



## 19/2. Carmel Letters – 1942

### Letter to the Artusrunde,<sup>176</sup> 1 January 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 for which to thank you, and express my wish for you.

#### [Thank you for your faithfulness]

There are probably few people who can and must say *Deo gratias*<sup>177</sup> as sincerely and as 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 master builder.<sup>178</sup> 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*?<sup>179</sup> 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 PSM<sup>180</sup>) with its mission and its spirit.

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

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<sup>176</sup> 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.

<sup>177</sup> Thank God!

<sup>178</sup> German, *Werkmeister*, which translates as master builder. Fr Kentenich means himself. He saw himself as a master builder who, together with his Confrères in the *Artusrunde*, tried to carry out God's will and our Lady's mission as they worked in the Movement.

<sup>179</sup> Literally, "Lights". What is meant are enlightenments, inspirations.

<sup>180</sup> 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.

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 that were 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 paradisaical 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 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 realm,<sup>181</sup> for the realization of which we have striven with more or less success. Guardini<sup>182</sup> 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 – practical consequences]**

I like to meditate on our *mission* while looking into this mirror. If we carry out our mission with faith and love, the Family will become 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 flux 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. You will be thinking: does not what has been said 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:

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<sup>181</sup> 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.

<sup>182</sup> 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.

*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*<sup>183</sup> 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 being consumed by flames. 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*.

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 Schoenstatt's secret, and the corresponding literature. Visiting the individual members 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*".<sup>184</sup>

At the beginning of our Family I was able to visit our priests and help them along. Anton Engel is doing something similar at the moment with his young priests, and Rudolf Klein - Arkenau with his faithful followers. In order to discipline everything and put heart and soul into it, the old "meetings of leaders" should be re - introduced in Schoenstatt every 2 - 3 months. Long live action ...!

*Thirdly*, the early Christians went under the legal umbrella<sup>185</sup> 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 MGO 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. Let me use an expression, although I don't want to 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 above all to protect F. 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 into 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 autonomy. 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 then guide the ship of our Family victoriously through the winds and waves.

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<sup>183</sup> It is related that Cato ended every speech in the Senate, no matter what subject he had dealt with, with the words, *Ceterum censeo [Carthaginem esse delendam]* – Besides this, I am of the opinion that Carthage has to be destroyed! Fr Kantenich took up this saying to signify unyielding concentration on a single goal.

<sup>184</sup> 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".

<sup>185</sup> German, *Rechtsfähigkeit*. 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.

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 height<sup>186</sup> 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 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 85 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 - class<sup>187</sup> 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 Albert Eise never

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<sup>186</sup> German, *eine geistig - geistliche Höhenlage*. It may be that with these two adjectives Fr Kantenich 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.

<sup>187</sup> German, *bürgerlich*. 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.

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.<sup>188</sup> 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 free Paul was to communicate with Christians and pagans despite being a prisoner.

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.<sup>189</sup> We say for this: freedom from obligatory ties has to be complemented by generosity and constant fineness of hearing, obedience, and 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 and fertilised with his blood in southern Galatia – 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!"<sup>190</sup> 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 people<sup>191</sup> who are free from all

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<sup>188</sup> 2 Cor 11,19ff.

<sup>189</sup> Spirit of Christ

<sup>190</sup> 1 Thess 5,19.

<sup>191</sup> Educators, leaders, multipliers.

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**

I would love to write each Confrère 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 Confrère 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*.<sup>192</sup>

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*<sup>193</sup> 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*<sup>194</sup>), *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 ...

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<sup>192</sup> I do everything for our crucified King.

<sup>193</sup> Glorified King.

<sup>194</sup> Let your conversation, the way you behave, your way of life, be in heaven – an adaptation of a Roman saying: Your way of life is in Rome, that is, behave like the upper classes in Rome.

## Conference for the Consecration of the Sponsa Course<sup>195</sup> on 5 January 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 at 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 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 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 a 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 loneliness,<sup>196</sup> 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 it was less painful as a result.

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<sup>195</sup> 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.

<sup>196</sup> In the Closed Novitiate the novices, in order to form a community of their own, should not have contact to the outside world.

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*<sup>197</sup> ... Controversies with the Gestapo until the great attack 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 undertook the latter, we expected to be taken by our word.

c) The 20 September and the events that followed are 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 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 wheat<sup>198</sup> ... 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".<sup>199</sup> 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?

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<sup>197</sup> The College was confiscated by the Nazis on 30 April 1939 and became a teachers' training college. In order to avoid other houses being confiscated by the Nazis, the Sisters of Mary offered the *Bundesheim* – taken over on 15 March 1941 – and the *Wildburg* – taken over on 25 August 1941 – to the army as a military hospital. A number of house searches, which took place at this time, aimed not just at the confiscation of the houses, but at attacking Schoenstatt itself. A Gestapo officer was overheard making this remark. They were not successful, because they found too little incriminating material, and because they were looking in the wrong direction. They were convinced that the "capital of grace" was a secret financial source.

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Luke 22, 31.

<sup>199</sup> Cf. Luke 22, 32.

In your way of saying things I would have to put it this way: For one it means: My love is now losing what is primitive in it, so that *amor concupiscentiae* has become *amor benevolentiae*.<sup>200</sup>

For another: I could never have imagined that distance would so strongly awaken the spiritual closeness, 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 breaks 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 [the Inscriptio] – 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. ...

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 it all, 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, "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."<sup>201</sup>

Until now your fate has always been united with mine. However, perhaps nothing has so greatly 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".<sup>202</sup> 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,<sup>203</sup> which the apostles made good use of in the controversies of that time.<sup>204</sup>

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?

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<sup>200</sup> Needy love has become generous love.

<sup>201</sup> Rom 11, 33 - 36.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Text 20.

<sup>203</sup> 1 Cor 12,4 - 12.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. for example, Acts 13, 1 - 12.

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. Think of how long we have already been working to bring the new person 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 to the free community of our richly blessed Family at such a fateful time, at such a time of suffering and blessing, ...

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

### **Brief note of 16 January, arrived 17 January 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 January 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 January 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 another 52 pages. By now there are about 340.<sup>205</sup>

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 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

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<sup>205</sup> This probably refers to the "*Sponsa Thoughts*". Fr Kentenich was writing on small pieces of paper, hence the large number of pages.

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 will be 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 we have done in rich measure what we would normally have to do in that regard. 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.

#### **To Fr Menningen – 20 January 1942 – afternoon**

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

#### **22 January 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 February 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 have been inseparably united for years. ... You may grow through me, and this time your growth is the ransom for my freedom. So, if you look at it closely, although I may seem to be in the foreground, 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 him. 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 – our faith was not sufficiently alive and deep.

Only now does everything become 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...*<sup>206</sup> 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.

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<sup>206</sup> Blessed are you because you have believed (Lk 1,54).