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Joseph Schmitz)

Excerpts from

The Battle for True Freedom

Retreat *Kampf um die wahre Freiheit*

January 7-10, 1946

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“You have not received the spirit of slavery, but the spirit of sonship.” (Rom 8,15)

First Conference

{5} My dear confreres!

A star over the manger in Bethlehem. For us Schoenstatt is a lighthouse and a source of grace.

Schoenstatt is a *lighthouse*. In the spirit of the Church our hearts delighted greatly in Bethlehem. The Lord in the crib is the particular focus of our attention and tender love. Every change in the nativity scene draws our attention. The three wise men have been there for some days with the star hovering over the crib. The words echo in our soul: “We have seen his star in the East and have come to worship him” (Mt 2,2). No one will hold it against us if, for us, the star stands for Schoenstatt.

In the past we have liked to call Schoenstatt a lighthouse¹. How brightly this lighthouse has shone to us over the years! {6} How it has helped us interpret the times! When we heard that Schoenstatt – while surrounded by the ruins of war – remains a land of paradise, our souls welled up with joy². With intense gratitude we admit that what we have heard from others is true: Schoenstatt, our home, is a wonderland, a paradise land! The more we see the ruins all around us, the clearer it is. All around us are physical, moral, religious ruins. But here in Schoenstatt are the exact opposite. Our soul is filled with great joy and gratitude! And we come – to our lighthouse located in

¹ This image of the *Leuchtturm* finds a prominent place in Schoenstatt’s tradition, most notably in the song “Protect us with your Mantle” (B. Warth, 1939) and in the Schoenstatt Office composed by Fr. Kentenich in Dachau in 1944 (*Heavenwards*, Waukesha 1992, p. 48). In both cases the English translations prefer the word “beacon” over “lighthouse.”

² In spite of the great destruction throughout Germany in the final years of World War II, Schoenstatt remained unharmed. Even the passing of the front on March 25, 1945 took place without incident, and the date itself (the Annunciation) was seen as a confirmation that Mary was especially protecting her place of grace.

a wonderland, in a paradise land – longing to receive a new light for our present day and for the times to come. Once more we want to take our bearings from clear insights and objectives, from a solid program that will overcome the world and the times we live in. Schoenstatt a lighthouse!

Even more than this, Schoenstatt is a *source of grace*, to which we ourselves have contributed, some more, some less. A source of grace which has issued stream after stream of graces, graces which have demonstrably carried us in the last years. Meanwhile, this stream gained such strength and vitality in the catacombs {7} that only very few, I think, have managed its equal in the recent unfolding of world events. We remembered this at the great Thanksgiving Week in October 1945³. It seemed to us like the bursting forth of a mighty fountain. Unfortunately, we priests have not yet been able to take full advantage of this spiritual stream. Now we come to Schoenstatt. We not only seek this light, but also profound graces for the will and heart. We want to receive the graces to take resolutely what we learn and put it into practice. If we can say that we have rarely gone home without just the special grace we needed, how much more can we expect it now! But our expectations and hopes are modest. We have become too tired. After all, we find ourselves surrounded by so much half-heartedness and superficiality. This does not mean that God’s grace has only been at work in our circles. God works wherever and however he chooses. With great gratitude we affirm: There are many oases where God’s streams of grace are richly flowing. But elsewhere, even in our circles, we observe so much half-heartedness and tiredness. We too, are affected to no small degree by this same fatigue. Hence, our expectations and hopes are quiet, but serious.

Which graces do we want to receive during these days? Which

³ The tradition of an annual convention in original Schoenstatt, the famous October Week, began in October 1945 with a gathering dedicating to giving thanks to God for the blessings and protection received during the years of war and Nazi persecution.

graces should Our Lady intercede for us? To discern God's will we {8} let the well-known sources of insight guide us – our personal needs and the currents of the times. We expect to receive the grace of the freedom of the children of God, greatly, as perfectly as possible. Because it is well-known that God does not work alone – “Nothing without you, nothing without us” – we ask: How do we want to view this retreat? We want to consider it a great battle⁴ for freedom. We expect graces of freedom, in order to conduct in these days a battle for freedom, to fight in order to at least train ourselves in what true freedom is, a battle of liberation and conquest. With that we are already in the middle of the world that will occupy us during these days.

We ask ourselves three questions:

1. What do we mean by this battle for freedom?
2. Why do we want to proclaim it?
3. What does it demand of us?

1. What do we mean by the battle for freedom?

– *Preliminary remarks.* The question is justified, the question is significant. It is simple to answer. Looking at world history, the question is significant and justified.

{9} The question is *justified*. A battle for freedom has so many dimensions. Exterior and interior freedom, political, economic freedom, social freedom, national freedom, etc., expressions that resonate deeply in the soul because we bear the yoke of slavery today. The heavier the yoke of slavery, the more elemental is the drive for its opposite: be it political freedom, economic, national, pedagogical freedom. All these are exterior forms of freedom. But we want to remember that beyond this is interior freedom, the freedom of the heart, that is, *a freedom from all things ungodly and opposed to God in order to be free for all things divine*. On the one hand the battle of liberation, on the other hand the battle of conquest, that is, *to become free from every un- and anti-godly thing in our nature so that we can*

⁴ The German word *Kampf* can also mean “struggle” or “wrestling.”

set free our strength to completely belong to God. This inner freedom is also the prerequisite, source, and barometer of our external freedom. Recall the well-known words of Our Lord which we hear so often in these days: “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all other things will be granted you besides!” (Mt 6,33). We could say, “Seek first interior freedom and, sooner or later, all other forms of freedom will be granted you besides. So concentrate everything on the freedom of the heart.

{10} The question is therefore justified, but it is also *significant*. We have a better appreciation for the old verse, “The freedom that I mean, the one that fills my heart...”⁵ What freedom do we mean? The freedom of the children of God. When we take a closer look we notice that the drive for freedom is plainly one of the most essential primal drives of human nature. All previous battles in heaven and on earth have been fought under the banner of freedom. The battle in heaven between the wicked and good angels – was that not a battle for freedom? Adam and Eve and the Devil in paradise – was that not a battle for freedom? Or the Church right until today. We have heard the cry so often for freedom, free space, freedom to develop as Germans, etc. Others have been demanding of us “freedom!” The drive for freedom is apparently one of the most essential primal drives in human nature. We are made in the image of God. God is the absolute free One. Otherwise we, his images, could not be so powerfully electrified by the drive for freedom.

– *The definition.* In all these preliminary remarks I have already given you the definition. What do we mean by freedom and the battle for freedom? In these days the freedom we mean is interior freedom, freedom of the heart. The battle for freedom is:

{11} *The battle of liberation*, that is, becoming free from all things ungodly and opposed to God right down to the sub- and uncon-

⁵ Popular German freedom song, lyrics by Max von Schenkendorf (1783-1817), music by Karl Groos, 1818 (1789-1861). In German the first verse begins: “Freiheit, die ich meine, / Die mein Herz erfüllt, / Komm mit deinem Scheine, / Süßes Engelsbild!”

scious life of the soul,

and simultaneously *the battle of conquest*. We want to conquer our mind, heart, and will for the conscious life of our soul. We want to battle our way into a perfect self-surrender to the will of God.

– *A glance at today's times and world*. If we cast a glance at today's times and world we discover many freedom heroes, freedom apostles, and freedom fighters. But are there many interiorly free persons? Let us look at the two camps: outside the Church and inside the Church.

The camp outside the Church. Freedom apostles, freedom fighters: How little true inner freedom do we find here, instead how much total lawlessness! Freedom exists through law. Human nature after original sin is in such a state that we need laws. Lawlessness is comparable to a stream without banks: the water spreads out and is lost. So too is man without laws, who is lawless, at least in the sense that he lacks any interior attachment to a law or a lawgiver.

Just look at how much inner neglect, how much inner slavery is at work today in circles outside the Church! You will find that modern mankind's lack of an attachment to law and {12} lawgiver has enabled the dictators to manipulate the masses. This is the problem: when man is lawless and interiorly unattached, he is incredibly vulnerable to mass suggestion. The dictator who knows how to crack the whip will rapidly have throngs falling at his feet. Are there many who are inwardly free? We take note of the yoke of immorality and see countless people stoop to animal behavior. This is evidence of a lack of inner freedom.

Circles within the Church. We distinguish here between two camps. The first is like the one we just described. The second: We suffer from lawlessness. We have laws. Many cling to the laws, but few understand their meaning. Indeed, the true meaning of the law and of education to lawfulness is: 1) to acquire the spirit of the law – the *ratio legis*⁶ – interiorly attached to the lawgiver, 2) to myself

⁶ The underlying principles, reasoning, or – in an extended meaning – spirit of the law. Here Fr. Kentenich interprets the underlying foundation of the law as

become a little lawgiver when God asks it of me. Many, many Catholics are enslaved to the law. Lawlessness on the one hand, enslavement to the law on the other. A lack of true interior freedom.

Let us pause for a moment here and look back. Those of us who were in the war were [often] cast into unconventional circumstances {13} and had to become their own lawgiver. The purpose of a genuine education to lawfulness ought to be that we see behind every law the person of the lawgiver.

We know how this looks in the formation of women: Women do not cling so much to things and laws as to persons. To fail against the law means to fail against the lawgiver.

As men we are naturally inclined to see the law as an abstract idea. But this does not sufficiently form us interiorly because we fail to see enough of the lawgiver behind the law, [as one finds in the attitude]: “We have not done what gave the Father joy.”⁷ We must see the organic whole and the unity between the lawgiver and the law. This is a great task. If we can succeed in growing from loyalty to the law to loyalty to the lawgiver, then we will have the right standard for deciding more complicated cases. This is the purpose of training in the law – I must acquire the spirit of the law while acknowledging my dependence on the lawgiver in order to become a little lawgiver myself when it is asked of me. How few men who have grown up in the religious life know how to carry out Catholic principles in abnormal circumstances! Freedom in the law and freedom in spite of the law, this is genuine education to freedom which knows how to keep the golden mean.

{14} What is at stake in the battle for freedom? It is a battle for *true inner freedom*, liberation from all things ungodly and anti-godly.

essentially linked to an attachment to the lawgiver as the personal embodiment of the law, making it possible for the person to serve the law not only in an abstract sense, but in a personal way and with one's whole being.

⁷ See the Evening Consecration in *Heavenwards*, p. 102, where Fr. Kentenich begins the evening act of contrition this way: “Father, may the Savior's Precious Blood / atone for everything / which grieved your fatherly heart / because we did not love you enough.”

This should not only be an aim of the will, but also of the emotions and of our subconscious life. It is the same as the perfect spirit of instrumentality⁸. In order to direct our train of thought, let me remind you of what we mean by the Inscriptio⁹. It has four important features: love's total detachment, total attachment, total readiness to be used, and claims of love. Total detachment: complete letting go of all things ungodly and anti-godly, in order to be free for God and the divine. Total attachment and readiness to be used: As true apostles and saints we want to belong not only to God but to that which is of God – to our fellow man and to God's works. The concept of instrumentality [is] total freedom from self in order to be totally available to the master and his work. We are talking about total surrender. And with it comes perfect freedom, a fruit of the Holy Spirit. You know what I am getting at.

2. *Why do we proclaim the battle for freedom?*

There are two reasons: It is an important issue in the Family¹⁰ and an important issue in our times.

a. *An Important Issue for our Family*

{ 15 } You will do well to remember how our Family differs from others in how we approach freedom. The axiom which inspires us is: "Binding obligation only to the extent necessary, moreover, freedom as much as possible and cultivation of the spirit as much as possible

⁸ This paragraph weaves together main elements of everyday sanctity as understood by Fr. Kentenich (attachment to God, work, and fellow-man, see M.A. Nailis, *Everyday Sanctity*) and instrument spirituality, that is, living the Christian life with a maximum of freedom as instruments of God (see J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt's Instrument Spirituality* (Waukesha, 1995), p. 48-61).

⁹ To totally inscribe one's heart into the heart of God as an act of love that embraces all that God sends, even cross and suffering.

¹⁰ The Schoenstatt Movement, the Schoenstatt Family.

in every area of life¹¹."

We otherwise call it the pedagogy of ideals. We understand the pedagogy of ideals as the freely chosen and freely willed surrender of the entire person to an ideal. This is in contrast to the pedagogy of laws, of binding the person through obligation. The intent of a pedagogy of ideals is [to form the person] to do more than just what the law prescribes and to make decisions from within, freely willed, always taking its orientation on the tiniest whispered wishes of God. This was one of my greatest concerns and goals during my imprisonment: that the Family make proper use of the freedom it still has. In all the enslavement, in all the times I was treated like a slave, I said to myself: I bear the chains of a slave in order to win true freedom for the Family. It is from this longing that the *Home Song* was born. In it the great goals of the Family are expressed in condensed form:

Do you know the land, like heaven itself,
the so ardently longed-for kingdom of freedom:
where magnanimity and sense of the fitting
overcome the downward pull of nature;
{ 16 } where the slightest wishes of God are binding
and receive in answer a joyful decision;
where they, in accord with love's fundamental law,
are always victoriously put into action?¹²

The ardently longed-for kingdom of freedom! How ardently do we long for this freedom! It is the noble favorite desire of every noble man and woman. From the very beginning of our Family, we have stepped forward as prophets of this freedom. We were often misunderstood. Doerner has so misunderstood our meaning that he devotes a third of his book to portraying us as modern heretics of

¹¹ For more on this fundamental axiom, see J. Kentenich, *Childlikeness Before God* (Waukesha, 2001), p. 67f, 192-200.

¹² J. Kentenich, third verse of the Home Song (Hymn of Home) written in Dachau in 1943. Published in *Heavenwards*, p. 159.

practical life¹³. But in reality we are bound by more things than others are. We have obligations. But we are not satisfied with that. We want to do more than that; we want to bind our will to the quietest whispered wishes of God.

The ardently longed-for kingdom of freedom! How many inhibitions are still in our soul! The little bird wants to fly into the heart of God, but is held back by invisible threads – a passion which may be glorified by the world around us, such as clinging to smoking a cigar... In tumultuous times a passion can always trip us up. “Where magnanimity...,” not pettiness of spirit but generosity of spirit, not just fulfillment of duties, but far beyond that!

{17} We know the two dimensions of free will: the ability to decide and the ability to carry out a decision. We want to be able to decide things from within. We want to decide for the quietest whispered wishes of the Eternal Wisdom. When we have made our decision, we want to vigorously carry it out.

The answer to the question, “Do you know the land...?” is a poetic formulation of the entire secret of Schoenstatt:

This wonderland is known to me –
It is the meadow radiantly lit by Tabor’s sun,
where our Three times Admirable Lady reigns
in the midst of her favorite children,
loyally rewarding each gift of love
with the manifestation of her glory
and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness:
It is my home, my Schoenstatt Land!¹⁴

The Schoenstatt kingdom must be a kingdom of freedom. But freedom is so difficult to achieve. It therefore takes a miracle – “This wonderland...” – if we sick human beings want to be building stones for a great kingdom of freedom, if we want to be heroes of freedom.

¹³ Fr. August Doerner, a diocesan priest, published *Sentire cum Ecclesiae* in 1941 as a manuscript for the Catholic hierarchy in Germany.

¹⁴ *Heavenwards*, p. 158ff.

“With the manifestation of her glory...” – which glory is meant in this verse? The glory of the freedom of the children of God.

Mary herself is the representative of this true freedom. During these days we therefore want to fold our hands and pray: Mother, implore for me the true freedom of the children of God! This battle for freedom {18} is a significant desire of the heart (*Herzensanliegen*) of Schoenstatt in every age, especially today. How tired we have all become! We often lack energy. We must take it for granted that the natural means of apostolic activity will often fail because the difficulties are so great. But how unspeakably difficult to decide for the ultimate things, for the divine things, and to follow God’s wishes when we experience so much failure! Do you feel the chains of slavery? Here the grace of God must free us, especially when we get older. Of course failure makes us tired. It is therefore truly a desire right from the heart of the Family, a significant desire of the Family.

b. An Important Issue for our Times

With that I already touch the second point. The battle for freedom is a significant issue of our times – indeed of all times: past, present, and future.

The past. It is our custom, in keeping with the words of Sailer¹⁵, to consider ourselves witnesses, observers, and imitators of Eternal Wisdom. Not infrequently we may have asked ourselves in the recent past: What was the purpose of the past years? Did God accomplish what he intended {19} through such dramatic and violent events? What purpose did this apocalyptic time have? The victorious return home of the elect through Christ in the Holy Spirit to the Father! Acceleration of Christlikeness and with it an acceleration of true inner freedom! Did he accomplish this in our German people, in my fellow priests, in me? Yes, it is true that God took away from us many externals and destroyed many things. The great laws which Mary proclaimed in the Magnificat have become reality: “He has cast down

¹⁵ Johann Michael Sailer (1751-1832), Catholic professor and theologian and later bishop of Regensburg.

the mighty from their thrones... the rich he has sent away empty” (Lk 1, 52f).

Our people today is totally impoverished, including the rich. Nothing but fields of rubble. Outwardly we have become a poor people. To what end? That we become interiorly free from too much attachment to things. Why did so many people have to be torn out of their previous condition of life? God wanted us to learn perfect freedom. Has God accomplished his goal? Must we not say: On the contrary! Are not many people today even more enslaved than in the peace before the war? In the case of many people we must admit that God did not accomplish his intention. Their number is significantly greater than the others. Once more: God has shown mercy on our people and, as it were, picked us up by the scruff of our neck through the defeat. What does God want? He requires that we learn from the past. What he was not able to accomplish with us so far, he wants us {20} to make up for now – by courageously wrestling with God’s intent and so growing in perfect interior freedom. If we have grasped God’s overall intent, this is the great goal required of us by the past.

And the present? Is it not fraught with the same problems? Our task is not simply to look back and make up for past failures, no, the present poses us with new problems. I am thinking of the many economic needs for which we are not able to provide today: lack of coal, lack of food, a certain suppression of public life. What does God want? He has not yet achieved his goal. He therefore reassigns the same task, like a teacher who, out of kindness and mercy, lets the student redo his homework. Only the truly interiorly free person can stand up to the needs of today. Today we must declare the battle for true freedom in every aspect of life!

And the future? It is enshrouded in darkness. What does God have in mind? Who can say? We are plagued by an inexplicable fear because we have not yet become free enough. Anxiety is the secret sense of helplessness in the face of omnipotence. The things we cannot explain make us so uneasy and we lose the courage to begin anything. Truly, we are not yet interiorly free persons. The interiorly free person is totally surrendered to God’s Providence, is espoused

with the {21} Eternal Love. The interiorly free person knows that what the past could not achieve, the present and future intend to achieve. It is a great ideal to be a freedom fighter and a herald and apostle of freedom. At heart, our pastoral work is this battle for freedom. Go forth and become apostles of freedom! We [as priests] do not want to engage ourselves directly on the political stage, nor in the economic struggle. But we have something significant to contribute to the dialog in all of these problems.

3. *What does the battle for freedom demand of us?*

It demands a death leap for the intellect and heart.

The *death leap for the intellect*. If I think in merely natural categories, even with the common standards of faith, I must often shake my head. There is so much which cannot be explained. Who has grasped the plans of God? Illogical realities, injustice in our present day and age. How often does it apply to us: “The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary” (cf Lk 1,28) How many messages God brings us today! How much of it is inexplicable! Our Lady did not understand either, but she pondered. How harshly Jesus treated her as a 12-year-old when he stayed behind in the temple. This is truly a mystery. {22} There is so much that defies explanation, even for the enlightened mind. The austere answer of Our Lord, “Did you not know I must be about my Father’s business” (Lk 2,49)! Mary did not understand or grasp it, but she kept all these words in her heart.

Tests of faith are trying. Let me turn for a moment to those who are especially attached to Schoenstatt and want to help realize Schoenstatt’s tasks for our times. Must we not also pass through tests of faith? Did not the past demand of us such tests of faith? Of course, God worked great things in Schoenstatt in the early years. Measured according to Schoenstatt’s goal, however, we must admit that desperately little has been realized. We must therefore live much more from faith than from the tangible reality. What do we [Schoen-

statt] priests want? We have become independent¹⁶. But that is also a very dangerous gift. On the one hand [it inculcates] much sense of responsibility. But how difficult it is to keep a family of priests afloat and motivated! Whoever leads the family will have to undergo many tests of faith if their activity is to [bear fruit] for the great mission of the Church and of Schoenstatt! What we see [alive right now] is not yet the ideal measured according to the standards of Sacred Scripture. Thus seen, being Catholic and being priests demand incredibly many death leaps of the intellect.

{23} *Death leap for the heart*. Yes, our poor heart, the freedom of the heart! The heart must let go of so many things. This is its death leap. We often sense that ultimate realities are at stake here. But we fail to muster the courage needed for the ultimate realities! We have returned from the war. Faithful to our origins we saw the ideal of our youth shining high over the horizon. The star of Bethlehem still beckons to us. But we make so little progress! Is not a vigorous death leap of the heart what we are missing? Are we not ensnared by fine, fine strands of hidden reservations? Outwardly no one may notice and others may think we are saintly priests. But God demands *perfect* freedom fighters and heralds of freedom, *perfect* heroes of freedom. That is why he requires that we at least clearly see in detail our secret reservations and have the courage to engage them in battle.

We not only want to fight for this freedom, we have the expectation that this freedom [will be given] from above. The power must come from above: “This wonderland is known to me.” Miracles in the order of grace are not of our own making. Let me remind you that Christ promised the apostles that signs and wonders would follow them: They would heal the sick, drink poison without harm (cf Mk 16,18). What are the miracles today which prove our mission is real? They are miracles of human transformation. {24} When people are

¹⁶ At this time the Schoenstatt diocesan priests were in the process of laying the foundations for their own secular institute with their own government and goals, though clearly still as diocesan priests under the authority of their bishops.

transformed, when Schoenstatt is able to form them into true, perfect heroes of freedom, that will be the great sign and wonder which will verify our mission – not so much healing the sick, touching scorpions or the like. The scorpions inside of us are the ones we must learn to deal with. We must form the new man in true justice and holiness.

The first song I composed in prison was the “Hymn of Thanksgiving”:

“The chains have fallen!
Let a song of thanksgiving
jubilantly resound to heaven
from all within Schoenstatt’s holy halls. (....)

We therefore stand united today,
formed by God’s love,
fearless in the struggle
with all of Satan’s offspring,

so that new men and women arise
who are, like Christ,
both free and firm on earth,
in joy and in sorrow...¹⁷”

God must give us this. Of course, our cooperation is also needed – that we seriously wrestle to make the deathleap of intellect and heart. But the main thing is that we fold our hands and fall to our knees in prayer. Graces of transformation: [Our encounter with] the transubstantiation must become [the occasion for our inner] transformation. We want to go forth from this retreat as heralds and apostles of freedom.

¹⁷ *Heavenwards*, p. 164f.

“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.”
(2 Cor 3,17)

From the Third Conference

a) *The clear-sighted person*

{44} I see behind all things the living God and the supernatural reality, God’s will, whether ordained and permitted.

Do you mind if I bring you a compact summary of what we have elaborated and experienced on this point over the years? Using our simple image: every event in life is like a building, a cathedral, at whose pinnacle is the living God. Our task is to put up the ladder whenever something happens, in every situation: losing the war, a wound in my nature, a genetic flaw, sins I have committed. We put up the ladder and look at each detail of life in this way. Our natural predisposition really ought to be to {45} immediately ask in every situation: Father, what are you trying to tell me? To seek and find God in all situations.

The man of this world will be broken by this world. The world today is so confused and in turmoil. If I cannot rise above the worldly view and see other laws at work, then I will be broken and become a poor, sick specimen of human frailty.

I put up the ladder for my intellect. I ask in the light of faith: Heavenly Father, what do you have in mind? What is your intention for this? But also – and even more important – the ladder for the heart. I climb up with my heart and embrace the living God and his intention. Easier said than done! Looking back into my past, if I find undigested impressions that are still haunting me, I must not just leave them there, undigested. Everything in my life must resonate with and flow into God. What an inner freedom this gives! In practical terms: in a certain sense I make *God’s* point of view my own. And [like from a high tower –] how far we can see from *his* point of view! And then, if I embrace all things with *God’s* heart, how interiorly free I become!

This is a task in life for times which scarcely know this high level

of faith in Divine Providence any more, and even religious men and women only vaguely believe that {46} things will turn out all right. In such times man is in danger of becoming fatalistic or calloused. (...) God speaks to us all day long through the circumstances of life. If we would only translate what the previous talk said dogmatically and put it into practice – how joyful we would be!

St. Ignatius tells us that our task in life is to “seek, find, and love God in all things and persons.” Things and events are God’s language. I must understand it and respond. This is the supernatural person.

{47} If our reaction to blows of fate is, “God has his reasons,” if this is my first supernatural reaction, what evidence this is – from the psychological standpoint – that our faith has penetrated to our subconscious thinking! Do we not really need to reach this level? Because God speaks his language of things and events so mightily today, because God speaks so clearly, we are forced to listen to him. The man of this world will be broken by this world. Earth has been separated from heaven, with the result that the earth has become a hell. The earth is being consciously cut off from heaven, and the resulting heaven-less world is supposed to be made into a paradise. With what effect? It has become a hell. How shall the earth become a piece of paradise again? We must reseek the connection to the supernatural world. (...)

{49} Cross and suffering are the fuel of love and an opportunity to prove my love. I want to prove to the living God that I belong to him and him alone. It is the chance to decide again {50} for God. What matters is not that I am free from all difficulties. He may let the whole world fall apart! What matters is this: that each person freely decides for him. We live in such challenging times: we are hit from so many sides, by so many storms, by so much thunder and lightning. Because God wants to catch our attention, because he wants us for himself – that’s why we should renew our decision for him and offer him all our love!

b) *The daring person*

(...) The supernatural person is not only daring because he constantly lives in the other world [the reality of God], but also because he joins his weakness to the power of God. It is clear: The side with God will prevail! The supernatural person is daring because *God joins his omnipotence to our utter helplessness.*

How can we tell the daring person? In his decision-making and his follow-through on decisions. This is of great importance today.

{51} Daring in decision-making. How often are we perplexed, standing before doors with seven seals! How shall I decide? We want to always know the complete outcome in advance. How cautious are the pope and bishops when they issue mottos! No one knows what will come, so everyone is cautious. That is why clear, certain leadership is hard to find. Don't wait for someone to take you by the hand! That takes too long. The supernatural person is daring in his decision-making. Thinking as St. Paul did, he constantly follows the law of the open door. He has a great goal which he never gives up on. The step required of him today is clear to him through the circumstances of the times. He can tell at once what God wants of him right now. What we need to know tomorrow we will find out tomorrow. The normal attitude of modern man is collectivistic and mass-minded. This is why it is so hard for him to take responsibility for his actions. Hence his need to be led. But I must have the courage to make decisions. If I waited for everything to become totally clear, to be able to go to work with total certainty, I would wait for decades. The supernatural person courageously steps forward, even at the risk of outward mistakes and failure. But in that event [he does not despair, for] it is an outward means for growing more deeply into the supernatural world.

{52} But also daring in the follow-through. Regardless of failure or success, health considerations, the praise of others, etc. Whoever wants to achieve something must always be daring. This is a lesson we learned in the past years. It is no different today.

“And a great battle broke out in heaven.”

(Rev 12,7)

From the Sixth Conference

Part Two:

History of the Battle for Freedom

{110} Here we only need to pick up the threads which we have just let fall. We want to consider three points:

- I. The origins of the battle for freedom
- II. The continuation of the battle for freedom
- III. The completion of the battle for freedom

It all revolves around a battle for freedom. We want to decide, freely and of our own volition, for Christ and his blessed Mother, against the devil and his minions. The purpose of world history is the victorious decision for Christ! Today God gives us countless opportunities to decide again for Christ. This is the profound meaning of the battle for freedom: to freely decide for Christ and to follow even the faintest wishes of Eternal Wisdom. Everything else only remains on the surface.

I. Origins of the battle for freedom

{111} *Michael and Lucifer.* The book of Revelation describes this process using the classical and massive statement: "*Et factum est magnum proelium in coelo*" – "And a great battle broke out in heaven" (Rev 12,7). The battle for freedom began in heaven. Its reward and crowning is in heaven. I must therefore climb upward. The realities of this world are tied together with the realities of the other world. A battle has broken out. What kind of a battle? A battle for freedom.

A great law of God's wise government is this: God is fatherly; he gives abundantly and superabundantly. But in order to gain permanent possession of his gifts he ordinarily demands that we pass of a test of obedience. [Why?] Out of respect for the freedom of his creatures. How richly endowed were Adam and Eve! But we must

reconquer these gifts. The living God has so much respect for our free will. He does not want us to just be nameless numbers. Again and again we are called to choose to join his side. The great tragedy of our life is that we can never say with certainty: We have it made! We must always reckon with new tests. We must simply consider it a given that there will be difficulties of faith, difficulties with purity, etc. There will be phases when we face new tests again and again. God wants our free will so that he can give his grace to us once more again. {112} This is the sound balance between God's activity and our free human cooperation.

The test in heaven. How richly endowed were the angels! Of course they were abundantly endowed! Theologians of earlier ages paint the picture for us: clear in intellect, strong of will. Moreover, they were endowed with abundant graces. But one thing was still missing: the beatific vision. This they had to conquer on their own. How? By passing a test. "And a great battle broke out in heaven." A decision was demanded of them. They had to prove themselves in a battle for freedom.

A great battle for freedom broke out in heaven. Why a *great* battle for freedom? It must be considered great for three reasons:

1. *Because of the number of combatants*

All of the angels were drawn into this battle. (....)

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2. *Because of the consequences*

a. *For the combatants*

We know that this battle decided the fate of the combatants for all eternity. The good angels entered into the beatific vision, the bad angels were plunged into hell for all eternity. Truly no trifling matter!

b. *For others*

This first battle was the beginning and source of all other battles fought ever since and until the end of time. Truly, the battle that erupted in heaven was a great battle for freedom!

3. *Because of the object of the battle*

It must have been about something of great importance; it cannot

have been about some trifling matter.

Revelation does not tell us what the test was. From the harmony of dogmatic thinking we can gain some reasonable clarity. It is clear that the test could not be something of the senses, since pure spirits are unaffected by sensuality. It can only have been something purely spiritual. It must have been some kind of a test of humility, a peril involving their pride. If we ponder the whole order of salvation and revelation as it has been given to us, {114} we can see how the theologians generally conclude: It was a test of humility in which Lucifer and the angels were shown the dignity of human nature made concrete in the *Verbum Divinum incarnatum* [Incarnate Divine Word], in the Mother of God, and in all who wear the countenance of man. Lucifer and his followers refused to bow to this dignity. Most especially, they did not want to bow in homage to the Incarnate Divine Word. If the Second Divine Person wants to assume a created nature, then it is clear that the entire heaven must bow before him, but if he really insists on taking a created nature, then the Divine Word must assume the nature of an angel! But no, [the angels were shown that] the Second Divine Person will assume a human nature. All of God's creatures endowed with mind and will also have a drive for the divine. As Lucifer saw it, this drive would be satisfied if the Second Person of God took on angelic form. God did not want this. The decision was therefore: "*Quis ut Deus!*" [Who is like God!] Michael and the largest portion of the angels freely placed themselves on God's side and bowed before Christ, his Blessed Mother, and dignity of human nature.

We want to pause and see that this is also the particular battle of our own time. {115} It is typical of our times that we are caught up in a battle for the dignity of man! Because the devil stumbled on the dignity of man, because the devil was plunged into hell because he refused to accept the dignity of the human race, we must conclude that our times today – when all destructive forces are deployed against this bulwark [of human dignity] – are extraordinarily diabolical, that the devil who, at that time, did not want to bow to the dignity of human nature, is especially involved in this battle. Today the devil

is celebrating great victories. All theories about man – separating man from God, man as a bundle of drives [=Freudian psychology], man as an interchangeable part in a machine, etc. – especially the theories that get the most attention, must be largely traced back to the influence of the devil. As a result, the dignity of human nature and of the human person must be the second great object which we stress over and over again in our preaching (the first being a living faith in Divine Providence, which is the Alpha and Omega of our formation of the Catholic faithful). (....)

{119} In his letter to the Ephesians and throughout his letters, the Apostle Paul contributes to our understanding of this mystery of Christ [i.e. Christ as the source of human dignity]. As members of Christ, we participate {120} in his divine nature and the Blessed Trinity dwells in us as a temple (cf Eph 4,14 – 5,20 and 1 Cor 6, 19; 2 Cor 6,16). St. Bonaventure uses the analogy of created grace as a halter; where the halter is, there the horse also must be. We cannot do enough to make people aware of the high dignity of man. "*Agnosce, homo, vilitatem tuam*" – "Recognize, o Man, your lowliness!" But this lowliness can only begin to radically change us after we have perceived our greatness: "*Agnosce, homo, dignitatem tuam*" – "Recognize, o Man, your dignity!" (St. Leo the Great). Today, a sermon on man's broken nature must always be preceded by a sermon on his high dignity. The awareness of his high dignity has vanished from the feeling of life of man today. Sin only gains its true weight when we are penetrated by the dignity of being a child of God and member of Christ. This must inspire our retreats and missions. We must stress the eternal truths, of course, but always against a positive background. Even if people are starving, man's primary value is not his mere existence, but his being made one with God. The proletarian feeling of life [i.e., the feeling that I am ultimately expendable and worth nothing] must be overcome and replaced with an aristocratic, a noble feeling of life. The entire person must grasp this, not only with the mind but also with the drives and emotions. This gives the correct Christian tact: Because we are so exalted, because as members of Christ we share in the {121} nature of the Father (....) [the Father

gives us] Christ, who died for us on the cross, the Holy Spirit who educates us, an angel to guide us, a heavenly Mother. How great we must be! Meditate on it in prayer and preaching!

The high dignity of man was ultimately Lucifer's great battle. He did not want to bow to the dignity of man, epitomized in the Blessed Mother.

Today, too, an extraordinary battle has broken out. When in all of history has the dignity of human nature been so trampled as today? Man is a replaceable part in a machine. So we want to proclaim with full vigor the dignity and nobility of man rooted in true freedom, in royal freedom. (....)

"I shall set enmity between you and the woman!"
(Gen 3, 15)

From the Seventh Conference

II. Continuation of the battle for freedom

{125} The book of Revelation continues with these simple words: "And thus the great dragon, the ancient serpent known as the devil or Satan, the seducer of the whole world, was driven out. He and his minions were hurled to the earth... When the dragon saw that he had been cast down to the earth, he pursued the woman who had given birth to the boy" (Rev 12,9.13).

1. The devil was hurled to the earth

Lucifer and his minions were hurled to the earth. What does "earth" mean? First of all, hell. Since then there has been a hell. Do we need to insert a meditation on hell? We can do that some other time. {126} The Church fathers say: since the death of Jesus Satan has been chained (cf Rev 20,2), but the chain is still long enough that the devil can reach each person. The power of the devil is limited, but he can still wreck havoc. But not only is hell meant, but also the earth as we know it. St. Paul sees the earth and sky filled with devils. St. Peter writes, "The devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5,8). The chain is quite long. If our retreat were longer, we would insert here a discussion of demonology, which would be quite useful.

a. The devil is always working

He is always at work on every front. After all, he is the antagonist of Jesus and Mary. He is interested in drawing all men, whose dignity he rejects, into his own fate. (...)

b. The devil always works massively

{130} If we ask about the devil's influence, we can expect that he always works massively. The book of Revelation says that he holds

whole kingdoms under his sway and rages against the Kingdom of God (cf Rev 20,8). We have felt this in the past years.

But the devil also uses many other kingdoms. "The devil prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Pet 5,8). His prowling is often silent. We think of what old ascetics tell us. St. Ignatius says that the devil is often like a general who knows his opponent's weak points. He focuses his efforts there. If I know that, I will direct all my attention on the weak points in my character so that the devil cannot take advantage of them. Ignatius goes on to say that the devil often plays the seducer. Seducers like to swear one to silence. To counteract this we must speak openly in confession about our difficulties and temptations. (...)

2. The devil pursues the woman

a. The woman = Eve

{131} Historically speaking, the woman refers, first of all, to Eve. Let me remind you of the devil's stroke of genius, his strategy, that he did not first approach Adam, but began by ensnaring Eve. He knew how great the woman's influence was over the man. He first won over the woman. In this way he had an ally against the man. After all [from the devil's perspective] it was all about conquering the bastion of the will and the intellect. (...)

b. The woman = Mary

{132} He pursued the woman. Also meant is the devil's great adversary, the Blessed among women, the great Christ-bearer and Christ-bringer, the One who conquers the serpent, the Great Sign in heaven. He pursues the woman – he pursues the Mother of God! "I shall set enmity between you and the woman!" (Gen 3, 15). (...)

{133} The book of Revelation speaks of a Great Sign and a terrible dragon (cf Rev 12). Where the woman is, there also is the dragon. And vice versa: Wherever the dragon arises today and celebrates his power, there also arises the One who conquers the serpent. Look at Lourdes and Fatima. God makes us notice her. Wherever

the devil rears his head, Mary's presence is also felt.

The great battle in our own times, in our own [Catholic] circles is not about Christ, but about the position of Mary. In Schoenstatt we believe we have a special mission to safeguard Mary's mission and place in world events today and to see to it that Mary is seen and acknowledged everywhere. (....)

c. The woman = all women

{138} The image of Eve – [also means] all women. The devil pursues the woman. Just as he used Eve to drag Adam into ruin, he likewise uses woman today to corrupt man. What was the object of temptation for the angels, for Lucifer? The high dignity of the human race. Therefore the devil tries to drag woman's high dignity {139} through any filth he can. Woman is robbed of her crown. Every way he can, the devil pursues the woman and in her all mankind. Take some time to ponder and grieve the degradation and defiling of woman.

It is certainly true that we cannot do enough today to help the world of men find its way back to Christ. But you know that the man normally finds his way back to Christ through the woman. Just as the fall of the man was through the woman, so also his redemption. Ponder in this context the famous words of St. Bernard: "*Non erigitur vir nisi per feminam*" – "The man will not be redeemed unless it be through woman." The man shall be redeemed by placing the woman more in the foreground. By "*femina*" [woman] St. Bernard means the Blessed Mother. The man will not be redeemed unless the Blessed Mother stands at the foot of the cross and speaks her fiat. She also speaks her fiat to the distribution of graces. It follows that our horizons in the pastoral care of women must be universal, must see the whole world! Whatever I do for the woman so that she becomes Mary, overcoming Eve, I do to help realize the words: "The man will not be redeemed unless it be through woman!" "Let there be Mary!" Eve must be more and more overcome in all women. Every woman who becomes a little Mary becomes a helpmate of Christ, a corredeptrix.

d. The woman = the Church

{140} We want to say one last thing. "The ancient serpent pursued the woman" also means the Church. Here too you sense how we could dwell on this at great length – the persecution of the Church by the devil. After all, the Church is an image of Mary. Don't think for a moment that the persecution of the Church is over. Wherever you go you find those who take offense at the Church. The devil persecutes all those who serve the Church. This is the continuation of the battle. It is too bad that we cannot explore this. Try to pray through these thoughts on your own. They need to take flesh and blood. For our pastoral work today these thoughts are of significance.

III. Completion of the battle for freedom

According to the book of Revelation, the devil will be completely defeated at the end of time. Christ came in order to defeat Satan and his works. In this age of history they [Satan and his works] will never be completely defeated; that will only happen at the end of time. According to the book of Revelation the Spirit of God will do this. Christ, as the radiantly crowned King will appear on a white horse. He will do it himself. With the breath of his mouth he will cast down Satan (cf Rev 19,11-21).

Whoever was in the war or in the concentration camp could study human nature in all situations. Anyone schooled in {141} philosophy and history also knows how the "progress of man" has been exalted in the last 100 years. More knowledge, more cultural advances, and soon man will no longer be plagued by the beast – he will be redeemed! But whoever saw human nature in these primitive situations [i.e., the war or the concentration camp] noticed how powerfully awake the beast could be in spite of all culture and learning.

Now comes the difficult question: Does education have any value at all? What must we do to hold our own in the face of such [human bestiality]? Serious thinkers have often discussed these problems. (....)

{142} Unless we educators and pastors become men of prayer, men who pray much for the grace of perseverance for ourselves and

those we care for, then no matter what we do we will face one failure after another! There is something sinister about the power of the human heart; so much of it defies our understanding! As a result – I am speaking with you, after all, as Schoenstatters – because of this danger that something mysterious and evil can approach us, suddenly causing us to give new birth to the serpent in our own breast, or that we are overtaken by the mysterious and profound influence of the devil in the world around us – we must not only seriously pray for perseverance, but also entrust ourselves to the Blessed Mother. Whoever has entrusted himself to her has the great counterbalance within, the great counter-prairie-fire against the devil. If everything we know about Mary from Sacred Scripture is true, then it should be clear to us that this is true. The love of Mary, say the doctors of the Church, is the most certain sign of the grace of election { 143 } and that we will have a happy death. (....)

I don't want to say more about the final battle. But it is of great value to know: In the end Christ alone will be able to defeat the devil. If we do not take precautions and humbly pray for the grace of perseverance, entrusting ourselves in childlike fashion to Mary, we can be certain that the devil will have a stronger influence on us and on the family and we will succumb in one form or another to the power of the devil.

The battle of our lives remains a battle for freedom. On the one hand, a battle of liberation – liberation from all things ungodly and anti-godly. On the other hand, a battle of conquest – we want to belong entirely to God.

From the Eighth Conference

{ 144 } My dear confreres!

We have laid bare the foundations and deepened our understanding of the history of the great battle for freedom through the ages, not only shedding light on our personal tasks, but also urging us to strive for the heights. We have already addressed many concrete realities. Now we gradually reach the point when we look more directly at our own personal issues. Here we are accustomed to pondering the times as a voice of God. Should we not do so now, delving more deeply in order to discover what God is saying for our personal lives? *Vox temporis vox Dei* – The voice of the times is the voice of God!

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Part Three:

The Battle for Freedom in our Time

It is worth our while to reflect on the battles for freedom in our modern times. We will then see that the great battle of our times is a concrete form of the overall battle for freedom. Our focus becomes less speculative and more concrete and direct.

We will first look at the situation of our times from the standpoint of the battle for freedom in our times. We will then try to interpret our times. They want to show us in a most concrete manner how we should overcome the difficulties of our times. The situation of our times, the difficulties of our times: *Vox temporis vox Dei!*

I. The Situation of the Times, the Difficulties of the Times

Two difficulties especially move us: losing the war and the occupation of our country¹. These are two things which clearly bother us and are of deep importance for us. We want to let them

¹ That is, Germany was defeated by the Allies in World War II (Germany surrendered in May 1945) and then divided into four occupation zones headed by Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States. The occupation forces remained in power until political autonomy was returned to the Germans in 1949.

sink in. We want to ponder not only the events of our own little lives, but also those of the life of the nations, and of our own nation.

1. Losing the War

What does it mean to have lost the war? It means a liberation from an insufferable yoke of slavery. Of course, the occupation means a new enslavement. We {146} will address that later. But the occupation has, first of all, freed us from the past years' chains of slavery, chains which held us more and more tightly, which we could no longer break with our own might. This may seem strange to us. We expected that the military would be able to help us. They tried at the last minute, but without success. We must admit that the occupation freed us. Our defeat in the war was therefore a liberation from an insufferable yoke of slavery. Some voices can already be heard which forget what we have been through. It is therefore important to make this clear.

If you want to have a reminder, let me describe a few characteristic traits. What lies behind us was an international war of slavery, an international war of religion, and an international war of culture. Which standpoint have you taken in the meantime?

An *international war of slavery* – a war which wanted to enslave the whole world. The new documents show this. But we knew it already. It was really an imperialistic enterprise. The world was going to be enslaved. What we experienced in Dachau and what the German people experienced more and more was going to be the model for world government. Consider the ramifications!

{147} Moreover, an *international war of religion*. On the theoretical level, Hitler considered himself a new messiah and was worshiped as one. What we experienced in everyday life was no coincidence. It was based on principles. One of the most important statements comes from one of Hitler's private conversations. It reveals his "gospel." He said, "I answer the Christian doctrine of the infinite dignity and significance of the human person with the new redemptive doctrine of the infinite insignificance and uselessness of the person and his complete absorption into the infinity of the nation.

I see the rising of the new man, and he is upon us. He is terrible and gruesome." He said this in 1938 or 1939; I read it in Switzerland.

National socialism [the Nazi movement] was not only a political current, but also a religious one, a war of religion on the international level. I have always believed this; otherwise I would not have had a standpoint [for my thinking and actions].

Examine what kind of a gospel this is! It is collectivism, the collectivistic, mechanistic image of man. How Catholicism honors the dignity of the human person! Hitler says: I answer him with the doctrine of the infinite insignificance of the person. Man is less than an animal. He is viewed as an interchangeable {148} part in a machine. When the part is worn out, is no longer useful, it is thrown away.

Absorption into the infinity of the nation! What does that mean? The individual is worth nothing, the nation is everything. Nor can we forget that those in power often also had their own interests in mind.

He is terrible and gruesome: He no longer has any feelings, he reacts as if one were pushing a button. A collectivistic person like this is brutal and murders thousands. Then he can turn around and embrace all of humanity. He is the depersonalized, mass-minded, dehumanized man.

This is the person we deal with today. We must form and win him over. The increase in church attendance [after the war]: Is this not a kind of mass-mindedness? We hear the astonishment of school directors at the pliability of the soldiers returning from war. Does not such a pliability raise at least one red flag? I would always fear [that] mass-mindedness [is behind it].

How has the war against religion been run? Pius XII writes in his encyclical: Until the end the Church was always persecuted, with increasing viciousness, then with a momentary let-up, but ongoing until the end. We have all experienced this countless times. What Pius XII wrote {149} in his encyclical about atheism is true: We are in the midst of a persecution of the Church greater than all others before it. This was not a private opinion or rhetorical phrase. I could offer you convincing proof of this through everything we experienced

in Dachau. We all sensed it: What is going on is a depersonalization of man, the oppression of the human person. It was a terrible yoke which the nations had to bear and carried with them. Hence, losing the war liberated us from an insufferable yoke of slavery.

Of course, I cannot ignore the fact that it was not only a war of slavery and of religion, but also a *culture war*, in the broader sense of the word. In the introduction to his encyclical Pope Pius XI wrote in a similar vein: We are entering a time of culturelessness worse than when Christ became man. This is true. How much moral fiber was destroyed during the war, in the concentration camps, and is being destroyed everywhere today! We must not lose sight of this!

“The angel of the Lord declared unto Mary.” Losing the war “declares unto us”... It is an angel of the Lord. Let me devote a few thoughts to making us think, to taking us deeper: It is an angel of mercy, of justice, of total surrender, and of apostolic spirit. It brings us a threefold message.

a. The message of God’s mercy

{150} God has shown us mercy by freeing us from this yoke. (...)

b. The message of God’s justice

{151} Losing the war is also an angel of justice. What am I driving at? Losing the war reveals God’s justice and demands God’s justice.

(...)

c. The message of total surrender

{157} Losing the war can be viewed as an angel of total surrender. I already mentioned this the night before last. The purpose of our defeat in war is the purpose of world history. Everything should help give us new birth. It is meant to help that Christ be reborn in us. It should urge us to decide more quickly and perfectly for Christ so that we become more and more like him and love him more and more deeply.

{158} Now the question: Has this purpose of the war been realized? Has this total surrender been attained? If I have not emerged from the war deeply, interiorly transformed, then the defeat should bring me the message: Amend what you have missed! We are not talking about great theories, but practical life. Why have we failed to grow more perfect through the war? Why are we still so half-hearted? Because we have not yet broken the chains of slavery or let them be taken from us.

Those of us who take their orientation from Schoenstatt face the grave danger that we constantly talk about attitudes but do not follow up with actions; that we are interiorly enthused by great ideas, but do not let them form and shape the little deeds of everyday life. I want to point out a few things.

– We are not sufficiently changed and transformed. Our transformation has not gone deep enough. We lack a deep-seated, vigorous spirit of sacrifice! There are many, many circles who want to have nothing to do with sacrifice. Our young people returning from war are fed up with being asked to make sacrifices. They want everything in a positive spin. But our interior transformation can only come at the price of serious mortification; this is just the way it is. Unless I really adopt self-denial as a powerhouse in my life, I may be a good talker, but my interior world will {159} never change. Therefore: We need *more* clear and definite *mortification all down the line!*

What are the names of the enslaving chains that hold me down? There is, first of all, sensuality. What do I mean? Members of religious communities who passionately smoked during the war², bring this passion back home with them. How much a passion can affect us! I could see it in Dachau. There were those who would rather be beaten than give up a single cigarette. To be so addicted to smoking is truly a chain of slavery! How can I become an interiorly free person? Not by saying:

“The freedom that I mean,

² For instance, as soldiers. They were therefore living away from the usual order of their religious life.

the one fills my heart...”³

No, by saying: The freedom that *God* means! Don’t always say, “It’s not so bad; it’s not a sin.” That is not the point. We want to be free – as free as possible! The world today is crying out for people formed by Christ. A universal desire! Must a cigarette constantly hold me hostage and keep me from flying? Vigorous self-denial.

I am no longer the youngest and have accompanied many people in life. How many started the journey and gave it a real effort. It was the little things that stopped them. Like: the housekeeper. Or so often: my own flesh and blood. “Poor Henry! He needs to be taken care of, pampered! Life is so hard today. It’s only right he has a nice little house!” We must ask ourselves if we have taken some of the austerity out of celibacy⁴! {160} We must ask ourselves: Might not my parents at home the greatest obstacle to my taking uncompromising steps along the way to sanctity? If it is not flesh and blood, it may be sentimentality⁵. We must not look at these things as trifles, but take them seriously, viewed from my ideal! The devil uses these things. If he fells a single oak, that is, a great leader, how much damage he can do to the kingdom of God! A single diamond is worth more than whole a pile of stones. What a plus is a priest called to holiness is for the kingdom of God and what a minus it is for the devil! He wants to trip up those called to total surrender and make them half-hearted. Then he can really fan the flames!

³ Popular German freedom song, lyrics by Max von Schenkendorf (1783-1817), music by Karl Groos, 1818 (1789-1861). In German the first verse begins: “Freiheit, die ich meine, / Die mein Herz erfüllt, / Komm mit deinem Scheine, / Süßes Engelsbild!”

⁴ That is, the austerity that makes it prophetic, fruitful, and appealing to those in search of God.

⁵ Based on what is stated below, “sentimentality” seems especially to refer to letting relationships with women become too sentimental. In other words, someone in the celibate state must keep relationships with women on a professional level and, even when heartfelt and lively, in the bright light of passing on all accepted love to God. The test: If God would ask it of me, would I be willing to give up this relationship? Indeed, would I (as a man) be willing to go to her and break this relationship, *if God would ask it of me?*

We all have a weak spot, a quirk which we cannot overcome. But we must at least make an honest effort! Beware of self-deception! Losing the war is meant to help give birth to the real Christ in us. We really ought to dig more deeply: We know that we men are much more inclined to do the things we subconsciously want. How dependent we are on impressions. But how many impressions are still sitting undigested in our craw! How many bitter priests there are! How many bitter men and women fill our convents! This must not be! Our subconscious is truly a point of vulnerability, our Achilles heel. The life of a priest is inconceivable without love of rejection. {161} Unless we educate ourselves in this, unless we force ourselves to maintain a certain simplicity in our lifestyle, unless we possess a positive disposition to prefer the more difficult, we will make no progress. What is the soul’s first spontaneous reaction when something happens? My goal ought to be that my first reaction is supernatural rather than natural. When someone wants to destroy me, or is slandering me, and my first and lasting reaction is not self-defense or revenge but interior joy, then we have been transformed. If I must always first ask: “Is it a sin?” then we might just as well pack up and go home.

Losing the war is an angel of total surrender. Now that the war is over, it demands what the war was intended to give us while it still raged in full fury but did not: radical total surrender.

Regarding simplicity of life: Some of us grew up in very poor families. The greater the poverty from which we come, the greater the needs we have later. This means something today. Please examine your own life!

Regarding contact with women: We must not forget to be vigilant when we return home, so that our sexuality does not run roughshod over us. Declare war on sentimentality! See things clearly and take seriously the call to increase your spirit of sacrifice – but show it by increasing your sacrificial deeds!

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– *More spirit of prayer, but also more prayer exercises!* In general our inclination is to quickly say: It’s not the act that matters,

the main thing is the attitude. This is true. But the attitude must also lead to actions. This is what is so frequently missing today – doing an actual prayer practice! If I omit a practice for a long time, the spirit will also be lost. What prayer practices do I have? It's time to reform my spiritual daily order! We must foster a sound priestly life of prayer, otherwise we are not even fulfilling our most basic duties as a priest!

Let me especially direct you to pray to the Holy Spirit. A profound sacrificial spirit is inconceivable without the action of the Holy Spirit. It is true that we must make our own effort to break the chains of slavery, but we cannot break them without power from above. We cannot break them ourselves, only the Holy Spirit can give us this spirit of sacrifice. This is the *Inscriptio* in very concrete form. This is love of the cross. Love is not love unless it has been crucified (Crescentia von Kaufbeuren).

d. The message of apostolic spirit

Losing the war is an angel of apostolic spirit. Sad to say, for many, many people it has become a helper to a new birth, but an angel of death. “Let the dead bury their own dead!” (Lk 9, 60). How many murdered resolutions, how many moral dead bodies, {163} spiritual dead bodies are lying about, how much half-heartedness everywhere to be found! Every war is followed by wide-scale moral morass and superficial culture. What then is our task? If the war has become the angel of death [for my apostolic spirit], I must see to it that it becomes a helper to new birth. Our goal must be to take the potential hidden in the fact of losing the war and use it, to the extent this is possible, to find the way to God.

With that we have tried to interpret the event of losing the war.

From the Tenth Conference

2. The Priests in Dachau

{192} To take a different angle and not always to speak from the metaphysical heights, let me share with you a little about Dachau. On average, about 2000 priests were in Dachau. If we all had lived out the character of Holy Orders, imagine how this should have transformed the camp and bore the fruits of spiritual living!

a) Let us begin with a *benevolent critique* of the priests in Dachau.

– First: *How did his formation fare in extreme distress?*

Is education really worth the investment? Let me first ask a few questions. You might agree with me if I declare: If education is worth the investment, then we would expect the priests in Dachau to have been more ideal than they were, more capable of standing up to the test. We would expect to find more resilience among the religious than among diocesan priests. Why? Because religious priests receive so much formation in novitiate and tertianship. For this to make sense and work, one ought to see something sooner or later. In my experience one hardly found any difference, indeed {193} no difference at all. Now, others may have made a different experience.

So, does education really make sense? Could we not accomplish a great deal more with less effort? True, it could be that human nature only has a certain resilience in extreme distress, that there are conditions and situations of which one must say, “Yes, when human nature is so crushed then we will all break down, then everyone will fail! It is true that human nature is very limited in its ability to cope. But we want to strengthen our resilience and make the investment in our priestly formation pay dividends! For instance, was the way our priests died [in Dachau] especially ideal, with a deep religious fervor? It was not so at least during the horrible starvation¹. I must say that

¹ One of the most horrific times for prisoners in Dachau: the “starvation summer of 1942,” when in spite of sufficient food in the German populace, the prisoners were reduced to rations below the standard needed for survival.

it was largely just an ending, a termination of life. I do not presume to judge anyone. When one's energies are so drained, so interiorly decimated, nature's ability to resist is gone: Would it not have been more or less the same for the rest of us? But we want to look hard at this sobering truth. What response shall we give to these reproaches? In my own mind I have always answered it this way:

One sees how much grace is necessary for education to bear continuous fruit. We must stress more the importance of praying {194} for the grace of perseverance, not only as preservation from mortal sin, but in living and striving for the ideal.

Do you not think that such observations ought to help us reach the conviction: So much depends on the family [I grow up in]! What is added later in the houses of formation is a kind of ironing out the wrinkles, a polishing. What I do not receive in my family I won't get later on. Therefore, stress the education of families – do everything you can any way you can.

Should I abandon all education and methods of education and only teach people to pray? No! I must make a still greater effort than before to let the great Catholic truths *form life*, to *take them seriously*. This is one definition of everyday sanctity. *Sanctus est qui sancte vivit* – Holy is the one who lives a holy life! Bottom line: Must we not give still more importance to everyday sanctity?

(....)

{196} – *The development of our ability to love*

When we greet each other in later years, we say, “You're the same as ever!” This is really a less positive than it sounds. After working on myself for 30 or 40 years – still I have not changed...?! What good were the frequent confessions, the particular examination, etc.! [On the other hand,] it is an accomplishment to say: I'm the same as ever. If the alternative is to say that I was *once* on fire for my ideal, but now it has vanished! The only ones whom ideals form and transform on the inside are those who strive from earliest years to seriously develop their ability to love (*Liebeserziehung*). Only love

has a profound, formative power. Don't be content with ethical formation and speaking of moral purity. No, work to develop your ability to love. Only love has profound, transforming power.

– *Natural-rational love*

We were dependent on packages being sent to us [in Dachau]. Anyone with an eye for life could observe who received packages, and who received outside help. Those who relied on fellow priests were in bad shape. Who was best taken care of? The ones for whom flesh and blood, and the ones for whom women provided for. All too often, the religious priests were horribly neglected by their confreres. The same for deanery priests! The problem was evident. {197} For months I addressed this in my talks in the dormitory². I always discussed it from the angle: Why is natural love more durable and able to make more sacrifices than supernatural love? Now the way the question is framed is not quite correct. If you look more closely, you will find: In those cases where sacrifices were made³, natural and supernatural love were in harmony. In those cases where nothing was sent, there was usually only a little supernatural bluster.

This totally serious question has ramifications for the education in every boarding school: Should one only see himself as supernatural or also as natural. One must allow the natural to grow into the supernatural. Private friendships are often prohibited in boarding schools because they might become sensual friendships. But not everything is sensual friendship! I have met so many people in whom the most beautiful and profound feature, their ability to love, was totally undeveloped. Those who grow up in normal circumstances have it easier. I won't dare to give an answer. I know it for myself, but I cannot just present it as generally true.

² One of Fr. Kentenich's apostolates in Dachau was to give spiritual “talks” (or rather, impulses) to the priests in the dormitory before they went to sleep. The purpose was to provide some spiritual nourishment and lift the hearts and souls of his fellow prisoners to a calling more than mere survival or bare physical existence.

³ And here one must remember that to assemble a package, the relatives or friends outside the camp had to make a real sacrifice of some of their own food rations to send it into the camp.

(....)

{204} As priests we belong to a higher state. This is how it is at the moment. The awareness that the priest is higher is why we were persecuted [by the Nazis]. Our task: to be humble and generous. Should we abandon our prerogatives as an admired part of society? Should we fall into the background and just gratify the body? No, not even our people wants that. But we should not become arrogant; instead we should come close to the people, be respectful, give alms, live simply, be charitable.

From the Twelfth Conference

{241} We must accept the love of our flock. It must become second-nature to accept it. We are embarrassed by it when we are young. When we are older, we fear it could become too natural. If we ask about how we develop in others the ability to love (*Liebes-erziehung*), we must take it as a matter of course that no aspect of education is without risks. There is even great peril in standing there like a block of wood and always pointing to heaven. St. Peter models for us true Catholic educational wisdom. He calls himself the *forma gregis* [the form of my flock, cf 1 Pet 5,3]. Ours was an individualistic age. We don't even try. With our words we may claim to be trying, but our deeds tell the tale.

We are the bridge between God and his people. People form attachments to people; people {242} come to God through people. This is education at its healthiest. I must simply accept the love of my people. Now it is not right to “fish” for the affection of my people. But if I am the form, the model for my people, and if Christ is my form, then the normal thing will be for people to attach to a person who carries them into the heart of God. How often must one say: Countless are they whose love for God is so minute because they have so little love for man. The way to a healthy love of God is by way of a healthy love of neighbor. (....)

{243} Now if love is awakened, it is clear that I must not be a robber or adulterer. I must carefully pass on [to God] the love and respect which the other gives to me. The healthy organism of attachments, the soul's experience of having a home demands physical untouchedness so that the love can be passed on to the heart of God. The *regula tactus*¹ must be observed. For us priests this means:

¹ The “rule regarding touching,” a practical safeguard for chastity. A celibate person does not foster physical touches or caresses beyond the bounds of public social convention, i.e. when a handshake is the customary greeting. This is not only a safeguard for the celibate person, but also for the transparency of the process of love taking place in the other – allowing his or her love to connect more spontaneously with God.

Interior unaffectedness, [joined to] perfect exterior untouchedness. This applies not only to our dealings with young women, but also with young men.

A noble person, himself at home in God, must become a home for countless others. We give each other a home. Therefore, “at-homeness” is a task. To me, giving someone a home [in my heart] equates with selfless service. St. Paul speaks of the “constant push of people.” He wants to be “all things to all men” (1 Cor 9, 22). If we are able to give ourselves this unselfishly to others and give them a home, then we will also easily lead them to the feeling of being at home with God. But if something is not there, a link in the chain will be missing. We must see to it {244} that our people give a home to each other [in their hearts]. For instance, in families. Every family should make the words of the “Home Song” their own:

“...where they glow and shelter one another
and flow as one into the heart of God;
where streams of love well forth with might
to quench the thirst of the world for love...”²

This must become a reality in every family. In practice every family will probably need to content itself with “bearing” love³. The more one shelters each other, the harder it may be to put up with some things. “The table of the family is the table of pleasure, but also the table of sacrifice.” We must put up with one another. To want the best for someone in a religious family creates warmth. It is not constantly spending time together, smoking, eating, drinking, etc. that makes family. At its heart the table of the family is supposed to be a table of sacrifice and love. This is the strong, masculine awareness: We who belong together all serve the same task. This is especially important for a community of men. This is why we as a federation of men have one single, great task: to support one another because we want the best for each member. If we only see ideas and do not serve

with other great objectives, the community will fall apart. How do we make people free? By giving them a home. How do we make ourselves free? By consuming ourselves in this, our task.

² J. Kentenich, *Heavenwards*, p. 158.

³ That is, a love which bears (puts up with) the quirks and shortcomings of each member.

From the Thirteenth Conference

Drafted as (unused) chapter for *Schoenstatt's Covenant Spirituality*

Renewal of the Covenant of Love: Eyes, Hands, Heart

The following text¹ is from a retreat for priests held by Father Kentenich in Schoenstatt, Germany, from January 7 to January 10, 1946. This retreat, held less than a year after Father Kentenich's release from the concentration camp in Dachau, had as its main theme the "struggle for true freedom", namely the inner freedom to overcome all the things that hold us enslaved in this world. In this closing passage from the retreat, Father Kentenich encourages the Schoenstatt Priests to renew their covenant of love with Mary under the aspect of inner freedom.

{248} *What can I say to you at the end [of our retreat]? Because of our helplessness we look to the great power who again and again reinforces our courage and again and again sends us abundant streams of grace from above. Our Lady, through her presence and power here [in the shrine], wants to personally intercede for us the grace of freedom; she wants to form each of us into heroes of freedom, she wants to form the entire family² into a kingdom of freedom.*

"This wonderland is known to me –
It is the meadow radiantly lit by Tabor's sun,
Where our Three times Admirable Lady reigns
in the midst of her dearest children,
loyally rewarding each gift of love
with the manifestation of her glory
and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness:
It is the land I call my home,

¹ *Kampf um die wahre Freiheit* (The Battle for True Freedom), January 7-10, 1946, manuscript, p. 248-262, 262, 264-267.

² References to "the family" in this talk imply the Schoenstatt Family.

it is my Schoenstatt land!³"

It may be therefore worthwhile to consider Our Lady as the great Mother of Freedom and the great model of freedom.

1. Our Lady as the Great Model of Freedom

{249} She was free from the tyranny of the drives. That is the freedom for which we so ardently long, because these are the chains which weigh down on us so much. What are the names of these chains? Sensuality, pride, the opposite sex, cigarettes, alcohol, comfort, easy living? Nicholas of Flüe⁴, the peacemaker of Switzerland, prayed:

"My Lord and my God, take everything from me which keeps me far from you. My Lord and my God, grant me everything which draws me closer to you. Take my very self from me and make me entirely your own!"

That captures the direction of our thoughts. The Blessed Mother was entirely detached from self, entirely surrendered to God. She is the perfect model of freedom.

We admire the glory of her inner freedom: without sin, without original sin, without inordinate desires, unstained, totally immaculate, more glorious than the purest light, freer than the most perfect seraphim. This is a freedom which she had without a fight. But there is also a freedom for God, i.e. an "upwards freedom", a growing into God. This freedom for God cost the Blessed Mother uncountable battles. She had to have the heroism of faith and devotion, the death leap of faith and of the heart. Pray through these thoughts from the standpoint of inner freedom – then the brilliance of the image of the Blessed Mother will appear before us.

2. Our Lady as the Great Mother of Freedom

³ *Heavenwards*, p. 158.

⁴ St. Nicholas of Flüe (1417-1487), Swiss layman and hermit who saved the Swiss confederation from civil war in 1481.

{250} At the end of our retreat, the second thought is of particular interest to us – Our Lady as our "Mother of Freedom". As the Mother of true freedom she wants to help us attain true freedom.

"When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all things to myself" (Jn 12,32). [Christ,] the "Sun of Justice" has told us that. When the sun is at its highest point, how it draws all things to itself! The flowers turn their heads to the sky, the brook bubbles, the animals stir, and man breathes deeply. That can be applied to Christ, the supernatural sun. Christ reigns above in heaven. From heaven he attracts all things to himself!

From a certain standpoint, the Blessed Mother can also be referred to as not only the moon, but also the sun. Of her, too, it can be said, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all things to myself." Our Lady is now exalted in heaven, she stands as the Great Sign in heaven, herself enveloped by the sun and in turn a kind of sun in her own right. She draws all things to herself. My prayer this time is that she, the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, form the Kingdom of her Son as a kingdom of freedom.

"With the bands of love I draw you to myself" (Hos 11,4). Through the band of genuine motherly love she shall draw me to herself. My weaknesses remain for her to heal. Would it not be worth the effort to renew our [Marian] consecration {251} at the end [of the retreat], to renew our covenant of love with the Blessed Mother? "*Ego diligentes me diligo!*" (I love those who love me!)⁵. I want to be loved by you. I want to receive from you the blessing of freedom. We therefore give to her ourselves and our entire wretchedness and helplessness. Then we know that we can expect "*Totum pro toto*", all for all⁶.

a. Eye in Eye

Should we not offer our eyes, the eyes of the mind and the eyes of the body? "My Queen, my Mother,... and to show my devotion to

⁵ Founding Document, No. 11. Originally from Prv 8,17.

⁶ Grignon de Montfort?

you, I consecrate to you this day my eyes⁷." They want to be praying eyes, pure eyes, supernatural eyes that seek to see the eternal light and peer into the supernatural world. We have otherwise referred to this as the "transparentization" of all created things. Lift up your hearts, your eyes! We need the eyes of faith that see the Divine behind all things. We sense how our eyes are still entirely earthbound, pleasure-oriented, so often and so powerfully attracted by every fascination of earthly and created things.

Our Lady now wants to give us her eyes. What kind of eyes are they? They are warm eyes which are constantly directed at us with deep love. They are seeing and soothing eyes. All of Sacred Scripture, especially the book of Revelation, emphatically draws our attention to the fact that Christ, {252} the King of Kings, dwells with us: "I know your deeds, your labors..." (Rev 2,2). It is a consolation to know that. The eyes which are constantly turned to us are therefore knowing and kind. How should I picture these eyes? The mother of Tobiah waited for her son who had gone on his journey with the angel Raphael⁸. She waited and waited, but he did not come. She could finally stand the waiting no longer and went out to the mountain. She had to keep watch to see if he might not be on the way. That is how I can picture the motherly eyes of Our Lady. My eyes, too, must become discerning and supernatural. The eyes of the Blessed Mother look after me and watch over my struggles.

These eyes are turned to me again and again in blessing. How often have we not prayed, "Turn your eyes of mercy towards us⁹." She will turn her eyes to us more and more. Another example: A child is sick and on the point of death. The mother will not leave the child's bedside, will not allow herself any rest either by day or by night, will keep constant vigil. That is how I can picture the eyes of Our Lady, her vigilant eyes. As St. Bonaventure says or Anselm or

⁷ Excerpt from the prayer "My Queen, My Mother".

⁸ The story of Tobiah and Raphael in the book of Tobit. See especially Tb 11,5-6.

⁹ From the prayer *Salve Regina* (Hail, Holy Queen): "Turn, then, most gracious advocate, your eyes of mercy towards us...."

St. Bernard¹⁰: Unless she watches over me, we are lost, we will not attain the graces which we await. For us that means that unless she watches over us, unless she keeps track of us with her eyes of mercy and warmth, we can never expect to receive the gift of inner {253} freedom. We will never have the strength to fight the battle against all the chains that we carry in ourselves, so as to achieve the exalted gift of genuine freedom.

It was probably St. Bernard who gave us the principle that whatever the Blessed Mother did in caring for Our Lord, she does for us as well. And how did the Blessed Mother watch over Our Lord? From the manger to the cross, eyes of mercy, motherly eyes kept constant watch over Our Lord. I am Our Lord. The things which he could experience through his Mother, she does for me too, especially for me as a priest, since I am and want to be his likeness in a special way. Throughout his life, including his public life, Mary's eyes always accompanied Our Lord in a blessed and serene manner. I, too, see her eyes in everything I do. An eye for an eye! Her eyes are turned to me and mine to her. I have given her my eyes, and in return she gives me the entire measure of her attention and vigilance.

These things also applied when Our Lord hung on the cross, seemingly abandoned by God. The saints point out that this feeling of being abandoned by God must have been something terrible. But even when abandoned by God, he was not abandoned by Mary. In the lives of the mystics we can observe how, even when God would abandon the zealous soul and lead it into the midst of mystical experiences, Our Lady would stand by keeping watch. The soul would often be utterly confused – Christ and God {254} the Father had departed – but, interestingly enough, in such situations the great consolation was always the Blessed Mother. What she was for Our Lord, she may and quite often must be for me. And her eyes are not only merciful, but also endowed with might. *Veni, vidi, vici* (I came, I saw, I conquered). That is a consolation for me! How often have

¹⁰ St. Bonaventure (1221-1274), St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109), and St. Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153).

I tried to shake off the shackles of one kind or another! Perhaps I neglected to call on Our Lady. If she really responds to my glance with her glance, if she responds to my plea, can she not say, *Veni, vidi, vici*? She had defeated the devil and the passion which would not release me. Let that happen more and more!

We want to lay aside all stubborn masculinity and fold our hands in prayer. May she bestow on us this inner transformation, this inner freedom as a grace of pilgrimage.

"You have not received the spirit of slavery so that you have to fear again, but the spirit of the childhood by which we cry out, 'Abba', Father!" (Rom 8,15).

"This wonderland is known to me...¹¹" May these be the miracles which imbue the entire Schoenstatt Movement! We do not expect miracles of physical healing or awakenings from the dead, not miracles in the natural order, but in the order of grace, the great miracle of perfect inner freedom. Let me become a miracle of grace, too, a miracle of grace through which the {255} glory of the freedom of God's children shines. May the Blessed Mother reveal this glory in me. I will then proclaim this freedom – how she, the One who is free, has freed me!

b. Hand in Hand

We have given ourselves to Our Lady in the renewal of our covenant. We not only want to offer her our eyes and our ears, but also our hands. My hands should be the property of the Blessed Mother. They are weak hands, muddied hands. My hands want to become one with the hands of Our Lady, they want to seal a covenant of love with her and go with her through life, hand in hand.

When the Blessed Mother gives us her hands, we have no need to worry. We are reminded of the imagery of Sacred Scripture – Peter walking on the water (cf Mt 14,22-32). He saw Our Lord approaching on the water and leapt into the water. Doubts came and he began to sink. The hand of the Lord reached out to grasp him and saved

¹¹ *Heavenwards*, p. 158.

him from the water. Likewise, we want to grasp the hand of Our Lady and walk with her hand in hand. What is her hand like? The world is a sea, an ocean. Those of us who have grown older are aware of our changing moods, our multitude of difficulties and fears. We sense that the image is an accurate one – the world as one big sea of storms and waves. How often {256} have we been in danger of drowning! Often we did not even notice. The future, too, may bring grave and serious dangers – at the very least the dangers of complacency, weariness, and spiritual paralysis. Lord, help us, for otherwise we will drown! The Blessed Mother wants to reach out her hand to us and establish her kingdom. How often has she saved us from misery and difficulties, from the waves and storms of the sea!

We recall what the theologians and popes have said again and again, especially in the last few years: No grace apart from Our Lady. The Blessed Mother's hands are full. In a mystical vision, St. Bridget¹² saw gold, pearls, and diamonds in the hands of Our Lady. They are figures of what her powerful hands have to offer. Gold signifies the protection which she gives us, pearls the guidance, and diamonds the blessing. That is how the hands of Our Lady are extended over us. We grasp her hands and through them her glory – the gold of protection, the pearls of guidance, and the diamonds of blessing.

The gold of protection. It is said that the King of Aragon once became weary in a battle against the Saracens and was in danger of being captured. He did not want to fall into the hands of the infidels and decided he would have to cast himself upon his sword. Suddenly, {257} his mother appeared before him and took his sword from him. He rejoined the fight against the Saracens with new courage and pulled out the victory.

Those of us who are hurled back and forth on the ocean of life – and that includes the majority of us, for we did not grow up in ease and comfort, but experienced the bullets whistling past our ears, one way or another – how many dangers have not passed over us, perhaps

¹² St. Bridget of Sweden (1303-1373).

without our not even noticing them! Am I not justified in saying that the Blessed Mother was the Mother who took the sword of temptations and near occasions of sin, etc. right out of my hand? We want to give thanks for that with all our hearts! We do not only want to do that in a general sort of way, but verify [her protection] in the past – in the specific situations when I was in immediate danger of falling into sin and losing the ideal. Sometimes it depends on the minutest of details. One small step and everything would have been lost. If a door had been opened, we would have fallen – or a door was suddenly held shut.... I was held by Our Lady's hand, her merciful and powerful hand.

I therefore grasp today, with great thanksgiving, the gold in the hands of the Blessed among women. As long as I {258} hold onto this hand and seal a covenant of love with the Blessed Mother, I can count on this protection. In the past she preserved me from the misuse of freedom, but the goal is still higher – the freedom of the children of God. Our Lady must protect me by preserving me from the more ominous dangers and by giving me the strength I need to keep from misusing my freedom.

"Where magnanimity and sense of propriety
overcome the downward pull of nature;
where the whispered wishes of God are binding
and transformed into joyful decision;
where they, in accord with love's fundamental law,
are completely translated into action?"

This wonderland is known to me...¹³"

What must the Blessed Mother protect? My magnanimity, my generosity, my sense of propriety. When I regain possession of that, strength will come into the family. We sense the extraordinary difficulty we face in becoming interiorly free from our body, and we are called to even more than that – to love one another. How much of a burden that is for our freedom! Our Lady will and must protect us. We take her hand. Hand in hand we undertake our pastoral respon-

¹³ Heavenwards, p. 159.

sibility; hand in hand we foster family spirit. That is how we want to fight the dragon in our own breast and break the chains of slavery.

The pearls of guidance. Once more we take her hand and feel the pearls there too, that is, guidance. We are aware of the remarkable guidance which the family has received in the past. All of us can say that {259} in one way or another. Looking back on his life, St. Francis Xavier¹⁴ said, "My life had so many steps, and each of them was guided by the 'Blessed among women'. I therefore have the courage to entrust myself to her guidance and let her direct me through the dark portals of death." Our history can also reveal much in this regard: how our entire family was marvelously guided through the tempests already behind us. And we can expect this remarkable guidance to take us through the tempests ahead. We ready stand on firm ground! But did we priests of the federation¹⁵ stand at the level of proficiency of other branches in the family? For honesty's sake it would be good to ask: Is our mutual unity as great today as it is in other branches of the family? A certain laxity has entered into our ranks, not only a weariness in our striving for the heights, but also in our relationships with one another. God chose to send an extraordinary number of challenges these past years, including many battles. Hardly any community faced as much persecution by the Gestapo as we did. We have made it safely through all the storms and mortal dangers. We can honestly repeat the words of St. Francis Xavier: Each step was remarkably guided by the Blessed among women! We should therefore be filled with an absolute certainty and reliance, an unconditional optimism. We will be victorious; we shall never fail; {260} we believe in our mission! We will complete all tasks, even when they become more and more difficult and cause us to humanly shrink back. Therefore: covenant loyalty – renew the covenant of love!

¹⁴ St. Francis Xavier (1506-1552), Jesuit missionary to India and the Far East.

¹⁵ The retreat was being held for members of the Federation of Schoenstatt Priests in Germany.

The diamonds of blessing. We take the hand of Our Lady a third time. We have already discovered gold and pearls there. We also discover diamonds. Diamonds symbolize blessing. We look on the past years and see the great difficulties that we faced. The Blessed Mother proved herself as Mother of Grace, as Bread Mother, as Home Mother! As Bread Mother: How often did she save us from material need! As Home Mother: Were not all of us able to retain our sense of having a home throughout the years, a home in the hearts of noble men and women, a home in the family, a home in the heart of Our Lady, a home in Schoenstatt? In fact, we can even say that the Blessed Mother has so marvelously revealed her power here that, since my return¹⁶, we have felt ourselves moved to think of the place we are at as a *terra ter admirabilis* (thrice admirable land) and ourselves as *fili ter admirabiles* (thrice admirable children). "The place where you are standing is holy ground" (Ex 3,5). Whatever we give her, she returns to us in even greater abundance.

How much protection and blessing have we experienced! And we confidently look forward to the blessings of the future. In the future, too, she will prove herself to me as the Mother of Grace, the {261} Mother of Freedom, as the Bread Mother, the Home Mother. She will keep my home safe in the hearts of the family, in the hearts of my confreres. And if she chooses to take away my earthly home in the hearts of others, then she will make me all the more at home in the heart of the Blessed Trinity. I therefore have no need to fear or worry, or to succumb to pessimism. My battle for freedom shall one day attain the victory. We are confident. Yes, the moment will come one day when we can say, "Yes, we are free!" If not, purgatory will provide the necessary recompense for the things we still lack.

c. Heart in Heart

The heart of the Blessed Mother is the third band. We want to be immersed in Mary's heart. We are aware of the multitude of invisible

¹⁶ Fr. Kentenich is referring to his return from the concentration camp in Dachau in 1945.

threads which pull us downward again and again. We are aware of the treachery of the heart, that our hearts harbor a serpent. We know how this serpent can spread its venom in all directions. As a consequence, we have struggled to attain the fusion of hearts. I give my heart to Our Lady and her heart begins to glow for me so much that she gives us her heart anew. *Si vis amari, ama!* (If you want to be loved, love!)¹⁷ The Blessed Mother seeks love. She wants to be loved by me and *must* [want to be loved by me], if for no other reason than because her entire life is oriented on the wishes of God and Our Lord. "Behold your son. Behold your Mother!" (Jn 19,26f). That is the source of her commission to love {262} us....

She has given us her heart. I am reminded of her life [on earth]. What was it like? Is it not evident, must I not observe how Our Lady allowed her love for me to cost her something? That is what makes Mary's love so dynamic. My redemption cost her so much! "This is my beloved Son!" (Mt 3,17 par; 17,5 par). She, too, can say, "I loved the world so much that I gave my Son..." (cf Jn 3,16). Of her own free choice and will she stood beneath the cross, giving up her rights as mother:

"There I see your mother-heart powerfully relinquish
and courageously annihilate each right as mother.

For the salvation of the world you surrender yourself
with your only Son
to the Father enthroned in heaven¹⁸."

(....)

{264} Nothing can decrease her love for me. We speak of "fatal blows" which can be dealt to love. What do we mean by that? That can mean the weathering of time, ingratitude, death. When a fondness exists between two people, how does love develop over time? [At first,] the fascination of a new experience retains love's warmth, but in time love often turns cold and indifferent. That does not happen to the Blessed Mother. Time does not reduce her love; she

¹⁷ Source?

¹⁸ *Heavenwards*, p. 53.

remains faithful to me. Why? Because she is my Mother, because she knows how the eternal God, how Our Lord has given his blood for me and cares for me in heaven. A mother-heart is simply a constantly vigilant heart.

What can reduce love? Separation. I have often separated myself from her and forgotten her just like I forget everything that is supernatural. I have often forgotten and torn away the bonds. Our {265} Lady loves me, she is an ocean of mercy. She dotes on me. The Father has entrusted me to her care. She will lavish her motherly protection on me again and again.

What reduces love? Ingratitude cools love. Love wants to have something for itself. How ungrateful have we been to the Blessed Mother! We want to say our belated thank you! But Our Lady does not let herself be turned aside by our ingratitude.

What reduces love? Death. Not even death will decrease Our Lady's love for me. She will stand at our side in [the hour of] death.

Whatever may happen, therefore: "We will remain faithful--loyal to the end!"¹⁹ We renew our covenant of love with the Blessed Mother: "And to show my devotion to you, I consecrate to you this day my eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart, my entire self without reserve. As I am your own, my good Mother, guard me and defend me as your property and possession²⁰." What matters is today. And if I am so totally given to her, she will protect me. She will protect me just as she would protect herself. She will take care of me just as she had to take care of herself. If I entrust my struggle for freedom to her, with all my worries, regardless of where I live, the moment will come when we can say, "Ireland is free!"

{266} Ireland's great freedom-fighter was [Daniel] O'Connell²¹. One day, while he was still young, he was doing his schoolwork in

¹⁹ A popular motto in the German Schoenstatt family: *Es bleibt dabei – wir bleiben treu!*

²⁰ Excerpt from the prayer "My Queen, My Mother".

²¹ Daniel O'Connell (1775-1847), Irish Catholic lawyer and politician who spearheaded the drive for Irish independence in the first half of the nineteenth century.

the corner by the window. A friend of his father's came into the room. They talked politics and failed to notice how the boy was taking in everything. He suddenly leapt from the window seat. He had heard everything which they had said about the slavery of the people and their oppression. Flushed and with burning cheeks and clenched fists he shouted, "I tell you, one day Ireland will be free!" The boy made the liberation of Ireland his life's work.... O'Connell got older, went off to school, and completed his studies. He entered public life. He took up the battle in the British Parliament and it trembled when he spoke. The crowds cheered him and carried him on their shoulders. And through it all, he quietly prayed his rosary. Our Lady made of him a freedom-fighter. On his deathbed he cried out, "Ireland has at least the freedom of religion!" He did not live to see the political liberation. It was nearly 100 years later, in 1921, when the Irish Freestate was officially recognized.

Our goal is to fight for true freedom under the protection of Our Lady. We are working to make our {267} family a kingdom of freedom. Our first objective is the interior freedom of land and nation; then we can be certain that we have done our best for the eventual reconquest of economic, social, and political freedom. Our nation will become free under the protection of the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. Then, when we die, we will be able to say like O'Connell: "Ireland has become free!"