



22. Address given in Bellavista on 31 May 1949

It is well known that the 31 May 1949 describes the Third Milestone in Schoenstatt's history. It is characterized by a number of subjects:

Above all it marks the crusade of "organic thinking, loving and living" in the battle against "mechanistic thinking".

It also describes the founder's struggle to have Schoenstatt recognized as a work of the Church, and assimilated into its organism.

Finally, under the heading "returning current", the milestone points to the importance and original mission of the daughter shrines and their organic connection with the original shrine.

In addition, the "interweaving of destinies" between "head and members", "founder and foundation" – which was already a distinctive feature of 20 January 1942 – is given a new and specific emphasis in this time of conflict.

On 31 May 1949 the first part of the "Epistola perlonga" lay on the altar of the shrine in Bellavista, Santiago de Chile, which had been dedicated a few days before, on Pentecost Sunday. The shrine was still incomplete and stood on open ground – truly a symbol of human helplessness.

In the "Epistola perlonga" Fr Kentenich defended his thinking and the principles of his foundation against accusations made by the Episcopal Visitor in February 1949. In doing so he pointed to the danger of mechanistic thinking in Church circles in Germany. He naturally feared that as a result of his reply he and his work would be hard hit by Church authorities.

Taking this occasion as his opportunity, Fr Kentenich gave an address in the shrine on this memorable day. His immediate audience was the Sisters of Mary. They had been sent to Chile shortly before the outbreak of World War II, that is, just fifteen years prior to this event, and were still very much engaged in the beginnings and erection of their community in that country. This is the helplessness mentioned in the talk, which was used as a symbol.

The address is an important historical document. It addresses the whole subject of the Third Milestone, mirroring Fr Kentenich's inner attitude as he undertook this "death leap" for himself and his work. As he saw it, this milestone required such a death leap. It led to fourteen years of exile for him, and brought his work to the verge of being forbidden by the authorities of the Church.

The present version of this address is a combination of three sources: shorthand notes made in 1949, extracts from the address in the so-called "Joseph's Letter" (Das Lebensgeheimnis Schoenstatts, 1. Teil, S.

184-189), and a source from the year 1996. It can also be compared with the text printed in the compilation, "Texte zum 31. Mai 1949", Santiago 1974, 1-13.²³¹

My dear Sisters,

at the moment something like the atmosphere of home surrounds us. It might seem that angels are among us and call out to us, "Take off your shoes, you are standing on holy ground".²³² Yes, it is holy, and it must increasingly become holy – holy ground. Holy ground because the Blessed Mother has chosen this little spot; holy ground because in the course of the years, in the course of the decades, indeed, in the course of the centuries, holy and saintly people will flourish, grow and become fruitful on this little spot of earth. Holy ground, finally, because from here holy, that is, sanctifying tasks are being placed on weak human shoulders.

[Return current]

It is a historical fact that Schoenstatt came to us, Old Schoenstatt to New Schoenstatt. As from today, or so it seems to me, we have the task of seeing to it from here that New Schoenstatt finds its way back to Old Schoenstatt. The river of grace, which has flowed to us here with all the fullness of the Third Founding Document, and which constantly flows further, has to return again to its source and bring rich blessings there.

This could be the profound meaning of today's celebration. It is simultaneously a joy - bringing gift and a burdensome task.

[The burden of a mission]

We have gathered here in this quiet evening hour in order to present our common work in a solemn way to the Blessed Mother. We have completed it for her. I have called it our common work. In the background, while I was writing day and night, you prayed for me to the Holy Spirit in our Cenacle.²³³ You did not tire of intensifying your sacrifices for the same intention. Above all, you tried to live the Inscriptio in everyday life.

Through this solemn presentation we take upon ourselves a burden that human shoulders, if left to themselves, could not bear. However, we are also expecting a great blessing for the Occident, especially for our homeland. We allowed ourselves to be sent out from there in order to help carry out the plans of divine Wisdom and Love as instruments in the hand of our dear Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. We tried to do whatever was possible.

Will it be a return gift, a recognition, an honour for us, if we can suppose that from today she wants to use us to exert a stronger, return influence on the fate of the Church in the cultural world of the Occident? Of course, when we hear the word 'Occident', we spontaneously think of Germany.

[An exchange]

May I put into words what is moving our souls at this moment? May I put into words what is happening in our hearts? We have come in order to give and to receive. We exchange all our helplessness, our readiness to help and our faithfulness in helping with the Blessed Mother. We give her our helplessness, and she gives us her helplessness. We give her our readiness to help, and she gives us her readiness to help. We give her our faithfulness in helping, and she give us her faithfulness in helping.

This comparison involuntarily reminds us that the central idea that always motivates us, that constantly drives us onwards, and that gives us unshakeable calm in every situation, is the idea of the covenant. Also this time it is the focal point of our interest. It offers an answer to all the questions that are awaiting a solution. The two partners, who have belonged to each other for a very long time, again face each other at this moment in a holy place. What do they want? What we bring, what we give, is our helplessness.

²³¹ For another translation see J. Niehaus, 31st of May, p. 4-12.

²³² Ex 3,5.

²³³ The house chapel.

This is **financial helplessness**. Pause here for a moment. I am thinking, first of all, of our financial worries. Those who have taken over the immediate responsibility want to do this very simply this evening. With all the love and fervour of their souls they want to offer the Blessed Mother all their helplessness.

But it is also **physical helplessness**. Those who came here will soon have noticed how the climate takes it out of them physically. If we tell ourselves that a new world has to be built on these weak shoulders, we have to admit that our body is far too weak for the climate and for the tasks expected of us.

So what do we give the Blessed Mother? We come with filled hands: with our financial helplessness, with our physical helplessness, but also with our **intellectual helplessness**.

We who have come from home [Germany], even if we are clever, know how strongly we experience our helplessness. We cannot speak [Spanish]. How helpless we are when it comes to passing on our intellectual gifts! Our hearts are filled, our minds are filled – and yet: Ah, I cannot speak.²³⁴ All of us feel more or less the same. Even if individuals have mastered the language more or less, we will nevertheless not be able to express ourselves very quickly in such an efficient way that we will be able to touch the people's soul. We will then feel our intellectual helplessness. With all the fervour of our hearts we offer our Blessed Mother this helplessness.

All of us probably feel our **moral helplessness** most deeply. When childlike love has suddenly broken through, how much helplessness it then expresses. Every greater degree of childlike love deepens our awareness of our weaknesses. Only when a child is small, can he or she be great. This happens to all of us without exception: The closer we come to God, the more we also experience the darkness in our souls. So we offer the Blessed Mother all our moral helplessness.

Finally, also our **religious helplessness**. How often we feel so cold and helpless in our relationship with God. We would like to be flaming torches burning for Christ and the divine.²³⁵ On the one hand, there is a deep meaning hidden in this longing, and on the other, the reality is very different from what one could compare with a flaming torch. So we come and give the Blessed Mother our manifold helplessness.

I have just pointed to the great tasks our little Family has been given here in Chile. However, the reason that has brought us together here this evening makes us aware that God has given us a great task to carry out for the whole world, in particular for Europe, for the Occident. What task is that? It concerns laying bare and healing the ultimate bacillus causing the illness affecting the occidental soul. It is the illness under which the occidental soul is suffering: mechanistic thinking.

I have reasons enough for supposing that in this regard God has placed a heavy burden on my shoulders and on the Family. The law of the open door convinces me that this is so....

What I have now written to the Episcopacy in Germany will wound. Also in this regard we come with tremendous helplessness. Who can dare to approach Church authorities in this way? Something like this can fail miserably. Nevertheless, whoever has been given a mission has to carry it out. A prophet's mission always includes a prophet's fate. Whoever has been given a mission has to be faithful to it, and do it justice. We see the Occident being ruined and from here see a powerful counter - current.

[The history of my own life]

Helplessness! When I think back on all that has developed, God has given me a huge gift: an organic way of thinking in contrast to a mechanistic way of thinking. That was my personal battle in my youth. My battles were really the battles the Occident is now undergoing. God allowed me to fight through what is today shaking the Occident to its deepest roots. God has given me a clear mind, so for years I had to undergo battles of faith. What saved my faith in all those years was deep and childlike love for Mary. Love for Mary always gives an organic way of thinking.

These battles ceased when I became a priest and was able to give form and structure to the world I bore within myself. My constant brooding underwent a process of healing in normal, everyday life. That is also

²³⁴ Cf. Jer 1,6; Ex 4,10.

²³⁵ Cf. Morning Prayer, Inscriptio, in "Heavenwards".

the reason why I understand the modern soul so well, as well as what is causing so much damage in the Occident. To whom do I owe it all? It is a gift from above. Without doubt it is a great gift from the Blessed Mother. So, along with the illness, I was also able to experience the remedy very personally and in rich measure.

Schoenstatt's obvious mission for the Occident, in particular for our homeland, in the face of the powerful onslaught of collectivism, which flattens everything in its path, is blocked by a wall that can only be effectively and widely breached if the bacillus I have described is overcome and removed.

[The daring required by a mission]

In your own way you can help me to bear this burden and share the tasks of the Family. However, we have to reckon with it that this work will wound noble hearts at home very deeply, that it will cause outrage and give rise to powerful retaliation. We may not be surprised if it calls into action a strong and united front of influential men to oppose me and the Family. Finally, in human terms we must take into account that the attempt could fail completely. Nevertheless we may not consider ourselves dispensed from daring to take this step. Whoever has been given a mission must carry it out, even if it leads into the darkest and deepest abyss, even if it requires one death - leap after another. A prophet's mission always includes a prophet's fate.

We see the Occident falling into ruins, and believe that from here we have been called upon to rescue it, to build it up and extend it. We believe we have to offer ourselves as instruments in order to direct a counter-current into those countries from which the peoples here once received their culture, and by whom we have also been very richly gifted.

So we summon up the courage to say with Paul, *Non possum non praedicare* – I cannot do otherwise, I have to speak!

You can understand how great such a massive task really is when compared with our helplessness. We seem to be like David opposing Goliath.²³⁶ I am thinking of the death - leap I dared to undertake in 1942, and I am aware that it is being repeated this time. If we could not count upon the Blessed Mother's readiness to help us, we would never dare to undertake this risky step.

[The Blessed Mother's helplessness]

On the other hand, if you understand me correctly, I think I may add that not only I, not only we, but also the Blessed Mother is helpless in the face of this situation. She is omnipotent in her supplication before God's throne, it is true, but according to the plans of Eternal Love, she depends on willing and compliant human instruments. If, according to the Founding Document, she has taken over the task of proving from our shrine in Germany that she is the one who will overcome the collectivistic heresies in an outstanding way – let me express myself in very human terms - she is longingly looking for instruments who will help her carry out this task.

You come with all your helplessness, but also I come with my helplessness, although I experienced long ago that the Blessed Mother has the solution.

Our readiness to help. We want to surrender ourselves completely to her. We want to offer our readiness to help in a way that shows we are taking a great interest in the work. I don't want to do anything without you. We again want to offer all our strengths to the Blessed Mother, but also all our faithfulness in helping her. We will simply remain loyal to her, come what may.

The greatest thing consists in repeatedly offering the Blessed Mother our readiness to help her, as well as our loyalty in helping her.

What is the Blessed Mother giving us? Her helplessness. The Blessed Mother is helpless, just as almighty God is helpless. God is almighty and yet he is powerless. He wanted to make himself powerless, and became a human being. God is as helpless as the Child in the Crib. Unless we help God and the Blessed Mother, they will not be able to carry out their task. The Blessed Mother is helpless in the face of the task

²³⁶ 1 Sam 17.

she wants to carry out here in Chile. She wants to be the educator of the people! She is now giving us her helplessness.

What else can we do than place ourselves unconditionally at her disposal in the spirit of our consecration, and carry out her wish? We have to surrender ourselves completely to her once more, and by working, suffering, sacrificing and praying in dependence on her, and for the sake of her mission, leave the responsibility for this great work with her. The Blessed Mother is helpless. She can't go it alone. It is a great honour for us that we may help her.

[The Blessed Mother's mission for the Occident]

The Blessed Mother has a great task to carry out in relation to the Occident. Now that she has given me such knowledge, she also expects me to give everything back to her. That is the beautiful and wonderful truth that unites us: we bring the Blessed Mother our helplessness, and she gives us her helplessness, but also her readiness to help. What does she expect in return? That we acknowledge our helplessness...

Of course, we can pray at times: Blessed Mother, take all these worries away! But if they all disappeared, what would happen to us? We would speak the most beautiful words, but we would be filled with selfishness.

She comes to us as our great educator. She offers us her educational abilities, her educational power and her educational strength. If God continues to bless us, so that we can group an Adoration Movement around the shrine, we can expect even more. If we seek the kingdom of God, he will give us everything else.²³⁷

Her faithfulness in helping. The Blessed Mother will remain true to us. You don't need to worry. On the whole we find little real loyalty. The Blessed Mother is the *virgo fidelis*.²³⁸ She still loves us when we bring her our dirty clothes, or even if we have turned our backs on her at times. She will remain true to us until she has us safely in heaven.

So I think, my dear Sisters, that we can rejoice with all our hearts that we have been able to have this very personal experience this evening in our shrine. It is very similar to 1914 when our young men gathered there. Think of how hard they had to work!

We find ourselves in a decisive hour in our Family's history. If we don't manage to bring down the wall I have mentioned, the Blessed Mother will withdraw the mission for Germany from our home, and attempt to rescue [the Occident] from the daughter shrines. She will remain true to the covenant. If sections of our Family do not answer her loyalty with loyalty, because they are too cowardly or weak, we may take it that their mission will be transferred to us.

Two thoughts can lead us into the battle, two slogans can shine out over our lives like guiding stars. The one is **Tua res agitur, clarifica te!** Your mission is at stake, your task, so glorify yourself and your work! The second is, **Mater perfectam habebit curam!** The Blessed Mother will glorify herself perfectly! If we try to draw her triumphal chariot everywhere we can, she will care for us and Schoenstatt, and lead it victoriously through all battles, just as she has done in the past years of persecution.

On the other hand, to the extent that we manage it in our weakness: **Mors sola**.²³⁹ Only death can separate us, only death can separate us from our work, from our shrine.

It is as though we are just beginning to live now. It seems as though what we have experienced until now is only a bit of pre - history. Only now is the real history of New Schoenstatt beginning, in much the same way as in Schoenstatt 1914/15.

²³⁷ Cf. Mt 6,33.

²³⁸ Virgin Most Faithful (Litany of Loreto).

²³⁹ Death alone!

How happy we may be, because we may all be the founder generation. All of us want to allow ourselves to be buried in the foundations of the shrine with our lives and being, the strength of our life and love. We want to be the pillars on which our shrine rests!

We can summarize this in a single statement: I am giving myself to you again, and you are giving yourselves to me! Together we will go through thick and thin! However, first of all we give and place ourselves into the heart of the Blessed Mother and the heart of the Triune God.

The Blessed Mother gave us to one another. We want to remain true to one another, we want to live in one another, with one another and for one another in God's heart. It would be dreadful if we could not find one another there. We have to find one another there! Please do not think that when we go to God we leave one another behind. I don't want to be merely a signpost. No, we go together! This will also last for all eternity. What a false attitude that is, to want to be no more than a signpost! We are together in order to set one another spiritually afire. We belong to one another for time and eternity. Also in eternity we will be in one another. This will be a loving fusion of person with person, an eternally loving fusion. We will then look at the Blessed Mother and the Triune God in one another and with one another.