



23. “Founding Document of the Family Movement” The Home Shrine

Following the Second World War and the death of Fr Eise in the concentration camp at Dachau (+3 September 1942), Fr Kentenich appointed Fr Johannes Tick the fulltime leader of the Family Movement in Germany. In 1948 he wrote Fr Tick this letter, which later came to be known as the “Founding Document of the Family Movement”²⁴⁰240. It summarizes the goal of the Family Movement, applying and laying down in practical terms the goals of the whole of Schoenstatt to marriage and the family. It includes moral demands in keeping with a metaphysics of marriage and as described by the Popes in their official Encyclicals.

This document has also to be seen in connection with the subject “Building site – Shrine” (see Text 37). It shows how the dynamic life from the “original shrine”, which is a unique place of grace, has been extended, or even multiplied, via the daughter shrines, the home shrines and the heart shrines. At this point it still needs to be mentioned that although Fr Kentenich gave the couples the incentive in the following document to prepare a “place of honour” for the MTA picture in their home, the actual “teaching” on the home shrine – that a home shrine is on a par with the original shrine – only took place in Milwaukee after he had spent quite some time observing life.

The following letter from Santa Maria in Brazil has been published in Kentenich, Joseph, “Das Katholische Eheideal. Eine Textsammlung” (A Catholic Ideal of Marriage. Collected Texts), compiled and introduced by Fr Heinrich M. Hug, Schönstatt 1989, 185 - 187.

Santa Maria, 15 April 1948

*Caritas Christi urget nos!*²⁴¹

To Fr Tick for the Family Movement

Dear Schoenstatt Families,

It was a good idea to again reserve the Feast of Pentecost for yourselves. Such a day is in keeping with the dignity and the importance of the Family Movement, for which you are being used as instruments.

It is difficult enough for a single person to submit completely to the dominion of grace, so it seems almost impossible to be a family after the example of the most Blessed Trinity, or the Holy Family of Nazareth. This has always been the case. However, the powerful tendency of our present times to uproot every aspect of life reveals its destructive effects most of all in the shrine of the family. If the Blessed Mother wants to form and mould a new human society and a new type of human being from Schoenstatt, she must of necessity concentrate the whole power of grace on creating and multiplying strong Schoenstatt families. That is why our Schoenstatt Office leads us to pray,

²⁴⁰ The occasion for the letter was the first Congress of couples who were founding the Family Federation. Some of the couples later went on to found the Family Institute.

²⁴¹ The Love of Christ compels us!

Your shrine is our Nazareth
in which Christ, the Sun, warmly shines.
This sun, with its clear and radiant light,
forms the history of the Holy Family
and awakens strong and silent everyday sanctity
in blessed family unity.
Through this Nazareth for homeless times
God wants to prepare salvation for families
and mercifully bestow everyday sanctity
on those who dedicate themselves to Schoenstatt.
Mother, let Christ shine in us more brightly
and join us together in holy community,
always ready for the sacrifices
our holy mission may demand of us.
Glory be joyfully given to the Father
through Christ with Mary, highly praised,
in the Holy Spirit full of splendor
from the universe now and in all eternity. Amen.²⁴²

Whoever knows life today, whoever knows about the dreadful catastrophies towards which the world and Church are heading, will be profoundly convinced that the Schoenstatt Family, as a whole and in its different parts, will never be able to carry out its task unless all its resources and forces ultimately converge on, and surround, holy islands of Schoenstatt families that increasingly unite to form a common Family Movement.

Sometimes when we are calmly reflecting it might seem to be an insoluble puzzle why our Lord spent thirty years in the seclusion of a family while the world around him rushed to its destruction. Involuntarily we ask ourselves what he might have achieved if he had placed his divine powers sooner at the disposal of the world. The solution to the puzzle is always given by the single answer, "I always do what pleases the Father."²⁴³ "I speak the words he has placed on my lips, and I do the work he has given me to do."²⁴⁴ This immediately shifts the question and directs it to the heavenly Father. We know the answer very well. The Father wanted to secure the immeasurable blessing that goes out from genuine Christian families in a way that could not be misunderstood.

May the Blessed Mother in her Cenacle, therefore, call down the Holy Spirit upon you all, so that you may correctly grasp your God - given, freely chosen and freely willed new task in life. May you also receive the strength to work out a useful asceticism and pedagogy for families, and perpetuate proven family customs, which you can observe whole - heartedly, and in this way become receptacles from which all the formations of the whole Movement can be constantly fed and renewed.

All of us without exception take an interest in this new miracle of Pentecost. So we unite and pray and beseech God with great fervour for a new and effective miracle of transformation.

Take the picture of the Blessed Mother with you and give it a place of honour in your homes. They will then become little shrines in which the picture of grace works miracles of grace, creating a holy family land and forming holy members of the family.

In the Founding Document the Blessed Mother promised to see to it that our Fatherland should again take the lead in the ancient world, but we know that the only way to this goal is via holy islands of Schoenstatt families. The MTA will carry out her promise if we respond to the conditions laid down in the Founding Document.

With sincere greetings and my blessing for all present and those they represent,
J.K.

²⁴² *Heavenwards*, p. 50.

²⁴³ Jn 8,29.

²⁴⁴ Cf. Jn 14,10.