious source of our profound community life. As you know, I usually have no time for socialising, nevertheless your faithfulness never wavered. This was because the union in the depths of our souls rested on such a firm foundation.

[Each person made an important contribution]

Community implies the harmony of hearts. If you can say that the Family is distinguished by the deep, inner community of the individual members, it means that to a very large extent this is because most of you have contributed your very best to the Family as a whole. I would like to ask each of you individually to admit honestly and humbly – or if you don't know, I will gladly tell you privately – what you have contributed of your heart's blood to the life of the Family. If you want to thank me for anything, it can only be for one thing – that I have tried to take up everything that was developing in you, to open up the way for you, and once it had come alive in the community to some extent, to proclaim it as a motto. So I could tell you who were the main leaders at that time in our Mission Movement.³³ As the master builder I have also built up things individually,³⁴ but when I knew that something sound was developing, I withdrew completely, because I knew it would grow without me.

I could also tell you who were the main leaders when the Outer Organization³⁵ was founded. Please remember, it can be proved that to an outstanding degree it was your work; it came about through your co-operation. It is mainly through your activity that the *Congregatio militaris* was carried over into peacetime.

³² World War I (1914 - 1918).

³³ The original Sodality in the College at Schoenstatt was divided into two main groups, the Mission Section and the Eucharistic Section.

³⁴ Fr Kentenich probably means that he did it with individual people.

³⁵ Comprising those young men in the army who had taken up the spirituality and aims of the Sodality at Schoenstatt – also known as the *Congregatio militaris* (literally, military sodality).

Here you have a classic example – I purposely did not go to Hörde,³⁶ I was so sure of what would happen there. Everything had been prepared, because each individual soul had gradually grown into the whole, large work.

My dear Schoenstatt Family, please admit that I am right to re - address the hymn of thanksgiving you have been singing and return it to you with gratitude and joy. I know that by doing so I include in very general terms what is moving me personally.

I could sing a hymn of praise to all who have not been directly mentioned in what has already been said. I am thinking now of all of you, also of the young generation, who again and again stand as guarantors for the whole Family through enriching the capital of grace. Right from the beginning it was my ideal to do nothing in the whole Family without my co - workers. I know that this thought has permeated all that I have done. Other bodies³⁷ with whom I do not have direct contact also act according to the law, “Nothing without us!” Eternity will one day show that the smallest and most insignificant members of our Family have contributed treasure upon treasure. Without their heroic life of sacrifice and prayer the Family and its spirit, as we see it today, would be inconceivable. Indeed, nothing without you!

I don't know what I should highlight in particular. Just imagine, our Sisters have lived for ten years without a written law, and yet they have grown into the most varied fields of activity. How was that possible? And when you look back for a moment, you will find that not one jot of their original ideal has been cast aside. Our eldest Sisters have merely matured inwardly in these ten years to such an extent that they gradually begin to understand what we set up as a programme ten years ago. I can prove precisely which school of thought has come from this or that Sister. Each can discover the best qualities of her soul in all that we are aiming at as a Family. It is part of our pedagogy of ideals, our pedagogy of movement, and of our pedagogy of anticipation.³⁸

[The collaborators in the Retreat House]

Don't you think that in this context I should make particular mention of those who work with me up there in the Retreat House?³⁹ Without their loyalty it would have been completely impossible for me to undertake so many different tasks. Please take a look at how much life and spirit proceeds from the Retreat House, and how each one is trying to give of their very best for the whole Family.

Yes, let me repeat, I want to take up and direct upwards to the Triune God all the hymns of thanksgiving you have sung. All honour is due to him, all thanks to you.

[A special word addressed to the young generation]

I may not forget our growing youth! This morning, when I saw what sacrifices they have made, I thought to myself, “What heroic young people are growing up!” They say that they have to become what the older members have become! Schoenstatt may not develop without us, also not without our young people. I greet our onward - storming young people with special warmth – our young women and young men!

I received a letter of congratulation from the young men at High School. In it resonated the spirit of the founder generation, “We want to take up the spirit lived by the older members, and with courage for battle bear it into the new generation. Our symbol is the graves of the heroes.”⁴⁰

³⁶ On 20 August 1920 leaders of the Schoenstatt Sodality and the Congregatio militaris met in Hörde, Dortmund, to work out the Statutes for the Apostolic Federation, which would merge the members of both organizations. The Schoenstatt Family developed out of this original body.

³⁷ This could refer to other governing bodies working outside the Centre of the Movement in Schoenstatt.

³⁸ That is, it anticipates the pedagogy needed in the time to come.

³⁹ Opened in 1928 as the first Centre of the Schoenstatt Movement and known as the “*Bundesheim*” (literally, Home of the Federation). It was built on the slopes overlooking the original shrine on the opposite side of the valley to the College. Today known as the “Covenant House”.

⁴⁰ Situated behind the original shrine. In 1934 the remains of some of the soldier sodalists who had fallen in World War I were found and reinterred behind the shrine. The remains of Joseph Engling have never been found. Later the ashes of members who had died during World War II were also re - interred here.

Our young women are also at work. Not just the eldest generation, also the youngest generation is included in my thanks. They, too, are celebrating a little bit of jubilee. It is their jubilee.

[1.3 I thank the coming generations]

I must also express my thanks to those who have not yet been born, those still to come. Yes, what will become of Schoenstatt if the coming generations are not gripped and permeated by the same spirit as we are? Must it not remain a law of the Family for all the times to come – each generation has to conquer Schoenstatt for itself? Unless my gratitude to the coming generations in the coming centuries is given a foundation in the development of the times to come, we can more or less bury our Family. Unless God awakens people in every age who are prepared to use the same means and the same ways to attain the same goals, we will have built a work that is just a dayfly; it will not last for all eternity. I hope, however, that the God who has protected us until now, that the Blessed Mother who has spread her hands so lovingly over the Family until now, will accompany us with their grace and love. For the sake of the loyalty with which we have tried to pass on what we have inherited to the coming generations, may they always send us people who will give of their heart's blood for Schoenstatt. At this point I also want to thank these coming generations most sincerely.

[1.4 I thank the Blessed Mother]

I know another person who has to be addressed. You know her as well. I think that the gratitude expressed to me in these days, and which I have returned to you, has also to be taken up by the whole Family and directed into the heart of our dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt.

Many years ago I read of an old and revered priest who was celebrating his jubilee. As is the custom at such jubilees, people collect all they know, and in this case they could say a lot about this priest. At the end of all these hymns of thanksgiving he stood up and said, "Yes, you have said a lot about me, about what I was able to achieve in my life ..." Then tears came into his eyes as he said, "I owe everything to our Lady!"

I, too, know that countless numbers of people owe the complete reformation of their lives to a meeting with Schoenstatt. I know how many priests declare again and again, "What would we be without Schoenstatt!" It would be gross ingratitude to overlook these thanks. Yes, I also know and gladly admit that there are very few priests whose lives have been so extremely blessed as mine. But I can also say that what has come about, what has come about through me, has come about through our dear Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt.

May I explain how and what was developing and at work through the individual stages?

To start with, then, I may say that she has personally formed and moulded me from my ninth year onwards. I would not like to say this elsewhere, but I think that in this context I can explain it briefly. When I look back, I can say that I know of no other person who has exercised a profounder influence on my development. Millions of people break down when they have to depend so much on themselves as I had to. I had to grow up in total inner loneliness, because a world had to be born in me that had later to be passed on to others. If my soul had had contact with the culture of that time, if I had been personally bonded to anyone, I would not be able to say with so much conviction today that my education is simply the work of the Blessed Mother without any profounder human influence. I know that with that I have said a great deal.

You may not think that I am saying this just in order to say something nice about the Blessed Mother. I know that she has placed her suppliant omnipotence and motherly heart uniquely at my disposal. You have also been able to prove it historically. From the moment she took up her abode in this shrine, she placed her power and her motherly heart at my disposal for the work I was allowed to create, and it was she who gave you to me as my co-workers.

Please study the subject and see how everything we see before us today has developed out of this deep and childlike love for Mary. Am I right, then, when I ask you not to forget the one to whom we owe special gratitude today?

[2. The jubilee celebration – a promise of loyalty]

I may also not forget to take up your simple promise of loyalty in the same way. It is true, if there is anything that can touch me, it is grateful loyalty!

To whom should we return this grateful loyalty? Those words sounded so strong and solid just now, “Faithfulness, loyalty!” I am happy to accept your loyalty with great gratitude. I know that it is not just faithfulness to me, but also to God and our work. We want to make this promise of faithfulness together at the end of this celebration, your jubilee celebration – faithfulness to our Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt, faithfulness to her work, and faithfulness to one another!

[2.1 Faithfulness to our MTA and the shrine]

Faithfulness to our dear Mother Thrice Admirable! Don’t you think – I address myself to the eldest children of our Family – that we owe the fruitfulness of our Family, and the amazing fact that despite the chaos of our times we could develop as organically as we have until now, to our childlike faithfulness to our Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt? We want to promise once again to remain true to her. We all feel proud, especially those who are working directly with me, to realise that the battle surrounding Schoenstatt⁴¹ ultimately concerns our devotion to Mary. As long as we may battle for the Blessed Mother, everything is in order. Please study all the spiritual trends of our times. Take, for example, the youth movement or the liturgical movement.⁴² If we had not held onto our love for Mary without wavering, there is no doubt that we would largely have fallen prey to extreme spiritual currents.

We want to remain faithful to the Blessed Mother no matter what happens. In these days I was told that the opposition has concerned itself with us. They say that we have put the Mother Thrice Admirable in God’s place.⁴³ It doesn’t matter! What is amazing is that we have developed so calmly until now. I don’t know whether there is another community that can boast about a similar calm, about such a profound calm! And the reason? Because we have remained true to the Blessed Mother, she has remained true to us. Even when it sometimes seems as though the lightning is about to strike, as long as we are faithful to her, she will spread her protective mantle over us. Even if one day she allows thunder and lightning to strike, even if she allows what sounded so serious just now at the end of the talk – that the Family could be rocked and shaken in every possible way – we may be certain that as long as we remain true to her, everything will be alright. We will remain true to the Mother of God, to the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt!

When I utter the word “faithfulness”, a promise immediately re - echoes in our little shrine.

I can remember how a few months ago, when it was said that people wanted to take our picture from us, many declared, “No one will be able to enter our shrine unless over our dead bodies!”⁴⁴

We are grateful to God that the place of pilgrimage is primarily connected with the place, not with the picture. Places don’t move so easily, pictures can change. Hence our simple loyalty to our dear Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt.

[2.2 Loyalty to our common work]

Our promise of loyalty also applies to our common work. Please don’t think that we have already reached the end of our activity! We have a tremendous goal before us. We want to help to create a new type of person such as the Church needs if it is to overcome the severe shocks of our times. We want to help to create a new type of Family, a holy community. Our work must make us into holy people. Woe, if we become superficial! Woe, if the members of the Family start to become babblers about God, and not God - bearers! We have to strive for true holiness. Faithfulness to our work, therefore, includes unflinching striving to reach the ideal of our state of life, to reach the ideal of our sex.

This morning one of our priests said to me as he looked at our girls, “How much purity there is in our girls!” If only we could manage to save a really sound womanhood and girlhood and bring them through our

⁴¹ In 1935 the German bishops started an enquiry into Schoenstatt’s “special ideas”.

⁴² Both developed strongly in the German Church after World War I.

⁴³ See note 13.

⁴⁴ The Nazi secret police already had their eyes on Schoenstatt and it was becoming increasingly dangerous to be a member. The occasion referred to here was the response of the novices of the Sisters of Mary at that time.

present times! The same applies to our men, to our priests! I don't want to go into this; it should be sufficient to mention faithfulness to the ideal of the type of person, the holy and saintly person, who is called to serve the Church in an outstanding way.

[2.3 Loyalty to our deceased – to Joseph Engling]

We want to be faithful to our deceased. Here I want to greet all who are working for the canonization of our Josef Engling. I know what this loyalty to our dead means to our generation. The Family has brought forth great people. We want to remain true to them. Faithfulness to them is faithfulness to our MTA, to our shrine, to our ideal.

[2.4 Loyalty to the coming generation]

But we also want to remain true to the coming generation. We have a task to fulfil for the coming generation. We bear responsibility for the coming generation, for our future history. That is why we try to lead youthful people into our family circle.

[2.5 We promise to be loyal to one another]

Yet we also want to swear that we will be faithful to one another. I am happy that one of the local sections of our priests' community has given me the following jubilee present, "To build up our community in the sense of a Schoenstatt Apostolic Order and family." How much mutual faithfulness we need when we are out in the world! Since we are not linked to one another by community life, how much profound faithfulness we need if we are one day to realize this great ideal of "a Schoenstatt Apostolic Order living in the world".⁴⁵ We need faithfulness if our whole Family is to become an organic entity at a time when so many conflicting trends are at large. The less we can live our way of life together, the more we want to swear simple faithfulness to one another. Loyalty for loyalty, love for love!

May our jubilee – your jubilee, my jubilee – thus come to its God-willed close. So let it be, we remain true!

Somewhere in a boarding school there was an ordinary lad who lay dying. His lips formed just one sentence, "So let it be!" The Rector of the house heard those words, but didn't know what to make of them. In the delirium of the fever the youngster prayed again and again, "So let it be, we swear once again, Heart of Jesus, we will remain true!"

I think that this should be our conclusion:

We swear once again,
Schoenstatt land, we will remain eternally true to you!
I swear to you with heart and hand
to remain true to my love until the grave!
All that I am and have
I consecrate to you, my Schoenstatt land!

⁴⁵ Later to become known as a Secular Institute.