



Foreword

Almost forty years have passed since the death of Fr Kentenich, the founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, and his foundation is still engaged in digesting his spiritual legacy. These efforts present it with many challenges. On the one hand, it is important to secure and preserve not only all the events, but also the whole legacy of his spoken and written words. On the other hand, since this includes a huge quantity of material, the challenge also consists in sifting through and arranging this wealth of material, and distinguishing between what is central and essential, and what is time - bound and peripheral.

Finally the growing distance in time from the founder challenges us to translate his spiritual legacy in a threefold sense: to translate it into other languages; to transfer it into modern German, making it available to the altered sensitivities of people through suitable secondary literature; and to bring it into dialogue with the current signs of the times.

It is hoped that this book will make a contribution towards meeting this challenge, and do so from a single point - of - view. The publication of the training courses and writings of Fr Kentenich – in printed or duplicated format – has increased to such an extent that it is almost impossible for those who are not professionally engaged in working with his legacy on a fulltime basis, as it were, to maintain an overview. This also applies to the young generation of those who feel called to one of the elite Schoenstatt communities, such as the Institutes or Federations. The danger is great that they, like so many others, can no longer see the wood for the trees when studying the founder.

For this reason the Family Council of the Schoenstatt Fathers commissioned a handbook that would make it easier for people to encounter Fr Kentenich through a selection of central texts. It is hoped that this "Reader" will also be of assistance to other members and formations of the Schoenstatt Movement.

Compiling such a handbook, which could be dishearteningly lengthy, gave rise to problems of its own. The main problem was the selection of the texts. Which texts should be taken, how many should be left aside? This was a huge challenge in view of the wealth of material, which the founder himself once called a "library on its own".

It was and is a heavy responsibility for the editors, who were well aware that other experts would have chosen other texts to illustrate one or the other subject. So it is important that they explain the criteria by which they selected the present texts. There were four main criteria:

The overriding point - of - view was to choose texts that reflect the spirit of the founder “classically”. There are texts that make a greater impression on the reader than others, and are constantly referred to by those who proclaim Fr Kentenich’s message.

In order to keep the collection of texts from becoming too comprehensive, the most central Schoenstatt texts as such were not considered. These include the Founding Documents, Heavenwards, Everyday Sanctity, Treatise on Instrumentality, and the section of the “Joseph’s Letter” [Letter to Msgr Joseph Schmitz] dealing with covenant spirituality. Knowledge of these standard works is presupposed. This collection of texts has to be seen as complementing them and broadening their scope.

A second main intention was to cover the central values of Schoenstatt’s spirituality with selected texts. At least one text had to be present on all the important events of the founding history and elements of the spirituality.

Finally, we also had to consider the many and different ways Fr Kentenich expressed himself in the various literary forms: the written word, the spoken word, poetry, and the use of aphorisms. The purpose of this Reader is to lead the reader to encounter the man who communicated to an extraordinary degree through language, which he used creatively and at times even played with.

In order to facilitate such an encounter with the founder the texts could also not be too short. Each text had to reflect how Fr Kentenich developed his subject, and the context in which he saw his message and his mission. There are a few exceptions in which a shorter text is added to complement a longer one.

From the point - of - view of making it easier to encounter Fr Kentenich despite the passage of time, the problem of editing the texts became acute. Fr Kentenich’s language was not only creative and original, it also reflected the times in which he lived. Its effect on the present - day reader is that it is antiquated. If the text is a transcript of the spoken word – which was naturally kept as literal as possible in the first edition – it can make for tiring reading, because of the typical circumlocutions, repetitions and padding of that time, as well the grammatical inconsistencies.

So the editors decided to smooth the texts presented here. They were very conservative in doing so with the written word, but more generous when dealing with the spoken word. Nevertheless, they were very careful not to change the meaning of what had been said; their aim was to bring out the meaning more clearly. Their main intention was to make the style more fluid and hence easier to read. More extensive modifications of the text, especially any additions, such as sub - headings, are indicated with []. If a whole paragraph has been omitted, this is indicated by [...] on a separate line.

One of the main problems of translating Fr Kentenich’s legacy is his creative use of language. It is not possible to take a dictionary equivalent for many of his concepts, because even in German they do not reflect standard usage. Fr Kentenich has given them his own meaning. In order to find a suitable equivalent in another language, many heads are needed to delve through the layers of meaning encapsulated by a concept. We are not always in the happy position where Fr Kentenich himself has defined the meaning. This makes translating the founder both challenging and rewarding.

In keeping with the purpose of this book to facilitate an encounter with Fr Kentenich, we did not make use of the conventions of textual criticism. Footnotes are only added to explain the text, or indicate literary sources. In the translation further footnotes have had to be added to elucidate points that would be familiar to the German reader. So if anyone is particularly interested in the original written or spoken word, they will have to refer to the sources from which the text was taken. The introduction to each text provides its precise source.

Each text has a brief introduction, which explains the point - of - view for the selection of a specific text. It also provides some information about the historical place and background within which the text was written or spoken. [...]

The texts have been organized into three main sections: Autobiographical texts, which shed light on Fr Kentenich’s personal life; historical texts that enlarge on the events of the founding period; and “teaching” texts on our spirituality. The historical texts of the first two sections appear in the first volume, the teachings of the founder in the second volume.

It needs to be said that there are a whole series of texts that cannot be forced into the framework of such a structure. Even our limited selection and its subdivision make it clear that for Fr Kentenich the history of his life, Schoenstatt's history and its spirituality form an organic whole. The one is closely related to the other and develops out of it. So in what he said all points - of - view converge. The texts are organized into chapters – and sometimes also shortened – in order to emphasize the one aspect for which it was selected and categorized.

The Reader is being translated into all “Schoenstatt” languages – German, Spanish and English – so that it can serve as a handbook for training new members.

Working on this Reader not only gave the editors a great deal of work, but also much joy and enrichment. It is their wish that the readers, and in particular their own new members, will experience the same.

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Fr Paul Vautier (+2007), to whom we gratefully owe the initial selection of these texts.