

**Excerpts from Workshop: The Secret of Schoenstatt  
December 29-30, 1933**

**Our Incorporation  
into our Lord's life as our Leader and Victor**

Schoenstatt Secret (29.12.1933), First Conference – homily on the Feast of St Thomas of Canterbury

*The Christmas Congress from 27-29 December 1933 has been given the title "The Schoenstatt Secret". It was held for two courses of Sisters of Mary – the MTA Course and the Filia Course. Hitler had seized power on 31.1.1933 and the new political regime promoted the cult of Hitler as the "Leader (Fuehrer) of the German People". The motto was: "The leader commands, we follow!" Unquestioning and unconditional obedience became a fundamental political virtue. Fr Kentenich took up this mythos of the leader, but spoke about the Good Shepherd as the Leader of the Church.*

*From a theological perspective his discussion of leadership is of interest to the laity in the Church. Their task to be leaders is founded on the sacrament of baptism. Priests receive their commission to lead through their ordination. They have to co-operate with the laity.*

[The celebration of the Eucharist is a movement of life]

Let us see Holy Mass as part of a movement of life. Our aim is not so much to follow up new thoughts, as to prepare the way into life for a very definite trend of thoughts.

Yesterday we were deeply impressed by what I had to say about our grassroots movement<sup>1</sup>, our Schoenstatt Pilgrimage Movement. Deep within ourselves we felt a great sense of responsibility for this Movement. Before God we experienced that we are the leaders who are responsible for this grassroots Movement.

Let us take up these thoughts this morning and awaken them to life during Holy Mass. This will anticipate the comprehensive subject we will be discussing in these days.

[Subject of the homily:

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<sup>1</sup> Volksbewegung – Movement among or for the general public. This became the Pilgrimage Movement or Pilgrims' Circle. Initially it was an attempt to reach out to the Faithful and neutralise the influence of Nazi propaganda.

sharing in our Lord's life as our Leader and the Victor]

That is to say, we shall be taking today's movement of ideas to show us the direction for the movement of life in Holy Mass. In the Mass our Lord appears before our mind's eye as our leader; he communicates himself to us<sup>2</sup>. That is to say, we are drawn into his life, he is our Leader and the Victor.

These are the two trends of thought that are presented to us today in the Liturgy, and that we should try to understand from the feeling of life prevailing in the world around us.

You know that we also like to consider the life of the saint of the day. It mirrors our Lord from a very definite point of view, and it is from this point of view that we want to see him.

That is why today's Service of the word focuses our attention not only on our Lord as our Leader and Victor, but also helps us to see the saint of the day [St Thomas of Canterbury] as an illustration of our Lord's life.

Now you have the choice, either to allow yourselves to be led by the Service of the Word, or by the saint of the day. If you choose the first, we will be dealing largely with ideas, if you choose the second, you will have a wonderful illustration.

### **[1. Sharing in our Lord's life as our Leader]**

In the Communion of today's Mass you can read: "I am the Good Shepherd. I know my own sheep and my own know me" (Jn 10,14).

Those are the words of our Lord, but he also speaks them through today's saint, St Thomas of Canterbury, the Primate of England. At first he was the Chancellor, then he became the Primate. "I am the Good Shepherd." Instead of this we could perhaps say with reference to a developing feeling for life: "I am the good leader". You could also say: I am the good mother. Genuine Catholic leadership is an outflow of the spirit of service. A leader does not only want to take the lead, he or she also wants to be a father or mother to a marked degree.

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<sup>2</sup> Throughout this talk there will be a play on words: communion and communicate. We communicate when we receive our Lord in Holy Communion, but he also communicates with us, giving himself to us and drawing us into his life. He lets us share in his life. In the Encyclical Letter "Ecclesia de Eucharistia", §22 we read: "Incorporation into Christ, which is brought about by Baptism, is constantly renewed and consolidated by sharing in the Eucharistic Sacrifice, especially by that full sharing which takes place in sacramental communion. **We can say not only that each of us receives Christ, but also that Christ receives each of us.** He enters into friendship with us: "You are my friends" (Jn 15,14). Indeed, it is because of him that we have life: "He who eats me will live because of me" (Jn 6,57). Eucharistic communion brings about in a sublime way the mutual "abiding" of Christ and each of his followers: "Abide in me, and I in you" (Jn 15,4)."

[The question]

How can we describe our Lord's life as leader? To be more correct and precise we would have to ask: What qualities must a leader have in our grassroots Movement?

[The formative power of the Eucharist]

When I know the qualities [of a leader], I also know that during Holy Mass today our Lord gives me some share in these qualities. So I am being formed today by Holy Mass, even if I notice nothing. The river of life enters into me and transforms me to become a true and genuine mother within our Movement.

[The qualities of a leader]

Taking the parable of the Good Shepherd as our basis, we could work out three essential qualities of a leader:

**A Shepherd's love – a leader's love**  
**A Shepherd' faithfulness – a leader's faithfulness, and**  
**A Shepherd's care – a leader's care.**

### **[1.1 A Shepherd's love – a leader's love]**

The love of the shepherd or leader means that he is living in a most intimate communion of love, life, destiny and tasks with his followers. Today we want to enter more deeply into this world. This morning I may ask myself: Am I connected with my closest and more distant followers in this intimate communion of life, love, destiny and tasks? Does my love as a leader show understanding, is it uplifting and reverent?

Please note the very strong emphasis placed on the word **love**. In the past we often said instead: Without real love every leadership is impossible in the long run. This may be love for the task, but it must also be love for our followers.

### **[True leadership as love for an idea]**

Do I love our Schoenstatt idea? Do I love it so much that I am completely at home in it? Is it my world, in much the same way as I would otherwise live spiritually in a person I love? "I in you and you in me, and we two in each other." That is the psychology of love. "God is love, and whoever lives in love, lives in God and God lives in them" (1Jn 4,16).

Of course, we have to add immediately, if we want to make use of psychology and philosophy – “I in you and you in me” – then that other reality also applies – “We two with one another in God”. Try to find out: Does this apply to me?

### **[A leader’s love as love for her followers]**

If this genuine love is not there, Catholic leadership is simply inconceivable. Then fatherhood and motherhood, which are the essence of Catholic leadership, are simply inconceivable. Of course, there is a tension between love for our task and love for our followers, for people. It is here that true mastery shows - if we manage to reduce this tension and solve it, so that the two poles fuse to form a certain unity. However, you will very seldom be able to talk about an ordered unity in this regard. Normally all we can achieve is a certain unity in tension<sup>3</sup>.

Our Lord gives me a share in his love as a leader.

[Jesus’ love for people]

Look at how our Lord committed himself to his task and his followers. How can we describe his love for his followers, and what qualities can we find in it? His was a searching love, an anticipating love. You will be able to prove this from his life. His was a heartfelt love, a love that was happy to sacrifice itself, it was an heroic love. “No one can have a greater love ...” (Cf Jn 15,13).

[Jesus’ love as the Shepherd – a searching love]

We see these old and well-known truths in quite a new way today. We see them at a far greater depth. So I have to ask myself: How can I describe the situation of my followers, who could be in danger today [from National Socialism]? It does not matter whether I am working with the Schoenstatt Youth or with adults, the parable is far more apposite today than in the past. The wolf can easily break into my flock today and try to destroy it (Jn 10,12; cf Mt 10,16). “The Good Shepherd gives his life for his sheep” (Jn 10,11).<sup>4</sup>

### **[1.2 A Shepherd’s faithfulness – a leader’s faithfulness]**

Very much connected with this is a second essential quality of a community of leaders – the shepherd’s faithfulness. “The Good Shepherd lays down his life for his sheep”.

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<sup>3</sup> The terms Fr Kentenich uses are: Spannungseinheit (unity in tension) and Ordnungseinheit (ordered unity).

<sup>4</sup> This was said at a time when many of the leaders of the Church in Germany still believed that it was possible to “baptise” National Socialism. From the very first Fr Kentenich said that he couldn’t find a single spot that would be able to receive the baptismal waters.

Here we have the deepest, greatest and most beautiful action our hearts are able to undertake. Our lives must be all of a piece; whatever we do must be integrated to create something whole. To what lengths should a shepherd's faithfulness go? "I give my life for my sheep". That is to say to start with – I die to myself. I have to die in a mystic sense.

[Selfless, redeemed love]

On our first evening together we spoke about redeemed love. So I give my life for my sheep. My love must be redeemed, it may not be the expression of refined [hidden] self-love, full of disordered passions and selfishness. We know what it means to be really free of selfishness and to live in perfect union with God. It is the greatest sacrifice that a great woman can make. It is the summit of feminine greatness. A woman's greatness does not consist in the brilliance and glory of visible work. A woman's greatest activity consists in giving up the satisfaction of her heart, it is to be found in the highest degree of unselfishness, in the most perfect harmony between God's will and the human will. I have to renounce myself. I have to give all that I have and am to my followers.

[Prayer as an apostolic power]

In his Christmas address our Holy Father said, "In order to wage war you need money. If the kingdom of God is to wage war, we need prayer." We want to wage war for the kingdom of God. So what do we have to do? We have to pray, pray, and go on praying. May the lamp of eternal prayer burn constantly in my heart. I give my life for my sheep by constantly lifting up my lambs in my heart to the heart of God.

[The light consumes itself]

The light consumes itself. So I must also consume myself. My life of sacrifice may be great or small, but everything belongs to my large or small group of followers. Nothing without me! Nothing may come into existence in my followers without my contribution, without my quiet prayer and life of sacrifice. It may be that others will have more success among my followers. However, eternity must show one day that my silent, calm and brave life of sacrifice was the source that nourished my followers and from which they drew life. It must show that without my life of sacrifice, the whole group of followers could not have existed.

That is how I should see myself today. You may not just think at present of the world of our Movement as such, you should also think about the children in your schools. You have to envisage things on a universal scale.

[The leader has to reckon with failure]

As you know, our leadership today essentially consists in doing without success. The awareness that there is no echo, and that the foundations we have laid today will be cast aside tomorrow<sup>5</sup> – this awareness is almost inhumanly difficult to bear. What heroism is necessary if we are to remain faithful in such circumstances; we need heroism. If we are not to lose the awareness that we are leaders and mothers, we must be heroic. It is the constant source of a mother's suffering.

The greater the love, the deeper the suffering. Love always includes suffering. The more we love, the more heavily failure burdens our souls.

If we expect our Lord to incorporate us into his love as a leader, let us ask him to give us his faithfulness as a leader. He has to communicate himself to us, he has to come with his loyalty as our leader. Look at the lengths to which he took his loyalty! Look at the way our circumstances and his resemble each other, especially with regard to the lack of success. He failed in every way so that others might later be successful. If someone wants to stand her ground at work, she has to have the world underfoot. It is a super-human demand. This alone is sufficient reason for us to feel urged to enter into our Lord's Heart, into the Heart of the Triune God. If we do not find a home there, we will repeatedly throw everything overboard, our nerves and our souls will break down.

That is the strong woman, the great woman, who knows how to pour out her heart's blood, and who is called to give everything so that others can live.

A mother knows that if the seeds she is now sowing do not sprout, they will spout one day in her children or grandchildren. If we are allowed to share in our Lord's life as leader, we may also share in his fiasco, in the failure of his life as our leader. If he was able to hold his head high, I may also do so. I may tremble and weep, but I must be aware that he lives in me and I live in him!

### **[1.3 A Shepherd's care – a leader's care]**

Finally, a genuine virtue of a leader is his care as a shepherd.

[Care as a holy restlessness]

You may not so easily settle down to your everyday routine. I may worry about my followers. This is not a fearful worry, nor is it profane anxiety<sup>6</sup>, it is a holy restlessness. We want to nurture God's restlessness in ourselves. This is a quiet,

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<sup>5</sup> Perhaps has a result of the work of the Nazis.

<sup>6</sup> This concept is a reference to the existentialist philosophy of Martin Heidegger. See: J. Kantenich: Childlikeness before God. "Heidegger uses a harsher expression. He says that modern people are *thrown* into existence. What does he mean? Human beings are thrown into life rather like a piece of wood that someone throws into to the sea, where it is simply tossed to and fro by the waves. Since people are thrown into existence, their fundamental feeling is one of *anxiety*. (p231 of the German edition).

constant concern that asks itself: How can I help, how can I serve? How can I steer the vehicle or ship of our Movement, or the school [in which I am working as a teacher] safely through the shoals of life today? Whoever wants to stand her ground at work today must be a saint, or want to become a saint. Whoever does not strive to rise above the average as leader and mother, will either be crushed or swept away by life.

[Striving to attain our ideals]

Let us not fool ourselves. It is obvious that as long as this world exists, our striving will always be to attain the ideal. We will be attracted by the ideal, we will achieve a little bit of it, then we will again be swept away by the current. Our ideal of holiness will always mean that we will strive to attain the ideal, but we will never possess it. Our greatness consists in always having the courage to start anew. Even our striving to attain the ideal community will never mean that we will possess it fully.

We need a far stronger awareness than in the past that we are leaders. This applies, to start with, to our district and group leaders. Unless you are fully aware that you are leaders, your followers will never find a point of rest in you, which is what they expect.

You know how important it is to me that our course communities really exemplify an ideal community. They should gather around the course mother, so that they really create a holy family. Here the unity should be far deeper than in a district, because they are united by the same ideal. Each one of us should anchor her leadership deeply wherever she is working.

When you see things in their context in this way, you should be deeply grateful to God that we are living at a time, such as ours today, when all mediocrity has to be set aside, when all half-heartedness is destroyed.

[Understand the Scriptures in the light of the circumstances of our times]

We have come to a completely new understanding of the Sacred Scriptures, because they were written at a time that is very similar to ours. (Recommends a book by Wieland: "The Life of Jesus".) You will find that conditions at that time were very similar to ours today. When we place our Lord's life into this context, it sounds so new, we can understand it in a completely new way. The Scriptures do not describe the political situation particularly.

So, during Holy Mass, let us allow ourselves to be incorporated very deeply into our Lord's life as our leader.

**[2. Incorporated in our Lord's life as the Victor]**

A second thought follows from the Offertory prayer of the Mass of St Thomas of Canterbury:

**O Lord, you have crowned him with a crown of precious stones. He asked you for life, and you gave it to him.**

We are incorporated into our Lord's life as the Victor. Our Lord appears before us as the great Victor. He has overcome the world. If we are incorporated into our Lord's life as our leader, we are incorporated into his mission as the God-Man. It is absolutely certain that our Lord will one day win the victory over the great battle being waged in the world. The cause he is serving simply has to win the victory: "I have overcome the world" (Jn 16,13).

[Thomas of Canterbury an image of our victorious Lord]

You can see an image of our Lord's victorious life in the life of St Thomas. The bishop who consecrated him asked him: "Thomas, choose either the favour of your King or of your God". Thomas replied, "If there is a conflict of interests, if I have to choose between the favour of the earthly or the supreme King, I am prepared to give up the favour of the earthly King."

It did not take long before he had an opportunity to defend the freedom of the Church. Victory would only be won if he paid the price of his blood. He won the victory, that is, the freedom of the Church, by shedding his blood. We can only expect to win if we are prepared to pay the price of our blood, if we are prepared to pay the price of apparent defeat, or what seems like destruction. It was the same with Christ, it was the same with St Thomas of Canterbury.

[Application to our Family history]

We may apply the victory also to our Family history. We may hope that we will be victorious one day. If we possess a distinctive Schoenstatt faith, it will also contain a distinctive certainty that victory will be ours. Our idea, our task, our world, has to win the victory one day, even if we seem to lose the battle here or there.

Should we not allow our Lord to give us his certainty that he would be victorious, or that of St Thomas? Let us tell ourselves that we are part of the Church.

[Application to the Church]

We could also apply this certainty that victory will be ours, to the Church. The Church will still be victorious, even if an iron hand<sup>7</sup> tries to suppress it. It is built on a rock. Many have already come to grief on this rock. We, too, are built on rock.

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<sup>7</sup> That of the Nazis and secret police



We believe in the victory of the Church's ideals, even if we discover much human weakness and insecurity in the upholders of Church freedom. The supreme Shepherd is and remains Christ, and Christ will win the victory. Christ, the great General, the great King, must win the victory. We want to help him to win the victory even if we have to shed our blood in the process.

## **Consecration to Mary in the Shrine lets us share in our Lord's Leadership**

From: Schoenstatt Geheimnis (29.12.1933) [Schoenstatt's Secret], Fourth Conference

***Consecration to the Mother of God in the shrine (in conjunction with renewing the course ideal), and self-surrender to Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, the "Leader", are inherently connected according to the mind of Fr Kentenich. As the official Christ-bearer, the Mother of God gives us her Child, the Good Shepherd, and we allow her to form our hearts in the covenant of love until we reflect his love and faithfulness as a shepherd.***

So it is only right and just that at the climax of our congress we should renew our consecration together.

### **Graces are given when we come to the shrine with faith**

In these days many of us realised intuitively that, if it is true that we are given graces in line with our mission every time we make contact with the shrine physically or in faith, we will have been offered a tremendous number of graces personally, as a course, and as a district in these days. We need light, we need strength, we need life.

Now that we have come to our shrine with faith, and especially this evening when we have consciously gathered as a community, will we actually receive the three graces in overflowing measure that have been placed at our disposal? However, this evening we want even more. We not only want to renew our faith in God's mercy and in Schoenstatt, together as a course we also want to give ourselves again to the work of carrying out Schoenstatt's and the Family's task. We want to give ourselves body and soul, with all that we have and are. We want to renew this act.

Three of us want to do so for the first time. Those of us who are renewing it, do so with no less awareness and knowledge of its significance. I think that whatever we do in these turbulent times<sup>8</sup> takes on greater significance and meaning.

### **The renewal of our consecration – what does it mean?**

Consider what it means in reality when we say that we consecrate ourselves once again.

[A consecration is a reciprocal give and take]

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<sup>8</sup> Hitler had seized power at the beginning of 1933.

A consecration is a reciprocal give and take. We give ourselves once again with all that we have and are to the Blessed Mother, and through her to her Son and the Triune God. This act of unreserved self-giving means a great deal.

We receive a gift in return. The Blessed Mother gives us herself and her task. She gives us the strength of her arm, the warmth of her motherly heart, and her divine Child. I can go from here richly endowed, but also burdened with tremendous tasks. I may go out from here to wherever I am working bearing our Lady's burden. These are such inconspicuous acts, yet they are profoundly effective. Eternity will one day show what streams of grace have come from such community consecrations, and poured into us and our world.

[Consecration a new affirmation of our ideals]

What does it mean when we consecrate ourselves? It is a new affirmation of our course ideal<sup>9</sup>. Is this true? Our consecration means that we are again touched by grace, while we again re-affirm our ideals. It does not matter whether this is your course ideal or the Family ideal. The course ideal is nothing else than a distinctive formulation of our common, great Family ideal. When we tell ourselves with great earnestness that a great Movement has to have a great ideal, it means that we, who are the born leaders, have to embrace this ideal with all our souls. Our consecration is a renewed yes, a more conscious yes, to the great goals and tasks of the whole Family; it is a new yes to our course ideals and the whole course family, a new affirmation of the course leader, a new yes to all the aspirations of the course.

[Through our consecration we are again touched by grace]

However, through our consecration we are again touched by grace. That is what we expect from a visit to Schoenstatt and from the consecration. It is good to do so. We can train our wills, set them in motion, we can formulate resolutions and take oaths: "This is the banner I have chosen, I will not relinquish it, I swear this to Mary"<sup>10</sup>. We do this with new courage and longing.

Our human will is weak and fragile. What we expect is to be thoroughly immersed in grace. Our souls should capture the river of grace going out from here, from our Mother's heart, far more strongly. That is our hope, we can expect

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<sup>9</sup> All who take part in the same Novitiate in the Schoenstatt Secular Institutes – Sisters of Mary, Fathers, Brothers, etc. – form a community known as the course community, that lasts for the lifetime of the members. The course looks for an ideal as a specific "ray" of the large community's all-embracing ideal.

<sup>10</sup> Part of renewing the consecration included the so-called "banner oath" as a symbolic expression of the consecration. A hand was placed on the banner and the above words spoken. This banner oath was understood as a public profession of faithfulness to Schoenstatt's ideals. During the Nazi period it was particularly meaningful, because the Nazi's had misused the national flag to make it the most important sign of identity and loyalty to the Nazi cause.

to receive this grace, even if we are unable to renew the world overnight. If we allow grace to uphold us, if we are constantly immersed in grace in a silent and thoughtful way, we will not need to fear anything.

[Do what we are commissioned to do]

Then, at the end of our lives, we will be able to say joyfully: “I have finished the work you gave me to do” (Jn 17,4). It is worth our while to see this work clearly defined. We have to concentrate our energies, because this work is as vast as God’s heart, or as the task of the Church. We are well advised to look at our task with a certain exclusiveness. This, and no other, is my task, I have to try with all my abilities, with the help and mobilisation of all the forces of grace, to carry it out. This should be the real meaning of our renewed consecration and of this quiet hour.

### **The specific character of this consecration – Sharing in Christ’s leadership**

[The task of Christ-bearers – to be mothers of the people]

You want, among other things, to be given a profounder point of view, a definite direction and a profounder, definite point of view for your thoughts, your aspirations and your striving. It would be good if I were to indicate this direction by highlighting the fact that we want to bear Christ<sup>11</sup>. It also corresponds with what we need at the moment. It is good for us to feel that we are children, but we may not overlook our great task to be mothers of our people.

[Mary gives us her Child – we serve him]

Whom should we serve? Whom should our motherly fruitfulness serve? What does God want of his child? If we are completely children of God and give ourselves to his Mother, what does she give us? She gives us not only the strength of her arm and her motherly heart, she also gives us the Child in her arms. *Nos cum prole pia ...* The Blessed Mother should bless us, she should lift up her arm and bless us with her Child, she should place this Child deep into our hearts. She wants to give us this Child, who is so great, so helpless and full of grace.

She entrusts this Child to our arms, to each one of us with all that we have and are. He is a sublime and beautiful gift. She is the official Christ-bearer. Through our consecration she wants to see us next to her in a very definite form. We should assimilate her image, for she is the great *Altera Maria*, the great Christ-bearer.

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<sup>11</sup> As Mary bore him for nine months in her womb. The MTA course saw themselves as little mothers of Christ, little “Christ-bearers”. This is an unusual concept in English. The Greek term “Theotokos” is translated in English as Mother of God.

[She wants the image of Christ, our Leader, to become visible in us]

It is as though the Blessed Mother is calling out to us today: Find in my Child all that you have heard today about true and genuine leadership! If you want to be the leaders of the Family, assimilate the features of the great Leader [Christ], assimilate the form and features of the Leader of the world. He should go before you. You should increasingly make his image visible in yourselves.

[Christ – the Lord also of our completely new era]

So the Blessed Mother gives us her Child today, so that we can look at him and increasingly come to be like him. Then, through our self-surrender to Christ, the King, we will personally grow into our task as leaders. “Christ, the Lord of the completely new era!” These are the words our Lady wants to call out to us. You give yourselves to him. As a result you share in the task of this era – to make Christ the Lord of the new era in Germany, in Europe, in the whole world.<sup>12</sup>

These words have a special nuance. The Mother of God has been at work for about two thousand years, and how many have followed her call? There are still thousands of millions of pagans. Very few of even those [Christians] who call him [their Redeemer] have understood her call. She tells them: You should bear Christ in my name, you should bring our Lord closer to the people of today. You should bring about what so few have managed over the centuries – to bring the new era to acknowledge Christ.

### **Christ, the Leader**

Let us pause here and quietly ask ourselves: Is it true, does our Lord possess the qualities of a leader?

I would like to simplify this train of thoughts and concentrate them by formulating them in this way: A leader has to have two abilities;

- 1. Unreserved self-surrender to a single, great idea,**
- 2. simple and heartfelt self-surrender to his followers.**

The Blessed Mother points to her Child and wants to bless us with this Child. This blessing should open our minds and help us to understand that Christ is the great Leader, the great Duke, or the Friend and Bridegroom of our souls.

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<sup>12</sup> Fr Kentenich grasped intuitively from the very first that the Hitler regime was opposed to Christ. The main argument of the Nazis was that Christianity is the enemy of joy, it preaches mercy and humility. All these values were diametrically opposed to the Arian mastermind. A crucified Saviour did not fit into the imaginary world of National Socialism. In opposition to this “neo-paganism” Fr Kentenich proclaimed with unmistakable clarity: Christ should be the Lord also of this new era!

## **[1. Christ's purposeful self-surrender to the great idea of his life]**

Great people are not erratic in following up their ideas. Truly great educators are people of **one great** thought. Even if love were to enable them to have many ideas, this multiplicity is summarised in a single, all-embracing thought.

[The great thought in our Lord's life]

Did our Lord have such a great thought? The angels sang their song of praise when he began his great task as leader in the Crib: "Gloria in excelsis Deo!" Glory to God ... and peace to all people ... (Lk 2,14). There you have the great thought: To honour and glorify the Father!

[He carried out his task as leader purposefully]

With what tenacious energy our Lord carried out his task to be our leader! You will have to read the Sacred Scriptures and listen to the tone in his voice: "I have come ...!" "I have not come ...!" You need to discover the tremendously purposeful way he pursued this idea, and the energy of his will as he carried out his task. It is an essential feature of the strength and purposefulness of a leader who is a genius.

[His purposefulness is tried and tested]

Look at how our Lord had to battle to substantiate this task. To start with, the devil tried to shake his purposefulness. He tried to banish it by appealing to human greed, selfishness and desire for pleasure.<sup>13</sup> However, in the end our Lord returned to the one great thought: "I did not come for that!" A brief and cutting answer.

On another occasion, which you should see as typical: His followers wanted to divert him from his purposefulness, but he shook his head. He spoke about his suffering and the apostles replied: "That may never happen!" Look as how he snubbed them. It almost contradicts our concept of a balanced character. "Get behind me, Satan!" (cf Mk 8,31-33). What strong emotions! That is the true leader: these short commands, this way of speaking.

[His demand – to be consistent in imitating him]

We here see our Lord as the God-Man, a leader from top to toe. Hence his serious demand to his followers. He demands great things of them. "Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God." (Lk 9,62). Compare this with the rich young man who would so much have liked to be one of our Lord's followers. He had done everything correctly. What did our

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jesus' temptation in the desert before he began his public activity: Mt 4,1-11; Mk 1,12-13; Lk 4,1-13.

Lord demand? Generosity! He wanted an elite group. He appealed to their generosity: "If you want to be perfect ..." (Mt 19,21). Our Lord always demanded that his followers take the consequences, he always appealed to their generosity.

[Our prayer to Mary: Form our hearts according to the Heart of Jesus, the Good Shepherd]

I think that if the Blessed Mother places her Child into our arms and into our hearts today, she again shows us her task: Christ must grow, I must increasingly disappear! (Jn 3,30). I must acquire the leadership qualities of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and become a leader like him. My purposefulness must also be unyielding, divine.

You may feel the desire: If only this could happen! Christ himself wants to form us, and the Mother of God is the God-bearer. What was said in our programme [the Founding Document]? She should draw youthful hearts to herself. We are those hearts, the hearts of her children, her favourites. She should draw us to herself and conform our hearts to the Heart of her Son. We need not fear, we need not be shaken. If we are tempted at times to lose heart, and fear that we will break beneath the storms of life, our Lady must support us with her intercession.

[The decision to say a ready "Yes"]

What do we expect from the consecration? We expect to be touched again by grace. When we are touched by grace in this way, it should increasingly form us into Christ, the Leader; it should imprint this on us and bring it out in us. We await this with humility. However, we also connect it joyfully with our serious endeavour to say "Yes". Our Fiat must be freely and willingly given, it must mean that we reach out with great strength. We, for our part, want to do all we can to attain this glorious goal.

[His style of leadership included both closeness and distance]

When you meditate on our Lord's personality as a leader, you will find that he was in the habit of making his will known very briefly. Our Lord didn't say a lot. You will always find this in the Sacred Scriptures. Despite all the closeness that existed between himself and his followers, he nevertheless maintained a distance from them. "They followed him *from afar*" (Mt 27.55). That is the greatness of a leader – he attracts while at the same time keeping people at a distance. In this regard also we expect to be touched again by grace when we renew our consecration.

## **[2. Our Lord gives himself to his followers]**

The qualities of a leader should not just be seen as strong and vigorous self-possession. The innate structure of leadership requires motherly self-giving to our followers, real self-giving.

[Qualities of Jesus' self-surrender to others]

We have now arrived at a point that can make us really happy. We are also his followers. Our Lord behaves towards us as he behaved towards his disciples, since his love is

- searching
- heart-felt
- strong and heroic.

Please examine the individual features and see yourselves as children and as one of his followers.

[Our Lord's searching love]

"Come to me ..." (Mt 11,28). Who of us is not weary and heavily burdened? He says clearly: "Now, come to me!" These are words from the mouth of God. He stands before me with all the attractiveness of his personality as God-Man. He is searching for me! He invites me, he wants to give me rest. He wants to renew me.

[In his love he wants me to be his instrument]

I need to deepen the awareness that he really loves me. We need to have this very strong faith because we in Schoenstatt should love our Lord with a quite exceptional love. His eyes are searching for us.

Our Mother has called us to serve him and to transform the world into his image. Our Lord and our Lady need instruments. How few people are serious in offering themselves to him to be his instruments!

Through offering ourselves to the Blessed Mother it is as though we are helping her out of a difficult situation. You want to give yourselves (through the apostolate) and find so few are open to receive your message. Our vessel is open, that is why our Lord is looking for us. Think of how he left the 99 sheep in the desert in order to go after the lost one.

[Our Lord's warm and sympathetic love]

Notice that our Lord is not just a person who is uncompromising in upholding his ideas. He also has a heart. A leader must have both – the qualities of a man and the qualities of a woman. A leader needs man's strong will and woman's simple



feelings. Of course, it has all to be disciplined by clear and purposeful determination.

Our Lord's love is heartfelt and sympathetic. It is not that he only uses his followers to achieve his goals. He feels with them when they suffer. He serves the community and tries to motivate his followers to carry out great tasks in the pursuit of his goal – to glorify the Triune God.

Think of the individual episodes in his life. On one occasion he surveyed the whole world with the eyes of a general. He saw how many bases were unmanned. They lacked leaders. The people as a whole wanted to follow him, they were ready, but they had no leaders (cf Mt 9,36).

Look at his sympathetic heart! He knows that he is omnipotent, but he has bound himself to secondary causes. That is why he says: "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into the vineyard". (Mt 9,37-38). Look at how his sympathy showed. At Lazarus' grave in Bethany, in the house where he liked to spend some time (Jn 11,35-36). We can see him weeping as he envisaged the terrible fate awaiting Jerusalem (Lk 19,41).

[Our Lord's heroic love]

You should add other episodes out of the Scriptures to what I have said. You will always see that a great leader loves his followers and surrenders himself heroically to them. "A man can have no greater love than to give his life for his friends" (Jn 15,13). Didn't our Lord do this? He went to his death without batting an eyelid.

We should take our bearings from this attitude: Even if they demand our lives, we will not relinquish our task. "If you don't commit your lives, you will never win eternal life." You need to follow this up and try to empathise with it. Then so many weaknesses will be transformed, we will not become even more nervous, and we will have a firm standpoint in many questions. We will become more heroic according to the example of our Lord.

### **[3. We are images of Christ, the Shepherd and Leader]**

[Let us ask for the grace to experience our leadership]

Our gathering this year should serve to deepen and intensify our qualities of leadership. Our gathering should help us to experience that we are becoming leaders. The Blessed Mother is giving us her Child so that we can say yes. We want to be touched by grace. The river of grace should take hold of us in two ways:

[1] it should give us an unreserved self-surrender to our idea, our Schoenstatt secret, and

[2] it should give us unreserved self-surrender to our followers.

[Let us ask for the grace of trust and strength]

I am deliberately avoiding talking about these things with great warmth and enthusiasm. If it is not the work of grace, it is unthinkable and we will break down when the first storm breaks. It is easy to talk, but when life challenges us with its demands, we break down. We expect to be given the spirit of leadership, as the spirit of martyrdom, through our consecration today. We again profess our allegiance to this spirit of leadership, to the great tasks of our Family, but we also expect the river of grace to be poured out on us drop by drop. Those words must drive us onwards: "Everything with you, nothing without you!"

We may feel weak. If you have been called, you have also been graced. You should take this tremendous trust with you and then embody that great law: God's omnipotence will be glorified through my weakness, through my powerlessness. Do away with everything that preys on our nerves and strength. *We have been called, we have been chosen, so we are also graced.*

[Dare to take the death-leap into Schoenstatt's river of grace]

May God's grace reign over us. The renewal of our consecration implies that we again dare to take the death-leap into Schoenstatt's river of grace. This means to some extent the death of our poor, sick nature. Let us allow this river of grace to carry us. We don't know where it will take us. However, in the end we will land on the shores of eternity.

We will then see whether our faith, hope and love were only an illusion that enchanted us. Eternity will show us that we have build on firm and solid ground. "I know whom I have believed" (2Tim 1,12). I know that the unshakable foundation for my heroic love is faith, unshakable faith in our Schoenstatt secret. May God grant that our Schoenstatt faith, hope and love will grow in height, in depth and in extent.