

Father Joseph Kentenich

The Family -

At the Service of Life

Recollection Days for Couples
USA 1953

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Foreword

Early in January 1992 we received a photocopy of a letter written by Father Kentenich on 31 May 1953 from his exile in the USA to Father Johannes Tick, the spiritual leader he had given to the Family Movement.

After the introductory remarks, Father Kentenich mentioned that he had just started holding recollection days for couples, and added that he expected that this material would be of great interest to a far wider circle one day. From what he wrote it is easy to see how pleased he was to be able to help couples in their efforts to discover their specific way in Schoenstatt.

Inspired by this letter we began our search for the text of these recollection days, and our efforts were crowned with success. In view of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Father Kentenich's death, 15 September 1993, we formed a committee to work on the publication of these recollection days forty years later. We wanted to give him this work as a token of our gratitude. We are happy that this task has now been accomplished and thank all who contributed to its success.

We hope that with the publication of this book we have helped to realise our founder's expectations of these recollection days. His words are now available to all who see the family as a service to life.

Schoenstatt, 15 September 1993

Fritz and Martha Körner

After Forty Years

An Introduction

The talks given by Father Kentenich during the Recollection Days for couples in 1953 need an introduction after forty and more years. That is to say, the people of today need to be given access to them through a description of the circumstances in which they were held. We need to look at the situation, as well as the audience and their socio-cultural background, in order to provide a framework for a better understanding of what was being said.

Father Kentenich (1885-1968) had arrived at the central house of the North American Province of the Pallottine Fathers in Milwaukee/Wisconsin, USA in 1953. This was the place appointed for his exile from his work (1952-1965). To start with he had little contact with the pastoral field, and since he was not allowed to work directly for the Schoenstatt Movement, he made use of every legitimate opportunity to pass on what he considered important and of value. The invitation of a small group of couples to conduct a series of recollection days for them provided him with such an opportunity. A more detailed description of the circumstances and a chronicle of events has been provided by Fr Jonathan Niehaus.

The special interest of the conferences presented in this book lies in the fact that they were conducted at the beginning of Father Kentenich's exile, during the course of which his pastoral work reached ever wider circles. The intensity of his efforts to serve the individual couples and to attach them to Schoenstatt's spirituality increased during his stay in Milwaukee. Later he began to conduct the Sunday services for the German-speaking Catholics of the region in the parish church of St Michael, and he deepened the effect of his sermons by visiting the families at home. Starting in 1955 he met couples every Monday evening, during which he gave them a talk followed by a discussion. A start has been made to publish and translate these texts.

Initially only those couples benefitted from his spiritual direction who had already been prepared for this by Sr M. Winfriede Wagenbach, a Schoenstatt Sister of Mary living in Madison. As time went by, however, couples living not just in Milwaukee, but in Madison and the surrounding areas were included. Working with couples became the favourite pastoral work of Fater Kentenich and his collaborators.

His intention is clearly stated in the first series of talks in 1953 - to protect people who have become isolated because of their religious and moral orientation, and to support them in the unfolding of their life as Christians. This intention is also clearly expressed in the sermons he gave in Milwaukee - unfortunately only very incompletely available in an English translation.

The chronicle notes of the Schoenstatt couples during the founder's exile years show that Father Kentenich made good use of the time and possibility, which he had never had before, to enter into a very intensive pastoral relationship with a growing number of couples.

The talks given during the recollection days in 1953 take place historically and pedagogically at the start of this development. Closer study reveals the principles that were always present in Father Kentenich's spiritual activity. He presented a central value, or ideal - in this instance the essential characteristics of a Schoenstatt Family - and then set to work to highlight this value by "constantly showing the association between word, truth and value", as well as the "connection between partial values and central values", while at the same time "constantly exposing and devaluing the opposite false values"¹.

Whoever studies these talks from this point of view will recognise in them a classic example of his pedagogical praxis and teaching, which increases the value of this series. Whoever values the spiritual legacy of the founder should keep this methodological background in mind, in order to be able to enter more deeply into what is being presented in this book.

It is possible to discover other didactical and methodological qualities specific to the founder in these talks, for instance, the way he repeated individual points while at the same time widening the range of his thoughts according to a given disposition or plan. This "mental work" is then on occasion complemented by an intensive phase of illustrating what had been said. In order to do this he drew from comparisons in history and examples from life. The "Sitz im Leben", the application to the actual lives of the couples, was more important to him than a polished rhetorical style. So he adapted himself as far as possible to their level of education and their actual experiences, not least by using a "chatty" and practical style of talking.

For the reader today, and probably this will be increasingly the case for the generations to come, the content and form present a challenge and could even give rise to contradiction and rejection. This is particularly true of those passages that seem exaggerated or dated. However, the reader should keep the following in mind:

- Father Kentenich wanted to provoke his listeners, in order to get them to think independently;
- he tried to point up unmistakably whatever he considered needed correction;
- he was pleading, as he always did whenever he was given the opportunity, for an alternative, absolutely Christian lifestyle and way of living.

After forty years and more, our feeling for language has changed to such an extent that editing such a text always presents a challenge. How will things be understood today? It is necessary to distinguish between things that applied to those times, and things that will continue to be valid over time.

Father Kentenich's great regard for marriage and family life was always oriented towards New Testament revelation, that is, to an ideal that is not easy to reach, and that is therefore constantly criticised by people who want to adapt the ideal to life. These conferences in 1953, in the same way

¹ See "Marian Education for Marriage" and other pedagogical courses.

as in "Marian Education for Marriage" of 1933, reflect the content and thrust of the Encyclical of Pope Pius XI "Casti connubii", which also reaches far beyond the everyday understanding of the role of husband and wife, marriage and the family.

A look at the content of the family ideal developed by Father Kentenich during the recollection days in 1953 shows that it is necessary to get to know his way of looking at things, in order to be able to understand his description of the ideal for husband and wife. This has to be kept in mind when he speaks about families, about father and mother, child and childlikeness, as well as about fatherliness and motherliness. In addition it is necessary to draw upon his understanding of authority and freedom, of the personality, community and society, of the elite and the masses. Textual sources are indicated in the footnotes and (in the German edition) in an appendix of related literature. It is necessary to keep this very broad background in mind, otherwise the present-day reader could easily be put off, rather than enriched by Father Kentenich's breadth and depth of vision.

During the time Father Kentenich spent in the concentration camp at Dachau (1942-1945), he founded the core community of the Family Movement as an essential part of the whole Schoenstatt Movement. In 1948, as a result of his experiences in South America, he wrote a letter from Santa Maria, Brazil, in which he succinctly expressed the position and importance of the Family Movement in relation to the Schoenstatt Movement, and in which he spoke about the renewal of the family and hence of "a new human society". This letter later came to be known as the Founding Document of the Family Movement and can be found in the appendix.

Looking at the talks given in 1953 and relating them to the development of the Schoenstatt Family Movement after 1948, it is possible to discover a correlation with Schoenstatt's foundation on 18 October 1914 and its Founding Document. In content these talks can be understood as a practical application of the "Founding Document of the Family Movement" of 1948. They will continue to influence us to the extent that individual couples and those who guide them spiritually accept and apply what was said. The forty years (1953-1993) during which they remained hidden and unknown, and the relatively small group that they addressed, make a comparison with the central act of Schoenstatt's foundation fairly easy.

The members of the Family Movement, inspired by the statement made during the 1953 recollection days that "the child is the parents' capital investment and God's capital investment", want to work out a sort of handbook which takes up the pedagogical incentives offered here.

Besides this, the talks have a documentary character for all the sections of the Schoenstatt Movement, not least for the Schoenstatt Secular Institutes, since they mirror the "Leitbild" (dominant and recurring concept) of the founder, and his intention for his foundation: that the ideal of the Schoenstatt Movement is to be a family - as the expression of a "new community" and "germinal cell of a new society". That is why the Schoenstatt Movement calls itself the "Schoenstatt Family", and why every Secular Institute understands itself in essence as a family with a family character, as well as an original legal form and way of life taken from the natural family. The theological foundation formulated by Father Kentenich as early as 1935 for his ideal of the "new community" states that his

foundation "strives to create an ideal family according to the example of the Holy Family of Nazareth, the family-like union of the blessed Trinity and the union of Christ with his Church. It wants to be an ideal state, that is, a community that is as perfect as possible based on personalities that are as perfect as possible, both of which are borne by the strong, fundamental force of love."

This model - taking its orientation from the Blessed Trinity as the original concept and with the Holy Family of Nazareth as its example - can be found in every foundation made by Father Kentenich. Therefore, every community belonging to the Schoenstatt Family can use these talks as a mirror in which to examine their faithfulness to the founder.

Since these recollection days in 1953 took place at the same time as the Schoenstatt shrine in Madison was being built and blessed, the present-day reader can find in them the founder's very personal testimony to his belief in the reality of the covenant of love with the Mother of God and the effectiveness of her work from the shrine. The simplicity with which he bears witness to this belief will probably only be understood by those who understand the language of the heart.

The editorial work

The talks are based on a typewritten text transcribed by Sr M. Winfriede from a tape recording made during the recollection days. This text was signed by her to testify to their authenticity.

Since this is a transcript of the spoken word, which was not worked over or authorised by Father Kentenich, they reflect his very original way of speaking and teaching. This differs from what he wrote, because the written texts are far more dense. When he spoke, he adapted himself far more to the people directly before him.

For this edition, Father Kentenich's spoken text has as far as possible been left in the form in which he spoke it. Corrections to the transcript were only made when it was obvious that the spoken word had not been correctly understood by the transcriber, or when it was clear that Father Kentenich had expressed himself in such a way that it gave the opposite impression to that intended. Had he corrected the text, he would have made these adjustments himself. Some of the talks start without any form of address, in others the form of address varies. This arose from the circumstances in which the talks were given and the text was not altered to make it more uniform.

For the sake of the reader, certain colloquialisms such as "You see,", "if you like", "yes", which are natural to the spoken word, but which can be an irritant when read, have been dropped. However, in order to leave the text in its original form, no sub-headings were inserted into the text. The main points of each talk are given before the talk, and the main topic in the table of contents.

Only statements that were given a particular emphasis have been placed in italics, for example, the definition of the ideal of the Schoenstatt Family, which provides the foundation for what follows. In addition, the sub-divisions of the talks as indicated by the author himself - first, second, third, etc - are also placed in italics. Other sub-divisions have been indicated by numerals.

Bible references have been added to the text, but all other comments or explanations can be found in the footnotes or in the appendix.

The original text is preserved in the archive of the Schoenstatt Family Institute, as is a transcript on floppy disk.

M.E. Frömbgen

Translator's Introduction

As close a translation of the German text as possible was aimed at. The initial "rough" translation was sent to couples in the USA and South Africa for correction and comment. I should like to thank everyone who contributed in any way to the final translation of this text.

For the sake of the reader, I should like to comment upon some of the suggestions or criticisms that returned to me.

Practically every couple commented adversely on the many *repetitions* in the text. I was obviously faced with the same problem, and should like to offer the following thoughts for reflection:

1. All editorial work changes a text. For the sake of authenticity I felt that changes should be kept to a minimum, especially for the initial translation. At a later date an edited text for a wider public could well be called for, but then there will be a text for comparison available to those who want it.
2. Removing the repetitive statements changes the character of the text and obliterates the character of the speaker. Father Kentenich always adapted himself to the people before him, and he was able to wait until all had grasped his point before taking the next step.
3. At the same time, Father Kentenich's educational method is obscured. He had the patience to be able to wait for people to catch up with him, and for what he had said to begin to grow in their souls. He was not interested in teaching theory, but in begetting life. In a society dominated by "instant" coffee and fast foods, his method provides a necessary corrective.

Some couples felt that the examples used by Father Kentenich were *dated*, and should be left out. At the same time, because he had to wait for what he had said to be translated, some of his examples fall flat. I feel that for the initial translation such corrections may not be made. A more streamlined text can come later.

In order not to interfere with the actual text, I have added footnotes giving background information or indicating problem areas in the translation. It is just not possible to find an exact equivalent for many expressions. German is a philosophical language, English pragmatic. The translator is faced with mediating not just words, but thought processes. Every translation is a challenge - not just to the translator, but to the reader who encounters a "foreign" way of thinking in the translation. This can and should have a broadening effect, but it can also be an irritant.

I have taken the Biblical quotations from the New Revised Standard Edition of the Catholic Truth Society.

Schoenstatt, Vallendar, 1996

Mary Cole

**The Ideal of a Schoenstatt Family
takes its bearings from
the Holy Family at Nazareth**

The Cana Movement

The covenant of love

A family ideal

Fatherhood

**Recollection Day - 18 January 1953
First Conference**

It is nice that we are holding our day of recollection just today, on `Cana Sunday', because we want to discuss the ideal of the family with one another. The snowstorm has meant that only a few of us could come, but it also means that we can conduct the day in a far more family-like way. We have mentioned `Cana Sunday'. It reminds us of two things. First of all of the historical wedding at Cana. You know what that means. At the time our Lord worked his first miracle at his Mother's intercession. Through their presence and that of the apostles married life and family life were sanctified (cf John 2,1-12).

However, Cana Sunday also reminds us that here in North America we have a widespread Cana Movement¹. What does that mean? It is a family movement that is reaching out to the ideal of the family. This immediately brings us to the first question: What is our aim here? After all, there is already a Cana Movement for families in America. What do we want? Why have we come together? Would it not be better to join the Cana Movement straight away? We would then be spared a lot of work and could be part of something that is really big.

We can actually find an answer to these questions very quickly, indeed, we can express it in a single statement. We are not satisfied with merely striving to attain the ideal of the family, as the Cana Movement is doing, we are striving for the ideal of a **Schoenstatt** family. This gives us the topic for our recollection day.

Now comes the question - it is really three questions:

firstly: What do we mean by a Schoenstatt family?

secondly: Why do we need Schoenstatt families?

thirdly: What does being a Schoenstatt family demand of us?

As you will have noticed, I am leaving aside all that is of secondary importance and presuppose that by and large you know something about Schoenstatt. So we shall press forward to the heart of the matter.

Once again the *first question*: What do we mean by a Schoenstatt family?

The *second question*: Why do we need such Schoenstatt families?

The *third question*: What does being a Schoenstatt family demand of us personally?

Let me start by answering the first question: What do we mean by a Schoenstatt family? with a simple definition, which you will immediately understand, especially those of you who know the context.

¹ The Cana Movement in the USA was started by Fr Edward Dowling (1898-1960), a Jesuit, who founded a periodical in 1944 that was aimed at the renewal of family life. The 'Cana Conference' developed out of this initiative and became the largest Christian family movement in the USA and Canada. By 1953, when Fr Kentenich was speaking, it was already very well known.

A Schoenstatt family is a family that tries, in the strength of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, to live the ideal of the Holy Family of Nazareth in a timely way.

It is an extremely simple, beautiful, deep and comprehensive definition. Let me repeat it. *What is a Schoenstatt family?* A family that tries, in the strength of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, to live the ideal of the Holy Family of Nazareth as perfectly as possible and in a timely way.

It is now my task to explain the individual statements. I can do so briefly because we will be discussing one or the other point afterwards.

First of all we have to discuss the question: *What is meant by the statement 'in the strength of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt'?*

In order to make myself clear, let me refer to a statement made by the Bishop of Madison when he laid the corner stone for the shrine in Madison². He said something like this: 'This shrine is a source of strength and grace. This shrine is a centre for the religious and moral renewal of the people here.' An amazing statement. What does it mean? Think of that little shrine. You will have seen photos and know how insignificant it is. What should it become? Involuntarily we are reminded of those words of sacred scripture: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel' (Mt 2,6; Mi 5,1). Little Bethlehem! And yet it was the starting point for the renewal of the world. What should this little chapel do? The Bishop said it - it should be a source of strength and grace, a centre for the renewal of the people here. If you were now to ask me how the Bishop came to say such a thing, and if you were to ask me: Do you also believe it?, I would answer: Yes, without any reservations!

Why? We have just said that a Schoenstatt family is a family that strives for something in the strength of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. We believe, and our faith is based on a number of solid reasons, that the Mother of God has taken up her abode in Schoenstatt, that is, in the original Schoenstatt shrine in Germany and in all the daughter shrines of Schoenstatt, that she has made a covenant with the place and with all who take their bearings from this place. What is she aiming at here? The Bishop has told us. This place should become a source of grace. The place should be a source of strength. She wants to use this place to take up her abode there, so that from there she can lead and direct a large, all-embracing movement for the renewal of the world into our present times.

So the Mother of God enters into a covenant. Where? With the place. She enters into a covenant. With whom? With the people who love Schoenstatt. What is the meaning of this covenant? She

² On 18 October 1952 by Bishop William P. O'Connor (1886-1973) of Madison, Wisconsin. The shrine was dedicated on 20 June 1953.

wants to use the place and the people as her instruments to renew our present-day world, including families.

A covenant of love! If we are dealing with a covenant, there must be two partners. Who is the second partner? The place and the people, ourselves. What do we promise by virtue of this covenant? To love this place with all our hearts and to find our home there, our source of strength and grace. What do we promise? To allow the Mother of God to educate us and use us as her instruments, so that she can fulfil her task for this nation³.

All this is contained in the simple statement 'in the strength of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt.'

This puts us in a position to answer the question we posed at the start. What is the difference between the Cana and the Schoenstatt Movements from the point of view of the ideal family? Both agree on the one point - they want to create an ideal family life. What are the differences?

1. We, as Schoenstatt members, have been given access to a superabundant source of grace and strength.
2. We have been given the Blessed Mother, the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt as our great educator.
3. We have been given a large number of brothers and sisters who, like ourselves, love both the shrine and the Blessed Mother, the great educator, so that as time goes by we can all swim in the same stream and no longer exist in isolation.

We are inwardly united with the place, we are inwardly united with our great educator, the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, we are inwardly united not just with our own little family, but also with the large Schoenstatt Family as a whole. That is the difference⁴.

We could apply this answer to the other questions as well.

I have been told that here in America you have something like a catechetical movement⁵. It has a different name, but in essence that is what it is. What is our aim? We also want to be a catechetical movement from the point of view of the apostolate, but in addition we want to exercise every form of apostolate. What distinguishes us in Schoenstatt from the other movement are the three points I have just mentioned.

³ The book 'Mary - Mother and Educator' goes into greater detail on this point.

⁴ See 'Mary, Mother and Educator'.

⁵ The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (CCD) is possibly meant.

Now we know, at least to some extent, what is meant when we talk of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. Now let me ask: Towards which family ideal does the Blessed Mother, as the Mother Thrice Admirable, want to educate her instruments? The answer is - the Nazareth ideal.

This raises the question: What do we understand by a Nazareth family?

Nazareth? Good heavens, you may think, that was two thousand years ago! We Americans are modern and have advanced beyond that. So we add: A Nazareth family in a timely way. Nonetheless - a Nazareth family.

You realise that we could dwell on this for a long time. However I shall only offer three sub-points for consideration.

Let me ask the question: *What are the qualities of a Nazareth family?* I will summarise them in three qualities.

Firstly, in the Nazareth family the father and mother occupy the position foreseen for them by God from all eternity.

Secondly, in the Nazareth family the child is the focal point.

Thirdly, in the Nazareth family, father, mother and children are united by the bond of deep, warm love.

Now comes the question: *What is the position of the father in a Nazareth family?* To start with my answer will sound learned, but after that it will be quite simple.

The authority⁶ of the father, or fatherly authority, is primary, it is the fundamental authority. That is to say, fatherly authority must be the heart and centre of a Schoenstatt family.

⁶ In a study he wrote in 1961, Fr Kentenich explained what he meant by authority.

'The thoughts on fatherliness as the timeless, fundamental attitude of the educator, were given a valuable complementation during a retreat for superiors (of the Sister of Mary conducted by Fr Kentenich from 25 June-1 July 1951). You could call the whole course a comprehensive description of inner authority as the root for outward authority, or 'potestas' (power). It centres constantly on the essence of inner authority as we have described it, that is, **on serving another person's life selflessly.**'

This quotation can be found in the footnote on p.220 of the German edition of the 1950 Pedagogical Course conducted by Fr Kentenich in Schoenstatt, Germany.

The simpler answer draws our attention to the Holy Family of Nazareth as it developed historically. Consider for a moment - who was the more perfect, indeed, the most perfect member of the Holy Family at Nazareth? Our Lord. He was God. After him comes our Lady. Then, strange to say, comes St Joseph. According to his dignity, his personal dignity, St Joseph, as the father, was inferior to both. But according to his official position, St Joseph - although he was less perfect than the Blessed Mother and our Lord - was the centre of the family.

We can prove this from the incident when the angel appeared to rescue the little Holy Family. To whom did God's messenger appear? Not to our Lady, but to St Joseph. 'Joseph, get up ...' (cf Mt 2,13). Heaven acknowledged the father's leading position, his fundamental authority. Later, when the command came to return to Nazareth, to whom was the message directed? To neither our Lord nor our Lady, although both were personally far, far more perfect than St Joseph (cf Mt 2,19ff).

What about our Lady? Did she recognise the dignity and central position of St Joseph? Let us recall the situation in Jerusalem. 'Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety' (Lk 2,48). Who is in the foreground here? That is an essential point. In the Holy Family of Nazareth the father is in the foreground.

In a Schoenstatt-Nazareth family everything must be orientated towards the father, even if the father is not solely involved with his family, but is politically active as well. Those are the three spheres of man's activity⁷, hence also of the father. You may not overlook that in the Nazareth family the father's main strength belongs to his family. It is the task of the mother to lead the children to their father. It is the task of the mother to protect the father's authority, even if the father has moral weaknesses and failings⁸. That describes the Nazareth family. A high ideal!

When we have the time, we want to describe this ideal in greater detail and place it in the context of life today, in the upheaval and chaos of life today.

Let me repeat, *the father is the fundamental authority at the centre of a Schoenstatt-Nazareth family.*

I must still add two points in order to round off the picture and to say all that has to be said.

1. This fatherly authority and fatherhood must be a reflection, a mirror image, of God the Father and his divine authority. My children must be able to see the Father, the heavenly Father, in me. I must be able to call his qualities my own, I must be his reflection. A profound challenge! A profound and breath-taking insight!

And who should form and mould me to become a replica of God the Father although I am by nature so impulsive? That is the task of our blessed Mother. She must lead me to the heavenly Father so that I can become a reflection, a mirror image of God the Father. My children should not get to know

⁷ i.e. the family, his work and the construction of the social order.

⁸ For further reading on the father's authority see:

Fr J. Kentenich, *What is my Philosophy of Education*, Cape Town, 1990, p.21ff.

God the Father first of all from the Bible or anywhere else, they should come to know him through me. That is my ideal.

2. If my dignity and position as father are primary - as the reflection of the heavenly Father - and if it is true that the mother has to give me this position, it also means that she has to see to it that the children find their way to their father. She must do this prudently. Children don't know who their father is. If the mother doesn't tell her children, they will have no idea who their father is. On the other hand, the father has to conquer this central position time and again. How?

Recently a Protestant doctor presented a paper somewhere in Germany. He coined the beautiful saying: 'The father must adopt his children time and time again'. What does that mean? It is as though he must repeatedly beget them and accept them. How does he do this? By forming and educating them in a fatherly way, by devoting himself to his family. He may not simply demand things from his wife and children, he must give, and give, and give - he must give of his very best. That is the picture of the father in the light of the Nazareth ideal.

The second quality: *in the Nazareth family, and hence also in the Schoenstatt family, the child is the chief recipient of the parents' care and concern.* This applies not just to the physical child as their own flesh and blood, but to the child as God's child.

The third quality: *father, mother and children are united by the bonds of love.* I want to deal in more detail with the second and third qualities in the next conference.

**Concern about the loss of true fatherhood
requires a new approach**

Qualities of a Nazareth family

Position of the child

Self-education brings us in line with the ideal towards which we want to educate our child

**Recollection Day - 18 January 1953
Second Conference**

This morning we asked ourselves what is meant when we speak of a Schoenstatt family, and we also gave the answer. This is a family, as we now know, which, in the strength of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, tries successfully to live the ideal of the Nazareth family in a timely and perfect way. We then moved on to the different parts of the definition and discussed them at greater depth. We know what the covenant of love is and have some idea what the ideal of the Nazareth family includes. Such an ideal is only conceivable if our Lady, the great educator of the peoples, supports us in our striving.

Now the question arises as to the qualities of a Nazareth family. We mentioned three:

1. an ordered authority;
2. the focal point of our concern and care is and must always be the child;
3. parents and children should be united by the bonds of love.

We have already covered the essential aspects of the first point. We consciously placed the father's authority in the foreground, because we are by and large living in a fatherless time today. Publications, at least in Europe, are full of ideas about the mother, but the concept of the father is disappearing more and more.

Since we are living in a fatherless time, we are also living in a Godless time in which authority is being lost. That is why we may say so clearly that fatherly authority, as a reflection of God's authority, is fundamental to the family. Of course, it is a fundamental authority that has to be recognised by the mother, and that must time and again be re-conquered by the father. How is he to conquer it? Through creative fatherly activity, through serving his wife and children selflessly.

Although these thoughts are merely touched upon fleetingly, they are most important. If we want to be a Nazareth family, we have to again become aware of the importance of fatherly authority¹. It should have a central place in the whole of family life. Therefore it would not be right if a father were to say, 'I shall work hard to earn a living, to do well at work and also to be politically active, but at home I shall leave the responsibility to the mother. When I am at home, the children should leave me in peace. I want to be able to relax.'

No, the main sphere of my fatherly activity - despite all I do at work, despite the need to earn money, despite political activities - must always be my family. I am the centre of my family and have a say in the education of my children. Otherwise I am nothing else than the breadwinner, I am not the father. Then I do not, so to say, 'adopt' my children time and again, that is, I do not beget my children once more, but merely see to it that they have enough to eat. The depths of the child remain untouched by fatherly authority. Then, later in life the child will be unable to stand his or her ground.

¹ Throughout his life Fr Kentenich tried to make people aware of this fact. Many of his Pedagogical Training Courses enlarged on this point.

The *second quality of the Nazareth family* is the subject of its main concern. Who is it? The child. The chief concern, the subordinate concern. The main concern is always the child. This applies especially to the mother. The subordinate concern², as we know, is the marriage, in which father and mother find relaxation. We can help and support one another by allowing our desires and passions to find expression in an ordered manner with each other. This is morally good and highly to be appreciated. However, all this is a secondary or subordinate concern.

The focal point of the Nazareth family is always the child. Please consider this for a moment. We are told that Herod wanted to find the Child (cf Mt. 2, 16ff). What did his parents do? They didn't say, 'It is a nuisance to have to flee to Egypt!' No, they fled through the desert. Their main concern was for the Child. What happened to the parents on the way was of secondary importance. Mary and Joseph remained in a foreign country with strange customs and a strange language. Why? Because the good of the Child required this of them. Once the moment had arrived when God required our Lord for his public activity - the good of the Child was in the foreground. The Blessed Mother, who was still alive, had to give up her Child. Just as in the Holy Family at Nazareth the Child was in the centre, so the child must always be the focal point for us.

Now, when we think of the child, we recall that the good of the child includes what is physical, mental-psychological, and religious. The family must always centre on this threefold good of the child.

Physical well-being! I think that here in the United States we have few difficulties in this regard. We earn good money and see to it that we, that is, also our children, are well provided for. We can ask the question later whether we do not perhaps overdo it at times in this regard.

However, we do not merely have to ensure physical well-being, we also have to care for the intellectual-psychological and spiritual well-being of the child. We - and we should remember this - have the main responsibility, not the Church, not the school, even if our children attend a private Catholic school. They can only 'help' us. We have to bear the main responsibility. And if we can do something ourselves, we don't want to offload it onto the school or the Church. This includes also the intellectual and psychological well-being of the children. My children should become people with a high moral character. Therefore they need to be taught and educated, they have to learn to think for themselves and take their stand in life. This is my responsibility.

Let me repeat - *the child is the focal point.*

Never forget, however, that this child is also a child of God. If I am a reflection of the heavenly Father, my child is a reflection of his Son. The Child was at the heart of the Holy Family. He was - in

² Fr Kantenich is following the official teaching of the Church at that time. See the first conference of 29 March 1953, footnote 1. The relationship between husband and wife is dealt with on the third recollection day, 15 February, 1953, in the third conference. See also 'Monday Night Talks' volume 20 onwards.

an absolutely literal sense - the Child of God. It is also one of my tasks to foster and mould the religious life of my child. I have to educate my children in such a way that they later give themselves to God - freely and of their own account - when and where God wills it. If God wants my child, for example, to enter an Order, or to become a priest or sister one day, I must give this child back to God. I may not keep my child to myself. It is the duty of parents to educate the child of God and to return that child to God. I must also form my children in such a way that they can find salvation in a sound marriage, if God has called them to this state.

Please understand - such is the Nazareth family! It constantly highlights the well-being of the child in every respect. 'It is God's will, be still!'³ The reflection of the heavenly Father returns the child to God the Father, from whom the child has ultimately received life. In this way a great river of life pours out of the heart of the heavenly Father into the heart of the father and mother, flows through the heart of the child and returns to the heart of the Triune God.

So, if the child is the focus of their common concern, then I as mother or father may not merely be the provider of material well-being. We are also the main educators of our child. You may perhaps know the wonderful saying of Pope Pius X in this regard. He called the Christian family 'the first seminary for priests'. My family is a seminary for priests. My family, I could also say, is a seminary for marriage. All the great things that will one day break into the life of the child - whether that child should become a priest or sister, or marry - may and must be laid down as a foundation in the family. This is how we are to understand the saying: my family a seminary for priests. And what am I? In a certain sense the rector of the seminary, the high priest, who educates the saintly married couples of the future.

That is to say, we must take the Nazareth family very seriously in every respect. Our main concern, in all its various forms, is for the child.

Now let us raise a practical question. It is this: What must I, the father and mother, do in order to educate my children correctly? Not to feed them correctly, but to educate them correctly, to educate them in a moral and religious sense?

Of course, we could give a number of answers to this question. The most basic answer is: by our good example. I must personally live the high ideal I place before my child, I must do so in keeping with my character. I must be an ideal father or an ideal mother, who is freed from self-interest. That is the most valuable means of education.

³ An old German proverb: 'Gottes Wille, drum sei stille'.

Allow me to express this more precisely. We can put it this way: Also on the level of the instincts and drives I must bring myself in line with the ideal towards which I want to educate my child. That is a most important sentence. Let me repeat it: On the level of the instincts and drives I must bring myself in line with the ideal towards which I want to educate my child⁴.

This gives rise to three questions:

Firstly, what do we mean when we say we must bring ourselves in line with the ideal of the child also on the level of our instincts and drives?

Secondly, why must we do this also on the level of the drives?

Thirdly, what must I do to reach this extraordinarily high aim?

So what is meant by bringing ourselves in line with the ideal on the level of the drives and instincts? There is a difference between what we do on the level of our mind or will and what we do in response to our drives.

1. *With my mind* I can say: My child must become a genuinely Catholic child. Good! So I am enthusiastic about this ideal and tell my child what it entails. If you want to be truly Catholic you have to go to church, you must receive the sacraments, you must control your drives, you may not sin against holy purity. Now I know the ideal intellectually. I proclaim it in what I say.

2. *The will*. Here I tell myself: If I tell my child all this, I have to do it myself. I want to be a Catholic through and through, from the crown of my head to the tips of my toes.

3. *The drives*. Yes, what are they? I can be Catholic with my will, but my sub-conscious drives rebel, for example, against marriage purity. Everything inside me objects to going so often to church. Although I do it there is nevertheless a strong, but unconscious, feeling of rejection. Now I ask myself: When will I educate my child most effectively? The answer - when I personally embrace, also on the level of the drives, the ideal I am proclaiming to my child⁵.

⁴ This is a key principle in Fr Kentenich's educational system. All too often even religious education is content with moulding the intellect and will. However, we are far more motivated by our hearts, and by our instincts and drives. These, too, have to be Christianised. These sub-conscious and unconscious depths of the soul are most easily reached, especially in a child, by the example of a person we love and admire - in the first place the parents. This key insight should motivate parents and educators to work at their own education till the end of their lives. Otherwise it is a case of 'Do as I say, not as I do!'

⁵ See Pedagogical Training Courses in 1931 and 1951.

Let me give you a few examples so that we can understand each other better. For instance, a father and mother have a son who has just reached puberty. He wants to become a mechanic. He has finished his schooling. He is offered a highly paid job in a business. The boy asks me, his father or mother, whether he should accept this job. I ask for more details about the job. How much will you earn? Yes, that is a very good offer, you will be getting almost more than I am, your father. Perhaps the boy could do piecework. All sorts of other advantages are included. 'But,' says the boy, 'I know that many of the staff are ex-Catholics. Although I will earn a lot of money, my soul could be in danger. Dad and Mum, tell me what I should do!'

Now, what could father and mother say in theory? 'My boy, that is a dangerous situation, your religious and moral principles will be endangered. Would it really be such a good idea to accept this job?' Inwardly - let me suppose - father and mother are themselves very dependent on money. Inwardly their feelings are saying: A pity that his faith and morals are endangered, but..., but - how happy we would be if the boy were to earn a lot of money!

Please understand this - as father and mother I may not stand there unsure of what to do and say, 'I don't know whether you should take the job, or whether it would be better not to do so.'

Has the whole person inwardly given advice? No! The lips have spoken the advice, the will has offered advice, but the heart - where is the heart? It is divided. 'I would have preferred ...' What would I have liked? The boy to earn a lot of money. You see, on the level of my drives I am not in line with the ideal I am proclaiming to the boy.

What do I now have to do? That is the important question for our education. The advice I offer my children must first have gone through my own heart. If I notice that I am personally extremely attracted by money, what must I do? Overcome my drive to acquire things. I must tell myself inwardly, 'Even if I were in a position to earn millions of dollars, but this posed a great threat to my faith, I would give it up.' Once I have fought this through inwardly and can then offer it as advice to the boy, I can guarantee that this advice will be taken. In the other instance it will not be taken. The boy can feel: Although my father is saying it with his lips, his whole conviction is not behind his words'.

Please remember - *the educated educator is the great personality who works wonders in education*. I must personally make demands on myself, demands that go to the depths of my being. I must be free from my selfish self right down to the unconscious levels of my soul-life. Bringing myself in line, on the level of my drives, with the ideal I proclaim to the child! Then I am a creative educator. Then something great will become of the child. In the other instance, I can speak eloquently, give talks, write books, but I will not form and mould life. Why? Deep down in me⁶ there is something that says no to what the lips have spoken and the mind agreed to. So the whole person must also inwardly make efforts in this regard. It is obvious that at times our drives will say, 'I would like that!' We can't do anything about that, but we must overcome it inwardly.

⁶ i.e. in the unconscious. According to Fr Kentenich all that happens consciously is determined by what is going on in the depths of the soul. What he is saying, therefore, is aimed at educating oneself in the depths of one's soul.

Please take note of the principle. It is essential for our educational work. Whatever I tell the children must first pass through my heart and mind, I must first fight it through inwardly before my mouth says anything. You will then see how effective you are as an educator, even if you haven't studied the subject.

Allow me to add some more examples. Let us suppose my daughter has just reached puberty. She is constantly flirting with the boys, and she is doing so in such a way that I am afraid that something could happen. Now I want to stop her. I can try. But will it work?

If you have understood me correctly, you must now say to yourselves: I must first of all look into my own heart. Aren't there similar drives in my own heart which I now see at work in the girl? Isn't there a lack of sexual control in my own nature? What should I now do? First of all try to overcome this lack of control in myself. When I have overcome it inwardly, I can go to the girl and tell her what she should do.

Do you understand what this is all about? It is the mysterious effect of a person who is inwardly completely at one with what he or she is saying. So I must make use of the opportunity and re-examine my own heart, and there gain control of the drives hidden deep within me. Having gained mastery, I can then offer the right advice in this regard. You will see, it works!

Do you now understand what it means to place our self-education at the service of the education of our children? I will be the best, the most brilliant, the most charismatic educator if I constantly discipline myself and use all the faults and failings of my followers⁷ to look into myself, so that I can again overcome a similar, or perhaps even the same fault inwardly. Then I am also constantly on the alert. I am not merely the one who educates, I am also educated by my children.

Another example. One of your boys is a teenager. Naturally he is unruly. He refuses to obey and just does whatever he wants. If that is just the expression of youthful high spirits, it would be alright. But no, he is rebellious, he just won't obey any more. Now I can say, 'I am going to show you who is the boss in this outfit!' That may be alright, but the important thing for me is to personally discipline myself, I must first master the beasts⁸ in my own breast. That is to say, I must ask myself honestly: Don't I also have a lot that is untamed, that is undisciplined, in myself? I must first overcome this. I have to take the bull by the horns. Once I have taken the bull in myself by the horns, I can then take hold of the horns of the bull in my son, he will allow himself to be controlled. If you don't do this,

⁷ Fr Kentenich is talking here not just to parents, but to all educators and leaders. He unconsciously falls into a more general way of saying things.

⁸ Instead of 'beasts'(Tiere), Fr Kentenich could have said 'drives'(Triebe). However, no change has been made in the text, because in his pedagogical anthropology he divides the various levels in human nature into 'the animal, the angel, the child of God', in order to explain the conflicting tendencies in a person.

you will have the opposite effect in the long run. Even if you can control the boy outwardly by force, you will not have won him inwardly.

Do you now understand what is meant when we say that the well-being of the child is the focal point of our concern? I educate myself for the sake of the child, I want to embody the ideal I set before my child and towards which I want to lead him or her. I guarantee that you will then be extremely happy fathers and mothers. You will then be creative. You may have a job in which you `manufacture' things, but at home you will be creative. You won't get bored. The husband won't need to go to the pub. Father and mother won't need to go to a restaurant in order to relax. No, the best place to be is at home! Why? Because our home is a real place of education, a family.

The principle we want to remember is this: I must first try to solve and overcome in myself all the difficulties I encounter in the education of my children. Or, I first of all want to allow all the difficulties I encounter, or that are presented to me, to pass through my own heart and mind. I first want to overcome them in myself. Then I can tackle them also outwardly. Suppose for a moment that your children have difficulties with faith or morals. What does that mean? First consider whether I do not have something similar in myself? How can I overcome it?

Let me quote a case that will naturally hardly or very seldom ever happen. Suppose, for example, that one of my children is married. It could be the daughter. She has become jealous and has murdered her husband. Now she is on trial. I, the father or mother, sit at home and pray, `Dear God, please see to it that all goes well.' That is fine. But I would take it a step further and ask myself, `Isn't the seed of jealousy also hidden in my heart? Isn't what has found such tragic expression in my daughter also present in myself in a small way?' I would first tackle my own jealousy, overcome it inwardly, and then pray that everything will turn out alright. I will then have done my share. I will have placed vigorous⁹ self-education at the service of the education of others, the education of my children.

If you try in this way to solve or overcome in yourselves all the difficulties you encounter in education, you will see that you will always be happy and will gladly stay at home. You will love your children passionately, warmly and deeply. Then, above all our fathers will protect themselves against two faults - firstly, against brutality, and secondly, against sentimentality.

⁹ 'Kraftvoll' - an untranslatable German word! Literally it means full of strength, hence strong, powerful, but it can also imply discipline, etc. I have used vigorous because it implies 'full of physical or mental strength, carried out energetically'.

**Overcoming an Infantile Attitude to Life
as a Condition for Creative Educational Activity**

Infantilism

Examples

Study of the Temperaments

Biblical Examples

**Recollection Day - 18 January 1953
Third Conference**

The child is the main concern of the Nazareth family. Everything is concentrated on this point. Even our personal self-education should be placed at the service of the education of our children. We have therefore raised the great question: *What must we do to become effective educators?*

Actually we have given an abstract answer, which can easily be repeated: *on the level of our drives we can bring ourselves in line with the ideal towards which we want to educate our children.* We then asked: What do we mean when we talk of bringing ourselves in line on the level of our drives? I think that the answer we gave was easy to understand.

However, I haven't finished. The whole subject is far too important. You also feel, when you hear these things, that this is so. 'If only I could do it! If only someone would come along and carry me! If only I could manage it!'

I now want to intensify the difficulties somewhat. Do you know what is included if we want to bring ourselves in line, on the level of our drives, with the ideal of those entrusted to our care? It means overcoming every form of infantilism. Infantilism and all that is primitive must be overcome in us, as fathers and mothers, if we want to be a Nazareth family.

This naturally raises the question: *What is meant by an infantile and primitive attitude to life?*

I will answer the question briefly. The best thing to do is to look for words that have the opposite meaning. Primitive! The opposite to primitive is mature, purified. Infantile means childish. What is the opposite? Once again, mature, purified. One could even say 'priestly'¹.

Our attitude to life can be childish or it can be mature, it can be thoroughly unpurified, but it can also be thoroughly purified. When is my attitude to life purified? When do a father and mother have a purified attitude to their children and to each other? When am I primitive - I, a father, towards the mother, or as mother towards the father? When is my attitude primitive, childish? Or, I can ask about my attitude to life. Suppose one blow after another falls at work. I break down. Why? My attitude to life, to my colleagues, or in general, can be inwardly purified, mature, masculine or feminine, but it can also be extremely childish, immature and primitive.

Let me give you a more systematic answer to the question: How can we describe a primitive or infantile attitude to life? The answer: *When love for self and love for others are not in the right balance, that is, when the emphasis is on love for self. This is when one speaks of an infantile attitude.*

I have possibly expressed this in too learned a way. Let me explain it. Every love, when it starts, is primitive and has to be purified later. What was my love like when we were newlyweds? What is the love between parents and children like to start with? Primitive! What does that mean - primitive,

¹ See Pedagogical Training Course 1931.

infantile? The self is in the centre. I want something for myself. Why did I choose this or that young woman? Why? I had the feeling that she could make me happy. I am in the foreground. Otherwise I would not have chosen her. I would have chosen someone else.

Or, why did I choose that man? There is a saying that puts it so beautifully if one wants to demonstrate the difference between men and women. The woman says: Can I make him happy? The man asks: Can she make me happy? That is to say, by nature woman's love is more strongly directed to another person. But if that is the case, it is already greatly purified.

Every primitive love thinks first of self. I want something. I! So, if as a married woman I ask: Does my husband still love me, is he still interested in me? it means that I am afraid he could have lost interest in me. I must ask myself instead: Am I still as interested in my husband as in the past? Do I love him, do I give him everything I am and have? Conversely, the husband should also think in this way about his wife. Every primitive love always centres strongly on self.

Again, primitive love asks: Am I understood? The wife says: My husband no longer understands me. The truth is, I don't need to be understood. I must understand my partner. That is the basic attitude we should all have. It is understandable that our human nature would far prefer it the other way round.

Consider for a moment how much primitiveness there is in us all. How much! I was infantile as a young adult. It was alright for me to ask such questions then. But as a mature man, as a mature woman, I should take it for granted that things are different. I want nothing for myself. All I want is that things go well with my husband. That the children are fine. I can guarantee that if you think in this way, your husband will love you, your wife will love you. However, if you ask: What does she give me? things will immediately change. So ask yourselves: 'What can I give?' Selflessness and a mature attitude to life will ultimately conquer all hearts. A mature attitude will always win the battle.

Can you now understand what is meant by a primitive and infantile attitude? I could also say it is a bit of self-adoration. I adore myself. I want to be the centre of attention. I am what matters. I must be considered, I must be loved. I, I, I! No, not I, but you! You are the centre of my attention.

Let us take an example. The father comes home. Things have gone badly at work. He has clashed with his colleagues. They had an argument. Now he comes home. His wife has also had a bad day. She is not feeling so well. She has had problems with the stove, or whatever else it could have been, or she is out of sorts. Now the two meet. What does the husband expect? That she understands him. What does the wife expect? That her husband understands her. Each is filled with disappointments. The husband says: What a wife! If I could do it again, I would definitely not choose her. Instead of understanding what has happened to me and listening to me, she is edgy and short fused. On the other hand the wife says: If only my husband would have more understanding for all I have had to go through today!

Both are primitive in their attitude. In both instances self is the centre of attention. What should the

husband say? What should the wife say? I don't matter. I have to look after my husband and see to it that all goes well with him, that he feels accepted and understood. As a woman I can notice immediately if something has gone wrong at work. I give him a hug and ask him about his day. He must feel that I understand him. On the other hand, what must the husband say? I don't matter. That is secondary. If you live in the world, you get hammered. I can bear it. I am a husband, a father. Now my wife should feel better, because I have noticed that she is on edge today and isn't feeling well. I will be particularly loving to her. That is the Nazareth family.

I have to add that it is naturally a tremendously high ideal. That is obvious. It is holiness in practice. But we want to look at the ideal. If the ideal is clear, and if we see it in context, the battle is half won.

The question arises: Did St Joseph and our Lady ever disagree? That is part of family life, it is part of life in Nazareth. In fact they found themselves in a very tricky situation. Do you remember that St Joseph even wanted to dismiss the Blessed Mother? That was in very truth a conflict between the two (cf Mt 1,18-25).

A mature person is someone who takes it for granted that life has its knocks, family life as well. I like to use the expression: The family table is a table of sacrifice, not a table of enjoyment². So, even if I have to make sacrifices during the day while at work, I come home in the evening to a table of sacrifice, not to a table of enjoyment. However, the family table will become a table of enjoyment to the extent that both partners try to consider each other and keep each other's well-being in mind.

Can you now understand what is meant by a primitive attitude, an infantile attitude to life? Aren't we all affected by it? Without doubt! If we don't overcome it, we will never be able to bring ourselves, on the level of our drives, in line with the ideal of our followers. In practice this means that holy parents in the above sense are charismatic educators. Do you now understand what is meant by an infantile or primitive attitude to life? What is primitive, what is infantile, places self in the foreground, what is mature, what is purified, on the other hand, centres on the other person. Once again - I have all sorts of difficulties with my wife and children! For heaven's sake, if only I had known all this earlier!

The mature person takes it for granted that there cannot always be 'Sunday' in a family. There are also working days. A mature person takes it for granted that there will be disagreements. Indeed, such a person will be surprised if there are no difficulties for some time, rather than vice versa. I take it for granted that there will be plenty of difficulties in family life. So I am surprised, firstly, if no difficulties crop up over a period of time. Secondly, I try to resolve the difficulties - not by making demands on the others, but on myself.

² Fr Kentenich attributes this to Adolf Kolping (1813-1865), 19th century pioneer of Catholic labour issues in Germany and founder of the Kolping Movement. The main 'sacrifice' meant here is putting self second and ensuring that the others have a good time. The 'family table' is really another way of talking about family life as a whole.

One of the best means to keep the peace in the family and to become mature is to study the temperaments, not just in general, but to know our spouse's temperament. I also want to get to know my own temperament. If I know my own temperament, or the temperament of the other members of the family, I can understand many things.

Later, during your group meetings, you should really study the temperaments. Don't do it just in theory, Say to each other: Now let me tell you what sort of temperament you have! Tell me what sort of temperament I have. Why did you react in this way just now? Why do I react in a completely different way to the same thing?

Perhaps I should mention that there is a booklet, which Fr Wilwers has translated, called 'The Four Temperaments'³. It is a small booklet, but very valuable. You should read it and then ask yourselves: Do I understand my husband? Do I understand my wife? What do I have to do in order to understand him or her? Not to be understood! I don't want to be understood. I merely want to understand the others. A primitive or a mature attitude! That is the crucial difference, the great contrast.

If you want to know what a purified attitude is like, you could try to learn from the apostle Paul or the Blessed Mother. We all know those words of St Paul: 'When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways' (1 Cor 13,11). That is to say, when I was an immature person, I behaved like a child. Now that I am more mature, more purified, that has changed.

When we think of our Blessed Mother, notice how the old masters painted the Annunciation scene. Our Lady was still just a child. She may have been about 15 or 16 at the time. How is she depicted? Her features are austere, mature. She spoke her 'Fiat'. What did she want to be? The permanent helper of our Lord in his entire work of redemption⁴. And what did her 'Yes' include? That she would later be looked upon as the mother of a political criminal. She heard the words: 'This child is destined for the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be opposed' (Lk 2,34). She knew all this. However, she had only one task - to serve the Saviour and his work. What an austere, strong and purified attitude! We see her under the cross. She gives her Son back to the Father. Why? Because it is the Father's will. Because it was her Son's life-task to die for us. There you see what austere and mature motherliness, or a mature and purified attitude, includes.

Yet this is insufficient. It was our Lord's task to educate our Lady to become selfless. There you have another expression - a truly mature man or woman is always detached from self, they are selfless. Our Lady was educated by our Lord to give up even the most noble feelings, motherly feelings that were absolutely noble, if this was part of the Father's plan. Think for a moment of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple. How hard that was! He simply stayed behind. The Blessed Mother was filled with anxiety. And what did he say? The heavenly Father wills it. You must let go of me. A

³ Conrad Hock: The Four Temperaments (Milwaukee, c. 1952), trans. by Fr Nikolaus Wilwers, SAC.

⁴ A key definition of Mary's role, which also applies to woman as 'another Mary'.

time will come in 18, 20 or 22 years time, when you will have to give me up completely. You must prepare yourself for it (cf Lk 2,41-52).

That is austere, mature, selfless self-giving. That is how the Blessed Mother stands before us. She is the Mother Thrice Admirable who wants to educate us to achieve the same strong manhood and womanhood, to become inwardly free from ourselves. She wants to educate us to overcome all that is primitive and infantile. We should have only one aim - what will serve God and his work. If only the others are well off, I don't matter.

Now we know what is meant by bringing ourselves, on the level of our drives, onto the same level as the ideal of our children. Now come the second and third questions.

The second question is: *Where does such an attitude get its creative and educational force?*

Then the third question: *What do we personally have to do to reach these heights slowly but surely?*

Those are the two questions we will answer briefly in the next conference.

**The Covenant of Love
as the Source of Strength and Grace
for Parental Authority**

The authority of father and mother

Sense of authority

Transference and transmission

Education through example

Contributions to the capital of grace

**Recollection Day - 18 January 1953
Fourth Conference**

Slowly but surely we are beginning to understand what a Schoenstatt family is. *It is a family which, by virtue of the covenant of love with our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, successfully tries to embody the ideal of the Nazareth family in a timely way.*

You will recall that we have highlighted two thoughts contained in this definition. What is meant by the statement 'by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt'? I do not want to repeat what was said in this regard. However, this is the difference between us and the Cana Movement, the catechetical movement and any other movement. That is why it is so important for us to take this covenant of love seriously - both with the place and with the Family. We want to help each other to understand this, so that as time goes by we can find a home in Schoenstatt, here in 'New Schoenstatt'¹, and discover here a source of grace and strength, not just for the renewal of the world, but also for our personal renewal and for the renewal of our own family life.

This ideal - especially in the way I have described the Nazareth ideal to you - is tremendously high. At times we have been able to laugh heartily over the human weaknesses that have shown up in our family lives. But we can feel that whoever wants to climb up to this dizzying height, even to some extent, must be a saint. And that is what we all want to be. A Schoenstatt family - we have heard what Pius X said - must be a seminary for priests, a seminary for marriage. That is what my family must become in the course of time.

The foundations for all the great things that will somehow come alive in my children later on must be laid in the family, in this seminary. Please understand how these things are connected inwardly. The higher the ideal is, the more we feel the necessity for a source of strength and grace. We cannot set the ideal high enough in our present times, on the other hand we cannot become sufficiently aware of how difficult it is to embody the ideal of a Schoenstatt family. We need a place that is both a source of strength and grace for us. We need someone who understands how to educate us towards this ideal. All in all, we know what is meant when we say 'by virtue of the covenant of love'.

However, I must still add another thought. *The family must enter into the covenant of love.* It is not enough if I as father do so, the mother must also do it. And the children? I would lead them slowly in the same direction. However, father and mother must discover this focal point, they must find a home, a source of grace. That is what is meant when we say 'by virtue of the covenant of love'.

We then considered what is meant by the ideal of the Nazareth family, the Schoenstatt family. Let us allow three thoughts to impress themselves upon our minds. It would be a pity if we were to hear the thoughts and then forget them again immediately.

¹ The local Schoenstatt Centre, in this case the shrine in Madison, Wisconsin.

*To start with, in such a Schoenstatt or Nazareth family father, mother and children take up the position intended for them by the order of being*². According to the order of being the authority of the father is primary, the authority of the mother is dependent and supportive³. The father is the focal point, not the mother. This is exactly how it was in the Nazareth family as we have just discussed it.

Of course, it must then also be said that according to their authority, father and mother also have a definite task to fulfil. *The father has to educate his children to be obedient and daring.* 'My children have to learn from me, their father, how to take risks.' Later in life they will have to show courage. There may be no playing around. But there must also be discipline and obedience, and that in relation to my authority, not just any authority. That is often the tragedy, people often do not see the law-giver. We should not obey the law, but the incarnation of the law in the father. These are essential points.

That is why I also insist: I, as father, am clothed with God's authority. Of course, I must also behave in such a way that my child can experience that I am a replica of God the Father, and can submit to God the Father in me. So when the child submits to me, he or she also submits to God the Father. That is to say, as the father I have to educate my children to obey and to be courageous.

The mother's authority is dependent, it has to place the father's authority in the foreground. What is the task of the mother? *The mother has to educate the child to renunciation and endurance*⁴.

² Ontological order - a concept that occurs repeatedly in Fr Kentenich's teaching. Put simply we could say that it is the original order intended by God at the moment of creation. Through sin this order has been disturbed and it is now our task to reconquer it with the help of God's grace. Nothing without you, MTA, nothing without us!

³ See Pedagogical Congress 1931 and 1950. Fr Kentenich is by no means devaluing woman or her leadership. In another context he says that the father is the head, the mother the heart. This corresponds with the findings of social psychology. In leaderless groups, the first form of leadership to emerge is that of the 'task specialist', i.e. the person who has the best ideas. As time goes by, this leadership gives rise to frictions, and then a second leader appears, 'the social-emotional specialist'. It is rare for both forms of leadership to appear in one person.

⁴ Fr Kentenich liked to use rhyming words or wordplay to bring home his point, and this is usually untranslatable. In this case he used the words 'Entsagen und Ertragen'. In other words, the father teaches his children to look **outwards**, to conquer the world, the mother teaches her children to look **inwards**, to conquer self and to consider others. This is obviously not meant in an exclusive or absolute sense, it merely shows a general and characteristic tendency in the two roles.

Those are the four elements that should support a genuine Schoenstatt family - *education towards authority (to obedience), education towards daring and courage, education towards renunciation and endurance*. There you have a whole network of thoughts.

If you look at it carefully, you will see that our present-day culture does all it can to deprive our young people of the ability to renounce things and endure things. Think of the many technological discoveries. They are all designed to make life as easy as possible.

When I think of how things were in the past. Those of you of German descent may have heard what it was like formerly in Germany, for example at Christmas. At Christmas we were given a little present. And yet, how we enjoyed it! Today, however, the parents have to give the children all sorts of things in order to satisfy them at all. If we don't learn as children to do without things, nothing will be able to make us happy later when we are older. Quite apart from this, a Christian life always includes a life of renunciation.

Let us ask ourselves: *What have we done to educate our children towards renunciation and endurance?* To endure all the suffering that is part of life. What have I done until now for my children in this regard?

As the father I should be aware of my authority. Of course, it is true (we mentioned this already), a father can misuse his authority in two ways - either through brutality or through sentimentality.

In psychology today they often speak about the laws of heredity. Many people today suffer under the faults of their fathers and mothers, (or their grandparents) when they were young. There is not merely suffering caused by heredity, there is also suffering caused by education. That is to say, the faults of the parents, especially the fathers in relation to their children, often have tragic results that the children have to bear for the rest of their lives.

Brutality. Being aware of my authority does not mean that I can now set out to break the will of my son or daughter. Oh, no! Being aware of my authority is something quite different. The child should be led to obey God in me. What does that presuppose? That I, on my part, as father or mother have an inner relationship to God, to God the Father.

We have a classic example in St Thérèse⁵. I would like to discuss this with you in greater detail from the point of view of the Nazareth family for our times. The family of St Thérèse was a holy family for our times.

You will have realised that this time I am mainly concerned with saying something for the fathers. The mothers hear these things repeatedly. But no one says anything of any worth to the fathers. At best they say: yes, hm, this or that. No, the father must be the ideal that saves the world again today.

⁵ See J. Kentenich: Schoenstatt's Covenant Spirituality, trans. J. Niehaus, Waukesha 1992, p. 161-166. See also 1951 Pedagogical Congress in which Fr Kentenich quoted at length from Hans Urs von Balthasar's biography of St Thérèse.

It was so natural for St Thérèse (1873-1897). She saw God in her father, and all the great gifts she received from God came not from God directly, but from her father. She even learned from her father how to love our Lord, she didn't get it directly from looking at our Lord.

Let me now explain how she could say: 'For me my father is God'. Imagine to yourselves what it was like when the tiny child, who loved her father deeply, was taken along to church. She adored her father, as it were. Vice versa, the father 'adored' his little queen. He used to say, 'This is my little queen'. They loved each other deeply. The child obviously watched what her father was doing closely. While her father was praying - the Blessed Sacrament was exposed - the child did not look at the altar, she looked only at her father. And through her father and in her father she saw God. How wonderfully she describes this! Since her father was gripped by the presence of God, the child was also gripped - but by the God who was present and living in her father. Therefore it is understandable that later on, once her father had died, those were no empty words for her when she said, 'Now we can pray: Our Father, who art in heaven'. What does that mean? She identified the heavenly Father with her earthly father. 'Our Father, in heaven', this was the most natural thing in the world for her.

Similarly, my authority as father must also be immersed in God's authority. This is what is meant when we say: I am God's representative for my children. This makes great demands on me. I cannot say brutally: They have to obey me! No, they have to obey God. Put quite simply - What is a father? He is the extension of God the Father. What is the heavenly Father? He is an extension of the earthly father. This is how we should see things.

Applied to St Thérèse this means - Thérèse looked at her father, her father looked at God, and through her father Thérèse looked at God. How simple that is! And it didn't just apply while she was a little child. It was always the case and remained true till the end of her life. Therefore we actually owe St Thérèse's whole teaching of her 'Little Way' to her father. Without her father it would not have been possible.

There you have a Nazareth family for our times, one in which the father embodied the ideal. She owed him not merely her relationship to God the Father, but also to our Lord. She read her entire love for our Lord from her father. An absolutely unique ideal. I do not want to discuss it in greater detail. You may perhaps know that St Thérèse's father was filled with a great longing to suffer. He asked God to send him great suffering. God fulfilled his request. In his old age he lost his mind. St Thérèse was already in the convent. She learnt from her father who was suffering so much, who had given up his mind out of love for God, how to understand our Lord. Our Lord had done the same. He had read everything from his Father's face - everything. The heroic way her father suffered in order to please the heavenly Father taught St Thérèse to understand what genuine love for our Lord is like⁶.

You notice how important the father is and must be to the family, especially a Schoenstatt family, a Nazareth family. So it is not unimportant how I behave when I have to suffer. If you experience a serious disappointment at work and don't know which way to turn, and yet stand erect because you know that the Lord God is behind everything, even behind this misfortune, you may be sure that such

⁶ See Story of a Soul, the autobiography of St Thérèse of Lisieux, ICS Publications, Washington, D.C., 1976, p.151ff.

an example will affect your children more than if they were to take part in any number of retreats or listen to any number of talks. The example of the parents, the example of father and mother, is simply the most important factor in education.

This brings us to the second point we discussed in greater detail today - *If the authority of father and mother is sound, both share the main concern for their children* - not just for their physical well-being, but also for the intellectual, moral and religious well-being. I will not repeat what I have already said.

We then went on to ask ourselves what we can do to live wholly for the well-being of the children and not pursue our own pet inclinations. I express my greatness in the well-being of the children. I live and die for them. Everything else is secondary. That is genuine fatherhood, genuine motherhood. This is what we have to do.

We used a learned expression and said that we have to bring ourselves, on the level of our drives, in line with the ideal towards which we want to educate our children - that is, not just intellectually, not just with our wills, but also on the level of our drives. That is a tremendously high ideal. We have discussed it in detail. I don't want to repeat myself.

There you have the whole way in which St Thérèse was educated at home. On the level of the drives her parents were in line with the ideal. Father and mother exemplified the ideal towards which they wanted to educate their children.

We posed three questions:

Firstly, *what do we mean when we talk of bringing ourselves, on the level of our drives, in line with the ideal?* You will probably remember the answer since we gave a number of very plastic examples. We know that it includes doing radical battle with every form of primitive and infantile behavior. Infantility and primitiveness have to be overcome. What is primitive must be purified.

Secondly, *why does such an attitude have such a creative effect in education?* Without going into this in detail, I will give you two reasons.

The first reason is that to educate means to awaken life. And the great law of life is that life is ultimately always enkindled by life. If I love the ideal in this way, if I love the ideal I am proclaiming in such a way that my subconscious is filled with it, I will be like a bubbling source of life, even if I am not a good speaker, even if I cannot formulate things well. Words no longer have much effect, especially today. If the words spoken by a person are an expression of that person, if they are the outflow of what is living in that person, they awaken life. That is the secret. Let me put it another way - Why does such an attitude in an educator work wonders? The answer: Because life is always only enkindled by life.

Let me give a second answer, which is basically the same as the above, but which highlights another

aspect. If I educate myself in the way we have discussed together, I will in practice be a being from another world. People feel this. There is a person who has flesh and blood like ours, but behind him there is something mysterious, because otherwise he would not have himself so much in hand. That is the secret.

People, even depraved human beings, no longer submit to other people today. To whom will they submit? To people in whom they see a mysterious power at work. If I behave in this way, if I am disciplined in every respect - hence, if I am not impulsive - I bear a secret within myself which no one can copy. We can copy words, we can copy a system once it has been set up. However, a system does not exercise an influence, only a personality can. The person who is mysteriously at home in another world, who does not merely say things, but lives them, is the one who influences others.

People no longer believe the spoken word today. You know the saying: Although people today still believe in a Bible, it is not the written or the spoken Bible. Which Bible is believed? The Bible of life, the Bible of a vital example. That is the great secret of education.

Now comes the final and most difficult train of thoughts. The third question was: What can we do in order to grow towards this high ideal? It is indeed a dizzying height. It is simply the eminence of the holy educator. We feel that it is only the Holy Spirit who can transform us inwardly. We should not think that this is the prerogative of priests and religious alone. I am the priest in my family, I, the father. And the mother is the priestess. I must be transformed.

The answer to the third question is easy to give in theory.

1. *Draw and draw again from the source of grace.* We know why the Blessed Mother wants to take up her abode here⁷. We want to take all our needs to the Blessed Mother. She should give us the grace of spiritual transformation.

2. *I must place myself completely under the influence of her education.* She must educate me. Vincent Pallotti (1795-1850) said of her: 'She is the great missionary'⁸. She is the great educator who can work miracles of transformation. She should work them also in us.

3. *I must do my share by making what we call 'contributions to the capital of grace'.* These could be:

Firstly, battling against serious sin - my contribution to the capital of grace.

Secondly, battling against venial sins - my contribution to the capital of grace.

Thirdly, battling against myself. I want to do everything I can so that the Blessed Mother has an easy task with me.

⁷ At the time the shrine in Madison was being built. See the talks given on this subject on 29.9.1953.

⁸ See J. Kentenich: Mary, our Mother and Educator, p.14.

Fourthly, battling against all that is unnecessary in my life - unnecessary in my imagination and unnecessary in my actions. Otherwise I will never progress. And how many unnecessary things we do today! How many unnecessary things also our clergy do today! That is why we are unable to create a holy people, because we do not strive energetically enough for sanctity.

A few weeks ago I quoted a beautiful saying of Cardinal Stritch⁹ for you. I think I should repeat it. 'The American has within himself the timber from which saints can be carved.' I may also say this about my children. Even if I have a stormy temperament and suffer under the laws of heredity, I am still the sort of timber out of which a saint can be carved and placed on the altar. 'But,' and here the Cardinal turned to the priests who were present, 'what is lacking are the masterly hands to carve the wood'¹⁰.

I, the father, am the priest. I must be the master craftsman who manages to carve saints from the timber I have before me in my children. That is what matters, not the discovery of new noise¹¹. There is enough noise in the world today. What matters is the discovery of new values and living according to them. We must go into the 'desert'¹² and allow ourselves to be formed there, we must be open for God, so that when we are filled with God we can go out again, or return to the family, in order to build and proclaim a Nazareth, a Schoenstatt family.

⁹ Samuel Alphons Stritch (1887-1958), 1930 Archbishop of Milwaukee, 1939 Archbishop of Chicago, 1945 Cardinal. See also, *Mary, our Mother and Educator*, p.24.

¹⁰ The Cardinal spoke these words on a day of recollection for priests on 11.11.1952. See also, *Mary, our Mother and Educator*, p.24.

¹¹ A reference to a saying of Nietzsche which Fr Kentenich often quoted, but the source is still undiscovered.

¹² The word used by Fr Kentenich was loneliness, but there is a clear reference to the action of the first monks who left the world and literally went into the desert in order to find God.

The Nazareth Family

**is brought about when it takes its bearings from
the order of being
love and
the child**

The father principle

The transfer of life through reverence and love

Character-formation - sensitive phases

Guilt and punishment as existential experiences

**Recollection Day - 15 February 1953
First Conference**

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

Since our last meeting you have come together from time to time and have got to know one another better and more deeply. This is a great advantage - as we heard last time - we should be together in a truly human and family-like way, so that living people interact and not just abstract ideas. Since we are all ultimately working towards the same great ideal, it is also worth our while to meet from time to time in everyday life so that we can influence one another.

Now we are meeting for the second time here. What are we looking for? I asked this question yesterday and I was told that I should first of all summarize what we discussed last time. I shall gladly do so very briefly, then I want to use today to illustrate with practical examples what we discussed last time in principle.

First of all: What did we discuss? The answer is very simple. We shed a little light on *the ideal of a Schoenstatt family*. The definition is now well known. What is a Schoenstatt family? *A family which, by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, strives successfully to achieve the ideal of the Nazareth Family in a timely way.*

This raises three questions. The first question: What is meant by the words 'by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt'? I don't want to say more about this at present. Those of you who are here for the first time can ask the other couples or Sr Winfriede to explain it to you.

The second question, which we discussed in greater detail, centres on the ideal of a Schoenstatt family, and the third point on living it in a timely way. We want to dwell on these two points today.

What do we understand by the ideal of a Nazareth family? I could see that you had understood me because, among other things, you met with Mr & Mrs Laufenberg not just on that day, but also later, and stayed with the question: Can Nazareth really be an ideal for us? How can Nazareth, how can the Blessed Mother, who was without original sin and whose sub-conscious and unconscious was therefore not in disarray, who also conceived her Son in a different way and gave birth to him differently, how can she be an ideal for us? I shall return to this question in the course of the day. Today I merely want to emphasize that when we spoke about the Nazareth family we consciously stressed certain points which make the ideal practical for us. We did not look at the whole life at Nazareth as our example. Why not? I shall go into this later.

From which point of view did we describe it? There were three points. It is a good idea to think these thoughts through time and again.

Firstly, *the Nazareth family took its bearings from the objective order of being*. You can probably remember what that means.

Secondly, *it was held together by the bonds of love*.

Thirdly, *everything was concentrated on the Child.*

We looked at Nazareth as our example from these three points of view.

Now let me dwell on the first point - the Nazareth family takes its bearings from the objective order of being.

What is the objective order of being? According to it the father is the head of the family. Please recall all I have said about the 'father principle'. Such truths are important for us today, especially here in America, because the mother is so much in the foreground here that the father hardly exists. It seems to me that the father is the breadwinner, but the mother wields the sceptre in the family. That wasn't the case in Nazareth! Who held the sceptre?

Please recall how the father principle was expressed in the Nazareth family, and what I had to say about it. *The father, the authority of the father, is primary, that of the mother is secondary, it is derived.*

What is meant by fatherly authority? What is the task of the father? The father should educate the children, not merely beget them and provide food for them. The father must be at the centre of the educational process¹.

Please note: Education! In German it is a beautiful word. The father has not just to beget and provide food for his children. It is also his task. No, the father has to educate, the father is at the centre. That is the Nazareth family.

Therefore, the work of education proper to the father is:

1. education to obedience
2. education to daring and the development of strength.

This is how the father is in the foreground. Of course, we as fathers have, on the other hand, to be on our guard that we do not fail through brutality and a certain sensuality², through being too soft or too cruel. That is the picture of the father as revealed to us in Nazareth.

Let me pause here for a moment and hold up a mirror, as it were. I want to tell you some examples from world history. I am deliberately taking examples that do not come from normal, everyday life, but ones that have an historical value. While I am giving you the examples, please do not say to yourselves: We are going to copy that! That is not the point. What is more important is to illustrate

¹ Fr Kentenich is playing with words to underline his point: erzeugen=to beget; ernähren=to nourish, to provide for; erziehen=to educate.

² By this Fr Kentenich means a state in which the drives are not controlled by reason. He uses the words 'sentimentality' and 'effeminacy' or 'softness' in the same sense. See his explanations in the previous conferences.

the principles and then to ask ourselves:

1. In this instance, what is the principle?
2. How can I apply it to my circumstances?

My main concern is

- that we acquire clear concepts,
- that we learn to think independently,
- that we create basic attitudes.

Don't just do things! They do it that way, so I will copy them. Or, this is one way to do it! Good, so I shall do the same. No! Then everything is up in the clouds. Have clear principles! Once the principle is clear, decide and act. This means taking ourselves in hand in an original way and also educating our children.

Now for the examples. I will start with Thomas More (1478-1535). We have all heard about him. He was Lord Chancellor of England, the man who sacrificed his life because he obeyed his conscience. He could have made life easier for himself. But no, he became a martyr because he obeyed his conscience. So he is obviously a man who has something to say to us. We are living today in an era marked by a mass mentality. Which us still follow our conscience today? I allow myself to be driven this way and that by the crowd. My conscience is no longer the norm, instead what we earn is; and then perhaps what people think of us. The crowd and crowd mentality! Thomas More followed his conscience, so much so that he even gave his life because of it.

Let me tell you about his relationship with his father. I shall merely quote one example. You should then ask yourselves: What is going on in the background? Even when he was Lord Chancellor, when he was the most important man in England, it was natural for him before he left the house to kneel down before his father and ask him for his blessing.

I am not saying we should do the same. However, you can feel what a profound respect this man had for his father. When he was in public, when as Lord Chancellor he was naturally expected to take the presiding place, he always led his father to the main seat. His father should take the seat of honour. Of course, his father refused to take it. Then Thomas More took the seat of honour due to him.

Do you understand what I am trying to say? Note the respect the Lord Chancellor had for his father. This had not been drilled into him, that is obvious. However we have to ask ourselves: How must this father have educated his son from childhood in order that he should show such respect for the authority of his father?

Please take note of a definition once offered by a philosopher. He said: Authority comes from auctor esse. What is meant by the words auctor esse? - Being the author or originator. The father must be the author or originator of respect in his child. That is to say, through the whole way a father behaves towards his children, he generates respect and reverence in them. Not through beating them, through

bawling them out, by kicking and punching them. No! The whole personality of the father should form and mould the children in such a way that from early childhood onwards they respect their father's authority, so that one can truly speak of 'auctoritas'. That is authority which comes from within, from what one is. It generates a response in the child. What is that? Respect, reverence, which always and everywhere submits to the father's authority.

The question we now have to put to ourselves is not so much: What must I *do*? That is the wrong question. After all that we have discussed together at our last meeting, the first question should be: What must I now *be*? How should I be as a father? Only then may we ask: What must I do? What must I as a father do?

When we are dealing with being the author of spiritual attitudes, we have an effect on others not so much by copied behaviour, but through what we are, through our whole being. What I am is what affects others. Let me stress - whoever has any sense at all for education knows that we can educate only when there is a certain climate or atmosphere. Doctors say: We can only operate when the body is in this or that state. If the body is weakened, we cannot operate. In the same way, if we are to educate correctly, a certain situation and atmosphere is necessary. How can we describe this atmosphere? (I am proceeding merely from the principle.) It is the atmosphere of reverence and love. That is to say, if children respect and love their parents, education is possible. We can also train them. I can train them. What do I do with an animal? What do I do, for example, with a dog? It isn't educated, it is trained. I can do this without awakening respect and love. I only need strength and muscles, or an authoritative voice, or a big body. I can force someone to obey me, just as I can force an animal. I need only use the whip, then everything functions. But that doesn't create an attitude of respect and reverence.

If reverence and respect for their parents have not been awakened in the children, and if at the same time there is no love, education is absolutely impossible. It is training, drill, but not education.

Now you will naturally ask: *How can I educate my children to respect and love me?* Please do not expect me to give you a recipe. What I want to bring home to you is what is called a fundamental attitude. In this instance it would mean - through my own respect and reverence for my children, through my own love for them, I create respect and love in my children. Do you see, there we have the atmosphere! What atmosphere? The parents must radiate respect and love in order to awaken respect and love in their children. You can then do whatever you like with your children. You will have the only atmosphere in which education becomes possible.

This raises the question, which I shall leave open - you can discuss it together sometime: How can I educate myself to show more respect and love for my child? Don't ask: How can I educate my child to show me respect and love? Instead, ask yourself: How can I educate myself to show respect and love for my child?

The ancient Romans had a strange saying: 'maxima reverentia puero'. A child, even an infant, should be shown not just respect, but the greatest respect. So that little being wriggling there in pampers

should be shown reverence by me, his mother or father. *Maxima reverentia debetur puero* - (Maximum respect is due to the child).

You should not think that such tiny children are not formed by the way you treat them. Educators of ancient times pointed out that a child is already educated by the time he or she is 3 or 4 years old, that is to say, at an age when the child is still completely immature. So we may not say: We will start educating when the child is able to use his or her mind. What did the educators of old mean when they said that a child is already completely educated by the time he or she is 3 or 4? They were saying that by that time the child has absorbed the influence of his or her parents on the emotional level. And whatever is in the emotions determines the future of a child, not what comes later into that child's intellect.

The emotions! How are the emotions formed? Through the way I behave towards the tiny child. I may not say: Oh, he or she is only a baby!

- If I let the child run around naked, the child doesn't know the difference. Of course, the child doesn't know it at first, but everything enters his or her emotions. Whatever we do, even towards an infant, enters that child's emotions and forms his or her character. So I can say: By the time a child is 3 or 4 that child's education is complete. Do you understand what that means?

So it really is worthwhile to meet from time to time to discuss these things, especially today when everything is so permissive, when there is confusion everywhere, where there are no longer clear principle and no one really knows what they should do. Later on we make all sorts of sacrifices for our children, we worry ourselves to death, and in the end everything fails. Why? Because we have not shown sufficient respect for that tiny child in pampers.

A second example. We shall take it from the history of France. We started with England, now we'll go over to France. One of the French intellectuals, a deeply religious man, wanted to educate his children in a deeply religious spirit. He did everything he could in this regard. One day he examined his child: 'Why are you here on earth?' What answer did the child give? One we probably do not expect. She³ said: 'I am on earth to love my father!' And she threw herself into his arms, hugged and kissed him. I am on earth to love my father!

Please do not look on this answer as the expression of a childish outburst. It is much as though we have here a breach in a wall through which we can see what is on the other side. What does this little incident prove? Notice how much the father was a reflection of the heavenly Father. Isn't it natural that the little one could only give this answer: I am here on earth to love my father, because she had seen her earthly father as the extension of the heavenly Father?

³ In German it is possible to tell such a story without defining the sex of a child, since the neuter form is used. Hence the child could have been a boy or a girl.

The Catechism asks us: Why are we on earth? Ultimately to love God. In this instance the answer is: I am here on earth to love my father, but he is the extension, the representative, the `transparent'⁴ of the heavenly Father. This is what fatherhood means, this is what showing fatherly authority through our being means, this is what being a reflection of the heavenly Father means. A high ideal, one we can hardly reach!

Do you now understand how fatherly authority should be expressed? The Nazareth family takes its bearings from the objective order of being. And how can we describe the father's authority in this order of being?

A third example. Now we are going to India. At the time we heard a lot about the Indian reformer, Gandhi⁵. It would be worth your while to hear about his relationship to his father. He was not a Christian. Fatherhood and the authority of a father are based on natural law, they are not just something that existed only in Nazareth. There are people, the Chinese people for example, where the authority of the father is extremely great and strong, so much so that we Christians can learn from them.

To return to Gandhi. When he was 15 he stole something. How did that happen? He was a young man, and like young people are he had got into debt and was unable to pay his debts. He didn't want to go to his father. So what did he do? His brother had a golden watch chain. Gandhi cut off a few links and sold them for about 10 dollars.

Now we can learn a lot from what went on inside the young Gandhi, on the one hand, and from the reaction of his father, on the other. Gandhi had such a sound sense of guilt that he was unable to relax day or night, and in the end he decided to tell his father about it. Not just anybody! No, his father, that is, the person with God-given authority over him. He had to confess his misdeed, and since he was too ashamed to tell his father, he wrote instead. He related this himself. He stressed that he was not afraid his father would hit him. His father had never beaten him, especially not once he had grown up. No, his only worry was: What suffering I will cause my father when I tell him that I, his son, have done such an ugly thing. After a great inner struggle he managed to write his father a letter. He handed it to his father and remained in the room while he read it. His father read the letter, and suddenly tears began to run down his cheeks as though a dreadful disaster had happened. The boy saw this and was inwardly deeply touched. He waited for his father to bawl him out. His guilt told him: You deserve a punishment. That was why he had felt the need to confess what he had done. His father merely wept, he did nothing else. The subject was closed. Can you imagine what a deep and lasting impression this had on the young Gandhi?

Once again let us ask the question: How can we describe the authority of a father? When a teenager

⁴ I have taken over the German word, and hence coined a new word in English, because this plays a key role in Fr Kantenich's teaching. The father becomes transparent, that is, the child sees through him and finds God.

⁵ Mohandas Daramchand Gandhi, (1869-1948) called Mahatma, meaning the 'great soul', the father of modern India.

behaves in such a way towards his father, it says a great deal about their relationship. What a wonderful attitude and authority that father had! What respect! What distance despite deep closeness! This is what fatherly authority is all about.

We could ask - although this question does not really belong here, but we want to raise it sooner or later: What does the young Gandhi's feeling of guilt tell us about him? And following from this we can ask the question: *What must I do to educate my children to have a sound feeling of guilt and need for punishment?* These are questions that are no longer asked in the educational field today. So it's not: How must I educate my child to deceive me, to behave in such a way that outwardly everything appears legal? No! What must I do to educate my child to have a sound sense of guilt and need for punishment?

You see, my dear Schoenstatt families, I am personally convinced that the world today⁶ is a bundle of nerves, it is ill to the depths of its being, so are we adults to a large extent. Why? Because we no longer have a sound sense of guilt. Education to have a feeling of guilt and need for punishment is an essential issue - I might almost say - even for contemporary medicine. Often we are physically and spiritually ill, we are spiritually ill to the core of our being. Why? Because we no longer have a correct feeling of guilt.

I can remember a famous European psychotherapist⁷ who recently spoke on this subject and said that most emotional illnesses are caused because people today are no longer able to cope with their limitations and their sense of guilt. They are suppressed. People today can no longer bear it - what I am about to say may seem odd to you - that they are merely creatures, that they are not God. People can no longer bear it that they are divided into two sexes and have to be complemented by the opposite sex. They can no longer see and accept their limitations. They can no longer bear it that they are not sufficient in themselves, that they are dependent on others⁸.

Where does this lead? It is always the same. We cannot cope with our limitations, with our miseries, with our feelings of guilt. And if you visit hospitals sometime - I am better acquainted with conditions in Europe - and look which doctors have the most patients, you will find that it isn't the surgeons in Europe, but the psychotherapists. Spiritual illness abounds.

How can it be healed? An essential element in this direction - for us adults as well - is education for a sound feeling of guilt. Don't stifle everything, don't just shrug it off! Don't stand to attention with head raised, hands at the side and the heels together, and then march off and destroy everything inside yourself! No! Education for a sound feeling of guilt and need for punishment, also for us adults, is an essential condition that has to be met if we want to live healthily today.

⁶ i.e. the people living in the world today.

⁷ Felix Schottländer

⁸ See Pedagogical Training Courses

I would like to suggest that you think through personally the thoughts we have discussed together, and then connect them with holy Mass. Those of us who receive Communion today will be well advised to visualise our Lord as the great educator, or as the Good Shepherd. He comes into my heart, he comes from eternity onto the altar and wants to become one with me. He wants to help me to educate my children as he, the Saviour, educated people during his lifetime here on earth.

The Good Shepherd! You could imagine to yourselves today that he is coming into our hearts as the Good Shepherd, in order to enlighten our minds, to move our hearts and to activate our wills, so that we gain a sense for the ideal of a genuine father, a genuine mother, and also the strength to put into practice what we have recognized as correct⁹.

⁹ Fr Kentenich often used the image and ideal of the Good Shepherd to describe the good educator and father. In Dachau he wrote 'The Shepherd's Mirror' consisting of 5870 verses in which he dwelt on the task of the leader and educator. Since it was written for the Sisters of Mary in the first place, it shows that it applies to women, just as much to men. His pedagogical courses and many sermons and talks enlarge on the same subject.

**Education as a process of begetting
presupposes the educated educator**

Being inwardly gripped¹

A total response to the other person as a whole

Modesty and a sense of shame

Generosity

Readiness to invest

**Recollection Day - 15 February 1953
Second Conference**

¹ This is not an easy concept to translate and I have had to use different expressions depending on the context. It can mean being seized with fear or enthusiasm, being emotionally moved or touched, affected, gripped with fear or enthusiasm, etc. We can talk of a gripping film or story. This is what is meant. The ideal should have the same effect on us.

My dear Schoenstatt families,

We have already touched upon some very serious questions. (I don't know whether I should continue with our topic or remain with some of the points already raised. I have been told that you had a long discussion.) I want to take up two of the points you discussed.

First of all: *Why was Gandhi's father so shattered that he wept?*

Secondly: *Can I talk to my tiny child about God?*

These are actually very serious questions.

First question: Why was Gandhi's father so shattered?

I don't know whether you have had the opportunity to work through the thoughts presented at our last recollection day. We made a very serious and clear statement that education is begetting. You may not overlook the fact that education is begetting. What you need now is the courage to visualize: *How do I beget the physical life of my child?* The whole person is involved. Suppose for a moment that you were to come together in the marital act - allow me to speak so freely - without being motivated by inner passion. That would not be begetting. It is something that is forced. You would notice this later in the child.

Education is begetting. Do you know what that means? The whole person must be involved. Now let me ask again: Why was Gandhi's father so shattered? He experienced inwardly: My flesh and blood has now started to steal. What will become of this child? So the father experienced inwardly the whole tragedy of stealing, and he did so all the more deeply because his own flesh and blood was involved.

Just imagine what would have happened if this father had said philosophically: 'Oh, well, you have lied or stolen. I did the same in the past. It doesn't matter!' He may perhaps have added: 'You shouldn't do such a thing.' Or he could have opened a book and said: 'Whoever has stolen must receive 20 cuts with a cane.' So 20 cuts, then the matter is closed. I have purposely exaggerated. If the father had done this, it would not have been an act of begetting. The whole person would not have been involved. If the whole person is involved and inwardly shares in the experience of the other person - and the ordinary person on the street can do this better than an academic - that is when the act of begetting begins.

Let me tell you another example that illustrates this point better. Please try to understand - *the act of begetting presupposes that I am inwardly gripped by what I am experiencing and what I am aspiring to.* If I am not inwardly gripped, then what I say or do is empty. That is why I said to you to start with, our first question is not: What must I do? but: What must I be? Hence the ancient saying which is constantly repeated by professional educators: *We need educated educators.* I must personally be educated. I must personally appreciate the values I want to pass on to the children.

Let me tell you another example. I don't know whether you have already heard about the well-known modern German Catholic writer, Friedrich Wilhelm Weber². He wrote the book 'Dreizehnlinden'. (You may have heard of it.) He had had an extremely strict father, a father - how should I put it? - who treated the boy with extreme severity for the least thing. One might almost say he ill-treated him, so much so that as a small child Friedrich Wilhelm trembled with fear when he saw his father. He tried out of sheer fear to do everything perfectly.

It happened that he had once again done something wrong. If I remember rightly, he came home too late. He had simply, as young boys do, stayed out too long while playing. He arrived home and was immediately gripped with terror. What did he do? He hid. I don't remember where, at any rate somewhere where his father would not find him easily. Why? He was simply terrified. Of course he knew that he would have to come out of hiding sometime, but in the way these things happen, he hid himself and tried for the moment to free himself of his fear.

So he sat there and waited and waited. His father went to the door and looked outside for him and started to shout. But the boy didn't move from his hiding place. Then he suddenly realized that his father had begun to worry about him. He realized: My father loves me! My father is suffering because I am not there. This awakened all that was noble in him. He could not remain in hiding any longer, he could not watch his father suffering. He came out of his hiding place, trembling with fear. He thought: Now I will be half-killed with the cane!

However, as the suffering father saw his trembling son, he was again gripped by love for the boy and saw him in his totality. What was the result? He said nothing. He was a real Westphalian. (There is a saying that two Westphalians can share a whole sack of salt and not exchange a word!) So the father said nothing. He wasn't angry. On the contrary, he was happy that the boy was there. He merely took hold of the boy by his long, black curls and led him to his room, and everything was forgotten. This had such an effect on the boy that he became a completely different person.

Do you understand what I mean when I talk of an act of begetting? Can you follow what the whole incident tells us? Take another instance. Suppose that the father had beaten the boy into pulp. What would have happened? The boy would have been afraid, terrified, but he would most probably have done the same again a few days later. He would not have been inwardly educated.

The whole person must be inwardly interested in the other person as a whole, and must act because of this inward interest. That is the masterstroke - it isn't knowledge, it isn't theory, but total self-surrender, it is what we once called (perhaps you will recall what was said) bringing ourselves in line with the ideal of our followers on the level of the drives³. On the level of the drives! I must be gripped by what I teach, by what I say.

² (1813-1894)

³ This demand underlies the entire pedagogy of ideals as proclaimed by Fr Kentenich, and shows that the ideal is not applied from without, but implies knowing the other person (and the self) as a whole.

May I tell you another example? I want you to understand the concept of begetting, that is, as an act which influences the other person as a whole because it is the expression of our own total integration of the ideal. It is not something made up, as though you were now to say: 'Yes, Gandhi's father did it that way, so I will do the same.' Your child will see through this immediately. Every child has a very sound instinct for such things. Children can feel whether their parent's actions are genuine or not. If the priest does that when preaching - you are far away, it can still work, he can do it. But parents cannot pretend to their children, because children have a very keen instinct. They take things in as a totality.

Please do not think - this is a second qualification I want to make - that I have to be affected in this or that specific way. Our response is so individual. I can be really touched by something and still not shed a tear. And I can weep unrestrainedly and yet not be touched to any depth.

If education is an act of begetting, it presupposes:

1. that I am totally involved, (or have a total understanding,)
2. with the other person as a totality, and
3. with the total goal towards which I want to lead the other person.

That is to say, there must be a threefold involvement. There is a total understanding, not just with the mind, but also with the heart, a total understanding of the total person before me. So I want to accept my child totally. However, I must also be totally gripped by the goal towards which I want to lead the child. Those are the three criteria.

Once again an example. Perhaps we will get where we want to go most quickly in this way. When you discuss these things later, you should dwell on such things in greater detail, because they are central. You need to understand them properly.

It happened in Germany. A mother had a son who had a strange inclination to tell lies. Such things happen. It is almost a normal inclination in children. However, in this case it was pathological. He had to tell lies and he enjoyed telling lies. The mother did all she could to get him out of the habit, but he was an almost compulsive liar, it was like a mania.

So what did the mother do once all her efforts, including strictness and kindness, had failed? She made a promise: I will make a pilgrimage on foot, I will walk barefoot to a nearby place of pilgrimage. It was Bornhofen⁴. She took the boy along. He naturally wore his shoes.

The mother went on pilgrimage. She was well off and therefore not used to walking barefoot, least of all along rough paths and for such a long way. She prayed the Rosary. Of course, she made the boy

⁴ A small town on the River Rhine not far from present-day Schoenstatt. Pilgrimages to the Sorrowful Mother can be traced back to the 14th century.

pray with her. However, he did not know the motive for their pilgrimage. After they had walked a while - perhaps for a quarter of an hour - her feet began to bleed. Her son saw this and begged: 'Mother, what are you up to? Please put on your shoes!' His mother did not reply, she continued praying and he walked with her, and her feet bled and bled. But the mother went on praying and the boy kept on pleading with her to put on her shoes. In the end, when the mother told her son why she was doing it - she was helpless, so she had to beg the Blessed Mother to stop him from lying - he was inwardly touched.

Let me ask: Was the mother touched by her son's fault? And how! Otherwise she would never have made such a sacrifice. If she had given him a long sermon and pointed out where lying could lead him, she would only have appealed to his mind, she would not have touched his whole being.

The boy was so touched by the way his mother took his lying so seriously that he began to cry. He went to his mother, knelt down before her and begged her to put on her shoes, he wanted to try to stop telling lies. His mother replied, 'I have made a promise and I want to carry it out. The Blessed Mother must give you the grace.' They reached Bornhofen and the mother had carried out her promise. She begged our Lady to give the boy the grace to become a truthful child. The boy promised he would, he was so touched by what he had seen.

There you have it: *one totality influencing another totality for the sake of a totality*. Do you understand this? One totality influencing another totality for the sake of a totality. From that time on the child's tendency to tell lies was overcome.

Now please understand that I don't want you to say: 'I'll do the same.' You should copy nothing. You should merely be! What should I be? Inwardly gripped by responsibility for my children, for the goal towards which I want to educate my children. I can do it differently, I don't have to do it this way. Let me ask you again - please don't copy anything! You will do it once, and that will be the end of it. It will not have grown from within, from the totality of your responsibility.

This provides us with a bridge to the answer to the second question: *Can I talk to my tiny child about God?* Can I tell my toddler about his or her guardian angel, about our Lord, about the Blessed Mother, or should I wait until the child goes to school?

Hear this time and again: Education is begetting! One totality influences another totality for the sake of a totality. Let me give you another example.

You may have heard something about Anna Katharina Emmerich⁵ and of the writer who recorded her visions - Clemens Brentano⁶. It was thought that Clemens Brentano, who was given a very good religious education as a child, owed his conversion to Anna Katharina Emmerich. 'No,' he said, 'that

⁵ 1774-1824, a mystic and stigmatist. Entered the Augustinian Convent in Dülmen, Germany. Her visions have been confirmed by the Church.

⁶ 1778-1842, German writer, co-founder of the Heidelberg Romantic Movement with A.von Arnim, wrote down the visions of Anna Katharina Emmerich with poetic license.

is not true.' To whom did he owe his conversion? To an insignificant experience he had had as a child with his mother. What had happened? It is so insignificant that one might be inclined to laugh about it.

As I said, he was given a really good Christian, Catholic education. Later he became very frivolous. One day he returned home after he had been drinking heavily, in fact he was really drunk. He was lying in bed and sobering up when he suddenly remembered something from his earliest childhood, a very ordinary incident. What was it? He remembered how, when he was very small, his mother used to make the sign of the cross on his forehead every night, and then pray for him. Do you understand what that means? This memory reawakened all the religious experiences he had absorbed as a tiny child, and later as a growing child, and it brought about the grace of conversion.

Do you understand what I am trying to say? Insignificant incidents. We say so easily: 'Children can't understand that.' It is true, children can't understand many things, but they absorb them emotionally. What? The total picture of father and mother. If father and mother are gripped by the religious life, they need not say much to their children, perhaps nothing at all, but if they kneel down before the crucifix, the children take this in, they absorb through the senses whatever their father and mother do.

Can you recall what I told you recently about St Thérèse. As a tiny child she was taken to church when the Blessed Sacrament was exposed and all the candles were lit? The child was not as touched by all this, and all that she took in with her senses, as she was by the example of her father. She herself put it so beautifully - she watched her father all the time⁷. And what penetrated her emotions was what her father was doing.

Can I talk to my tiny child about God? Yes, of course! How? Through what I am. Through my reverence. What the child absorbs in this way is what educates the child.

This morning I told you that a child's education is complete by the time that child is three or four. Do you understand why? The first impressions have been absorbed by the emotions, and they come through again later⁸. They have an effect. Intellectually the child has not understood much. He or she may parrot what has been said, perhaps, but without understanding. However, the heart has taken it

⁷ Story of a Soul

⁸ Fr Kentenich is using a popular description of the various levels of the psyche. Psychologists tell us that the earliest impressions sink down into the sub-conscious and unconscious and later enter the conscious again through association with other experiences. These earliest impressions, however, continue to influence the behaviour of a person till the end of their life. Thus a child who learns to fear punishment as a tiny child will remain fundamentally insecure for the rest of its life. Later on this will show as anxiety and depression, for which there is possibly no 'conscious' explanation. A child who experiences love and acceptance from birth will be fundamentally secure and healthy.

in. The important thing is that the heart has absorbed it.

Perhaps you will allow me to use a drastic example. It is commonly said that a barrel retains the smell of the first liquid poured into it. This is a fact. I can wash out the barrel over and over again - I can't get rid of that initial smell. Do you understand what that means? Whatever I have absorbed on the emotional level as a tiny child will have an effect later on. This applies to God, all the more so if I talk to my child, for example, about his or her guardian angel. I can only do this if I myself am gripped by the reality of what I am saying. Of course, I have to speak in a language a child can understand. A child will not be able to understand how I speak to God as an adult. I have to use the simple language of a child, I must again become a child with my child. The child cannot understand all the implications of what is said, but he or she can experience the reality of religion through my example, through the reverent way I talk about our guardian angels, our Lord, the Crib, or God. Children love to listen to stories. That is education - far more than many other things. You see, this applies to my relationship to the religious world and to the education of my child.

Most probably you will now understand better that it is not true when people say that children cannot understand things. Let me put it this way - a child that constantly runs about stark naked. Some parents think that the child feels nothing. Don't be deceived! Children absorb this on the level of their feelings. They will learn not to respect their bodies.

It is sometimes said that American education is different. Americans are so conditioned, they have got used to so much that they are unaffected even by all they see on TV. I don't believe this. People simply remain human. And what has been taken in on the level of the emotions or feelings will have an effect sooner or later. Of course, a child isn't committing a sin. That is obvious. But he or she no longer has the feeling of personal, physical integrity any more⁹. That is an essential experience. It is something that has to enter my feelings - a certain integrity, the feeling that there are certain parts of my body that have to remain covered, even in the presence of father and mother, unless there is a specific reason to be uncovered.

Do you understand what that implies? A certain education of the child, also with regard to modesty, from infancy onwards, indeed even in the cradle, is necessary¹⁰. These are things you should take note of. Otherwise, at the end of our lives we will stand there and think how wonderfully we have educated our children, and then see one aberration after another and wonder what has caused them.

Do you notice how important education as begetting is? Once this is clear, you will have gained a great deal. So you as the mother may not say, for example: 'No one can see me, so it doesn't matter what I wear at home. My child is too small to notice.' Don't deceive yourselves! The child takes in

⁹ Physical integrity, as understood by Fr Kentenich, refers to a person's relationship to his or her own body. According to Fr Kentenich, children's direct or indirect experiences with their bodies in early childhood will exercise a positive or negative effect on their individual development and sexuality.

¹⁰ In the framework of his teaching on the education of the personality and the community, Fr Kentenich was of the opinion that the observance of certain limits to one's behaviour is of particular importance for the religious and moral maturation of the personality. In addition, he set great store by the cultivation of reverence and consideration for others in interpersonal relationships. This applies also to the sexual sphere.

impressions. See how it is often done in Europe. It is natural for parents to behave before their children in such a way that strangers can come in at any time. Can you understand what that means? As father and mother I clothe myself, I cover myself, I am not negligent.

At the same time I want to draw your attention to something else. We are not concerned here with merely avoiding sin. I want you to be clear on this point. If I say, 'It is not a sin if I do it, so ...' Goodness me, if I only want to avoid sin, I will be a rogue tomorrow. If I only want to avoid sin, for example, in the way I dress in front of my child, or in the way I treat my child ... that is not the point here. I don't just want to avoid sin. If I educate, I want to educate towards an ideal. And that means living the ideal as an example. So it is not a question to me: 'Am I sinning here or there?'. On the contrary, I have to ask: 'Am I living the ideal as an example to my child, so that I can show myself to my child at any time, even if the child later becomes famous?'

So, let me say:

1. we should not just want to avoid sin;
2. we should not say: but the neighbour's children do it! The husband goes to communion every day, and the wife would love to be able to go twice a day. How do they treat their children? If they can do it, so can I!

You see, it doesn't matter what XYZ do. I alone bear the responsibility for my child, not someone else. And my own sense of modesty tells me what is the finest and most noble way to behave. So don't ask: 'What must I do?', but, 'What may I do? What is the best thing to do, the most noble way to do it?' If you merely want to educate a person who does not batter in the brains of someone else, you needn't do very much. No, we are concerned here with educating the whole person towards and into the ideal. This means that you must as far as possible accept the ideal inwardly and live it as an example yourselves in the way you expect it of your child. That is education. That is an act of begetting. Isn't it also most attractive?

This week you visited a family and were surprised at the number of children they have. It is a simple working-class family which almost lives hand to mouth.

Let me tell you about Cardinal Faulhaber¹¹. He was once in Cologne for a Kolping jubilee and prayed at Kolping's tomb. As he got up he said to his secretary: 'Yes, it is strange - to be rich and to be happy are not always the same thing. But to be happy and rich - that is real greatness!' Do you understand what that means? Adolph Kolping came from a working-class family. To be rich? Riches, having a lot of money, by no means implies that one is happy. But to be happy? When am I happy? When I strive towards the ideal, when I grow into the ideal I have chosen. Then I can be outwardly poor, but because I am happy, I will be rich. And these riches take away so many cares. After all, God adds his share. I will later speak in greater detail on this subject.

¹¹ Michael von Faulhaber (1869-1952), 1917 Archbishop of Munich and Freising, 1921 appointed Cardinal.

I want to tell you another example so that you can see how essential it is for our children to experience that they are totally accepted and the object of all our love. Somewhere - it was obviously not in America - at a time when it still meant something to buy a car, a father had a car, so he was well off, and his son naturally enjoyed the car as well. But he was surprised that his father was always present when the servant or chauffeur worked on the car. So he asked his father: 'Why do you do that? You could be doing other things in that time?' His father replied, 'My boy, that car is a capital investment for me. Nothing may happen to it. That is why I have to be there all the time.' The boy listened to this and then said, 'Father, then I am certainly not a capital investment for you!' 'Good heavens, what do you mean? Not a capital investment ..?' 'You don't bother about me.'

Do you understand what that means? What is our biggest capital investment? Our children! They are the true capital investment. Do you know the effect of this boy's words on his father? From that day onward he took time for his son. And when he got home from work, he didn't say as other people so often do: 'I still have to read a book, I still have to read all sorts of things. I need it for my general knowledge.' His capital investment had become his child.

In Germany we have a saying - I don't know whether it can be translated into English: 'First the children, then the cattle!' Do you understand what it implies? It means that we shouldn't first collect all sorts of material goods (the cattle!). Obviously, a father and mother have to care for their children in the material sense. Please understand me correctly. I am not talking about this at the moment. I take it for granted. I am a father, so I have to see to that. I have to care for their material welfare. What I am stressing at present is what is normally not mentioned. It is obvious that we have to care for material things. I have to work and be proficient at my work. I have also to feed my family. They must be able to live. I am presupposing all this.

You see, my capital investment, the children come first. It means that I do not try to hoard money and possessions and neglect the children. If X or Y don't bother about their children, the Sisters can do so, or someone else, the parish priest can bother about them. But I? I begot them. Now they can do what they like - in the end the state can do what it likes with them. No, first the children, then the cattle! Not first the cattle and then the children.

My capital investment! Where is my capital investment? With my children. You see, if they are my capital investment, I will devote all my attention to this capital investment. It is always the same truth: The act of begetting life - one totality for the sake of the other totality leads to the totality!

So, my children are my capital investment! My children - my treasure! My children - my greatest wealth! Everything else is secondary. One totality leads to the other totality for sake of the totality!

Let me give you another example. I'm not doing anything else than telling stories today! A mother - she wasn't Catholic - had some wonderful children, in this case they were both boys. She educated them well. They did well in life, they were highly educated in the sciences and up-to-date with technical developments. During the war they were called up to the army. Life at the front was quite a different matter to life at home. Once when the situation became dangerous they noticed that their

companions began to pray. They had never learnt from their mother how to pray. They wrote home to thank their mother for all she had done for them. They mentioned how well they had managed to advance financially. `But there is one thing you never taught us - you never taught us to pray. Now we are here and can't cope with life.' Not long afterwards the news arrived that both boys had been killed in battle. The mother went mad and had to be institutionalized. Why? She couldn't cope with the thought: It is true, you did everything for your children, but you never taught them to pray. She met some Catholics and learnt from them how to pray. She became a Catholic and is once again a happy person.

Do you understand - my treasure, my children, they must really be treated like a treasure. Nothing can harm them. Above all, they must know about God, they must learn to pray, they must learn to love God. My children, my treasure, my capital investment!

A final example: A mother lost her temper. She had a number of children and was quite at her wits end. One of the children did something to upset her and she burst out: `Dear God! So many children! How can I cope with so many children!' That night as the children were going to bed and said their prayers, the one to whom she had spoken like that prayed quite simply: `Dear God, please let me die soon!' His mother asked, `What on earth is going on?' `Well, you said: How can I cope with so many children? So I am asking God to let me die, then you will have one less.' From that time on the mother never repeated those words again. She had understood what it means: my children, my treasure! My children, my wealth!

I don't come to an end with my stories! Let me tell you another little example, then that will be the end. Somewhere - we could suppose it happened in Madison, but it didn't really - there was a very ordinary family. I shall tell you things just as they happened. They had eleven children. It was quite exceptional in that town. So the Caritas workers came on a visit to congratulate the mother and bring her some presents. Why? The eleventh child had just been born. The mother had not studied and did not know what was the usual thing in society. She was so touched that these people had shown an interest in her that she didn't know what to say. She wanted to wish the ladies the nicest thing she could think of. What did she wish them? `I hope you have as many children as I have!' And the effect? One after the other the women crept away. No one said a word. Then the woman asked: `What have I done? I merely wished them the best thing I could think of - a large number of children.'

Now we have used a whole hour to answer the two questions you discussed in the workshop.

First question: Why did Gandhi's father weep?

Second question: Can I talk to my tiny child about God?

Now you have a way to answer such questions - not just with a short answer, *but by working out the principles, clarifying the principles, and then allowing each one the freedom to apply the principle as he or she thinks fit.*

What is the principle we have worked out, from which we have answered all our questions and towards which we have directed all our questions? It is the essence of education. What is education? Begetting. If I hold onto this insight, I will be able to answer all the questions that arise in this field. If I were now to talk to philosophers, I would refer to the history of philosophy and offer a polished definition of begetting life. That is learned stuff. However, in essence we can say what I have just said to you - life enkindles life. One totality leads to the other totality for the sake of the totality. That is begetting. Here you have a genuine and clear concept of education as begetting - life enkindles life! I try to live as an example, although I often fail to do so, that is obvious. We simply remain human. But I try to live what I teach. I try with all my soul to live what I teach. I try to give myself totally to my child. Auctor esse - *I want to be the author of life*, not just of the physical life, but also of the religious life, of the spiritual life of my children. Then being a father or mother will make us happy. Otherwise it is a burden.

The Primacy of the Family

must be considered by Church organizations

Sociability

Charisma of education

Awareness of the family

Readiness for sacrifice

Examples from life

Task of the wife

Reality of the covenant

Mary as our ideal

Recollection Day - 15 February 1953

Third Conference

My dear Schoenstatt families,

I should really take up your discussion again, but we would never get any further. Nevertheless I think I should say two or three things.

You are quite correct in feeling that *the mother has been left out*. I have not said much about the mother. I didn't want to do so. In all probability I have said more (about the father) than I had initially intended. I merely wanted to place the father in the foreground at first. Then, when we again have real fathers, we will also have real mothers. The time will come when I will speak at greater length about the mothers.

The second question you discussed together was: What can we do when we have a number of children and today this has to be done, tomorrow that, and the next day something else, either for the parish or the school? Your instinctive reaction was right - you will then never have the children together. I think you must remember that *the most essential thing is the family*. The most essential thing is not the parish organization or the school. We are living in circumstances today in which it seems as though the family is merely the place where children are begotten, they get everything else from the school or some organization. That is fundamentally wrong.

Allow me to impress on you one principle or law according to which you will gradually be able to find your own orientation. It may sound somewhat learned. The law is: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi - the objective order of being¹ must be the norm according to which I bring order into my life*. According to the objective order of being the family comes first, the family is the root, the beginning of the whole of human society. As the father and mother I must tell myself: *Whatever disturbs family life does not come from God*, even if it comes from the parish.

Perhaps it is even out of place to say this - yesterday someone told me that there is a discussion going on in the parish here about whether they should build a hall or auditorium. The children should have somewhere in the parish where they can be together in this or that organization. One of the mothers said: 'That's not at all important for me. I don't want my children to be in a hall, I want them at home.' Of course, one has to be careful to understand this correctly. Obviously the children have to be able to come into contact with other young people. They need some social contact. But this should not mean that they are constantly away from home.

This was also said at one time in Germany: We must cultivate the organizations, because there are no families. In theory this is correct. I say 'because', or more correctly 'if' we have no families. However, in practice what happens is that the organizations destroy the families that are still there, and that may not happen. So I think you should hold onto the principle: *The family is primary and must come first*. I simply do not take part in whatever disturbs my family life. My neighbours can join in. That is their business. Even if it is something organized by the Church. Because then you no

¹ The way God planned things and people when he created them. This order was upset by sin and has to be restored - by God's grace and human co-operation.

longer have your children in hand. Then the street will educate your children. What can you expect after that?

Of course, it is obvious when we think of our teenagers - we were the same - at a certain age they want to be part of the group, they want to socialize. They want to be with their peers. But when you have a large family, they are together with their peers. Besides this, they go to school.

I think I have to say that in the way Catholic circles today often foster their social lives outside the family, they destroy the family so thoroughly that in the near future we will almost have a form of communism. That is what communism is aiming at - the family should no longer exist. And in practice we do the same without really wanting it. In my opinion we may not do this. We should hold onto the principle: *Ordo essendi est ordo agendi*. According to God's plan the family comes first.

Let us consider for a moment: Why did our Lord spend thirty years in a family? Thirty years! Can you imagine that our Lord was constantly out on the streets? Or that he was constantly working in some organization? If that was the case, he could have started preaching before he was thirty. Just think of all our children have achieved before they are thirty. By then they have their own children. They have experienced all sorts of things by then. And our Lord? Thirty years - I might almost say he spent thirty years tied to his mother's apron strings. What did he do during those thirty years? He impressed on us just one thing - it is the family that matters! He spent only three years in his public life and thirty years with his family.

From this you can conclude: *Whatever disturbs my family life does not come from God*. The opposite is also true - you must see to it that your children receive all they need within the family. Everything! They can be happy together. They should find whatever they need for their spiritual lives. They are given a good schooling, etc. They should in essentials receive all that they need from their family.

However, if the children are dependent on finding this here and that there, it is obvious that I will be unable to keep them in the family. They may not have less than other children. The family, father and mother, give what the children need merely by being together.

You have asked that at some stage we should discuss how we can educate our children in puberty, as teenagers. We will go into this later. Today we want to remain with one thought. It is obvious that as father or mother I will have to adapt myself when my daughter becomes a teenager or my son enters puberty. I cannot say: Obey the rules! And that's the end of it! I can't treat youngsters at that age in the same way as when they were children. Mrs Laufenberg is right. One has to have the right instinct. I can't learn that from books. What you pick up in books is usually 'stuck on', it is purely theoretical.

If you love your children, and if you personally strive to reach the ideal towards which you want to educate them, you will do the right thing. That is the wisdom of age. I want to give my children back to God, who gave them to me, and together with the children I want to reach God and master life today with the children. You will see that you will become creative, inventive and resourceful. You will do the right thing. If you constantly study a book first, like a woman who cannot cook - good

heavens! She always uses a cookbook, so everything fails, because she merely follows the cookbook. A cookbook - what she needs is in the fingertips! That is to say, she needs to get a feel for cooking. This is what is meant when people say that education is a charisma. It must become part of the deepest depths of a person.

So please remember, whoever disturbs and destroys family life - no matter who that is, even (to put it drastically) if it were the Pope himself - is preparing the ground for communism. You will see, the actual pockets of resistance to what the communists are aiming at are to be found in markedly Catholic personalities and markedly Catholic families. Those are the pockets of resistance. What about the organizations? Well, what do they do? With all due respects to the organizations! My children should belong to one organization. What is it called? The family!

I have already given you so many examples today, let me add a few more. You probably prefer to listen to them than to dry theory anyway.

Let us take the example of family XYZ. As so often happens, the father was constantly active outside the family. He had to earn a living, and in addition he played a leading role in the Catholic organizations. His poor children were without a father. His wife had to cope on her own. Then the children got the idea to suggest something to their father: 'Daddy, we are going to start a club, and you have to preside!' He was the chairman of so many organizations. Yes, he was ready to do that. Which club was meant? A family club. From now on you are the chairman of our family. I don't know how this little plot continued, whether the father stayed at home after that, or whether the chairmanship he exercised elsewhere still meant more to him.

A second example. There was a sound family which did things in the way many of you do and protected the children, although not completely, because they had to be able to make friends outside the family. But they were a family that always remembered: *My family is my main organization.*

In this instance the mother was approached to join an organization to serve one or the other charitable cause. 'Yes,' she replied, 'it is a wonderful organization. But I also have one, and I would like to ask you to join it.' 'What sort of organization is that?' 'Oh, with us, in our organization, we do things this way - we always eat together, we relax together, and we pray together.' The woman who was trying to win new members responded, 'I've never met such an organization before.' 'Never? This organization is my family. I always stay with my family, and I would like to ask you to join this organization, the family.'

All in all, then, I think I have touched upon what you yourselves feel - *the family is the first organization, and nothing may disturb my family in any essential way.* Of course, you have to be prepared to make concessions here or there.

I could tell you so many things, also with respect to the future and what can still happen. The world is increasingly being torn apart. And what will happen if we promote this development? In the end, what will a woman still do at home? She will take things easy. She will go to a restaurant on Sunday,

perhaps even on weekdays, things are cheap there. I no longer need to cook. The children are away. I shall no longer cook. What are we then? Not even a boarding house! We will be torn apart. And the day after tomorrow we will say: `Nos cum prole pia!² and tear the marriage apart as well.

I think it would be a good idea to return to our topic. It might seem that we have lost sight of it, but we haven't. What was our aim? I merely wanted to respond to your wishes and deepen what we discussed together last time.

What do we understand by the ideal of the Nazareth family? We highlighted three characteristics: It is a family that takes its bearings from the objective order of being. The father is the head. We have constantly remained with this point and have merely `sprinkled some holy water' every now and again to the other side³.

First of all, *the father is the head*. If the father again sees and carries out his mission as head of the family, the other will probably function better as time goes by.

Secondly, *the Nazareth family is held together by the bond of love*.

Thirdly, *it is totally orientated towards the child*.

We have said so much about the child - my treasure! - that I think I may say that this third point has been dealt with sufficiently. To round it off let me repeat - *the child must be the focal point, not just the well-being of father and mother*. We are there for the children.

Now let me tell you something that happened in ancient Rome. It is simply a fact that men never change and women are always the same. `As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be for all eternity. Amen. Amen. Amen.'

Once upon a time a group of elderly, noble Roman matrons were together. Today we would say it was a `hen party'. Perhaps they had lunched together. And as always happens when women are together, they have a common topic. So do men. `As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be ...' Of course, these were women from the nobility, each wanted to show off what was best. Do you know how such things happen?

² Nos cum prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria! - Mother with your loving Son, bless us each and every one! This was the traditional greeting in the sodalities and was taken over by the Schoenstatt Sodality. It is still used by the Schoenstatt Institutes and Unions particularly to close a meeting or when members say good bye. Here Fr Kentenich is using it ironically to indicate finality.

³ i.e. he has only touched upon the role of the mother. The reference here is to the 'Asperges' before Holy Mass, when the celebrant sprinkles the congregation with holy water.

This suddenly reminds me of something else - just by the way. It happened somewhere in a family. The son, who had just come into the house, suddenly said: 'Whose the visitor?' 'Visitor? Is there a visitor?' 'Yes, of course!' 'How do you know?' 'Well, I have just heard Dad say: Where is my darling wife? When he talks like that it means we have a visitor.' If there is a stranger in the house, we are more polite to one another. When we are alone, we speak quite differently. - That was said just as an aside.

So, this group of women were together discussing things. Suddenly they came to talk about how rich they were. The one was the wife of the consul. - I can't remember who else was there. - One after the other had her say and showed her rings and earrings and other jewelry, all their treasures. Just imagine what came to light there. Finally it was the turn of the hostess to speak. She was obviously a very noble lady, she had said nothing, she had just listened. Now it was her turn to boast about her treasures. At that moment her two sons entered the room - I don't know if they just chanced to come in, or if she had sent for them, at any rate they came into the room and she said: 'These are my greatest treasure!'

Where are my greatest treasures? You see, that is a genuine Nazareth family. The child is its heart and centre, just as in Nazareth. My children are my treasures. Deo gratias! This is the way we should all think.

There is still one point we have to dwell upon at greater depth. Let me repeat: the Nazareth family can be seen from three points of view:

- it takes its bearings from the objective order of being,
- the child is at its heart and centre,
- it is held together by the bond of love.

I still have to say something about this last point, the bond of love. Now we could really start our recollection day! Since we decided that today we would illustrate what has been said rather than consider the subject in principle, let us dwell on a few examples also in this regard.

In principle you must always hold onto this truth: *genuine love is always sacrificial love*. Ask yourselves - all of you have been married for quite some time: What was our love like in the years or months before we got married? What was our married love like during our honeymoon? What is it like today? If we are honest, we will have to say: When we were young, our love was less love for the other, it was more self-love. We saw some sort of ideal - the husband in his wife and the wife in her husband - but it was not the ideal our partner really exemplified. It was something we thought we saw in the other. Once we had lived together for some time, we suddenly realized: My wife is different, she is not what I imagined her to be, and the husband is also different.

This is when love begins to become genuine, solid, it is when love's faithfulness can prove itself. Please remember, *genuine marital love is sacrificial love*.

Can you remember what I told you last time about Adolf Kolping? *The family table is primarily a table of sacrifice, not a table of enjoyment.* If I don't feel at home in my family, I have to ask myself, not: What has the family given me, or not given me? but rather: What have I not given the family? Whatever I, the father or mother, give the family, will come back to me with interest. If I only make demands, I will also be given nothing. Sacrificial love! You see, the genuineness of our love must be proved by sacrifice, not just in what we do at work, but by bearing and forbearing with one another. Married love is - how did Kolping put it? - the hearth for brightly burning love that bears and forebears with one another. We have to learn to bear with one another, to complement one another, to acknowledge what is good and noble in the other, to understand each other's weaknesses.

This is a chapter we will have to discuss in greater detail on another occasion. For example, how should I treat my wife if she is a melancholic? Or, how must I, the wife, deal with my husband who is a choleric? A choleric wants to rule, especially at home, and all the more so if he is unable to do so at work. So he has to let off steam at home. What must I then do as his wife?

These are very specific and very serious questions. They must be answered in some way one day. But I don't want to go into details on this subject at the present moment.

You have said that there is something you have missed so far - I have said too little about the wife. I shall now dwell on this point at greater length. The statement I am about to make is somewhat exaggerated. I say: The wife must hold the family together mainly by bearing and forbearing with her husband's weaknesses. Let me say it again - I have overstated the case. The husband has also to bear with the weaknesses of his wife, that is obvious. There is a mutual give and take. As we put it just now - married love is the hearth of a brightly burning love that bears and forebears with each other. However, *allow me to stress the woman's role with a certain one-sidedness.* It is also justified. Do you know why? It is woman's task to bear and forebear. If she should educate the children - the girls and the boys - to bear and forebear, to suffer, she must exemplify it herself. She has the physical strength to do so. You have no idea what a mother can achieve if she bears with her husband's moods, what a mother can achieve if she allows her husband to let off steam at times. And a mother knows how to control her grown up sons and daughters through her example.

Let me give you some examples. You probably enjoy hearing them. At times it may sound like a joke, but it is seriously meant. There is a story told about St Vincent Ferrer⁴. One day a woman came to him and told him about her marriage. She complained bitterly about the man she had married. If she had to do it again ... `What is wrong with your husband?' the saint asked. `He is so terribly

⁴ Vincent Ferrer (1350-1491), born in Valencia in Spain. Joined the Dominican Order at the age of seventeen, and taught and preached until he was forty. Then he began to travel extensively, particularly in France preaching and exhorting people to the faith. He was a councillor at the court of Aragon.

In the talk of 13 September 1953 Fr Kantenich attributes this incident to Vincent de Paul. He had obviously associated it with the name Vincent. He was not so much interested in the historical exactness of his story, as in the content.

moody. If things haven't gone well in the business and he comes home, he has to let off steam. And if something goes wrong with the cooking ...' You know yourselves what can go wrong in the kitchen. For example, if it is not his favourite dish, then all hell breaks loose.

Now try to picture to yourselves what it can be like at times when things don't go the way the husband would like them. And sometimes a lot of things can go wrong, can't they? And when I now come home? Who has to bear the brunt? In the normal course of events, the wife is the person with whom the family let off steam.

So try to picture to yourselves how this woman complained to St Vincent Ferrer about all sorts of things. Do you know what Vincent Ferrer said? 'My good woman, I know a remedy. I have a miraculous water. If you drink this miraculous water, you will experience miracles.' This water was later called the miraculous water, that is, the 'miraculous water of St Francis'. What sort of water was it? He said: 'Not far from here there is a convent.' Actually, there was no need for him to send her to the convent, he could have sent her home to her own well. 'Please go there and ask the man at the door to give you a bottle of water.' Perhaps you can guess how the story of the miraculous water continues. 'When your husband comes home and is in a really bad mood ...' It was Monday and this is usually the case on Monday, at least in Germany we talk of blue Monday. 'All you have to do is to drink a mouthful of this miraculous water and then swallow it very, very slowly. Then another one, and then another one, before you answer him. Only then may you speak to him.'

No sooner said than done! The woman fetched some of the miraculous water - she could have fetched it from her own well, for that matter - and then strange things happened. Not only did the husband not blow his top - because, while his wife drank the miraculous water he could let off all his steam, there was no one to answer him back. He quickly relaxed. So, he did not just stop grumbling, he suddenly began to be loving. And from that time people have spoken about the miraculous waters of St Francis. So my advice to all wives who have such husbands - actually we all have such a husband at times - is to drink the miraculous water. We don't need to buy it, there is plenty around us, the miraculous water is to be found wherever we are⁵.

An elderly sage used to offer this advice. As you know, it has always been the case, when people are together you will find human weaknesses. It happens and should also happen. Life wouldn't be nice if things didn't happen.

The man always offered the following practical advice when people, above all women, came to him. - Men pretend that they can bear everything, but women need to speak about their problems. It is sensible to do so. -

The sage used to say: 'I suggest the following: When your husband comes from work and is

⁵ Fr Kentenich is making his point by 'placing the emphasis', as he put it. He is by no means suggesting that woman has to put up with everything and become the proverbial doormat. On other occasions he could point out with equal emphasis how much a husband has to respect and consider his wife. What he is illustrating here is a generally valid principle in all interpersonal relationships, that at times 'silence is golden' and achieves far more than words.

unbearable, or if he even starts to complain or starts an argument, say to him: We can argue this out in three days time, but not just now. In three days time. We will wait three days.' Whoever followed his advice managed wonderfully. You know why. An argument doesn't last three days. If you have managed to swallow the first words, the battle is soon won. The couple never get so far as to fight. Why? Because everything had solved itself in the meantime.

Do you understand what is meant when we say that the wife's task is to bear and forebear? That is how she rules. If I as a woman want to rule, I must serve. If I am not prepared to serve, I will never rule. Please remember this. *If I, as a woman, am most prepared to serve, I will also rule the most*⁶.

Let me give you an example from history. It happened a few hundred years ago. The woman was Clotilde and the man was Clovis⁷. It was a time when the Germans were even wilder than they are today. They are still wild today! Once Clovis and Clotilde had married, she said, 'Now I belong totally to my husband, and I will serve him with every means at my disposal and with all my strength.' Imagine to yourselves - I want to repeat this - men can at times be as they are. And at that time, it was a wild time, they were even wilder than they are today. And Clothilde had to put up with a lot. But the result? Later on Clovis said, 'I have conquered hundreds and hundreds of enemies, I have conquered nation after nation, but I have been conquered by my wife!' Do you understand what that means? That is the bond of love. In the end love is triumphant.

You will tell me that until now I have always sided with the men. I am now siding with the woman when I say that a wife rules through serving. Look at the coming generation, the wives of the future - how few of them are inclined to serve! We do not educate them sufficiently to serve, to bear and forebear. Instead, for each little thing, for every little pain there is a plaster, a pill. I don't think our older generation was educated in this way. If I as a girl have never learned to bear and forebear, even to bear with injustice, that is, not merely with physical pain, then God help the man who later leads me to the altar. God help the man whose life I later turn sour. That is a fact. If we had better mothers and wives, we would have better men.

I know too little about conditions here, so I can only speak about Europe. Look at how many men go to the pub. Why? Because their wives don't know how to serve. This doesn't mean that she doesn't have a right to have limitations, that is obvious. If she can't cook, I can't give her the ability overnight. In this case the husband has to take it into consideration and be patient. I can accept this more easily. But the attitude must be there: As the wife I want to serve my husband. I must bear and forebear, I must bear with him. And if I do this, I will begin to rule.

Let us close that subject by asking once again: *What is the Nazareth family like?* Now we have a

⁶ Refer to the fourth conference in which Fr Kentenich deals with the different forms of leadership. He is here saying that woman is 'the social-emotional specialist', she is the 'heart' of the family.

⁷ Clovis (c. 466-511) King of the Salian Franks (481-511), who conquered N. Gaul (494), founding a kingdom that dominated western Europe. He married (c. 493) Clotilda (c. 475-545), a fervent Christian, whose efforts to convert him succeeded after an important victory over the Alamanni (496), when he was baptised with some 3000 warriors. He was regarded as defender of the faith against Arianism. After defeating the Visigoths near Poitiers (507), he established his capital at Paris. (Macmillan Exyclopedia, Guild Publishing, London, 1987).

clear and practical answer. There are three points that indicate the way to the ideal:

- Taking our bearings from the objective order - the child is at the centre.
- The father is the head, the mother is the heart, and the child is at the centre.
- Everything is held together by the bond of love.

That is the ideal family.

We have now drawn a picture of the ideal of a Schoenstatt family with ever increasing clarity. And how do we feel about it? On the one hand we will say: Thank God that we are slowly getting clarity on the subject. We have not seen many things this way before. On the other hand, you will probably also say: What a pity that this or that couple, who are in a similar situation to ourselves, cannot hear these things.

And finally, when you are on your own and quietly reflecting on our human nature, especially on life in community, life in the marriage community, you will probably feel something similar to what the poet (Goethe) once wrote: 'The person I am, sadly greets the person I should be!'

What does that mean? The ideal and reality! We have tried to adapt the ideal as far as possible to life. That is wrongly expressed. We may never adapt the ideal to life, we have to show the ideal in such a way that it impinges on life. On the contrary, we have to say that we adapt life to the ideal.

When you think about everything as a whole, you will have to admit that it is a tremendously high ideal. There we have a family that is striving for holiness. We then have a holy family, not the Holy Family of Nazareth, but one that is holy to the extent possible to us poor human beings who are burdened with original sin.

Let me not forget one thing, although I do not want to deal with it at present. Please remember that we have only spoken about one aspect of the Schoenstatt family, that is, the ideal of the Nazareth family. We have not considered the point I would like to remind you about now. What is the source of such striving? It is the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother. If you do not reckon with this covenant, you will be deceiving yourselves. I must admit, although I can explain everything to you quite well, I would not be able to live what I have told you unless I had a source of strength to draw from. What is this source of strength? It is the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother.

We will have to come back to this later. I don't want to go into it today. Perhaps Sr Winfriede has had an opportunity to talk to you about it. For your part, you should say to yourselves: *Unless the Blessed Mother enters into a covenant with me and I with her, unless she takes over the responsibility, I will naturally not manage.* I can only cope if another, a divine force, breaks into my life.

In this context, let me draw your attention to another point. I am addressing those of you in particular who are more at home in our Schoenstatt world. The others should just listen. Actually it is sad, at

least for me, that we are making such poor progress with the shrine in Madison. It should have been completed long ago. Our Sisters in Germany laid the foundation stone for the shrine on December 8th, and it was complete by December 25th⁸. That's women for you! If they take something in hand, it always turns out well.

Now let me turn the tables. It was completed over there. How could that happen? I am not joking now. The thought comes to me whether we have prepared sufficiently for the building of the shrine. Please do not think that I am talking about money. You will never hear me do so. I am thinking of the spiritual preparation of the shrine.

Let me tell you how they did it in the Argentine⁹. They built the shrine in spirit over a number of years. What does that mean - to build it spiritually? Through their sacrifices. They did it this way. The men said that they were prepared to build the walls of the shrine. The women wanted to build the tabernacle. May I repeat, we are not concerned here with money, but with building it spiritually. What does that mean? All our sacrifices as a spiritual contribution. And the young men naturally wanted to build the bell-tower and the bell. Boys have to have something that makes a noise. And the girls worked for the MTA picture. Do you realise what is involved here? I only wanted to raise the thought.

I think that we laypeople in Wisconsin should do something similar. You could say: Now we want to help the Blessed Mother with our sacrifices, so that something great can develop here. Not with money! I am not interested in money. My concern is to place a world at our Lady's feet, a world in which our Lord can reign. With or without money, that is immaterial.

Hence the question: What could we do to build the shrine spiritually? Of course, you will tell me: 'We are all still strangers and everything in Schoenstatt is still new.' That is true, we have only met a few times. I realise that it is difficult for you to come together on a spiritual plane in such a way that you strive together for a common, practical goal. I only wanted to mention the idea. I don't know whether this seed will fall on prepared ground, or not. Of course, those of you who are here for the first time will say: 'What is that - a shrine? What is that - a covenant of love with the Blessed Mother?' Please forgive me for not going into this at present. It would be nice if you could tell one another about it.

I must admit that it doesn't worry me at all that there are so few of us. On the contrary! I am almost happy that our group is so small. Do you want to know why? Every great renewal of the world started with a small group. However, this small group must be absolutely filled with the authentic spirit. That is why I do not try to make any concessions, instead I show you the ideal, and I do so in the way I think God requires it of us. We are only a small group. Give me a little family! And even if

⁸ Fr Kentenich is referring to the shrine on the Liebfrauenhöhe near Rottenburg, Germany. The actual structure was complete; the dedication took place on 1 May 1952.

⁹ The shrine in Florencio Varela, Argentina, was dedicated on 20 January 1952 in the presence of Fr Kentenich.

there were only two of you, I would say exactly what I have now said to eleven or twelve. The number doesn't matter.

You see, when our Lord wanted to redeem and renew the world, he didn't do things for the masses of the people. Obviously he also served the masses. But he had a small circle of followers. It is the same in our case. Last time we were eleven, we are the same number today, that is to say, if we count Sister we are twelve. So we are eleven, there's no traitor with us. Judas is not here! Each time eleven¹⁰.

If you want to know what our Schoenstatt Family in the rest of the world, that is, outside the USA, thinks about the shrine in Madison, I could tell you what someone wrote recently from South America following the presidential elections¹¹. This letter came from Chile. You may know that we have a flourishing movement there among the academics, it is a movement that is moving ahead dynamically. They want to take the whole state of Chile by storm! One of them wrote that he had read about how things were done here during the elections. It had impressed him greatly. For a South American it is quite unusual for the President to pray openly and even have the courage to say: We are a free people, but we are not so free that we want to be free from God!

Then this young academic began to muse about developments in the world at large. He wrote: We are living today on an active volcano and the larva could begin flowing at any moment. Asia wants to free itself from the influence of the white race. Africa wants to become independent, it even wants to shake off Christianity. And America? North America seems to look at things far too simplistically. They seem to think that the enemy is bolshevism¹². Obviously it is. But aren't they too easily inclined to overlook the enemy in their own camp, because they are insufficiently open towards God and the moral law? They want to start a crusade against bolshevism, but not against the superficial and liberalistic mentality in their own country.

That was the survey he offered. Then he remarked: `As far as we can see, we believe that once our Lady of Schoenstatt has a shrine there, she will carry out a twofold task in the American people.

Her first task will be to help the American people to carry out its mission for itself.' (An important point - for itself!) The American people must once again become a religious, a deeply religious people.

`Our Lady's *second task* from this shrine will be to help the American people to carry out its tremendous mission for the present times.` Without doubt this is true. America has a unique mission. That is the reason for the tremendous battle going on at present. On the one hand you have Russia,

¹⁰ Fr Kentenich is here referring to the Biblical passages describing events around our Lord's passion in which his relationship to the crowds, to his disciples and to the closer circle of the apostles can be more clearly seen.

¹¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, 34th President of the USA from 1953-1961.

¹² By bolshevism Fr Kentenich meant every type of totalitarianism.

on the other, North America. Those are the world powers. They are struggling for their position in the world. That is why, if the Blessed Mother is to renew the world from Schoenstatt, she must have a shrine as a place of education also in North America.

When you now look at the great goal our Blessed Mother wants to reach from her shrine, and then look at our small group, you will say: For heaven's sake, it is impossible! Let me remind you again that our Lord did exactly the same. Although he possessed divine powers, he left behind only a little group of twelve faithful followers. It was through them that he conquered the world, it was through them that he sowed the seed of religion, of the divine, of Christianity in the whole world.

That it is why it is worth our while at the end of our meeting to turn our attention once again to our little shrine. It is the source of our strength, it is a source of strength in bringing about the ideal of family life. It is also the source of strength through which we can carry out our great mission for our own people, the American people, and the whole world.

Let me ask once again: What is a Schoenstatt family? I think that each word is now filled with more meaning. It is a family which, by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, tries successfully to live the ideal of the Nazareth family in a timely way.

I think that this brings us to the end of our line of thought.

Now let me pick up what you touched upon in your discussion last time. You also raised it again when you met in between. Your concern was: The Nazareth family cannot be an example for us today. We are living in the twentieth century, and besides, the Blessed Mother didn't suffer under the consequences of original sin.

Let me offer just one answer. There are others. There are many ways in which the Nazareth family offers us an example. I have already emphasised three. You will say: Yes, but the most difficult things of family life cannot be found in the Nazareth family. What? You have pointed out, and in all probability you will do so more often, that the Blessed Mother conceived her Child in a way we do not. So she cannot be an example to us in this regard.

Further, the Blessed Mother did not suffer under the consequences of original sin. So it is not just that she conceived in a different way. She did not know what often makes our lives as couples so difficult, that is, our passions, our rebellious drives. So she cannot be our example.

What can I answer to that?

Let us ask once again: So is it impossible for the Holy Family to be our example in these things? I am purposely overstating the thought, the problem.

Now for the answer. The Blessed Mother was untouched by original sin, so she did not suffer under rebellious passions and drives, and our Lord even less so. He is God. In spite of this we say that our

Lord is our example in everything. What is the secret?

Let me put the question still more clearly. I don't know whether you had similar problems when you were young. It has been said: When I was most tempted as a young person to sin against holy purity, and if I thought of our Blessed Mother, I always felt that she had an easy time. She was spared from original sin! But when I think of St Augustine I can really take him as my example. He was a man who was up to his ears in filth, he really experienced all the passions of human nature, so he can be my example.

Notice that we are here confronted constantly with the same problem - the character of the Holy Family as our example. Since at least two members of that family did not have original sin, and hence were spared the consequences of original sin, the question arises: How can they be our example? What answer can we give to this problem? How can I solve the difficulty? I want to offer you two answers.

I must admit that I had intended to spend the whole day answering this difficulty. Perhaps we could follow up this train of thought during our next recollection day. So let me give you a brief answer today. It is twofold.

Firstly, let me ask you: Has it ever happened to you at times when your drives and passions were in uproar that you met a person who was inwardly mature and calm? What effect did this have on you? However, in a similar situation, what happened if you met a person who was also inwardly in turmoil? Which person had a calming effect on you? Do you understand the answer? When everything within me is on fire, the soul experiences the calming effect of a person who is absolutely calm and in harmony. This explains why we like to be near the Blessed Mother when everything within us is in turmoil, even though she did not know this rebellion and uproar of the drives and passions. *That is why the lack of original sin in the life of the Blessed Mother has such an educational effect on us.*

I can only hint at *the second answer*. It would need to be dealt with in great detail and requires a discussion of the whole psychology of human nature. We want to understand our human nature. You see, in this regard I believe we are all misinformed.

Let me remain with the Blessed Mother. We think that our Lady did not have to struggle. That is a big mistake. You must distinguish between two things. Human nature has been broken by original sin. Prior to original sin there was a twofold harmony. This is where the beautiful word begins which I want to explain to you one day. The composition of human nature. What can be found in human nature? An animal, an angel and a child of God¹³. How can we describe the animal in our children? But there is also an angel in me. As well as a child of God. And these three - let me put it this way for the present - were united in harmony before original sin.

Then original sin happened. Through the first sin Adam and Even severed the bond uniting the angel

¹³ That is, the physical, the spiritual and the divine.

and the child of God. Then, in punishment, God severed the bond uniting the animal and the angel in the human person. Since then there has been a double rift in human nature - a rift between the animal and the angel, and a rift between the angel and the child of God.

What about the Blessed Mother? She never knew the first rift. Which? Between the animal and the angel. She never had anything to do with inordinate drives and passions. However, she still had to battle her way into the divine will.

You see, we usually look upon our battle simply as a battle against our inordinate drives and passions. That is why we often get stuck half way.

The Blessed Mother is our example in the way she battled her way into God's will. That is why she is our example, she offers us an example in every situation. One day I must show you how our Lady had to struggle throughout her life, how she had to battle her way into God's will.

**Draft of a Christian Education for Marriage and Family Life
orientated towards the basic law of love**

Survey of the past meetings

A new incentive

The goals of marriage

Suggestions for a handbook

Central position of the child

**Recollection Day - 29 March 1953
First Conference**

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

This is our third meeting. Our topic - the ideal of a Schoenstatt family - has not changed. Even if we could spend months and years together, we could only and would have to centre repeatedly on the same topic - *the ideal of a Schoenstatt family*. By now we know what that means. It refers to *a family, which, by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, tries successfully to live the ideal of the Nazareth Family in a timely way.*

During our first recollection day we looked in general terms at what a Nazareth family is like. On the second recollection day we considered practical examples in order to gain a better understanding of what had been said on the first day.

We traced the ideal of the Nazareth family back to three principles. That was the meaning of the first day. It was directed more to the intellect. These three basic principles are:

Firstly, a Nazareth family always takes its bearings from the objective order of being.
Secondly, it is borne by the ideal and the bond of mutual love.
Thirdly, the child is the focal point.

Those are the three principles. You will remember how solidly we founded them and constantly appealed to the intellect.

Let me repeat - *a Nazareth family takes its bearings from the objective order of being*. We emphasized two points in particular:

According to the objective order of being, the father, as the begetter, is the centre of the family. We even said that the father is the 'extension' of God the Father, so the father's authority in the family is also the primary and main authority. The mother's authority is derived from it. The father's task consists in educating his children to be obedient and courageous. The mother's authority has to educate the child to bear and forebear. That is the objective order of being. We want to impress this truth upon our minds so that we never forget it.

The second principle we highlighted was this - *the family must be held together by the bond of love*. In this context there are two statements we should take note of:

1. *The family table is primarily a table of sacrifice* and not a table of enjoyment.

2. The second statement comes to us from Sacred Scripture: *the family should be an image of the relationship between Christ and his Church*. Our Lord told us through the Apostle Paul: Just as Christ loves his Church, so the husband should love his wife (cf. Eph. 5,25). Vice versa, just as the Church behaves towards Christ, so must the wife behave towards her husband (cf. Eph 5,24). We only want to call this to mind. It is the bond of love, that is to say, of a strong and sacrificial love, that unites father and mother, or husband and wife.

The third principle draws our attention to the child. It is this: *The focal point of the Nazareth family, and hence also of a Schoenstatt family, is the child.*

Those are the three principles we clarified in the course of the first day. I repeat - at the time we mainly addressed the intellect. On the second day we illustrated these thoughts. On the third day (today), we shall again consciously address the intellect. We shall take as our starting point the difficulty you raised at the time, a fully justified difficulty: the Nazareth family is so special that we cannot take it as our example.

How can we describe Nazareth? And how can we describe our Nazareth? Where is the difficulty? We obviously feel that the main members of the Holy Family - our Lord and our Lady - were never touched by original sin. So their drives and passions were simply not awakened¹. We human beings who are afflicted with original sin - how we have to struggle with our passions and drives! Hence the thought: The Nazareth ideal cannot be our ideal.

We have already tried to offer an answer, a very simple answer. Let me repeat it quickly in order to prepare the ground for today's subject. We said that although it is true that our Lord and our Lady never had to battle with their disordered passions and drives, yet they had to experience the harshness of life and the darkness of faith, and for them this was far harder than for us.

To put it another way, they didn't have to battle with the lower, but with the higher difficulties and trials. They had to battle their way into God's will, into the dispensations of God's Providence, in order to be able to master life with all its harshness, which was greater for them than it is for us. That was the initial answer.

I want to take this as my starting-point today and from it develop a whole system for you - Schoenstatt family a Nazareth family - *a whole system for a pedagogy for marriage and a pedagogy for family life. A pedagogy for marriage - how should husband and wife behave towards each other and educate themselves and each other? A pedagogy for family life - how should we educate our children?*

That is a whole system. We can only take it in drop by drop. The background we should keep in

¹ In keeping with Scholastic tradition, Fr Kentenich distinguished between human drives before and after original sin. According to this tradition, human drives were characterised by the harmony that existed between the opposing tendencies arising from the combination of body, soul and intellect, or between the animal, angel and child of God. This was the result of the 'donum integritatis' (gift of integrity) as an outflow of the 'donum gratiae' (gift of grace). From this Fr Kentenich drew the consequences for the ordered or disordered instincts and drives in human beings. Hence his very brief statement would need to be completed as 'or disordered'. He never held that the members of the Holy Family had no drives or instincts, but that these were ordered and in harmony with each other.

mind all the time is the Nazareth family with its mysterious character.

So I must now ask you to forgive me if I again address mainly the intellect. As adults we need to have clear concepts to start with, then the heart can again be warmed. In addition, I would like to ask you to repeatedly work through together what we are going to discuss today and in the coming recollection days, so that you grasp the principles clearly.

If I were now to ask: What is the Catholic concept - seen merely juridically and dogmatically - of *the meaning and purpose of marriage*? Academics would say: *finis primarius, finis principalis*. What does that mean? The main purpose for which we marry, the main purpose for being together, the main purpose for the marriage act - as we said last time - what is it? The child. *The focal point is not pleasure, the focal point is the child*. You cannot put this bluntly enough. We have married for the sake of the child. We work ourselves to death because of the child. We were united sexually for the sake of the child. That is the main purpose of marriage².

Of course, there are other purposes. What are they?

Firstly, (or the second purpose of marriage): *father and mother, husband and wife should complement each other, educate each other, but also support each other*. What does that mean: to support each other? To support each other financially, intellectually and in life.

² Prior to 1968 the official teaching of the Church, which was followed by Fr Kentenich, put the child first and the marital relationship in second place when describing the ends of marriage. The main thrust of Fr Kentenich's teaching and educational work was that the 'you' (in this case the child) should come first, and the 'I' second. This applies equally to couples and singles.

In the Encyclical Letter 'Humanae Vitae' of 25 July 1968, Pope Paul VI describes the ends of marriage as a) the personal union of husband and wife, b) in order to co-operate with God in the generation and education of new lives (Para. 8). In the Charter of the Rights of the Family of 22 October 1983, Article B of the Preamble states: 'The family is based on marriage, that intimate union of life in complementarity between a man and a woman which is constituted in the ... bond of matrimony, and is open to the transmission of life.' The new Code of Canon Law (1983) states: 'The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, and which of its very nature is ordered to the well-being of the spouses and to the procreation and upbringing of children, has, between the baptised, been raised by Christ the Lord to the dignity of a sacrament' (Can. 1055 §1, Collins Liturgical, London 1983).

Secondly, the third purpose of marriage, what is it? *A certain regulation of our sexual life.*

Those are the three goals of marriage.

Now consider the Holy Family. Apply this yardstick to it. What do we find there?

Firstly, in the Holy Family the Child was the focal point, the procreatio. What is meant? The focal point is the procreation and education of the Child, of course in a different way to us. We want to discuss this later.

Secondly, the *mutuum adiutorium*, mutual complementation and support. That is the same as with us.

Thirdly, the regulation of the drives and passions. This does not apply to our Lady or our Lord. We take this for granted. He is the Child. What about St Joseph? Let us leave this aside for the moment. Hence, the regulation of the sensual drives, of the sexual drive, did not arise in the Holy Family. Instead there were other, possibly far greater difficulties, that had to be coped with.

We want to work out *a handbook on our Schoenstatt education for families*. According to what has been said, it would have to have three main chapters. The first chapter would bear the title: *The Child*. The second chapter would deal with *the mutual complementation and support of father and mother according to nature and life*. The third chapter would be entitled: *The regulation of the sexual drive*.

Once we have worked through these three main sections, we will have something really solid in hand. We will then know what we have to do in our present times, which knows far too little about these things.

Chapter One, or Section One: The Child

What can I tell you about the child? Since we are only together for a limited time, I will have to limit myself. I want to follow up three main thoughts:

1. How does our present-day world judge the child?
2. The focal position of the Child in the Nazareth family.
3. The focal position of the child in a Schoenstatt family.

I am happy that I can enlarge on the first thought, because I can illustrate my point. When we are dealing with the other points, we will have to rise from the practical examples to the principles.

First thought: *How does the present-day world judge the child?* Or, what do married couples today think about the child?

Catholic teaching maintains what I have already emphasized - the child is the focal point. Or, to put

it in other words, (you may perhaps have heard something which is often said in Europe at present), people speak about the `transvaluation of all values'³. What is the highest value in the family? What is its central value, the value for which we married, for which we took upon ourselves the burden of marriage, for which we enjoy the pleasures of marriage - burden and bliss? What is this value? It is the child, indeed, it is a number of children. This is how highly the Catholic Church values the child. The ideal declares: A number of children is the highest ideal. Lucie Christine⁴ once put it so beautifully: `I cannot imagine anything more beautiful or valuable than a large number of children'.

Do you understand what that means? *An ideal, a central value, a high value.* What is that? *The child.* Not the `I', not the father, not the mother. What is the central value of marriage? Of course, from God's point of view I am also a central value. But my child is the focal point. I am there for the sake of the child. The child is not there for my sake. Do you see, what is the purpose of marriage? Not pleasure, that is not the main thing, it is only an extra. Nor is sexual pleasure the main thing. What is the main thing? The child. And if the child is to be valued so highly, it is obvious that the ideal placed before me is to have a large family, not just one child. We should not want to limit the number of children and say: So many and no more! Of course, that is not meant in an unlimited sense. Prudence has to have its say in some way.

That is the central attitude - the child is the focal point and central point of the family. If this Catholic concept is still alive today, you will notice two things:

1. If God has not given this marriage children, there is a feeling that something essential is missing. A childless couple suffers. That is why they feel the need to take on an additional task or adopt a child, either spiritually as Godparents, or by physically adopting a child.

2. If a family still loves children, they will want a number of children. They won't so easily say: `We can't have another child, because we want to be richer.' Their greatest riches are their children. Material possessions are merely a means to a goal. I may not say: `Other families around us live so comfortably, and we can't afford it, so we want no more children. Then we can live as they do.' That turns the values upside down. *The highest value is the child, it is to be found in many children.*

A few examples from this point of view. In Poland there is the grave of a very successful preacher of missions. I don't know his name. After his death they found a sort of testament among his things. Among other things he wrote: `On all my journeys,' - and he travelled the whole world - `I always took along the bridal wreath my mother wore at her wedding.' - I am not sure of the details - `I am the eighth child. If my mother had not worn her bridal wreath in honour and accepted her eighth child, to whom she gave life out of love for God, I would not have been able to live such a fruitful

³ See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844-1900). It was a fundamental theme of his writings.

⁴ Lucie Christine (1844-1908), pen name of Mathilde Boutlé, a member of French society and the mother of five children, who wrote down her at times mystic experiences. She was thoroughly father-centred. She is repeatedly referred to by Fr Kentenich, although he does not give his sources. I have been unable to find anything in English by her.

life. God blessed all I did. I owe this above all to my mother, because she tried so hard to observe the marriage laws faithfully. She loved children so much.'

In good Catholic families, therefore, the principle applies (let me express it in a popular German saying): 'Rather ten on the pillow than one on one's conscience' - or, 'God never sends mouths unless he sends meat!' There is another well-known (German) saying: 'Where there are many children there are many 'our Fathers', and where there are many 'our Fathers' there is also much blessing from God the Father.'

Can you understand what these sayings have to tell us? They give expression to the high esteem in which the child is held. The child is the focal point, the child is at the centre of marriage.

There is another German saying: 'One child, no child. Two children, half a child. Three children, only then a child.'

Do you understand what that means? Popular wisdom! A one-child family, or a two-child family doesn't mean much. Only when there are a number of children do you have a real family. It is something like a 'boarding school', a world of its own. But if there is only one child or two children, it is simply not complete. All this illustrates the one thought: The child is the focal point of the family, the centre, the central value of the whole of family life.

You may forget the examples, but you may not forget the central thought. What is the central thought? The child is the central value of the family. We married for the sake of the child - or we would do better to say - for the sake of as many children as possible.

Another example. There was a French bishop, I have forgotten his name, who was in the habit of officiating at the baptism of the fifth child of a family. Think of that! A bishop travelling through his whole diocese on that account! He didn't have the child brought to his cathedral. For example - I don't know the towns in your diocese - imagine someone was born in Timbuktu and the bishop were to travel from Cologne to Timbuktu. Why? Simply to show how highly he valued this child, how highly he valued families with many children.

Another example, this one is more negative. I got to know a priest while I was in Dachau who had written a booklet about his prison chaplaincy. He had been a prison chaplain. He collected a whole wealth of examples from his experiences in everyday life. A young man was imprisoned because of murder. He told the priest his life history. Can you imagine what came into his mind when he talked about his life? The words: 'And I wanted to kill this fine young man!' What did he mean? He admitted that he and his wife had wanted only a certain number of children. They had tried with every means at their disposal to kill the next child she was expecting. They had not succeeded. And this child had become the sunshine of his life, the best of his children, who genuinely loved his father and was a really upright character. Now that his father was in prison, none of his other children bothered about him. Only this child was constantly concerned about him. - 'And I had wanted to kill this fine young man!'

Do you understand the point? The child is the focal point. Not just a single child. Think of how much we, too, owe the child whom, if it had depended on us, we would rather have had on our consciences at that time?

Another example from prison, more negative, and yet also positive. One of the prisoners told his life story. He had killed his wife and child. However, what followed him was the thought: `And this child's eyes follow me all the time!' That is the central thought. Which child's eyes? The child he had killed had loved his father deeply. And when he had set about murdering his child, the boy had said to him, `Daddy, what are you doing?' The father had not allowed this to stop him from killing his child. The last look of his child followed the father ever afterwards. The look of his child, his murdered child, persecuted him. He could not forget it.

You see, the child is the focal point. That is the central task, the central value of the family.

If we now take a look into life today and ask: How do people today - outside the Catholic Church - regard the child? We can give a generally valid answer: The child is a burdensome result of sensuality. They want to get rid of this burden and recognize the satisfaction of sensuality as the most central goal of marriage. Recall what I have just said: Of course, relaxation and the regulation of sensuality is one of the goals of marriage, but it is not the main purpose. In this case a secondary purpose is made the main purpose, the only purpose. That is why they either say: Get rid of the child!, or, as few children as possible and as much sexual enjoyment as possible!

Some years ago someone printed a postcard here in North America. It was a strange picture of a winter landscape, everything buried in snow. (This year we haven't had much snow, so I can't imagine such a winter here very easily.) So there was this winter landscape, and above it flew a host of storks. Each stork - can you imagine how many there were! - carried a baby on a cushion. They were flying about looking for somewhere to put down the child. There were houses everywhere, but in the skylights of the houses were men with guns. What for? They wanted to keep away the storks and their cushions.

That is the attitude to the child which is more and more pronounced in the world today.

If we want to be a Schoenstatt family, we have to try to value the child in principle as the greatest good in our family. That means valuing the child more highly than the husband values his wife, or the wife her husband. We are both there for the sake of the child. I don't think I should say more about this first point.

The question we asked was: How is the child valued today? Crass contrasts! You know the answer better than I do. We compared a truly Catholic attitude with our modern, superficial, sensual and secularized attitude. We want genuine families once again! Indeed, I may even say: If we want to be happy in our marriages, we have to return to this Catholic attitude and again place the child at the centre.

The child - our capital investment! That will be the great theme of my next talk in which I will describe the child to you:

1. The child as God's capital investment. You will discover wonderfully beautiful and new truths.
2. The child as the parents' capital investment, their best capital investment. However, we don't want to go into this at the moment. We want to keep hold of the central truth: *The child is the focal point of my family.*

The Child

**is the focal point of the Nazareth family
and a Schoenstatt family**

Begetting and education

Self-giving and letting go

Care and renunciation

Dignity of procreation and pregnancy

Exceptions in the Nazareth family

Mary's exceptional position

**Recollection Day - 29 March 1953
Second Conference**

The first section of our pedagogical handbook for marriage and family life has been given the title: *The Child*. We have mentioned three chapters:

Chapter I: The position of the child in the world today

Chapter II: The place of the child in the family:
the focal point of the Nazareth family.

Chapter III: The place of the child in a Schoenstatt family:
the focal point of the child in a Schoenstatt family.

In essentials we have summarized all that has to be said in the first chapter about *the place of the child in the world today*. Put very briefly we can say that in a truly Catholic family the child remains the focal point. In every other type of family the child is not important, a burdensome result, which has either to be done away with or at least kept within limits.

Allow me to deepen this thought a little so that it can sink deeply into your hearts.

First of all, to round off what has been said I must tell you that what we have discussed together should be seen as a fundamental principle. Do you understand what that means? In principle the child remains the focal point. In practice this often fails to happen. Please be on your guard, don't allow yourselves to become confused. We remain human beings. If today pleasure is so forcibly placed in the foreground and people don't want to have anything to do with the burden, you may not overlook that you are also people of your times. What does that mean? We need only allow St Paul to be our teacher. He said so honestly about himself: 'Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?' (Ro 7,24). 'For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do' (Ro 7,19). This applies not only to me as an individual, it also applies to me as the father or mother. There are drives in my nature that want something else. Our greatness consists in upholding the principle and not saying: 'Because it is difficult, I will change the principle to suit myself.'

In principle the child remains the focal point, even though we aren't always successful in actual life. Then I must repeatedly take my bearings again from my ideal. How often I will have to say - to repeat Goethe's words: 'The person I am' (as I really am), 'sadly greets the person I should be.' This is true not merely of the husband or wife, but also of the father and mother. Life often sees us fail, but then I again take my bearings from the ideal.

In principle, therefore, what we discussed together this morning should be accepted as we said it.

A second addition. We said that in principle the child is the focal point. What does that mean? *The begetting and education of the child are central. Both!*

I do not want to dwell upon the theory at any length. We shall do this later. I would prefer to say

something practical, which is particularly directed to the mothers. A mother has to give life to her child on two occasions - the first time when she conceives the child and brings it to birth, the second time when father and mother have to give that child up, because God has called him or her. Why? I do not educate the child for myself. That would be selfish, extremely selfish. For whom do I educate the child? For God! Later on I will put this statement in its context and discuss it with you. I educate my child in such a way that when God places his hand on that child, for example, when he wants to lead that child into a Christian marriage, or into his service, either as priest or in some other way, he can use the child for this task. I conceive the child once again when I give up that child. You see, the central position of the child reaches to such depths - I give life to my child. I give up that child so that he or she can develop and unfold. The child is always at the centre, not I. Away with the 'I', move towards the 'you'!

I think that you have now understood the point fairly clearly. If God gives us a child, that child comes into life with a task for life. I have to give up that child if God wants that child for his service.

In order that this thought does not remain in the theoretical sphere, but enters our hearts, let me give you a few examples.

I may have told you the first example already. It concerns one of those mothers one often meets. Although they are religious, they idolize their children. In this case it was particularly strong because the child was her only daughter. Such mothers forget that they give birth to their child twice. Please impress this thought very deeply into your hearts and minds - the first time when the child is conceived, the second time when we have to give up that child, when we have to give that child back to God.

This particular mother was tremendously attached to her child. She was getting older and began thinking about the end of her life. However, her child clearly had a vocation to the religious life. She begged her mother to allow her to enter. 'No,' the mother replied, 'it is impossible.' She could manage without her child. 'Financially I am well off, I don't need you for that,' the mother said. 'You don't need to work for me,' she added, 'but I can't give you up.' 'God wants me to enter,' the daughter objected. 'But I can't do without you!'

The daughter did what her mother wanted, she didn't enter. That was a time before there was electricity. There was a large lamp suspended from the ceiling. One evening they were sitting together when the lamp fell down and the daughter's dress caught fire. She died of her burns. God had taken the child to himself in this way.

If God places his hand on a child, I must naturally say 'yes', no matter whether he wants that child in the married state or for some other vocation. Please take note of this principle. I will explain it to you later in more scientific terms. *God's law invalidates human law! God's rights invalidate the parents' rights!*

God has the first right to the child, the parents only have the second right. Therefore they may neither

force a child to enter a convent, nor force a child to marry. God must speak the last word. We must tell ourselves this at least in principle, even if it is difficult in practice to come to such a decision. We have to see things clearly in principle in these questions.

I have said enough on this point. Let me repeat the train of thought: the focal point is the child, at least in principle, even if in practice things go wrong at times. Both the conception and the education of the child are the focal point, as well as releasing the child for the vocation or state of life God has foreseen for that child.

In conclusion another example, then we will go over to the second point. Pius X had just been appointed bishop, later he became a cardinal. He could wear a bishop's ring. As we all know, he came from very humble circumstances and was not ashamed of saying so. As a newly appointed bishop he visited his mother and with great joy showed her his ring. 'Mother, look at my lovely ring.' He was so truly human and childlike. What did his mother say in reply? 'Yes, it is beautiful,' but then she pointed to her own marriage ring and added, 'but you would not be able to wear that ring if I had not first worn mine honourably.'

Now comes the second section of the first chapter:

The position of the Child in the Nazareth family.

I want to posit two principles. Of course, we could dwell on them for ages, partly to answer speculative questions, partly to grow more deeply into the dogma behind these thoughts, partly also to let our hearts warm towards the Holy Family. I shall only highlight the most essential principles.

1. In the Nazareth Family the Child is the focal point, though in a different way to what is possible in a Schoenstatt family. We are conversant with the first thought, so I shall only dwell on it very briefly. In the Nazareth Family our Lord was the focal point, that is, he was the centre of all their care. Think of the birth of our Lord. Think of his conception. Our Lord was the focal point of heaven. When he was conceived, an angel was even sent. Heaven was interested in the Child. At his birth the angels sang, the shepherds came and the wise men were led to the stable. Truly, the Child was the focal point of all attention.

And what about the Blessed Mother? We need only think of our Lady in the stable at Bethlehem, of how she cared for our Lord in every situation. Even under the cross her whole being was directed towards him, not towards herself. She had said in principle about herself: 'Ecce ancilla Domini' (Lk 1,38). I am there to serve you. 'Ecce ancilla Domini' - that was her guiding thought. She spent herself completely in caring for our Lord.

And St Joseph? You will notice that I am only quoting the Bible. What did St Joseph do? He received a special commission from God: 'Joseph, get up!' - don't lie there, don't sleep! Get up, Joseph! Get up and take the Child! - the Child is the focal point: 'the child and his mother!'. You have also to care for the woman. But the main thing is 'take the child!' And so he fled into Egypt (cf

Mt 2,13f). Later, when the danger had passed, he was told: 'Go home again!' (cf Mt 2,20f).

When you look at this in context, you will notice that the Child is the focal point of their care, and not just of their care, also of their renunciation. When God wanted her Child, Mary gave him up. Of course, she had had him for thirty years. She had been well off, they had been together for thirty years. But then she had to give up her Son. And when the hour of the crucifixion came, she also gave him up so that he could carry out his lifework.

Notice, the child is the focal point - in a radical way. Therefore, let us repeat, in the Nazareth Family the Child was without doubt the focal point. Of course, you will say: It was quite different to the way it can be in any other family.

What is the difference between the central position of our Lord and the central position of the child in the normal, Christian family?

Let me point out the differences briefly, even if only so that we can train ourselves dogmatically to some extent.

First of all, the Child was God himself, and our child is not God, he or she is a divinized child, a child who is the image and likeness of God. A big difference!

Secondly, there is a big difference in the way the child was conceived and educated. How was our Lord conceived and born? Without an earthly Father and without opening the Mother's womb, that is, without labour pains. Please take careful note of this - without an earthly Father and without opening the Mother's womb. I will explain this immediately. Please remember - I repeat myself once more - our Lord came into the world without opening his Mother's womb. He was born without his Mother suffering labour pains¹.

Now you will say: For heaven's sake, that is a proof that the way our children come into the world is obviously undignified. Is that a reason why God acted in this way? By no means! Look, in principle

¹ The absolute perfection of the bodily virginity of the mother of Jesus, with regard to that act through which she outwardly appeared as the mother of Christ, is usually thus defined: Mary was a virgin in the birth, before the birth, and after the birth. This order shows that, whereas with other mothers the violation of the bodily integrity is strikingly obvious in the birth, Mary's integrity was miraculously preserved in the birth of her Son and supposes and reflects the virginal conception of her Son. Furthermore it guarantees the perpetual continuation of her integrity to the exclusion of any other human conception' (M.J. Scheeben, Mariology, Herder, USA, 1946, p.111).

The question of how Mary's virginity was preserved at Christ's birth is subject to much legitimate dogmatic speculation and has not been formally defined by the Church.

the way a person comes into the world - I will go into this later in greater detail and explain the reasons - is totally in keeping with human dignity and God's dignity. Indeed, even before original sin Adam and Eve conceived and bore their children in the same way, if they had children before the fall. That is the normal way and it is not undignified. I will tell you later in what its dignity consists. Of course, we have to admit that since the fall the danger is great that human nature is subject to a number of disorders in this type of begetting. But in itself it is completely dignified.

Now comes the question: Why did God make an exception here? Why without a human father, why without opening the mother's womb? Why? The question contains two points. Why did God will it that, firstly, there should be no human father?

The answer: *So that the fatherhood of the Eternal Father and the sonship of the Eternal Son should never be obscured.*

You need to reflect on the fatherhood of the Eternal Father. The Eternal Father begot the Son from all eternity. That is to say, it was not as though the God-Man only received a soul at that moment. He is God. He had already been begotten from all eternity. So God wanted to share his fatherhood with no one else. The fatherhood of the Eternal Father and the sonship of the Eternal Son should never be obscured. That is why there was no human father to undertake the act of begetting in some way. What the father normally does in the begetting of a child, God did through a miracle.

Please think about this for a moment. It means that with regard to our Lord there was only one human procreative principle - the Mother. She conceived. What does that mean? Think for a moment in the modern sense of the laws of heredity. People sometimes say that a child is the image of father and mother. Our Lord had only one earthly, only one human hereditary principle. What does that mean? Obviously - whoever knows and understands our Lord can draw a conclusion about his Mother. Why? Because in this instance the Son inherited only from his Mother, not from father and mother. Therefore, even from a physiological point of view, our Blessed Mother must be a unique replica of our Lord, and vice versa - our Lord must be a unique replica of his Mother.

Now take a look at a Mother and Child. You will then understand why artists like to paint both faces with the same features. Think of our MTA picture. The child really is the image of his Mother, also physically, far more than is the case with us who have a father and mother. In our case people can see what we have inherited from our fathers or mothers, what has come from a grandmother, and so on. Our Lord inherited everything from his Mother on the physical plane. Once again we see the Blessed Mother in her endless greatness and dignity.

Once again the question: Why was there such an exception made in the Holy Family?

A second answer - *God wanted to glorify himself, he wanted to glorify his Mother, and he wanted to glorify his only begotten Son.* Clarifica te!

How is God glorified?

Firstly, through the glorification of his sovereign omnipotence. He is above the laws of nature. He can abrogate the laws of nature that are at work in the conception of a child. He is the sovereign Lord. So, if I believe in the way our Lord was born, I submit to the omnipotence of Almighty God, the sovereign Lord over the laws of nature.

Secondly, through the glorification of his Mother. Was his Mother glorified? Consider what it means when we say that the Mother gave the seed of life to God himself. Imagine it to yourselves quite simply - especially the women should do so. The mother's seed united itself through a unique conception not with the seed of a man, but directly with the God-Man, that is to say, with the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. This happened at the moment when the mother's seed united itself with the Second Person, whom she freely chose through her Fiat. She was not forced. It was a free act on her part. 'Will you give me the seed?' - 'Fiat!' (cf Lk 1,38). And then the wonder took place. The mother's seed was physically, substantially, taken into the Godhead. Can you follow?

How wonderfully great she is! If we understand this, we have to love the Blessed Mother. Together with the mother's seed, her womb was sanctified. That is why we are justified in saying that the Blessed Mother was drawn into a blood relationship with the Triune God. The blood of our Lord, the God-Man, is the blood of our Blessed Mother. She has been drawn in a unique way into the Blessed Trinity. We can say that we are related through marriage. Here much more is meant, there is a blood relationship.

Can you now understand the uniquely exceptional position of the Blessed Mother, even from the merely physical point of view? God took to himself the mother's seed, and from this union we have the God-Man. Her womb was the bridal chamber of Almighty God.

From here you can also understand why the Blessed Mother had to be conceived immaculately. It is part of her exceptional position. She could not have the seed of original sin. Think of the whole of mankind. Not merely our Lord, also our Lady tower above us.

According to Protestant teaching, a mighty river of sin, caused by original sin, is flowing through the whole world. According to Protestant teaching only the pillar of the God-Man towers above it. Our Lady is not excepted from it. However, according to Catholic teaching, there are two lighthouses that tower over the flood - on the one hand, our Lady, on the other, our Lord. The Blessed Mother had to be conceived immaculately because our Lord took his flesh and blood from her. Of course, God could have done things differently with our Lord, he could have abrogated the normal laws of heredity governing human nature. But in order to glorify his Mother, God saw to it that this took place already with his Mother, who was conceived immaculately. That is Catholic teaching. Therefore - Mother and Child above everything!

You can quote St Paul, you can take every great person in world history - none of them can compare with the Blessed Mother. She surpasses them all. These two belong together. They are one. These two have redeemed the world - not the one alone without the other.

We may be proud of this, particularly if we are women, because the only being who had an exceptional position was a woman. That is why we should honour the Blessed Mother in our wives. There is a lovely saying you should constantly keep in mind. Also my wife, I may love her, I may love her sensually. I may do so. But on her brow I should always see a hidden Marian diadem. She is a 'Mary in miniature' in whom I honour the Blessed Mother. I also honour her when I make use of all the rights God has given me in relation to my wife.

Now let us take another look at the title to this conference: The Child is the focal point of the Nazareth family. I have merely shown the difference in the conception of the Child from that in any other family. What is the difference in the education of the two? I will answer this question later.

**The Catholic Tradition of the Faith
explains the relationship
between Jesus and Mary in God's plan of salvation
and between parents and child**

Mary's conception

Jesus' conception

Jesus' education

Mary's education

The child as the parents' capital investment

**Recollection day - 29 March 1953
Third Conference**

First of all, allow me to correct an unconscious mistake concerning the immaculate conception. The question is: Was it necessary for the Blessed Mother to be conceived immaculately for her glorification and that of our Lord? The heart and centre of the question has been answered. But the mistake in the background is that an active and passive immaculate conception have been confused. We look at our Lady and see how she conceived our Lord without the co-operation of a man. But this is not what we call the immaculate conception. It is simply the wonderful birth of our Lord. One could call this an *active conception*.

Now for the *passive conception*. In this instance we look at the Blessed Mother as the immaculately conceived. What does it mean? She was conceived and brought to birth in the same way as we are. How? Father and mother co-operated: her mother contributed the ovum, the father the sperm. So our Lady entered life in exactly the same way as we do. Her immaculate conception, therefore, does not mean that her mother conceived her without the co-operation of her husband.

What is meant when we say she was conceived immaculately? Although she came into the world in the same way as we do, she did not have original sin. That is quite a different matter. It was as though the Lord God erected a protective wall, because otherwise according to the laws of reproduction everyone is born with original sin. Theologians tell us that if Adam and Eve had not sinned, we would have received God's life at the moment of conception. That is to say, God's life would have been passed on in the same way as reproduction takes place. Now, however, this source has been blocked by original sin. The supernatural river of life is no longer there.

What is meant when we say that the Blessed Mother was conceived immaculately? She received God's life together with her natural life. At the same moment as natural life began, she also received God's life. So she entered into this life without original sin, that is, without being drawn into the river of original sin. You must distinguish clearly between two things, then you will have a line of thought by which you can later on give an answer to these questions.

By the way, a most beautiful thought: The Mother of God was conceived immaculately. Allow me to dwell on this for a moment. The tremendous river of life flowing powerfully through the whole world from Adam came to a stop before her. You must distinguish between the river as such, and the pollution in the river. Our Lord, that is, the Second Person in the Godhead, could have taken on our human nature in the same way as Adam, that is, he could have been created directly by God. Why did God not want to do this? He wanted our Lord to be one of our race. He should enter into the whole river of humanity, he should become a link of this chain. If you take an honest look at our Lord's family tree, which is given to us in great detail, you will find that it contains any number of adulterers. Our Lord did not have forebears he could be proud of. There you see the whole river (see Mt. 1,1-17).

Now you have to distinguish between the river and the pollution in the river. What is meant by the pollution in the river? Through original sin human nature has become ill. Original sin is passed on through the act of begetting, God's life is not. You see, this is where the exception begins. According to Protestant teaching, the exception begins with our Lord. He did not have original sin. The Blessed

Mother, they say, naturally had original sin, just like the rest of us. According to Catholic teaching the `protective wall' begins with our Lady. She was conceived and born just as we are, but through the act of generation she did not receive original sin. She was preserved from original sin by a miracle. So now she stands next to our Lord. The two are tremendous pillars which surpass everything else. According to Protestant teaching the Blessed Mother is on the same level as we are. For us, however, it is impossible to honour and value her enough. There must be a difference between her and all the saints. You can take whichever saint you like, he or she is nothing when compared with our Lady. She is simply the outstanding achievement of the whole of creation¹.

I think we should now return to the subject of our talk. A great deal could still be said about the question you raised, but what has been said must do.

This morning we spoke about the child as the focal point of the Nazareth family. Of course, there is a big difference between a genuinely Catholic, even a Schoenstatt family, and the Nazareth family. And we must know this difference. We can never bridge the gap, it will remain for all eternity. In what does the difference consist? We saw it in the way we are begotten. That is the first difference.

Later, when you have some time on hand, you would be well advised to immerse yourselves in this clear teaching, because it sets up a great many inner connections between the Blessed Mother and ourselves. This teaching helps us to understand the Blessed Mother in a unique way.

The second difference: is to be found not just in the act of begetting, but also in the education. That is the meaning of the family and of marriage - begetting and educating. What is the difference?

It is like this - our Lady and St Joseph cared for our Lord, they cared for him outwardly, they saw to it that he was clothed and fed. You can also call this education, but in the widest sense. They also saw to it that our Lord learned to speak and observe the customs of the time. However, our Lord did not receive education in the actual sense, education to live a life on a high religious and moral plane, from his Mother and St Joseph. In this instance the opposite happened - our Lord educated his Mother, and he did so for thirty years. You should think about this - our Lady did not have original sin, yet it took thirty years before her education was complete, and even that was insufficient. Later, during his public life, he continued this education. It was his main task to educate his Mother. What was the ideal towards which he educated her? Our Lady should become his permanent helper. Her natural motherhood had to recede into the background, so that she could become the `Woman', that is, the permanent helper of the Saviour and our Mother, as described in the Scriptures (see Lk. 8,19-21; Jo. 2,1-12). Our Lord educated her for thirty-three years so that she could really become our Mother and educator.

I shall later discuss this with you in greater detail, so that you can understand it better. At present my concern is that you can see the difference clearly. What did you feel when the problem arose: Can we

¹ See the Litany of Loreto

be a Nazareth family? In this regard it is impossible.

Let me complete the point. Here we see the Nazareth family with the Child as its focal point. I will discuss much that I am touching upon now at greater length with you later on. In order that we can come to some sort of conclusion today, let us now look at the position of the child in a Schoenstatt family. I am happy that I can tell you this briefly now. It isn't easy to grasp abstract thoughts, we prefer to hear more practical examples.

(Part III of Section I)

Now for the question:

What can we say about the child in a Schoenstatt family?

Allow me to give you the answer: *In a Schoenstatt family the child is simply the capital investment - the capital investment of the parents and of the Triune God.* Here we have a vast topic - we could talk about it for months. What I want to say to you today is more like a summary, almost an outline. Later on we can fill in the details.

Let us start with the capital investment of the parents. Later we will discuss the capital investment of the Triune God.

You know why I am using the concept 'capital investment'. It is because the example we heard recently has left a deep mark on our imagination and our emotions. Please recall the example. Can you remember how the father looked after his car? His son asked him: 'Father, why are you so concerned about the car? Why can't the chauffeur do that on his own?' 'I have to do it, it is my capital investment.'

Capital investment! Who is my capital investment? The child I am now carrying close to my heart². However, the child is not just my capital investment, he or she is also the capital investment of the Triune God. It is almost as though the Lord God had nothing else to do than to invest his capital in the child I am now carrying close to my heart. This is how you should understand this.

As I have said, I will only give you a very general outline so that we can come to a conclusion.

First thought: My child is my capital investment. I have capital. How many million dollars? Where should I invest it? You see, my child is my capital investment. What does that mean? I don't have any dollars, I have a different capital. What sort of capital? Please listen carefully, it is such a beautiful thought: I have biological-physiological capital, mental-psychological capital and religious capital. Where can I invest all that I possess in physical qualities, in health, in abilities? In my child. That is quite a different matter to just a few dollars. My dollars, my riches, are my physiological riches, my

² Fr Kentenich is referring to one of the mothers, who was expecting a child.

mental riches. I have something up there in my head, and something here in my heart. That is my capital. And over and above this I have a rich inner life. So what is my child? My capital investment. I have invested all my capital in my children. Besides this I may possess thousands or even millions of dollars, but that is secondary; I can do without them. However, my child cannot do without my capital investment, my biological qualities, my psychological qualities, my religious qualities.

Suppose for a moment that you weren't married, but engaged; suppose for a moment that you are 17 or 18 and that I am telling you to invest your capital for the highest possible interest. What is meant by capital in this context? Make sure that you have yourself in hand, that you become a spiritual person, that 'the angel' in you is strengthened. Make sure that you remain deeply religious - especially the mothers. Why? The child you will soon carry close to your heart will receive it all.

You may object: No, I have to work and earn a lot of money and do all sorts of things. You can do this as well. But the most valuable things you can give your child are the capital investments that are part of me - my physiological, biological, psychological and religious qualities.

You see, whatever I have done since childhood to educate myself intellectually and spiritually will be given to my child. What I have neglected has been lost to my 'capital'. I have nothing left, absolutely nothing, perhaps some pathological passions to pass on to my child, but nothing else that is decent. That is to say, in a certain sense I am a father or mother from childhood. Why? Because I am already collecting a capital within myself.

Suppose you were younger than you are now and that as a girl your ideal was to marry and have children. This is natural to woman, she wants to nurture and care for others. She wants to be a mother. Now comes the thought: For the sake of the child God will one day give me, I want to be a saintly girl. For the sake of my child I want to respect and care for my body. For the sake of the child - not just for God's sake, naturally that is included - I want to educate myself for the sake of the child. This is how deeply the thought should live in us. I might almost say that we should love the child fanatically. My child is everything to me. Notice how my love for my child grows so strong in me that nothing else can motivate me as strongly to practice self control. I educate myself for the sake of my child. For the sake of the child I keep a watch over myself and allow no temptation to enter my mind. Why? All this is transferred to my capital investment. I want to be good and holy for my child's sake, and for God's sake.

Allow me to draw your attention to some points from this perspective. If my child is my biological capital investment, I take care of my health for the sake of my child. If my child is my biological capital investment and I notice that I have a hereditary disease, I would say: I don't want to have a child! Do you understand why? I am prepared for this sacrifice. I give up this wish because I love my child. I will try to find everything else I would receive, for example, through the marriage act, in an honest and God-willed way. All this because I love my child! The child is my capital investment. We may not pass on a diseased capital, only a healthy one. Therefore:

1. I care for my health so that the child, who could be born in the near future, inherits health from

me.

2. If I carry a hereditary disease, love for the child motivates me to sacrifice my wish for a child. I will then do without sexual love.

Take another example: I am soon to be married. I have fallen in love, let us say, with a girl. Suddenly I notice - I may not have been aware of it - we are related. I love a relative. Then I must tell myself, if I am sensible: Normally a marriage between people who are closely related doesn't work out well, because there is no natural difference, because we are blood relations. It often happens that the children of blood relations are either abnormal or half mad.

I know of a place where the people are actually sound, but by far the majority of the children are not normal, or are retarded. Why? Doctors say that it is because these people usually marry close relatives. If I know that this is the case - or even if I only suspect that it might be so - I would normally give up the idea of marrying a relative because I love the child (who could be born). Why? A capital investment. In the first instance, it is clear that this is my own capital, and in the second instance, since we cannot complement each other, because we are blood relations. A different blood³ has to be mixed with mine if the child is to be healthy. However, because I am a blood relation of the girl I love, the danger is great that the child will not be normal. I have then made a bad capital investment.

Somewhere there is a family where the father is an alcoholic. His son marries. Strangely enough he has no inclination to drink. This often happens. But his children, the grandchildren of the alcoholic, have the same weakness. Everything within them is drawn to an unrestrained enjoyment of liquor. Now, if I am a father and I feel the urge to drink too much, then it is clear that as a highly moral person I will say to myself: That is not right. I will keep this passion in control, because otherwise it could happen that my children, or if a generation is skipped then my grandchildren, could be affected by the same passion⁴. A capital investment. Do you understand what is meant? My high moral plane is my capital investment for my children.

It is wonderful to be able to be a father or mother, but only if the children are so much the focal point

³ Fr Kentenich is playing on the word 'blood', but what is meant is the genetic inheritance. The technical term used in Canon Law is 'consanguinity'. Scientific studies have proved that negative traits (recessive genes) are far more likely to be passed on to offspring if the parents are closely related. It has also been shown that traits like alcoholism or the susceptibility to certain diseases are passed on in the genetic information of DNA. Such inherited tendencies may well skip a generation, but will appear again at a later date.

⁴ It has so far not been proved scientifically that if someone has inherited a recessive gene, e.g. alcoholism, and opposed this tendency successfully, they will not pass it on. Fr Kentenich was not talking in scientific terms and has combined the nature/nurture arguments.

of my existence that my whole being is orientated towards them.

You might be inclined to object: But we have to live, we have to eat and drink and earn our living. We don't want to underestimate this. Our children should be better off than we have been also in this regard. But that is not the main thing. Although it is a capital investment, the most essential capital investment we can make is our own qualities, is our own selves. This is how we should invest our capital.

The more morally upright I am, the more valuable are the moral qualities I pass on to my child. This applies particularly to the mother when she is carrying a child. It is a most important point.

My dear Schoenstatt Family, we should take this very seriously. Let me give you a brief example. I can't remember any more where this took place. Somewhere or other a mother was informed that her son had taken his life. She immediately broke down. 'It is my fault!' 'Why is it your fault that he killed himself?' 'When I was pregnant with him I had the same temptation, and I didn't fight it.'

Can you understand what this means? A mother's thoughts and actions while she is carrying a child are most important. You may not overlook that there is a vital union between mother and child, it is not just a matter of the circulation of her blood, there really is an interplay between the two. Sensible fathers therefore see to it that while their wives are carrying their child, they are not exposed to too much emotional excitement. Instead they help the mothers to take in warm, religious impressions during this time. These things exercise an influence. If a mother is over-burdened during these nine months and has to cope with strong impressions, the child is influenced. Vice versa, if parents are deeply religious and pray a great deal during this time, if they live religious lives, this is a capital investment even if the child has not yet been born. Later on they will thank you for all eternity for what you are doing for them now.

My child's character is my capital investment. I pass on my character qualities to my children as a basic disposition. This is important. If you discover degenerate qualities in them later on, you must always ask yourselves first: As father or mother, when I was carrying this child, what was I like? And if the child is odd and unable to cope with life, I should always ask myself: What was I like while I was carrying this child?

A capital investment. For the sake of the child I must make the greatest possible demands on myself, I must discipline myself.

May I again emphasise the thought: Our children are our capital investment! If you are sensible, and if you know the laws of heredity somewhat, you will say: This is true. My child is my mirror, my capital investment. Suddenly I notice something developing in my child. What is it? It could be anger, temper or sensuality. Think of all the bad habits a child can have. If I am sensible, I first ask myself: Don't you have that as well? My child is my image and likeness. In all probability I have that habit as well. Now I can study myself in the qualities of my child. We will discuss this in greater detail later. I want to show you how you can educate your child from the first moment on. At present I only want to show you the general direction.

It is wonderful when I, as father or mother, have my child before me: I can well imagine how a mother studies her child all day. This doesn't mean that she just sits in a corner and does nothing else. She has to work, that is obvious, but she is aware of the child. She observes every little thing. It is a most interesting study. Why? In my child I can study myself and discover the same qualities. I ask myself: What must I do in order to overcome this or that in myself, so that my child can learn from me? My child is the best school for my character, because he or she is at the same time my capital investment. When a father comes home tired, he probably sits down in a corner and thinks: Leave me in peace, I have had enough to put up with. He can do this sometimes. The mother can also fetch his pipe or something else and talk to him kindly till he feels better again. However, that may not happen all the time!

The most important thing is this: *Their child is the capital investment of father and mother.* The father lets the mother tell him what the tiny child has done during the day. Every little thing, every breath is of interest to him and is studied. Every father does this instinctively, he doesn't have to think it out. He wants to know about it. Then he considers what will happen next. Is there anything nicer than this? No, you won't find any deeper or more beautiful family joys than those that come from devoting yourself to such a child. You see, that is the majesty of a child around whom everything revolves. That tiny being in the cradle is the focal point of the family, not I, the father, not I, the mother.

You should now go on to consider how children can keep a family together. For example, when father and mother sit down together and discuss: How is the baby? Is he or she growing? Putting on weight? We shouldn't merely ask whether the child's eyes are alright and his or her cheeks fat, we should also take an interest in the child's character. Suddenly we may discover that the child has a sweet tooth, or tells lies. As parents we should ask ourselves: Why is this child so stubborn or have a bad temper? (In Germany they sometimes ask jokingly in this context. How did the dog get fleas? He caught them!) What do I see in the child before me? The child caught it! The father says: 'The girl got it from you!' Or the wife says: 'The boy got it from you!' It doesn't necessarily have to be to the same extent. Nevertheless, you are now an educational community. The father works himself to the bone at work, but at home life is lovely. Not because he can smoke his pipe in peace, or read a book, or listen to the radio or TV. Others can do this as well. My joy is to be found in my children. They are my riches. I live and die for them. Who is the happiest father? I am, no one else. Who is the happiest mother? I am.

Now the question naturally presents itself to the parents: What can we now do with the child when we discover bad habits? The answer is not: 'I shall beat the boy into pulp. He has to obey me.' No, I should rather beat myself into pulp first. You see, this is where self-education begins. I must first of all have myself in control. Then I can consider what I should do with the child to help him or her to overcome this or that bad habit.

I shall leave aside the other answers. I only want to create an attitude in you, so that you are deeply convinced: My child is my capital investment! Deo gratias! Now we have it!

A final example. It happened in Germany. A child suddenly became very ill. What had happened? They quickly called the best doctor. Do you know the diagnosis? 'The child is drunk!' 'Impossible', the parents objected, 'the child cannot have drunk any alcohol.' When the doctor examined the child more closely he confirmed his diagnosis. What had happened? The child had had a wet nurse, and while she had suckled the child she was drunk. The poison had passed over to the child.

The conclusion I want to draw from this is: If the child is my capital investment, this is particularly the case while I am carrying the child and when the child is being breast-fed.

Another important chapter: How should we feed the newborn child? Should the mother give her own milk? Later on I will talk in greater detail about the importance and significance of this method of feeding a child. While the mother is breast-feeding, the child basically receives everything that is necessary for life - naturally, together with the mother's milk also the mother's qualities, which develop more strongly in every regard. And if I cannot feed my child myself, I must be very careful whom I choose to do so, or what I offer instead. Together with the mother's milk, certain qualities and dispositions are brought out or suppressed.

My child is my capital investment.

I am striving for sanctity. Why? For the sake of the child, because holy fathers and mothers beget and bring up holy children. At any rate, this is how it should be.

**The Responsibility of Parents
for their children
has been given to them by God**

God's capital investment (1)

God's co-operation

God's indwelling

Reverence

The body as a task

God's capital investment (2)

**Recollection Day - 29 March 1953
Fourth Conference**

I am sure you will already have heard about the majesty of the child. It is a saying that contains a profound truth, it is easily understood, but it can also be misunderstood. I have visited South America quite often. There the child is so much the centre of attention that he or she is a little idol. 'The majesty of the child' is exaggerated to an extreme. The result is that all the children's wishes are fulfilled. When they are a little older, the parents are unable to cope with them any more. So they are sent to boarding school, because it is thought they will be taught some discipline there.

You see, we want to have nothing to do with such an understanding of the majesty of the child. Later we will consider how we can educate a child so that this 'majesty' is unfolded, that is, all that is beautiful, great and noble. However, we also want to learn to educate our children in such a way that the 'Ave' is awakened and the 'Eve' taken by the scruff of her neck. Then it is correct.

I myself have to educate my child. The child is mine, not the school's. My child does not belong to the state either, at least not in the first place. Primarily the child belongs to God, secondarily, in dependence on God, to me. I have to educate this child. Other people can help me, but they do not bear the main responsibility. That is my pride.

So don't say: I want to have an easy time, and then palm the child off quickly somewhere so that you can have a good time. No, I also want to bear the burden of education and not just enjoy the pleasures of conceiving the child. That is my pride - I educate my child, I bear the responsibility.

This brings us to our central thought: my child - my main capital investment. This capital investment has captured our interest.

However, my child is also the main capital investment of the Triune God.

You see, God is really and truly rich. He possess a tremendous capital - 'dollars galore'. But he doesn't want to keep this capital to himself. He has invested it. Where? First of all, in me! Deo gratias! He has invested all sorts of things in me, but also in my unborn child.

What a wonderful and beautiful world this is! That very simple, Catholic idea is brought into play: my child - God's main capital investment. What is meant by 'capital investment'? What sort of treasures does the Triune God possess? In my child he has made a preferential capital investment of his infinite power, wisdom and kindness.

Look at the glory of the sun or the beauty of the stars! What is all this in comparison with the riches of the little being lying there in pampers and unable to say a word? This is God's capital investment, *a masterpiece of divine wisdom, divine omnipotence and divine kindness*. Do you believe this? If you don't believe it, you could as well be buried. We don't want to have anything more to do with each other. But if you believe it, you have the right to be proud of being a father or mother. You have a sense of your real standing and can cope well with our Lord God.

My child is not just my capital investment, that child is also *his* capital investment. Now if you

connect the two investments they become a treasure, even if we are otherwise as poor as church mice. It doesn't matter. The children are our riches. Indeed, this tiny being growing within me, or lying there in pampers, is the capital investment of God's infinite omnipotence, wisdom and kindness¹.

Let me add two thoughts: To start with we are looking at the child in the natural order, then in the supernatural order.

By the way, we must get to know ourselves and our children in detail, because we have to educate them. If, for example, I am a lawyer, I have to know the laws of the land. What on earth could I do as a lawyer without this knowledge? If I am a vet and have to treat a cow, naturally I need to know the psychology and physiology of cows. That is obvious. So if I have to educate children, I must know my children, otherwise I cannot intervene correctly. I must know my child's character and disposition, as well as his or her goal. We know, and yet don't really know, this.

I have said, firstly, that the child is a monument of God's infinite omnipotence in the natural and the supernatural order. If I see my child as a created being, I have to say two things:

[Firstly], our infinite God had to make use of his creative power in order to create the soul of this child. The parents did not procreate the soul, it was given to the child by God at the moment that child was conceived. A direct act of divine, creative power! God said `Fiat!' - Et factum est (and it was done!). The world came into existence (cf Gen. 1,1-25). He repeats this `Fiat' each time a child is conceived.

Secondly, creative power. God also has to co-operate when the human body is conceived - theologians say for this `concursum divinum generalis'². Unless God is active, we cannot conceive a child. God the Father has to hold us in existence, otherwise we would not be able to live or do anything. So what is a child? A document, a monument, God's capital investment. The Triune God has invested his omnipotence in the child according to the natural order.

Now the supernatural order is added to it. A `nova creatura'³ has come into existence. God has allowed the child to share in his own divine glory, he has allowed the child to share in his divine nature. What does that mean? We will discuss this in detail later.

The child of my womb is at the same time a child of God, and this in the actual sense of the word. God dwells in this child from the moment of baptism with his divine life and constantly generates this divine life. This child of mine, who is jumping around before me, whom I may feed and clothe, has been a shrine from the moment of baptism, a dwelling of the Triune God. He constantly

¹ Fr Kantenich pointed once again to one of the mothers in the group who was expecting her twelfth child.

² God's general co-operation

³ A new creation, see 2 Cor 5,17.

generates his divine life in this dwelling. Truly, God has set up a monument to himself in my child. This child is his capital investment.

However, I myself am also a proof, a monument to his infinite, creative power, and want to become so more and more. He has allowed me, the father and mother, to share in his creative power. Without me he could not have called this child into life. These are all mysteries - mysteries of conception, mysteries of fatherhood, mysteries of motherhood. So you need to reflect on this thought sometime: My child a little church of the Blessed Trinity.

Is this true? Literally - this child is consecrated to the Trinity and is the dwelling of the Trinity. How should I treat such a 'little church'?

Now you must draw your conclusions from what has been said. Then all the little things we do with our children during the day will take on a unique, supernatural consecration. A most beautiful truth!

I have taught our Sisters to see themselves as living little churches of the Blessed Trinity in which their shining eyes are a reminder of the sanctuary lamp. Each person who bears the divine life is a little church of the Blessed Trinity⁴. And when the eyes are shining - also the eyes of my child - this is the sanctuary lamp. What does the sanctuary lamp in the house chapel indicate? The presence of our Lord. So the shining eyes of human beings reflect the sanctuary lamp if they have remained noble, if they are still children of God. They are an indication of God's presence, living little churches of the Trinity.

Please take note of these expressions. Then the world of children and the world around you will take on a deep, supernatural character. In addition to doing well financially, which you should try to achieve, you will at the same time live in a new, supernatural world, which comes alive in everyday life.

From this vantage point you will understand an axiom, a principle, you should impress very deeply on yourselves for the education of your children. It is also important for your relationship to one another. What is this axiom? 'Maxima reverentia debetur puero'. Maxima reverentia! Not just reverentia. We owe each child the greatest reverence - the infant to whom I offer my breast - because without it the child cannot exist. This child is part of my own being. I owe him or her the greatest reverence, maxima reverentia. The smaller and more helpless the child, the more reverently he or she should be treated. Maxima reverentia!

Do you want to hear again why we should show this great reverence? Let me take up what I have just said and look at it from another point of view.

⁴ Each baptised person is a church of the Blessed Trinity! This is a central truth in Fr Kentenich's teaching, and one which he applied to his pedagogy and asceticism. It finds expression in his teaching about the heart shrine. See also M.A. Nailis, Workaday Sanctity.

What is a child in the natural order?

What is this child, in particular what is the body of this child? I owe the greatest reverence - maxima reverentia - also to the body of this child, this tiny child, as well as to the body of the people around me. Why? There is always the same thought: in the natural order the body - let us remain with the child - is, firstly, the associate of the soul, secondly, the instrument of the soul, and thirdly, the expression of the soul.

What is the body of this tiny, graced child in the supernatural order? A temple of the Blessed Trinity and a member of Christ. What a wonderfully great mystery! Saint Paul put it so clearly and beautifully: `Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit? (1 Cor.6,19). He himself lived from this thought. Outwardly I see only a body, a fragile body, which I may nourish. However, in order that I may preserve a sense of reverence for it I recall: This is a temple of the Blessed Trinity, it is a little church of the Trinity. It has to be treated reverently.

Recently a German teacher told me: `We are used to treating a priest like a monstrance'. What does a monstrance carry? The Blessed Sacrament. It contains the Blessed Sacrament. So what is a child in the natural order, and in the supernatural order? If we were thoroughly imbued with this thought, we would have the correct basic attitude.

So you can understand why, for example, Origen⁵, one of the first great Church writers, approached his own child as he was being carried out of the church, opened his clothes and kissed him on the chest. It wasn't the expression of sensuality, but of profound reverence. The soul of that child was in communion with our Lord. That is a supernatural way of looking at things. That is what is meant by making things transparent⁶. Suddenly I see something quite new in my child, something which I cannot see with merely natural eyes. Maxima reverentia debetur puero! I owe this reverence also to my tiny child.

This provides us with a firm standpoint. Now I can ask: *How should I treat the body of my child?* Whatever I say about the child, I also say about myself. There is a double answer: firstly, *with reverent love*, and secondly, *with wise strictness*.

You will realise that I am summarising everything very briefly. This is more a teaching of principles.

⁵ (c. 185-254 AD) Egyptian theologian and Father of the Church, born at Alexandria, son of a Christian martyr. As head of Alexandria's catechetical school he gained fame as a teacher. During the persecution of Emperor Decius (c. 250) he was imprisoned and tortured at Tyre. The most famous of his many influential works are his critical edition of the Bible, and a theological treatise.

⁶ According to Fr Kentenich, making all created things, especially human sexuality, transparent is a mark of workaday sanctity. In the book with this title it is discussed as prophetic and priestly bonding to things.

Firstly, *with reverent love*. Why with reverent love? I can only repeat what I have already said: *because the body is a mystery*, it contains a mysterious soul. The body is a mystery, because it is a temple of the Triune God. That is why Paul could say in such a radical way: If the body is a temple of the Triune God, that is, if the Triune God dwells in it, then the body belongs to the Lord. This body does not belong to the child, but to the Lord. This body does not belong to me, at best I have a conditional right to my body. Why? Well, if God had not been creatively at work, the child would not even exist. I also helped him. You see, this is why the child belongs primarily to God, and secondarily - in dependence on God - also to me. 'The body is meant for the Lord', St Paul tells us (cf 1 Cor.6,13). Everything belongs to the Lord - the eyes belong to the Lord, as do all the organs. Allow me to put it this way: Even the sexual organs belong to the Lord. Please understand this literally. Nothing at all belongs to the child. So the child cannot do what he or she pleases with these organs - with his or her eyes, ears, hands. Everything belongs to God, because everything came from God. And it is my task to help my child to live for God. Hence, since the child belongs to the Lord, that child should show *reverence for God's property*.

The same applies to the second thought. What is the child? A temple. So, every profanation of the temple must be prevented!

When you look at life today - you know this better than I do - the opposite is the case. I think this is also true of America. The outlook of the world is completely contrary to our outlook - on the one hand there is the cult of the body, the idolisation of the body, and on the other our sound, moderate cultivation of the body. Profanation of the body! I may not expose and show off the body merely as the object of pleasure. This is particularly true of woman's body. Please take a look around you, wherever you look, what do you see? Or, think of television or the illustrated papers. Profanation of the body! Isn't that true? Profaned for what? An object of pleasure, nothing else.

We need to have clear concepts again. How should I treat my child's body? The child should be healthy, beautiful, strong. That is all well and good. The cultivation of the body, not the idolisation of the body. Reverent love, because the body belongs to the Lord, on the one hand; and on the other hand, because it is God's shrine. Paul tells us in another passage: 'If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person'. Then in the same breath he adds: 'For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple' (1 Cor. 3,17; see also 1 Cor.6,12-20). That is why God is passing judgement on the world. Why? Because the body is profaned and idolised today.

Now comes the practical question: *How can I treat my child in contrast to the world around me?* Haven't we all been slowly drawn into the idolisation of the body as practised by our present-day culture, this heathen culture?

Reverent love for the body, on the one hand! There you have a metaphysics, a whole philosophy and psychology of the cultivation of the body. How should we treat the body of a child? With reverent love. 'Reverence is the turning-point of the world' as Shakespeare said. I think we lack reverence today far more than devotion.

Secondly, once again, how should we treat the body? The answer is: *with wise severity*. The body also needs to be treated with severity. The dogmatic reason is, because the body feels original sin the most. Let me put this in a picture. St Francis of Assisi (1182-1226) liked to speak of his body as 'Brother Ass' and of his soul as 'Sister Soul'. The body has the qualities of an ass. A donkey is lazy, sluggish and stubborn. Is my body the same? We will discuss this in more detail some other time. That is why the body needs to be treated with discipline and strictness. It has to submit. The deeper reason - we have just mentioned it: in the natural order the body is the instrument of the soul. What does that mean? It has to obey the soul. It should be pliant to the soul, not the master of the soul as is so often the case. Then the body is on its high horse and the soul runs behind. That may not happen. The body has to obey the soul, and the soul has to obey God. Hence, I must educate my children with discipline and strictness.

I have already said that it is mainly the task of the father to educate the child to be courageous. The mother has to educate the child to bear and forbear. Don't constantly blow on the sore place and ask: Does it hurt? A boy must be able to bear it on his own. Don't blow on the sore spot constantly! Don't constantly caress! In a big family there just isn't the time to caress constantly. You have to get on with the job. The children have to bear and forbear with one another. So even because of this it is a good thing to have a big family. If I have only one child, he or she will be spoilt, I will be constantly caressing him or her, and soon the child will govern me. What then? You will have lost out!

Strictness must be wise strictness. Why must it be wise? The body should not be killed, it should merely be made subject to the soul and also to God. The body is, firstly, the capital investment of his infinite omnipotence, secondly, a monument to his wisdom, and thirdly, a monument to his kindness and love.

A monument to his wisdom. How much wisdom is shown by the fact that God does not allow children to come into the world directly, that he allows the father and mother to share in his creative power. Otherwise absolutely no preparations would be made for the child. God doesn't want to do things the way modern governments do it. The modern state looks upon the parents and the family merely as the place where children are begotten. Then the child is taken away⁷. The cold and impersonal state looks after the child. If this child is my own flesh and blood, I must be pretty far gone if I do not love him or her. How much God's wisdom is revealed in the way he allows a child to come into the world. I must share in this wisdom.

Let me repeat, the child is God's capital investment, but also an investment of his loving kindness. By giving a child life - obviously the parents are the instrumental cause - he allows this child to share in his divine life here on earth and through all eternity. A capital investment of his loving kindness! You see, this little child is not merely the object of my parental, that is, my motherly and fatherly care, God's providence is also there. Now our whole teaching on God's providence suddenly takes on

⁷ The reference here is to what was being done in communist countries, but to some extent the Western democracies are also meant.

a new meaning. This child is the object of God's providence⁸.

When I look at my child, I may perhaps ask: 'Dear God, what will come of this child?' and then tell myself: 'I have to leave that to your providence. You are infinitely loving and kind'. Do you notice what a wonderful and beautiful world comes alive in me if I look at my children in this way?

We have discussed a great deal today. Now I must ask you to discuss it with one another until our next meeting. Otherwise you will not understand what is coming next. I would like you to take something along with you. You have made the sacrifice to come here. So you also have the right to hear something from me. So let me ask you again: Please try to digest and work through what has been said.

Let us consider once again: What was the focal point? The child. We have merely talked about the child.

1. The position of the child today,
 2. the position of the child in the Nazareth family,
 3. the position of the child in our family.
- The conclusion? I shall put it briefly.

My dear Schoenstatt Family, we should recall the baby Moses, who was hidden in the bulrushes. His sister stayed close by to see what would happen to the baby. The king's daughter came by. For us the 'king's daughter' is the Blessed Mother. What does she say? She is given the same commission which the king's daughter gave to Moses' sister at that time. 'Take the child!' (cf Ex 2,1-9).

⁸ See the collected texts on Divine Providence - translation and publication in preparation.

Take the child! Take the child in the way we have just heard! Take the child and educate him or her according to the image and likeness of the Triune God. Educate this child to become an `alter Christus', an `altera Maria'⁹.

`Take this child!' Take the child as soon as you get home. It is possible that the children may have got up to all sorts of mischief while you were away. It doesn't matter.

Look at your children with new eyes. Each child is my most valuable capital investment. But this child is also God's most valuable capital investment. Much more valuable than the atomic bomb, much, much more valuable than the sun. Try to work out for yourselves why. I have only hinted at it.

So when you see your children in this way, you welcome them in a new way. `Take this child and educate him or her!' Our Lady is saying this to me. And what do I have to do? The king's daughter took the child and educated him. The baby Moses became the great Moses. Our little Moses should also become a big Moses. He should become a man who serves his people and sees to it that the American people become truly free.

⁹ Another, or second, Christ; another, or second, Mary.

**The Child - God's Capital Investment -
challenges parents to act accordingly**

Witness to God's omnipotence

Expression and reflection of God's wisdom

The transfer and transmission of love

**Recollection Day - 10 May 1953
First Conference**

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

You are probably surprised that our circle is so small today. Certain circumstances are to blame. Today is Mother's Day, but there are also so many things that simply happen. That is why so few of us are here today. This should not bother us. We know that St Francis de Sales (1567-1622) was prepared to preach to a handful of people in a huge church. Afterwards he was asked why he had done it. His answer: Every soul is worth a diocese to me. So we could think for a moment how many dioceses we represent here!

For us there is still another reason - we are slowly becoming a family. What one member of the family experiences is soon passed on to the others. Whatever we are discussing during our recollection days should ultimately be seen as a system for a sound Catholic education, or if you like, a sound method of education for us Schoenstatt children¹. So, even though there are so few of us here, we want to try to focus on the ideal of a Schoenstatt family. We know how this is to be understood. A Schoenstatt family is simply a family that tries successfully to embody the ideal of a Nazareth family in a timely way by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt.

We immediately distinguished between the two parts of the definition:

Part one: What is the timely form of such a Nazareth family? We have been dealing with this until now. We must soon begin to discuss what is meant by the statement: *by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt*. Here and there you are beginning to wonder about it, you are asking yourselves: Well what is the meaning of the 'covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt' especially now that some of us are preparing to enter into this covenant of love with her officially and formally when the first shrine in North America is blessed². As you can see we have plenty of material for our discussions.

However, for the time being we want to remain with the ideal, the timely ideal of a Nazareth family.

What have we reflected on together until now? Perhaps you will allow me to summarise it briefly once again. How can we describe the Nazareth family? The first recollection day showed us how, in the first place, the objective order of being was carefully obeyed by the Nazareth family. *The objective order of being in which the father's authority is primary and the mother's authority secondary*. Again, how can we describe the Nazareth family? The second thought: *it is held together by the bond of love*. And the third thought: *The child is the focal point*. That is the ideal.

The second recollection day went a step further and illustrated the principles with many examples.

¹ As the members of the large Schoenstatt Family we are all 'children'. Childlikeness (as distinct from childishness) is one of the coping stones of Schoenstatt's spirituality.

² This took place in Madison, Wisconsin, on 20 June 1953.

Then we went on to consider what is meant when we say that the child is the focal point. That was the subject of our last recollection day.

Today, I think we should remain with this subject again, while at the same time taking up in a meaningful way what interests us at present. The child should again be the focal point. You will soon see that this will also give us the opportunity to draw in the mother. Today is Mother's Day, after all! We want to look into the face and the heart of the mother.

Do you still know what we considered in this regard during our last recollection day? It is a statement we should really never forget. What is the child? We said that the child is:

1. the parents' capital investment,
2. the Triune God's capital investment.

Firstly, *the parents' capital investment*.

This morning we saw the infant Mr & Mrs Laufenberg brought with them³. When we look at a child, let us ask ourselves: Is it true that this tiny being is really the parents' capital investment? Now you can repeat all that we discussed together at that time:

1. the biological capital investment,
2. the mental capital investment,
3. the capital investment of character, and
4. the religious capital investment of the parents.

Please study a little child! Look at that child's features! And then consider, study, ask yourselves: Is it true that this tiny being is really the father and mother's capital investment? You see, this capital will soon gain interest. What is this interest? On whom do these riches, the quality of the interest, depend? Naturally they mainly depend on the parents who have invested the capital. That is the one thought.

I ask you to think over these thoughts again, not just briefly on one or the other occasion.

Secondly, *the child is also the Triune God's capital investment*.

Here we paused for a while. We only discussed one thought, that is: the child is the capital investment of *God's omnipotence*. We didn't get further than that.

Today we have to consider the two other thoughts: the capital investment of *God's wisdom* and the capital investment of *God's love*. The Triune God has invested a capital, **his** capital. It is wonderful if I, the father and mother, can say: I have invested my capital here. But now comes the Triune God,

³ Their twelfth child, Winfriede Laufenberg, who was just two weeks old.

the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Father says: I have invested my capital. Where? In this tiny being. What a sing-song that infant held for us this morning during Holy Mass!

This tiny being - the capital investment of God's omnipotence! How small and helpless! A stroke of the pen can kill this child. Nevertheless - the capital investment of God's omnipotence.

(I should now repeat everything. I am sorry that you have not worked through all the material in the meantime. So you are less disposed to take in something new. You were more concerned with discussing what the covenant of love is. But the thoughts we are now dealing with are so essential, they should become part of you.)

God's omnipotence! Is the child the result of an act of God's omnipotence? As you know, the soul was created directly by God. If God were not omnipotent, this tiny being would not be there. I, the father or mother, would not have been able to do it on our own. Even the act of procreation and everything I, the father and mother, have done for this child, would not have been possible without what theology and philosophy call: *concursus divinus generalis*, that is, without God's general co-operation. God had to be involved in the conception of the child, otherwise it would not have been possible.

God's omnipotence! Even if I only consider the natural existence of this tiny being. In the meantime you have baptised the child.

(It is a pity that the bishop did not perform the baptism himself. He should really have done it! (Jokingly): When I become bishop one day, I will make up for it. That is only right. The twelfth child should actually be baptised by the Pope. Yes, we will make up for it later. ...)

Please understand, *God's omnipotence in the supernatural order* is added to this. It would naturally be worth our while to consider what God's omnipotent act is like in order to make this tiny child a child of God. So this baby is not just Baby Laufenberg, what is she? The Father's child in the truest sense of the word. The Father's child! A new life. And who gave this new life? God himself had to give it directly. Hence: this tiny child here is the capital investment of God's omnipotence.

And then we drew our conclusions. We considered the consequences:

First consequence: *To whom does the child belong?* Primarily to God, secondarily, in dependence on God, to the parents.

Second consequence: *How should I treat the child?* With boundless respect! Why? Because this child is God's capital investment. With boundless reverence! How should we treat the child's body? I should now repeat all the consequences.

So, in the first place, the child stands before us as the capital investment of God's omnipotence.

Today we want to consider what it means when we say that the child is the capital investment of

God's *wisdom*.

The capital investment of God's wisdom or product of God's wisdom. How is God's wisdom revealed in this tiny child?

(A pity that the child isn't present!)

If I were now to speak in intellectual terms, I would have to present a vast outline on the subject and say: God's wisdom is revealed

1. in the law of creation: How did the child come to be?
2. in the construction laws, and
3. in the orientation laws.

I must ask you to keep the child in mind, otherwise what I have to say will be too abstract. The more immature and the more tiny the child, the more tremendous the law of creation, the law of construction and the law of orientation sounds. These three laws are the expression of God's wisdom.

(I don't know how much time I may spend with each of these points. If I could be sure that you would discuss it carefully afterwards, it would inspire me to go into them. But when everything just lies fallow, I don't feel inspired to explain them to you in detail.)

I shall dwell on just one of the laws to some extent - the law of creation - because that is the most tangible one.

I have to ask three questions:

1. how can we describe this law of creation?
2. in how far does it reveal God's wisdom?
3. what is the consequence for me, the father and mother?

We will then come to speak about Mother's Day. I must say something about that, otherwise the mothers will not receive what is due to them.

First question: *how can we describe the law of creation?*

You could actually answer this yourselves. How did the child come to be? Father and mother gave the most valuable part of their own substance and united them - the most valuable part of their substance biologically, intellectually, personally and religiously. Call to mind what I am saying! That is how the child came to be. Father and mother contributed what is best in themselves. How? Through the marital act.

You should take this in the way God willed it. As young people we are often faced with this fact and ask: How is it possible? You should follow up God's thoughts! You will then be able to understand far better how great God's plan is. Please remember: This is the law of creation. This is how the child came into existence - father and mother gave the best of their own substance: physically, mentally,

personally and religiously, so that the child could be called into existence through the co-operation of the parents, that is, not just through God's omnipotence, but through the parents sharing in God's creative power. In this way I grow beyond myself.

Almighty God used me as an instrument. And now I say: This is how he reveals his wisdom. Where is his wisdom at work? Would it not have been better if I had come into the world like Adam, directly from God's hand? I would have preferred that! Or when you began to enter into a relationship as a girl, you may have thought: What can I do later? May I have children? If only things were different! Why just in this way? To this I reply: It is a tremendous act of God's wisdom! Those are God's thoughts which we have to follow up.

The second question I posed and now answer is: *In how far is this law of creation an expression of God's tremendous wisdom?*

Let me again ask: In how far is God's wonderful wisdom shown in the fact that the child came into existence through the sexual, mental, personal, spiritual and religious co-operation of the parents? How does it show his wisdom? Please take careful note to see whether I can explain this to you.

Wisdom consists in using all the means that lead in a perfect way to a goal. What is God's aim with the child, with this tiny being? What is God's intention?

A philosopher would first ask: What is God? God is Love! This is what the Scriptures tell us. And according to the Scriptures this tiny human child is an image and likeness of God. If a child is an image and likeness of God, and God is Love, it follows that the child is an image and likeness of God's love. What does that mean? It means that the child is a product of love. A child is designed for love and can only grow in the climate of love.

I then know what God's intention is with the child - the child should be a fruit of love, so the child is designed for love and should grow and flourish in the climate of love to become a little hero of love, and hence as far as possible an image and likeness of God. That is God's intention.

And now his wisdom. What did God do to reach his goal for this little being? Suppose for a moment that God had said: Fiat! Then little Winfriede would suddenly have been there. A little Winfriede Laufenberg would suddenly have popped out of the earth. Yes, suddenly! Fiat, and the child would have been there. And father and mother, where were they? What is God's intention for little Winfriede? She should be a child of love. For heaven's sake, how? God could now say: 'Mother, father, now look after this child!' And what do father and mother reply? 'Good, we will do so. We will keep her.' It is much the same as if one were to take up a foundling somewhere. It can work out. What can work out? That the two, father and mother Laufenberg, accept little Winfriede and say: 'Alright, we will care for her a little.' Would that be an expression of God's wisdom?

What did God do? It is as though he thought: Now I shall think in very human terms. Now I shall see to it that little Winfriede can come into the world in such a way that her father and mother invest the

best of their own substance, and that father and mother discover themselves in her.

Do you understand what that implies? If parents discover themselves in their child, God does not need to say: 'Father and mother Laufenberg, you should love your child.' On the contrary, he has to say: 'Don't love her too much!' As you can see, God has ensured in an extremely wise way that the child is given a loving home. By nature the child is directed towards love, because she is the image and likeness of God, she is designed for love, she can only grow in the climate of love and should become a hero of love.

Now, if wisdom consists in making use of the means to reach a goal, we all have to bow down before it. To what do we bow down? Before God's wisdom, because he designed things in this way. With our poor human mind we often do not understand this. I shall never again say: 'I would have far preferred it, Winfriede, if you had somehow - I don't know how - dropped down like a meteor from heaven or grown up like a blade of grass from below.' If God had done things in this way, we would probably have said: 'Well, if I were God, I would have done things differently.'

God has seen to it that according to her substance, her being, this child has really received whatever was necessary - the sunshine of love.

Now you should consider: Isn't that right? Of course, Mrs Laufenberg has brought up eleven children. She knows what to do. But it is so wonderful. Would a mother make all the sacrifices for a child if that child were not part of her own substance? Please think about this. Could a father make all the sacrifices necessary to provide for his family, so that father and mother can offer their child a loving home?

Let us ask ourselves: Could God have done it differently? Suppose he had done it in some other way. Think about it as though this were the first time you were considering such a thought. You will find that there is no better way than the one chosen by God. Therefore: What is the child? *God's capital investment according to the law of creation.*

I take it that the things we have just discussed have touched your souls deeply, because they are not new to you. It is not as though you would do things differently now. No! But to see things clearly in context makes us inwardly happy. Therefore: *We admire God's wisdom!*

Of course, now we have to draw our conclusions. I would like to dwell on this point at greater length.

The third question was: *What follows from these laws of the child's creation as an expression of God's wisdom?*

Actually, the answer is easy. We have to see to it that God's eternal wisdom reaches its goal through us, through me, the father and mother. And when does God's eternal wisdom reach its goal? When I, the father and mother, give the child a warm and loving home - a warm and loving home at God's behest and as God's representative.

There is a German saying, which goes like this: 'Since God can't be everywhere, he created mothers'.

It is obvious that God is everywhere. But we know what this saying means. It is simply one of God's special qualities - he wants to work through secondary causes. God does not want to give the child his love directly. He wants to love the child through the parents of that child. Why? That is simply his nature: *bonum est diffusivum sui*⁴. If my whole being is goodness and kindness, I must also show goodness and kindness everywhere. And in order that the child might receive the love he or she needs here on earth, God created parents to act in his place. Parents should take God's place, and in dependence on God they should love their child with the love God wants to give the child.

The law of transference and transmission!

Hence the simple answer: *In order that God's wisdom can reach its aim, father and mother must see to it that the child finds a loving home in their heart, in the heart of the family.* This brings us to the big, practical question: What must we do in this regard? Give our children a loving home, a warm and loving home. We have to give our children a ray of sunshine, the warmth of love. Because it is only when the sun is shining that the tiny plant, which has been placed in the earth, can flourish. Since children are designed for love, they can only grow, they can only grow spiritually, if the sunshine of God's love - *his warm love* - can light up their lives through me, the father and mother.

However, it must also be an *enlightened love*. That is now the question: How should I radiate God's warm and enlightened love in such a way that the child becomes a product, really and truly a product of God's eternal wisdom?

Allow me to give a general answer to start with, since it is almost identical with the question I have asked. What must I do to secure a permanent and loving home for my children in my heart? The answer: *Father and mother may never dismiss their child from their heart.* Do you understand what that means? Children leave school, but they may never be dismissed from my heart, not even if they disappoint me, not even - allow me to put it so bluntly - if they become a nail in my coffin, or if they were to scratch my eyes out.

If I am really the father and mother and want to be the image and likeness of God's eternal wisdom, I may never dismiss my children from my heart, just as God would never do so. The children may be naughty, they may bring disgrace on the family ... A stranger would say: That is enough! I want to have nothing to do with them any more! They are dismissed from my service! From whose service? Well, I don't know what sort of business a father and mother may have, or what sort of job the boy has chosen, but a father and mother may never dismiss their child from their heart.

That is what it means to answer the law of creation by which the child came into being as the expression of God's wisdom. That is God's wisdom. A sound mother, a sound father, will also do the

⁴ Goodness means giving oneself totally.

same. They will never dismiss a child from their heart. That is the general conviction of the people. A child may die as a criminal on the scaffold. The child remains convinced, if he or she has a true mother: I am forever at home in my mother's heart, even at this moment.

It was similar with the Blessed Mother. You have to imagine it this way - our Lord was nailed to the cross as a criminal. In public he was looked upon as a criminal. And his Mother? She stood by that criminal, she remained with that criminal. Of course, as we know, our Lord had not committed a crime. He was innocent. But as far as the general public was concerned, he was a criminal.

A father and a mother may never dismiss a child from their heart. Of course, I have to add, although I cannot discuss it in detail today even though it is so important: If I, as a parent, want to love correctly, it presupposes that I love my spouse correctly. Do you understand what that means? If father and mother do not love each other correctly, they will not manage to love their child correctly. Parental love always presupposes the love of a spouse, and that is naturally a masterpiece: *How do we manage to love one another correctly?* As you know, we might manage it during our honeymoon. But now? How long have we been together? Twelfth child - how long have we been married? Do we still love each other? Do father and mother still love each other?

You will never be able to educate your children correctly, you will never be able to love your children correctly, if, for example, the mother does not love the father. If the mother only loves herself - there is always the danger that I am self-centred - we can say lovely things about love, but genuine love is very rare, because true love is always orientated to the other person, not to oneself. Love begins when the self disappears, as it were, and the other person is drawn into the foreground.

If I don't love my child's father, it is obvious that I will soon not love my child, because I don't love his or her father. There is an inner connection. Or it can also happen that I begin to love my child so slavishly, and attach the child so closely to myself, that I start a 'joint venture business' with my child in opposition to the father. How often that happens! On countless occasions. And then I ask myself: *Why do I not love my child in the right way, and why does the child not love me in the right way?* Because father and mother do not love each other in the right way.

These are very serious and deep truths. They should be discussed any number of times together until they have been fully assimilated. Then we will be able to work at reforming the family. Then, as time goes by, we will get true Schoenstatt families.

Let me summarise: What must I do if my child is to find a loving home in my heart? The answer is almost the same as the question: Never dismiss the child from my heart. God has taken care of this. That is why the child is part of me, of my very substance. That is why it is easy for me to love the child. As far as it depends on God, he has made it easy. However, if the child had just fallen down from heaven, or grown out of the earth, that is, if the child was foreign to me, God would have to command: 'You must love the child.' Now, however, he doesn't need to command, he has given me a natural urge. Parents can see God's wisdom in the way a child comes into being.

In order to make the general answer more understandable, let us go into details. There are two questions:

1. How can we describe a mother's heart that never lets go of her child?
2. How can we describe a father's heart that has the same structure?

I am sure it will be fine with you if we remain with the mother's heart this time. In the last weeks we spoke about the father. Today our attention is drawn to the mother, it is Mother's Day.

Let us ask: How did Mother's Day come into existence? What is its meaning? You will notice that this fits into our framework. We have created the metaphysical foundation so that we can say all the great things about the mother that have ever been said about her. At the same time we also have the foundation for all the demands I have to make on myself as mother, so that God's wisdom can be revealed in my life.

**The Ideal of the Mother
reveals itself through the love of her heart**

History of Mother's Day

Meaning of Mother's Day

The ideal Mother's heart

The mother who blesses

The loving mother

Eve and Mary

Give love

Awaken love

Refuse love

The results of lovelessness

**Recollection Day - 10 May 1953
Second Conference**

We are approaching the question: How can we describe a mother's heart that never abandons her child? We also wanted to talk about Mother's Day - its history and how it can and must be interpreted.

Mother's Day actually started in America in 1907. A woman in Philadelphia, Anna Chervy, was celebrating the first anniversary of her mother's death, and had decided that she would see to it that a Mother's Day was introduced in America. President Wilson¹ took this idea up in 1917 and set aside the second Sunday in May for this purpose. The woman died in 1948 at the age of 82 or 84. She was old, blind, poor and hardly noticed. That is the history of Mother's Day.

A start has also been made here in America to introduce a Father's Day, but it doesn't work in the same way. Mother's Day was immediately taken up.

What is the meaning of Mother's Day?

This brings us back to our topic. What is the purpose of Mother's Day? It should remind us what a family owes to the mother, and it also wants to remind us to connect it with an act of love and gratitude in return.

This again brings us to the question: *How can we describe a mother who under no circumstances dismisses her child from her heart?* This is the mother's heart that should be praised on Mother's Day. So when we take a close look at a mother's heart and consider what we should do to show our gratitude for all that our mother has done for us, we will have carried out the meaning of Mother's Day.

So the question now is: How can we describe such a mother's heart? I shall give you a few examples and then go into the deeper implications.

A small boy was once asked: 'What do you know and who taught you everything?' The boy knew exactly which answer to give. 'Sums!' 'Who taught you that?' 'My uncle.' 'Writing?' 'I learnt that at school.' 'Catechism?' 'I learnt that from our parish priest.' The questioner paused and then asked, 'Well, what have you learnt from your mother? Didn't she teach you anything?' Then came the deep and very beautiful answer: 'From my mother I have learnt to love God and to help the poor.' With these simple words the youngster had said all that one can say about a mother.

What have I learnt from my mother? To love God and to help the poor. What does that mean in practice?

That is what a mother's heart is like. A mother's heart overflows with the riches of love. A mother's heart teaches love. A mother's heart awakens love. A mother's heart leads love onwards - to the child's father, and beyond him to the eternal, infinite God.

¹ Thomas Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), 28th President of the USA from 1913-1921.

What is a mother's heart? A constantly bubbling spring, a glowing furnace of love, of warm love, but also an enlightened love.

A second example. The mother of St Bernard had given birth to eight children - seven sons and a daughter. St Bernard², as you know, had an extremely deep and fervent love for Mary. Why? Because he had an extremely tender relationship to his own mother. He only needed to transfer what he felt for her to God's Mother.

His mother was in the habit of inviting guests to celebrate the feast of St Ambrose each year. The feastday was approaching and the guests were invited. She had the strange feeling that although she was quite well, the feast would cost her her life. She was convinced that this was so. She prepared everything and lay down on her bed. While the guests were gathering she developed fever. However she wanted no one to stay with her. The feast came to an end and she received the guests. It was clear that she was dying. They prayed and prayed. Her sons and daughter stood around her bed. Just as they were praying: 'Through your sacred Blood, O Lord, we hope for the forgiveness of all our sins', she tried to make the sign of the cross. She raised her hand, drew her last breath and died.

Here we have a mother who was richly blessed with saintly children. Her hand continued to bless even in death.

The ideal of a mother is a mother who blesses, a mother who blesses the world. How? Through the endless riches of her warm, selfless, but also enlightened love - warm love for her husband, warm love for her children, warm love everywhere, wherever and however someone comes close to her heart. But also an enlightened love.

Love, also love for a child, includes not only gentleness, but also austerity. That is what a mother's heart is like.

We want to start with the question: *What is motherhood?* More precisely: What does it mean to call such a mother's heart one's own? I shall give three answers which ultimately say the same thing. They may inspire us to look back into our own lives and ask ourselves:

1. Did my mother have such a heart?
2. If I am allowed to be a mother, what is my motherly heart like? Does my motherly heart approach this ideal?

Of course, whoever looks more deeply, may also look through the earthly mould and look up to the motherly heart of the Blessed Mother, because we have in her the ideal of genuine and true motherhood.

What is motherhood?

² Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153), Cistercian monk, founder and abbot of the Monastery at Clairvaux, mystic and Doctor of the Church, canonised in 1174.

First answer - Motherhood means awakening love, giving love and passing on love.

Second answer - Motherhood means working in the garden constantly, it means weeding and cultivating.

Third answer - Motherhood means always offering refuge, being a home forever.

What is the purpose of these three answers? They merely enlarge upon the one statement: A mother's heart, the heart of a true mother, is a constantly bubbling spring, it is a furnace of warm and enlightened love. This is simply the ideal of woman as such. The mother should exemplify this ideal in a perfect way.

We can still remember the answer: Motherhood means giving love, awakening love and passing on love. That sounds so obvious, and yet there is a whole world behind it: *the ideal of woman*.

When we look deeply into God's heart in order to discover there how he envisaged woman in contrast to man, our attention is drawn to a statement in the Bible: God created humankind in his image and likeness (cf Gen. 1,27). It is most interesting to ponder on this passage, it repeats the same words three times in succession:

- Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness;
- So God created humankind in his image,
- in the image of God he created them (cf Gen. 1,26f).

When we repeat the same words, we want to emphasise something we consider essential. It is the same here. Humankind is an image and likeness of God, not a bit of a machine, not a bundle of drives, not even just an animal. No, what is humankind? An image and likeness of God - of the Triune God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Triune God wanted to see his reflection³.

Let us take a look into Paradise. Adam should be the reflection of the only begotten Son of God, the woman, Eve, should be the reflection of the Holy Spirit. 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness.' God the Father is the bond of unity between this world and the next. Adam with his creative strength should be the reflection of the Son, Eve the reflection of the Holy Spirit.

Who is the Holy Spirit? Love in Person. What is woman according to God's intention? Love incarnate, love in person. This was how Eve should have carried out her task. She was meant to love man, she was meant to awaken man's love and redirect, pass on, man's love and her own love to God's heart. What did Eve do? She destroyed the foundation for her theological existence. Instead of using Adam's love for her and her love for Adam in order that both hearts could love God, she misused her influence through love and opposed God. She became 'Eve'.

³ For more about Fr Kentenich's concept of humankind, see: What is my philosophy of education?; Mary, Mother and Educator, etc.

Thousands of years later our Lady, the `Ave', came on earth. Hers was the task to fulfil woman's original mission in a perfect way. The Mother of God is therefore a unique reflection of the Holy Spirit. Isn't it wonderful that she is also called the `dove'⁴? The dove is also the symbol of the Holy Spirit.

Every woman should discover her ideal in the picture of the Mother of God: to be incarnate love, a reflection of the Holy Spirit. This brings us back to our formulation: A mother must be a woman in an eminent way, and the wife, as woman, should exemplify what is feminine in a unique way. What is her task? To be incarnate love, love in person. That means:

1. loving overabundantly,
2. awakening love and
3. passing on love, directing it back to God's heart.

Giving love, awakening love, passing on love - a mother's constellation of three stars.

Giving love

Let me very briefly emphasise one or the other thing.

Firstly, the sexual act should be an expression of mutual love with a view to the coming child. Give love - so the child should be the fruit of the marriage partners' mutual love which leads to the sexual act, and which has inspired them to show their love sexually.

Giving love

While a child is in the mother's womb, it lives from the mother's very substance. A true mother cannot do anything else than to think lovingly about this child during the nine months she carries it in her womb.

When we think of our Lady in this connection, she bore the God-Man within her in this unique two-in-oneness for nine months. God and humankind were uniquely united, because the Child drew life from the substance of his Mother.

Giving love

Think of the labour pains. They should be borne with love.

Giving love

Think of the helplessness of the child. How should a child, in the way God envisaged, planned and created him or her, be cared for sufficiently? How should a helpless child grow and flourish unless a mother's heart is motivated by selfless and sacrificial love to care for that child?

Giving love

The child is ill. A mother's love manages to keep watch day and night at the child's bedside, she doesn't close an eye, she doesn't snooze or sleep.

⁴ This is a reference to the Song of Songs (2,14; 5,2; 6,9). These texts are used in the Liturgy and Breviary on the feasts of the Mother of God.

That is the task of a mother - to give love in education, to give love in feeding her child. Please fill in the details of the picture. And then we want to look back to see what our own mothers have given us, we want to recall what we mothers have given our children. That is the meaning of Mother's Day.

Give love so that justice is done in all respects to the helplessness - the physical, mental, spiritual and psychological helplessness - of the child. That is the life task of the mother.

What I have said is by no means new. I have merely summarised what people have thought about mothers down the centuries.

Awakening love

The second point I want to emphasise should actually be obvious. Unfortunately it is not always the case. Since the mother is a furnace of love, a constantly bubbling spring of love, the mother also has the task to awaken love in her child. She should not merely give love, she should also awaken love. A mother should consciously make this her task in life - to awaken love in her child. She must awaken love that the child can feel, that is, a tangible love.

I am almost inclined to say that the child, especially as a tiny infant, must become tangibly aware of the love that is alive in his or her mother's heart.

An infant is not so far developed that I can already form his or her mind. But I can still teach that child to love. And you should always remember that to be human means making a realm of love visible. Since God is primarily love, the most basic feeling in human nature is that of love. Our drive to love is our most basic drive. And this most basic drive has to be awakened in the infant; indeed even while the child is in the womb. How does this happen? The ancient philosophers have put it in classic words: If you want to be loved, you must first love⁵. That is to say, love is awakened because I experience it and feel loved. Infants are not yet able to use their intellect, they must feel love.

Normally a mother also caresses her child. A child needs this. Of course, when a child cries, a true mother can distinguish whether the child is in need, whether the child is suffering. Then the mother answers by helping the child. However, the child can also cry obstinately. A mother soon feels whether the child is trying to get its own way, whether it is tyrannising the mother. There is a 'little devil' in the child, incarnate selfishness. A mother soon feels this.

How do I show love? If children cry because they are in need, it is a sad cry, not angry or self-willed. A mother doesn't answer an angry cry. She allows the child to cry as much as he or she wants. But when her child cries because he or she is in need, the mother answers and the child feels loved. Why? Because justified needs are met.

Awaken love

⁵ I will reveal to you a love potion, without medicine, without herbs, without any witch's magic: if you want to be loved, then love (Hecaton of Rhodes).

A mother must awaken love. She may not pretend. It is not enough merely to hide one's love in one's heart and not show it outwardly. Love should find expression through caresses. Of course, this must be kept within bounds. A child will feel whether the caresses are an expression of self-love or sensuality, or whether a caress is the expression of warm, disciplined love. Children have a very fine antenna for this.

Somewhere in Bavaria a few mothers were sitting together and chatting. They were talking as mothers generally do about their children. One woman said proudly: I have never kissed my child. I have never hugged my child tenderly. The others shuddered. How was that possible? Is a mother's love even conceivable, is real motherly love thinkable, unless - I would like to say - it shows in disciplined tenderness?

You understand what I am trying to say - not without restraint, don't just smother children with kisses. We shouldn't do that. Children then feel that they are merely the object of our lust. Even if children don't notice it today, still they internalise the experience. It enters into a child's soul. A kiss, a warm kiss to show tenderness, is an expression of love and awakens love. And I must awaken love in a child.

So it is the task of the mother not merely to give life, but also to awaken love. Why? The child is love. Because God is love, the child is also love. The most basic drive in a human being is the drive to love, and this should be awakened already in the infant. That is why it is so important for my heart to feel reverent love for my child. I can accept the child reverently, embrace it reverently, kiss it reverently, and respond reverently to its needs, to its natural needs.

So let us remember: One of the most essential tasks of a mother consists in consciously awakening love.

Let me tell you what a child is like in whom love has never been awakened, who has never received enough love. Please do not put love and sensuality on a par. That is why I have deliberately spoken about reverent love. I am sure you understand what I want to say - reverent love that is also felt. I have mentioned only two elements to symbolise children's justified needs: children know through expressions of love and through caresses that they are really accepted.

Let me suppose that I am a mother whose attitude is: That is my child. I will care for religion and the child, but that is all. I won't love the child, I won't give it the feeling that it is loved, so that it knows that it is loved. That is not my style.

There are two extremes you should try to avoid: Either the child is treated only in a sensual way, as the object of sensuality - I satisfy my own needs by kissing and hugging the child beyond measure; or I treat the child like a piece of leather. In both instances the child is not given genuine love. I have either satisfied only my sensuality, or I have allowed the child to feel how cold I am.

Can you understand how such a child will develop? When you survey our present-day world, you

will find that there are millions of people who are `creditors of love', they wait and wait for love to be given to them. Can you understand the expression: `creditors of love'? These are `Hunger Artists'⁶ in the field of love, creditors or hunger artists. Why? Because they did not receive enough reverent love from their parents. A child, such as I have described to you, will most probably

1. remain a person without individuality, a de-personalised person till the end of his or her life;
2. without faith, and
3. sexually ill to the depths of their being.

Listen carefully, I am generalising. Possibly I have overstated my case. It is also possible that it does not often show in this extreme way. But developments go in this direction. So let me repeat - such a child (let us suppose we are speaking about my own child) is in danger of losing his or her identity, of being without religion and becoming sexually ill.

These are three characteristics of countless people today. Why? Because we have too few mothers today, too few genuine and loving mothers. Even if they care for the physical needs of their children, the children experience too little true and genuine love.

The task before me is to prove these three points to you in an understandable way.

Firstly, *a child who grows up without experiencing love will feel inferior, de-personalised and*

⁶ Franz Kafka: The Hunger Artist.

'The hunger artist on display at a circus who is starving himself out of an inner need, finally shrivels away to nothing, and explains before dying that the reason he hasn't wanted to eat is that he couldn't find the food he liked.'

'Are you still fasting?' asked the overseer; 'when on earth do you mean to stop?' 'Forgive me, everybody,' whispered the hunger artist; only the overseer, who had his ear to the bars, understood him. 'Of course,' said the overseer, and tapped his forehead with a finger to let the attendants know what state the man was in, 'we forgive you'. 'I always wanted you to admire my fasting,' said the hunger artist. 'We do admire it,' said the overseer, affably. 'But you shouldn't admire it,' said the hunger artist. 'Well then we don't admire it,' said the overseer, 'but why shouldn't we admire it?' 'Because I have to fast, I can't help it,' said the hunger artist. 'What a fellow you are,' said the overseer, 'and why can't you help it?' 'Because,' said the hunger artist, lifting his head a little and speaking, with his lips pursed, as if for a kiss, right into the overseer's ear, so that no syllable might be lost, 'because I couldn't find the food I liked. If I had found it, believe me, I should have made no fuss and stuffed myself like you or anyone else.' These were his last words, but in his dimming eyes remained the firm though no longer proud persuasion that he was still continuing to fast.' Taken from Alice Miller: *Thou shalt not be aware - Society's Betrayal of the Child*, Pluto Press, 1991, p.279.

without any individuality till the end of his or her life.

Do you know why? Can you give the answer through your own lives? Have you observed this in your own child? A child needs to have his or her individuality confirmed. Children need to be accepted, welcomed with their own personal character. So it is not sufficient if parents show a very general love for their children. No, each child has to be personally accepted and welcomed. They need to receive affirmation of their originality, of their very personal originality. This can only happen if children feel loved just the way they are. Such tangible love is the only means, the only way by which an infant can feel inwardly accepted - not on the intellectual level, but inwardly affirmed and accepted. If children do not experience this affirmation through the personal love of the people around them, they will always experience a hidden anxiety. And such children can never get rid of this anxiety, a hidden anxiety. They are not always conscious of it.

How will such children develop? They will be eternally insecure and full of anxiety, and they cannot bear this in the long run. Then comes what present-day psychiatry calls compensatory satisfactions or over-compensation. Outwardly they seem secure and stable, but this is forced. Inwardly they are eternally restless. That is why people today are unable to cope with the battle of life. I can only cope with the battle of life if I am a personality. And someone can only become a strong personality if they have felt accepted and affirmed somewhere when they were young, if they have felt confirmed in their originality while they were young. If I have grown up differently, I have to catch up on this experience in some way later on in life. If I don't catch up on this experience, I will remain eternally a duffer, my growth will be eternally blighted. I may try desperately to pretend outwardly that I am strong and secure, inwardly I will be totally fragile.

You see, anxiety is immediately overcome when I feel accepted and loved. Human beings are simply made for love - it can't be otherwise - because we are made in the image and likeness of God, and God is Love. So human beings must in some way be a reflection of love. Since we are dependent on love, we must grow in a climate of love.

So much depends on whether a mother really sees it as her task not merely to give love, but also to awaken love. May I take it that this is now clear and understood?

Motherhood
means giving love, awakening love
and passing on love

Love for another person

Taken up and accepted by a mother's heart

The law of transferred emotion

Positive and negative examples from life

Guilt and punishment as the expression of love

Passing on love to the father

Recollection Day - 10 May 1953
Third Conference

We are looking at the question of the meaning of motherhood. The little one is with us again. She is the best visual aid.

To be a mother means

1. to give love, to give overabundant love,
2. to awaken love, and
3. to pass on love.

What does that mean? We spent a long time considering the thought: *being a mother means to awaken love*, and to do so consciously. That is, I must awaken the riches of love hidden in every child's heart. I have to bring it to the surface. If I don't do this - let us put it very bluntly - I am a criminal. Do you understand this? I can't put it bluntly enough.

If we grow up without love it means that we are predisposed or predestined to become a person without character, a rootless person without religion, as well as a sexually ill person.

You notice that I have put it very harshly, but this is a very serious matter. Whoever knows life today, knows that a whole host of people are running around in the world who are really nothing else than hunger artists in the sphere of love. They are therefore characterless people without an identity, without religion and also sexually ill. To be a strong character means being in possession of one's personality. I must possess myself, I must affirm myself. But a child, especially an infant, is essentially dependent on being affirmed individually and very personally. I have to be affirmed the way I am. A very general love is not enough, it must be a very individual, special love, which is also expressed very specifically when the parents answer individual needs. Such love is given individual and special expression - I want to emphasise this very strongly - through reverent caresses. This is how a child experiences his or her individual worth. And this self-possession, this experience of our own personal worth, is the foundation on which the personality and character rests. If I don't experience this, I will always be insecure.

As I said this morning, there is always a hidden anxiety in people, and this hidden anxiety drives and drives them. These are the *hunger artists in the sphere of love*. They are constantly searching in some way - also later in life - for a substitute for what they have not been given. Generally they do not find it throughout their lives unless they meet a mature person with whom they can be a child again - a person who gives them the possibility to catch up on what they have not experienced as a child - which happens very rarely¹.

From this you can understand how important a mother's love is for the tiny infant. I am constantly educating while I hold my child in my arms, while I serve my child reverently. If I don't do it reverently, the child feels that he or she is the object of my lust, and then the child loses the core of his or her personality.

¹ See Pedagogical Course 1951 and What is my Philosophy of Education?

These are the little things that are so important, that are of elemental importance for the fate of the child till the end of his or her life.

Let me summarise what can be said on this point. I think I should emphasise that a true child wants

1. to be welcomed into a mother's heart,
2. to be sheltered in a mother's heart, and
3. to be affirmed by a mother's heart.

These are three essential elements. If I give this to my child, I will have given what is most essential, even if I haven't gone to university. Let us suppose that my head is full of scientific knowledge, but I am unable to offer my children a heart that welcomes them, that accepts and affirms them in every situation. My educational work will not bear fruit.

Secondly, a child wants to feel secure and sheltered in a mother's heart, and thirdly, I must affirm my child just the way he or she is. If I can't manage to do this, we can be sure that education will not be a success.

Of course, what I have just said about the mother's heart also applies in a certain sense to the father's heart.

You see, children who are accepted and affirmed by a father's and mother's heart in this way, will experience that they have real personalities, and they will then be able to take up the battle of life later on. If the opposite is the case, if children do not experience that they are centred, stable and integrated, they will simply throw themselves into life. Then life can play as it will with the boy - but also with the girl. Today they swim in lust, tomorrow they are crushed and cast into the abyss. Those are the people of today who have lost their individuality and wait for a dictator.

Whoever wants to stand up to a dictator must be a strong personality, and the 'little person' is basically formed into a personality now. They will become little personalities, although they are so tiny in their cots today.

Can we now understand why I can state that children who have grown up without love are usually people without character?

Secondly, I have also stated that *children who grow up without love will usually not be religious.*

Of course, I generalise. It is not as though this will show up overnight. But this is the direction in which people today, who have grown up without being loved as children, are developing. What is the connection? We can easily understand it.

What does it mean to be religious? Being in contact with God, believing in him, building on him and trusting in him. Keeping in vital contact with God. Now you should consider for a moment what it

means when a child does not feel accepted by father and mother, especially by the mother. Then the child does not believe in the love of the parents. And if I do not believe in the love of my parents, I will also not trust them. What does that mean?

There is *a law of transferred emotion* - religious children who hear something about God, normally transfer what they have experienced with their parents to God. If I have not experienced love, a theoretical study later in life won't help me. The experience is simply missing, the religious experience. A child might later on study and hear any amount about the love and kindness of God, but the 'antenna' has not been developed. Everything remains in the mind. And religion is not primarily something for the mind. What is religion? Religare - to be connected back. Heart must be united with heart.

If I have not experienced that I have been accepted and affirmed by my father and mother, what happens? More precisely, I know that my father and mother know me. If anyone knows me with my good and bad points, it is my father and mother. And now I experience - how did we put it? - I will never be driven out of my mother's heart, no matter how badly I behave. For example, I have been negligent and have set the house on fire. I am found guilty in court. Everyone points at me and says: Look at that criminal, that young criminal! Where should he be sent? To prison or somewhere like that. But I know my mother will not reject me, she knows me, she won't give up on me.

Can we guess what that means? We human beings, especially when we are older, even when we are out of puberty, repeatedly experience our weakness. Each of us knows only too well what a 'cross' we can be, we know where our faults lie. And when we now stand before God in all our weakness and have not experienced that there are people who love us although they know our weaknesses, who have accepted us with all their hearts, we will find it very hard to believe that God loves us despite our weakness and faults.

Do you notice how difficult it is to apply all this to God? Books can tell us everything possible on the subject, it will simply remain in the mind.

So much depends on the education of a child. So much depends on our being true mothers, on our never dismissing our children although we know them so well, on our always affirming them even in their weaknesses. We can punish a child, indeed a child wants to be punished. A sound child has a sound feeling of guilt and wants to be punished. But after the punishment, the child must again know that he or she has been accepted and affirmed. If I do not feel accepted again after being punished, the punishment will not have attained its aim.

The child simply wants a loving home in the heart of his or her mother. Essentially it depends on this experience whether a child will be deeply religious later, or whether the child is superficially religious or without religion. Even we who have probably grown up in a normal way, who have been touched by the sunshine of love, have to consider how few of us manage to say when we encounter a heavy cross and suffering: God has done this out of love for me. He loves me! How few of us are

convinced that we are borne by a `providentia divina christiana'². We may well believe in general terms that God means it well with us, but who of us is convinced that from all eternity he has planned every least detail in my best interests, and that in every situation he has allowed this or that to happen because it is the best for me? And why is it that we ultimately don't hold onto this conviction, that is, that we ultimately do not experience that we are the recipients of the heavenly Father's special love? There are various reasons. One of the most essential reasons is that our parents have not sufficiently borne us in their hearts, they have not given us enough security. They have not given us the affirmation of our individuality that we need.

Take, for example, a girl who is very sensitive - in German we say sometimes: `She has built too close to the water'. That is an idiom which indicates that one is close to tears, that one cries easily. Obviously a very sensitive nature. Of course, as all children are, we were also like that. A child who isn't naughty simply isn't a child. We all have original sin. If a child has done something wrong, the parents do not need a stick. They don't beat their children, but the girl begins to feel: If only they would beat me! Why? Once the beating is over, everything is alright again. The parents have forgiven and forgotten, and the child loves father and mother as before, possibly more than before.

In this instance, what is really going on? For hours, perhaps even for a day, there is a strained relationship. The child feels: Mother doesn't bother about me. The child is ignored. The cry for love: the child wants to be punished. She would even gladly accept the punishment, but then afterwards everything must be alright again.

Do you understand what is behind this? It is the need to feel accepted with all my weaknesses, and if I am guilty also to be punished. It is not a disgrace to be punished in this sense, but afterwards I must again feel accepted. I must again be affirmed in my individuality. Everything must be alright again.

These may seem to be little things, but they are profound faults in education that often follow us for the rest of our lives. Unless a girl feels accepted and affirmed by her parents, or finds this affirmation from her brothers and sisters, she will later become a really unbalanced person who is unable to cope with the world and life. So much depends on these seemingly insignificant details.

So if I know that my father and mother accept me, affirm me and love me despite my weaknesses, which they know all too well, I have been given the very best precondition for having a good relationship to God the Father throughout my life. If this is lacking, it will be tremendously difficult to be and remain a deeply religious person in every circumstance of my life. So everything depends on this initial experience. The core of the matter is this: I want to be taken into my mother's heart despite my weaknesses, she may never reject me even if I have committed any number of crimes.

² Divine Providence in a Christian sense.

Let me tell you another example. It doesn't really fit in here, because I wanted to talk about the mother, but it does apply here from a certain point of view. It is a story, an autobiographical incident, related by a German writer³. He had this to say:

He was still very young and came from an ordinary worker's family. His father was a down-to-earth and strict man who loved his son. His mother was love in person. When the boy deserved it, they praised him; on the other hand, when he deserved it, he was punished, and that was the end of the matter. Rosegger writes about this most beautifully. His father very seldom hit him, but when he had been really naughty - and which boy isn't? - his father's eyes flashed angrily. He then stood in front of the boy and roared. This usually ended with the words: You have really deserved a hiding, but I will let you off this time. Peter Rosegger puts it so beautifully: On the one hand, he stood before his father and looked at him while he was scolding him so angrily; on the other hand, he felt really good inside. He didn't get a hiding to start with.

Why did he feel so good inside? I will tell you the answer just now. One day - it was just before Easter - his father had carved a crucifix, or had had it carved, and had put it up where everyone could see it so that they were reminded of Holy Week. The boy - you know how it is, children have to examine everything - suddenly took an interest in the cross and pulled it to pieces. Of course, he wanted to put it together again afterwards. But he couldn't. So there was the crucifix in pieces. What was he to do? He put the pieces of the crucifix in a basket and didn't feel in the least that he had done anything wrong.

His father came in and saw what had happened. He was angry and began to scold: The time has come in which I will not just threaten you, this time you will get a hiding. I shall go away, but when I get back you will get your hiding.

You can imagine - the boy related the incident so beautifully later, he became a famous writer - you can imagine how afraid the boy was. What did he do? Before he could get a hiding he hid himself.

His father came back and searched and searched for the boy. He had brought back a whole selection of sticks he wanted to use on the boy. He looked everywhere - upstairs, in the cellar, under the bed, in the stables. But the boy was nowhere to be found. His father sent people outside to look for him. Good heavens, if he is outside! It was so cold and he didn't have his coat on. If he comes back, he will be half dead. The father began to worry about his son. They searched everywhere and couldn't find him. In the end his father returned. His mother began to scold him: 'You were wrong to be so cruel to the boy.'

Do you know where the boy was? I can't really imagine it myself, I know too little about these things. The family had a big grandfather clock. The boy had hidden himself in the clock. How did he get in? I can't imagine how he did it. At any rate, while the father was giving vent to his anger, his son was nearby in the clock. The boy began to worry because the weight of the pendulum was dropping lower and lower. It would soon land on his head and then his father would discover him. He curled up

³ Peter Rosegger (1843-1918), an Austrian writer.

smaller and smaller. He heard the whole upheaval and became more and more afraid.

Now comes the most important point of the whole story. After his mother had scolded his father, his father admitted honestly: 'Good heavens, do you really think I don't love the boy? I love him more than my own life.' The boy's mother then left the room and his father burst into tears. He knelt down and prayed and sobbed, begging God to see to it that the boy came to no harm.

Remember that the boy in the clock case could hear everything that was going on, and this touched him. For the first time he experienced how much his father loved him. He could no longer bear to stay hidden in the clock case. He came out, threw himself at his father's feet and begged for forgiveness. His father was naturally wise enough not to punish the boy. Father and son had found each other. The boy knew, he no longer doubted that his father really loved him. And what was the result? His father could do what he liked with him.

Let me come back to what I mentioned before about a child's need to be punished. Do you know why, despite his fear, the boy had felt so good inside when his father had scolded him? He was thinking: My father is taking a personal interest in me! Can you understand this? A personal interest. A child can bear punishment, even harsh punishment, as long as there is a personal love behind it.

I don't know whether I have been able to tell you this incident as clearly as I wanted to, so that you can see which law underlies it. What is this law? *Acceptance and love*. How did we put it? A child should know that he or she will never be rejected and thrown out of the heart of father or mother.

A child wants to be taken up and loved. Children want to be affirmed, they want this affirmation and confirmation because they are as they are, not because of this or that good quality. If a mother loves her child because he or she is good looking, if a mother loves her child because he or she is gifted or clever ... That would mean: if the child is not good looking, he or she isn't loved. Of course, such things can help me somewhat to love my child - if the child is good looking, clever, gifted and well-behaved that is all well and good, but children want to be loved because of themselves. And that is the strange thing about a mother. Even if a child is really ugly, for a mother there is no more beautiful child in this world than hers - no matter how ugly - because this is her child. Do you understand what this means? How seldom we find such deep motherly and fatherly love today!

Often a child has to say: My mother loves my sister more, because my sister has better qualities than I have. The contrary should be true. A mother should love a child with less good qualities far, far more. That is the core of the matter. It is what matters. *I am accepted, affirmed and loved just as I am, with my qualities - that is the master stroke of education*. So to be a mother means giving love and awakening love.

Can you now understand what is meant by awakening love?

But we also said that *love has to be passed on*. The child has to be led to his or her father. As far as the mother is concerned, the father must always remain the focal point. If this is not the case, the mother will soon ally herself with the child in opposition to the father, and that destroys family life. Let me repeat: We must pass on love. *The river flowing from God the Father's heart passes through*

the mother's heart into the child's heart. From there it must flow into the heart of the child's physical father and return to the heart of God the Father. That is the great river of love. That is the ideal of a Schoenstatt family.

If we grow up without love, it means in other words that we are characterless, without religion and morals.

Thirdly, what is meant when we say someone is without morals? We have used another expression for this: sexually ill. Human beings, who are made in the image and likeness of God, and hence of eternal Love, hunger for love. If this hunger for love is not satisfied in a sound way, it sinks down into the deeper layers of human nature and develops into a wildly charging sexual drive⁴. If we want to protect ourselves from sexual aberrations, we have to learn to love in a sound way. Of course, this depends on whether we are loved in a sound way.

Let me summarise: What is motherhood? We have explained only one answer to some extent: *To be a mother means to give love, to awaken love and to pass on love.*

To be a mother means - and that is the second answer - to be a gardener, to work in a garden. What does that imply? We have to weed and cultivate - this is the task of a gardener.

To be a mother means, thirdly, being a place of refuge for others at all times, it means giving husband and children a home.

We won't be able to discuss the last two answers in detail any more. Let us remember just one point: to be a mother means giving love, awakening love and passing on love.

Those of us who are deeply religious and want to celebrate Mother's Day not just in relation to their natural mother, but also in relation to our heavenly Mother, will not find it difficult to apply all that has been said to our Lady. Does our Lady love me? Has she awakened love in me? Has she passed on my love? Please reflect on this personally. Then Mother's Day will suddenly take on a deeply religious character. Then God's Mother will be the focal point for me, as she should be for all of us: I owe everything I have and am to God's Mother⁵.

⁴ Fr Kentenich is using figurative language in order to make his point clear to his listeners.

⁵ This is a witness Fr Kentenich is giving of his own life, and shows how much he owed to Mary as his Mother and Educator.

The Shrine
according to the founder's conviction
is Mary's special place where she lives and works
as educator

Attachment to a place

Our home

Mary's workplace as educator

Source of grace for the ideal of family life

Recollection Day - 13 September 1953
First Conference

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

We have been meeting for some months as families. Each meeting has probably strengthened our sense of responsibility and our deepest feeling of being at home. And yet it seems as though we only started today to become a family. Why? I think we have found a home today. What we have been working for for such a long time, what we have been longing for with such great fervour, has at long last become a reality. We might almost say: We seem to be like a family that has until now been living in rented lodgings, but which has always felt the strong need for a home of its own. For what a long time we have been longing for our own home! And at long last we have found it. That is why we seem to be like a family that has found its own, original home after a long search¹.

A home! How does that word echo in our souls? It is usually said that our home is where our father and mother live and work.

You see, that is the meaning of this shrine. Here, we believe, the Blessed Mother is living and working in a special way. That is the great event that has taken place since our last meeting - the blessing of this small shrine. It means that the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt has taken possession of this little place. We may say that from the moment of the blessing our Blessed Mother has lived and worked here in a special way.

Now that I have made this statement, let us ask two questions and offer a very simple answer.

The first question is this: What does it mean when we say that the Blessed Mother lives and works in this little shrine in a special way?

And the second question: How do we know this?

So first the fact, then the proof.

What is meant when we say that the Blessed Mother lives and works in a special way in this little shrine? We understand this very well. Those of us who were present at the blessing can well remember what the Bishop said. What an echo that found in our souls when the bishop said that it seemed to him that he had heard our Lady `whispering' here! What a lovely statement! Our Lady whispers here. What does that mean? She doesn't speak loudly, she speaks quietly, pleadingly, yet extremely effectively. *The Blessed Mother whispers here.*

Of course, what does this presuppose? That we also whisper. What else does it presuppose? That we are deeply convinced that the Blessed Mother really whispers here - she is speaking to us and always finds the right words: the right words for our needs and worries, but also for our joys. That is to say, our Lady lives and works here in a very special way.

¹ On 20 June 1953 the Schoenstatt shrine was blessed in Madison. This is where Fr Kantenich conducted the fifth recollection day for couples. The previous four had been held in Milwaukee. See: Historical background.

Our Blessed Mother whispers here, but she whispers in a special way. Again, what does that imply? Our simple faith convinces us that God's Mother hears us everywhere, no matter where we approach her - in every church, or if we greet her picture somewhere. This is what our faith teaches us. Our Lady sees us, our Lady speaks to us.

But now I have said: God's Mother whispers here in the shrine in a special way. Do you understand what that implies? When we are here, if we come to this spot with faith and look up to the Blessed Mother, she has more to say to us than elsewhere. She speaks to us more lovingly and effectively than elsewhere. God's Mother has chosen this spot - now we have the right expression - in order to dwell here, in order to speak a word of love to us here and from here, and to employ her power and `omnipotence'².

When we are in need, our Lady says everywhere: `They have no more wine' (cf Jn 2,3). However, when she says those words here, they are far more effective than when she speaks them anywhere else. That is to say, the Blessed Mother whispers here in a very special way. A simple statement, a generally applicable statement, a profound statement, a rousing statement, a warming statement! Of course, what does it presuppose? Our simple faith that it really is true. That is to say: our Lady lives here. She has set up her throne here in a special way. She speaks here, she is at work here in a very special way³.

What does it mean when we say that she lives and works here in a special way? Let us look at the thought from another angle. Suppose a couple comes here and would like to have a child. They have two already. They may have three, they may even have five. However, that is not enough for them. They want to have twelve children, or at least six or seven. Well, now what? The child does not come, nothing happens.

² One can only speak of omnipotence as an attribute of God. The Mother of the Lord is called `suppliant omnipotence', or `omnipotence on her knees'; see: Our Lady, Papal Teachings selected and arranged by the Benedictine Monks of Solesmes, St Paul Editions, 1961; also the Marian Encyclicals of Paul VI and John Paul II.

³ When Fr Kentenich says that our Lady speaks here, this should not be understood in the same way as she has spoken during apparitions, for example, at Lourdes and Fatima. We have to understand her speaking in a more indirect sense, as the expression of a personal encounter and as the content of our personal attachment to her. In Schoenstatt's Founding Document (18.10.1914) we find the statement: 'It seems to me that our Lady is speaking to us here in this ancient Chapel of St Michael through the holy Archangel: Do not worry about the fulfilment of your wishes ...' For Fr Kentenich, this dialogue has from the first been seen as the expression of what later came to be called our covenant of love with Mary, that is, this dialogue is a fundamental part of Schoenstatt's spirituality.

Remember that the Mother of God cares for the kingdom of God, so she also has to care for new members for that kingdom. So she is also responsible for our children. Good, so now I go to our Lady. At home we have a picture of Mary, or we could go to our Lady's altar in some church. I tell her: 'Mother, you have to see to this. My husband would love to have another child. I would also like another. We have so many girls. Now we would really like to have a boy.' That is one possibility.

Now comes the second possibility. I have become a Schoenstatt member and I tell myself: 'Stop! Although our Lady listens to my prayers everywhere, she prefers to answer them in the shrine, if I visit it either physically or at least in spirit.' Please take note of this: The one prays in connection with the shrine, the other without this connection. What does that mean? Oh, if only it were true! I shall presuppose this for once. So let me ask you not to rush ahead of this train of thought and ask: How do you know this? I shall explain it in a minute. At present I only want to tell you what it means when we say that our Lady dwells here in a special way. So if I express a request in connection with the shrine, our Blessed Mother whispers more quickly, she whispers more gladly, she whispers more effectively, she whispers more continuously. *What follows from this?*

You can multiply the answers. Suppose, for example, that my child is gradually becoming a teenager. Teenagers want to have their own way. And I don't want to show all the time that I know better. That is to say, I can't get the child to submit to me overnight. I just can't manage. I am helpless. How should I educate the child? I simply go to the Blessed Mother and say: 'There you are, this is your child. I have already given this child to you before he or she was born. You are responsible for him or her.'

It is wonderful if I can do this. However, if I do it in connection with the shrine - please take careful note - what does that mean? Then God's Mother listens to and hears my prayers more gladly. That is to say, *the Blessed Mother whispers here in a special way.*

You can list example after example. You will then understand better how profoundly significant those words are: The Mother of God whispers here in a special way. Have you already noticed, if some of you have found your way here during the week, that the Blessed Mother has in fact started to attract you to her shrine like a magnet? Visualise to yourselves how a magnet attracts iron. Our Lady is also a magnet. She attracts human hearts.

Such a simple, little place! What attracts people here? Of course, it is a beautiful place also outwardly. But what matters is that *the Mother of God has a secret power.* Since she whispers here, she attracts everyone who is inclined to love her in a special way. The magnet begins to attract people, even those people who really know very little about Schoenstatt.

Do you now notice what is meant when we say that the Mother of God is whispering here in a special way? It is almost as though she is the bond that binds one human heart to another, and then bonds them with this little shrine, with this little spot where she is particularly at work.

You may now be asking yourselves the question: How do you know this? I would like to ask you to

set aside this question until I have answered it later. First of all you must know what we mean. We shall dwell on this point for a time and hide nothing, so that you can know clearly what is meant when we say that God's Mother is dwelling in the shrine, she has set up her home and her throne here.

We, too, should find our home here, a home for our hearts, a home for the whole family. That is to say, now we have started properly to become Schoenstatt families. We have our own home, where father and mother are particularly at work and where we can always come with our needs and joys.

We can probably understand many things much better now than we did a year ago when we came together for a recollection day. Can you still recall the childlike legend I told you about Blessed Hermann Joseph⁴? It expresses in a very simple way what the Bishop said about this place: 'The Mother of God whispers here in a special way'. I think I should tell you the legend again. My only concern is to tell you the truth. You know that this is a legend, that is, it does not have to be true and historically exact. But what this legend circumscribes is a most beautiful thought.

Hermann Joseph - the legend tells us - had very poor parents. He played with the boys of his own age and went to school with them. He noticed the big difference between his family and the parents of other children. They were rich, he was poor. The others were well dressed, he was always poorly dressed. The others had enough to eat and drink, while he was happy if he had the most necessary things. And - humanly speaking it was a very understandable thing - he began to feel: If only I could be better off. I would like to have nice clothes. I would like to be able to eat and drink as well as the others.

Since Hermann Joseph loved our Lady deeply and spoke to her just as he spoke to his own mother, he felt urged to tell her his childlike needs. How did the Blessed Mother answer him? 'Hermann Joseph, you really are stupid. If you need anything, come to me. I have everything. I am rich. In future, if you need something, come to me here in the church. You will find a stone behind the altar. You only need to lift it up, you will find everything you need there.'

Even if this simple conversation sounds childlike, I can well imagine that it really happened. We are also told that St Gerard Majella⁵ had a deep devotion to the Blessed Sacrament. He thought to himself that our Lord was really stupid to allow himself to be locked away day and night in a little box⁶. Once, when he was alone in the church - this isn't a legend, it really happened - he crept up to the tabernacle and asked our Lord: 'Lord, what a fool you are to allow yourself to be locked up like this. After all, you are almighty!' The Lord answered him: 'Gerard, you are a far bigger fool than I am to just come here and tell me that!' This is how naturally they spoke to each other.

⁴ Hermann Joseph of Steinfeld in the Eifel (c. 1150-1225), a monk in the Praemonstratensian Order, mystic and composer of many hymns.

⁵ Gerard Majella (1726-1755), lay brother in the Redemptorist Order. Canonised in 1904.

⁶ This is how the child saw the tabernacle where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved.

The word `fool' has naturally to be understood here as an expression of love. Notice how simply the saints spoke to God and our Lady. We should learn to do the same.

Let us return to Blessed Hermann Joseph. He didn't need to hear our Lady say something like that twice. Picture to yourselves what he needed. Think about his childlike wishes. If he wanted an apple, or a pear, or plums, or if he needed clothes or underwear, or if his mother needed money or some fish ... I don't know what they needed. What did he do? He didn't worry, he just remembered that the Blessed Mother had promised to help him in every need. He simply went to her and said: `I need some fish!' Our Lady replied: `You know where the stone is!' He lifted the stone and found the fish, or a shirt ... I don't know what he asked for and found there. It is a legend.

How does the legend continue? His friends suddenly noticed the change and asked: `What has happened? His parents are just as poor as before.' Boys will be boys, they followed him and discovered his secret. What was it? His Marian secret. They didn't tell him. You can imagine how they hid in the confessionals in order to give him a fright. At any rate they saw that he fetched things from under the stone. As he left the church, they went to the stone and lifted it - and? - found nothing.

Do you understand what that means? The Blessed Mother had promised Hermann Joseph that she would be particularly at work under the stone, and he had believed her. The others didn't.

Can you now understand what is meant when we say that our Lady whispers in a special way here? She is particularly at work here. Of course, what does this presuppose? That like little Hermann Joseph we come to her and lift the stone. In practice this means that we have to present all our big and little cares and needs to her, and also bring her presents. She also wants to receive something from us. We will later discuss what this could be.

I have not yet finished explaining the statement: `God's Mother is whispering here in a special way.' I am particularly struck by the words `*in a special way*'. What do they imply? I think I should take the next step and add: *The Blessed Mother lives and works here in a special way as our educator.* That is a word that should re-echo in our hearts and minds: *Educator.*

We all feel that education is a big problem, no matter whether we are thinking of our own education or that of our children - the little ones, the teenagers or the grown-ups. *The problem of education is actually the deepest problem of parents and families today.*

Now our Lady comes along and whispers as our educator. What does that imply? She had taken up her abode here as the great educator and wants to advise us in all our questions about education. She doesn't merely want to advise us, she personally wants to take our education and that of our children in hand. Please understand what that means in our present times when the whole world is so helpless. How should we educate, in which direction, towards which goal? The Mother of God is particularly at work here, she has taken up her abode here. She wants to educate all who come here, but she also

wants to use them at the same time as her instruments, so that they become great educators in their own way⁷.

The statement 'whispers in a special way' has really captured me. Since the Blessed Mother is at work as our educator, she works here in a different way to other places of pilgrimage. As our educator she has to get us going on our self-education. What does that imply? If she is to take our education and that of our children in hand from here, she requires our co-operation. In practice that means: when we come to her, we may not merely come with empty hands. They must be filled. What does that mean? Our hands should be filled with our attempts to educate ourselves. We should say to her: 'Take our education in hand. Look at our good intentions. I am often so abrupt and edgy.' Or, the husband could say to himself: 'When I get home from work I am constantly moaning at my wife. I can see that this disturbs the family climate.' It isn't enough to pray: 'Blessed Mother, help me to be calmer.' She will say: 'First make an effort, try to please me and take yourself in hand. Then bring me these little efforts and I will see to it that you become a really great person.'

Do you understand the big difference? We do not merely come with our requests, we also have something to give. That is the great thing.

Have you heard what they do in other countries where they have built little shrines of the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt? All who love the shrine meet there on the 18th of every month and bring our Lady their efforts at self-education. We have a special expression for this. I shall merely mention it without trying to explain it. Ask someone to explain to you later about the 'contributions to the capital of grace'. What does it mean? We Americans can understand the word 'capital' very well. We have accumulated capital. What does that mean? It is a capital of merits. Since I have tried to control myself, since I have kept silence, for example, and not contradicted my partner, I can give the MTA the sacrifice. We have already discussed these things in the past.

What must I do if, for example, I am too edgy and abrupt? There is the miraculous means advised by St Vincent de Paul. A woman came to him and complained: 'When my husband comes home, it is as though I am being bitten by a tarantula. Before we know it, we are fighting. My tongue simply runs away with me.' The woman asked the saint: 'What should I do?' He advised her: 'Fill your mouth with water! When your husband comes home, you must have your mouth full of water. Only when he has been home for five minutes may you spit out the water.' A wonderful remedy! I could now make use of this remedy as well. This is a contribution to the capital of grace. I bring this to our Lady and tell her: 'Here is the sacrifice I have brought you!'

No matter whether I am an adult or a child, we will have to educate ourselves until the end of our lives. *If we do not take ourselves in hand, there will never be a family.* This also applies in relation to

⁷ Note the changes made to the manuscript of the First Founding Document: 'I will then gladly take up my abode with you and distribute gifts and graces in abundance. I will draw youthful hearts to myself from here and educate them to become useful instruments in my hands.'

our children. We have to make demands on ourselves. What should we do? We should bring our Lady these sacrifices and tell her: 'On account of these sacrifices I ask you: Take my education in hand! Look after us!'

Do you now understand what is meant when we say: God's Mother is at work here in a special way? What is she whispering? - A lovely whisper! - 'Educate yourself!'

Another picture. Someone was in great need. He went to the Blessed Mother and said: 'Show me that you really are my Mother!' She replied: 'First show me that you really are my child!' Can you understand this? Now, all of a sudden, another motivation enters our lives. I make demands on myself. I do not merely say: 'Dear God, you must look after me.'

This reminds me of another lovely example. In Germany there is a city called Aachen. The people there are particularly pious. One day a mother came to her child's teacher and asked: 'How is my daughter doing?' The teacher answered: 'Well, she is talented, but terribly lazy.' To this the mother replied: 'I must light a candle before our Lady's picture!' And so she went and lit a candle before our Lady's picture.

That is certainly a nice custom, the expression of a simple faith. But lighting a candle alone will achieve little. What should the mother do, what means should she use? Ask Mrs Laufenberg what she does when a child is lazy. Ask yourselves what you should do. 'Do something ourselves,' you will say. We can see the words: 'Nothing without you - nothing without us' on the altar border.

We have to do something, we have to exert ourselves. We have to educate ourselves and bring our Lady the sacrifices connected with our self-education. Then she will say: 'Good, now I will take over the responsibility. I will now take the bull by the horns and see to it that you become a good person, even that you become a little saint, a little, saintly mother, a little or bigger saintly father.'

She has whispered in a special way. She has to whisper a great deal. She never stops. God's Mother whispers here in a special way.

Don't you think, my dear Schoenstatt Family, if all this is true - and we take this for granted - we should really feel inspired to enter into a covenant, a contract, with the Blessed Mother. We have a lawyer amongst us, but in this instance we all want to be lawyers. We want to enter into a contract with the beloved Mother of God. What should this contract include? We tell our Lady: 'Here I am, I belong to you. I want to allow you to educate me and I will co-operate. But I want to ask you to take my education in hand.' If what I have said is true, we parents should go a step further and say: 'As the husband I want to ask you: heavenly Mother, take my wife in hand. Educate her, because she has the seeds of greatness in her, she could become a saint. But there are all sorts of things that have to be pruned first. I can't manage it, you will have to do it. So I am entering into a covenant with you. I want to work on myself courageously. But you have to educate my wife.'

The story is told of an artist, a sculptor. As with all professionals, they have their own jargon. He was

walking with friends somewhere in the mountains. The others were enjoying the beauty of nature, the artist only took an interest in a block of marble. Suddenly it was as though he was in a trance. His friends asked him: 'What is going on? What do you see?' He replied: 'I see a saint.' 'Where is your saint? That is just a stone.' 'Yes, but I can carve a saint out of this marble block.' My wife could well become a saint. But I can't educate her, and she is unable to do it on her own. 'Blessed Mother, you have to educate my wife!' The wife does the same for her husband. He could well become a great person.

I have already told you what the Cardinal of Chicago once said: 'The Americans have the timber!' What sort of timber? The timber out of which a saint can be carved. 'But there is no one there to carve the saint out of the timber.' Our Lady replies: 'If you please, I am there! I want to carve a little saint out of your husband.' So now I enter into a contract with the Mother of God. How profound all this is!

In addition, I want to ask the Blessed Mother, by virtue of this contract, to take the education of my children in hand. I can't manage everything. They are becoming teenagers, they are no longer infants, they have reached this or that stage. I am helpless. I am faced for the first time with the problems of education. So I say: 'Mother, you will have to take their education in hand.'

This is what is meant when we say we enter into a covenant with our Lady.

We have asked: What is meant when we say that God's Mother has set up her throne here? That she is living and working here in a special way? We have answered the question by taking up the words of the Bishop of Madison: 'The Blessed Mother is whispering here in a very special way.'

I think, my dear Schoenstatt Family, that things are beginning to dawn on you. Can you remember that when I first told you what we understand by a Schoenstatt family, I gave you a polished definition? What is a Schoenstatt family? It is a family which, by virtue of the covenant of love with our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, tries effectively to live the ideal of a Nazareth family in a timely way.

Until now we have remained with the ideal of a Nazareth family. But the actual source of nourishment, the source of strength, the source of life, has been rather left aside. Do you now understand what is meant when we say: 'by virtue of the covenant of love'?

The Bible tells us in one passage: 'In the strength of this food the prophet walked for many days' (see 1 Kings 19,8). In the strength of the covenant of love we start once again to live the ideal of a Nazareth family.

Actually I had not intended to talk about these things today. I wanted to undertake an examination of conscience. We have been meeting for months now, we have had our vacations and could have had a nice time. So the time has come to ask: Have our meetings also had an effect? On other occasions when we took our vacation in the mountains, we got on each others nerves. Instead of bringing us closer to each other, we were driven further apart. Did this happen this time? Or has the ideal of a

Schoenstatt family, of a Nazareth family, become a reality in our lives to some extent? Depending on how we answer this question, we can say: 'Yes, things have improved.' Or, we will have to admit: 'The person I am, sadly greets the person I should be. A lot is lacking.' So what should I do? Go to the source. We haven't done this until now. The shrine wasn't there. Now we can begin to breathe. We will now manage things we couldn't cope with before, because we now have a source of life, a source of grace, a source of education. All you need do is come here more often.

Think again of the example of Naaman the Syrian. You can read the whole account later. He had leprosy. I also have leprosy, but in the soul, or somewhere else. I want to be healed. My wife has leprosy. It isn't nice to have leprosy. My husband also has it, so do my children. We all have leprosy. What does that mean? What was said to Naaman the Syrian? He should wash himself in the Jordan. He replied: 'We have much bigger and more beautiful rivers at home.' 'No, no, here in the Jordan,' his servant repeated. 'If the prophet tells you to wash here in the Jordan, go to the Jordan, otherwise it won't work' (2 Kings 5,8-14).

Where is our Jordan? Here in our shrine. We have to come here again and again. By virtue of the covenant of love we will find help here. Let me repeat: What is a Schoenstatt family? A family that, by virtue of the covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, tries successfully to live the ideal of a Nazareth family in a timely way in an era that is without God. Without this covenant we will have little success, but with the covenant of love we will be successful in our efforts.

Please repeat the prayer you prayed at the blessing of the shrine. One sentence in it will ring a particular bell. Our Lady is asked to come down here and make this place her Bethlehem, her Nazareth, her Golgotha. That is to say, we are asking our Lady to work today, in our present-day world, here in America, from Madison, from New Schoenstatt, in the same mysterious way as she did two thousand years ago in Nazareth, Bethlehem and on Golgotha, etc.⁸.

Now comes the question, the 'doctoral' question: How can I explain this? How can the Blessed Mother make this shrine a second Nazareth, a second Bethlehem, a second Golgotha? How is it possible? The general answer is this - I won't give you a more specific answer, you will have to study the matter yourselves: From here the Blessed Mother should work as educator and form and mould our Lord's image in me, just as she formed and moulded his image in Nazareth, Bethlehem, on Golgotha, in the Cenacle, etc. Now we can understand far better what is meant when we say that 'the Mother of God is whispering here in a very special way.'

⁸ See the Office Hours in 'Heavenwards'.

The Founder's Faith

**is explained by his practical
faith in Divine Providence**

Readiness to believe

`Mustard seed and pumpkin faith'

Intellect and grace

Interpretation of Schoenstatt's history
in the light of faith in Divine Providence

**Recollection Day - 13 September 1953
Second Conference**

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

We have asked two questions and we want to answer them briefly today. These are questions that have been in the air ever since we have had our shrine.

I can well understand that this morning, since we were together like a little family also for Holy Mass, we felt deeply: *We are a family*. We really are a family. We belong together. We are standing around the altar. Yet at the altar we find not just our Lord, we also find our Lady.

We are a family. What we have just discussed together in the last talk gives us an answer to the secret. Why are we a family? Why have we found a home here in this chapel? Why will we find a home here more than before?

A home, as we said, is where father and mother live and work. So, as time goes by we should feel that our hearts have been attracted here as though by a magnet¹.

Hence, our first question is this: *What do we mean when we say that the Blessed Mother lives and works here in a special way?*

Allow me to repeat at least the most central thoughts briefly. I have done nothing else than explain the Bishop's statement: 'The Blessed Mother is whispering here in a special way.' If you like, you can try to understand all that you see in the shrine.

What do those words mean: 'Servus Mariae nunquam peribit?' - A (servant) child of our Lady will never be lost. I think I have actually given you the answer. Even if we see 'Servus Mariae', we have to say that what is meant is our Lady as the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. Why can a child of the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt not be lost? Because God's Mother is our mother and educator - that is where you must place the emphasis: she is our *educator!* She has taken over the responsibility for us. Servus Mariae nunquam peribit!

What conclusions can we as parents draw from this? We will see to it that we parents, that our children and all whom we love, enter into a *covenant of love as an educational covenant* with the Mother of God. Servus Mariae nunquam peribit!

¹ A home, in the sense of feeling naturally and supernaturally at home, is one of the central features of Schoenstatt's spirituality. The grace of being at home is one of the three original pilgrimage graces we can expect to be given if we visit the shrine with faith - the other two are the grace of transformation and education. Fr Kentenich developed his thoughts on the importance of being at home in the 1951 Pedagogical course, in which he enlarged on the theological and philosophical dimensions. The 'Hymn of the Home', which he wrote in Dachau concentration camp, can be found in 'Heavenwards'.

If you take another look at what is written here, you will see the words on the altar frontal: 'Nothing without you - nothing without us!' Do you know what that means? It expresses the original character of this place of grace. As our educator, the Mother of God does not want to educate us without our self-education. We have to educate ourselves as well. And all that we have heard in the course of the last few months about education has to be seen in a new way and applied to our little shrine.

If you take another look at the altar, what do you notice? A crown! What does a crown imply? I think I must take up the train of thought from our last talk. What I had to say was inspired by the words of the bishop.

I want to quote another statement, which shows us the way to the crown. It happened many years ago. A priest from South Africa visited Schoenstatt. Afterwards he wrote about his impression of the original Schoenstatt. He wrote: 'Schoenstatt has become a little bit of heaven to me!'

Do you know what that means? That is what New Schoenstatt in Madison should become for us, for all Americans: *a little bit of heaven*. What does that mean? The Triune God lives and reigns in heaven, and that is where the Blessed Mother also has her throne. And she wears a crown.

Please note, the Blessed Mother is not merely in heaven, she is also here. She has a home here, this is her throne room. She is wearing a crown. What does she want to do? Since she is the crowned Queen of Schoenstatt and the Schoenstatt realm, she has the great task to make this Schoenstatt realm a little bit of heaven.

A little bit of heaven!

You see, our homes must also become a little bit of heaven. Our Sisters should make a little bit of heaven present, all who come here, all Schoenstatt families, should be a little bit of heaven. As our crowned Queen, our Lady has the task to educate all who belong to her in such a way that they can anticipate heaven and bring a little bit of heaven to earth.

Do you now understand what all that implies? You should allow the symbols to be explained to you often so that you can understand them. We need this.

You know, Americans are unable to think symbolically. They have to learn this once more. The shrine is something like a 'nursery' for us, where our Lady introduces us to many things. In this nursery we can learn again to express ourselves in symbols and think symbolically.

Now let us answer the second question. I could imagine that because of the simple and believing way I spoke to you this morning, you are not inclined to pass a critical judgement on what I said. It was put so simply and so naturally, and you followed me inwardly with great faith. But I can also imagine that when you get home and can distance yourselves from what was said, the question will arise: 'Yes, but how does Father know that? How does he know that the Blessed Mother is 'whispering'

here, and that she does so in a special way, and that she never tires of whispering again and again? How does he know this?'

You may perhaps ask yourselves: 'Well, did he see our Lady sitting here? Have you seen her sitting on her throne? Have you seen her sitting there while she educates us?' Indeed, if only I could see her, if only I had visual aids to show you, for example, how our Lady educates someone who is really nervous and doesn't know which way to go. Yes, how? How can I manage that? How can I see to this, or how can I do it or copy it? Do I merely need to see how our Lady does it? 'Well, have you seen our Lady at work as educator?' I have to reply: 'No, by no means. I have not seen her with my natural eyes.' So how do I know it? The Bishop said he had felt how the Blessed Mother is whispering here. He felt it! Have I really felt that our Lady is at work here?

You know, some say yes. They have a strange feeling. How many who have come here without knowing anything about Schoenstatt, and to whom no explanations have been given, have said quite simply: 'I can feel that there is something special here.' Of course, this is very personal and subjective. It could happen that God might give you this simple feeling: This is true! No one has proved it to me. I merely feel it. The Bishop also saw nothing. I don't know where he got it from. At any rate, during the blessing on 20 June he said that he felt that the Blessed Mother was whispering here.

Is it enough for us to be able to say quite simply: It's true! I don't know whether I may say: I feel it, I personally. Yes, I feel it, I do feel it. But beyond this I have another source of knowledge. Where from? Should I say that I have had a dream? The angel of the Lord brought a message to Mary! The Angel Gabriel came to me at that time and said: 'Pay attention!' 'What is going on?' 'Down there, here in the chapel in Madison, New Schoenstatt, the Blessed Mother has descended from heaven. She is not just in heaven, she will be at work from there in the future.'

The angel of the Lord! Did an angel appear to me? Did he appear to you? You know, if he had appeared to me and I came to my senses afterwards, I would most probably have asked: 'Was I dreaming?' or, 'What on earth happened?' I would have been unsure whether it was true. Anyhow, it could happen. We know, for example, that Don Bosco² had such dreams. An angel did not appear. God spoke to him through his dreams. We know this, but do I know from a dream that our Lady is at work here? By no means! I hardly dream at all. I have never had such dreams.

So, how do I know it? How do you know it? That is now the great question. We have to find an answer to it.

Can you remember that I once pointed out to you that the Blessed Mother should see to it - rather as she did with Hermann Joseph in the legend - that the Sisters can soon build a house up there? They have already bought the land. Now that they have built her a shrine, she should really build us a 'palace'. She merely got hold of a little house, but we want a palace. In order to get it, we first need

² Don Bosco (1815-1888), Italian priest and educator of boys, founder of the Salesian Fathers and Sisters, canonized in 1934.

`pumpkins'. We need a whole lot of pumpkins. What does that mean: We need a whole lot of pumpkins? I shall give you the answer right now.

Pumpkins? What has that to do with the thought that after we had built our Lady a `nest', she should build our Sisters a palace, not merely a palace, a whole city. You see, we are gradually beginning to go mad. We want more and more. But we may and should ask for things. `Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy' (Mt 5,7). We have looked after our Lady, now she has to look after us.

We said that we need pumpkins. There is a story about the pumpkins. In the Bible we find a lovely picture of faith in Divine Providence. Our Lord said: If your faith is as big as a mustard seed, you would be able to burst rocks asunder (Mt 17,20). We should take this literally for once, because our Lord said it. I imagine to myself that somewhere there is a mountain or rocks. I want to blow them up. We have the means to do this today, we can blow things up. What did our Lord say? If you want to blow them up, you must believe. And if you believe, the mountain will move. It will take a walk, if you like, over the ocean, over the Rhine, to Schoenstatt. So the mountain begins to move. It suddenly gets legs.

Now we must take this literally. What is meant by faith the size of a mustard seed? A German poet once enlarged on this simile. He made a lovely verse:

`Faith the size of a mustard seed
can cast mountains into the sea.
Tell me what it could do
if it was the size of a pumpkin?'

What does that mean? A mustard seed is very, very small. And if my faith is as big as a mustard seed, it will bring such things about. It will work miracles. How much more so if our faith is as big as a pumpkin, that is, a tremendous faith?

Of course, you will say: `That is only a picture.' Yes, it is a picture. It is obvious that God will not give feet to some rock so that it can walk around and move, just because I asked. So what should the picture express? Through faith you can achieve everything with God. But it has to be a strong faith. That is why we said just now that we need a whole mountain of trust, not merely a pumpkin. No, a whole mountain!

Our Sisters here are just little innocents in the world. And what do they want? They have hardly anything to live on, there are only a handful of them, they have no money, they have no capital, and yet they want to build. There you have it! This is how it should be - boundless, blind trust in God's fatherly kindness.

The Mother of God should not merely build them a palace, but a whole city. Good heavens! When someone talks like that one has to suspect that they have a screw loose somewhere. Yes, they are all

mad to want such a thing. What do we mean by mad³? They are unhinged. What is unhinged? They have given up a purely natural way of thinking, and instead of this purely natural way of thinking something else has taken its place. What is it? Faith. Yes, faith the size of a mustard seed can cast mountains into the sea. Just imagine what it would do if it was the size of a pumpkin? There we have the answer.

I asked just now: How do I know that the Blessed Mother is dwelling here? Have I seen her? No! Have I felt her presence? Yes, if you like, but that has nothing to do with you. How do I know it? Simply through faith. What sort of faith is that? Mustard seed faith? Pumpkin faith? I don't know, but it is through faith. Basically it is the same faith that tells me that our Lord is present here. Have you seen him? Have you felt his presence? Possibly felt!

How do I know that our Lady is at work here in a special way? Through faith. Of course, there is a difference between these two beliefs. I believe that our Lord is really present here because he has told us so expressly in the Bible. The other belief, that our Lady is present here, is the fruit of faith in Divine Providence. But that is the same divine faith, it is merely another aspect of it. So, faith has told me this.

Now I must say something for those who want to think things over in peace afterwards. Faith requires two things:

1. *a sound, natural foundation.* That is why St Paul says: Your faith should be a reasoned acceptance of the truth. I have to use my reason. Do I have a reasoned proof that the Blessed Mother is really dwelling here?

2. *Faith is also a grace.*

So we distinguish between two elements. Now I have to prove to you that both are present - reason and grace. Whether this is true of yourselves - well, you will have to examine the matter.

All in all, therefore, how do I know that our Lady is really here in a special way, that she lives and reigns here? The answer? Through practical belief in Divine Providence.

Now we have to consider this. We have said that there are two elements in faith - reason and grace.

Reason. What does reason tell me? In order that I can simply list the thoughts afterwards, I must first draw your attention to the following: We are convinced - actually I must speak personally - that the Blessed Mother is at work here in a special way, because I am convinced that she is at work in the

³ Fr Kentenich is using a wordplay which cannot be captured in English. Mad=ver-rückt=literally 'moved away'. He then changes this to: weg-rückt=literally moved away. The prefix in German indicates a change in interpretation. I have tried to capture something of the image by using the word 'unhinged'.

original Schoenstatt in a special way. And since we have a daughter shrine here, what applies to the original shrine also applies to this shrine. I want to presuppose this.

Now I have to offer you a proof about the original shrine. Does our Lady live and work in the original shrine in a special way? What can tell me that? Practical faith in Divine Providence. Now I am not sure whether I should explain this to you quickly. I shall make up an example to explain what I mean.

Take, for example, a family such as the Laufenbergs. Please allow me to use the picture in this way. They are poor, really poor. They do not have enough to eat. Everything they do fails, everything - let us suppose this. Now they have twelve children. Try to think yourselves into their situation. Even though they are not very rich, they are still able to let their children study, they have healthy arms, they have jobs, an income. No. This is not what you should imagine. I am making up a case - they are really very poor. Whatever they do, fails. Now - there is a girl or a boy in the Laufenberg family, they are naturally very poor, they hardly have enough to eat, and the boy says: 'I think I have a vocation to the priesthood!' And the parents say: 'Good heavens, child, what an idea! We can hardly keep you in food and clothes. What would higher studies cost? How should we do it?'

Let me exaggerate the case. The Laufenbergs should please not get annoyed if I put it this way. Take, for example, that the two live really bad lives, they are wicked, they are not a good Catholic family, but vagrant beggars. Let us suppose this. And now, although this is what the family is like, a child comes along and says: 'I think I must become a priest.' What will the parents say? Firstly, 'We don't have the money.' Secondly, think of the lovely saying we have considered together. What are the children? The most valuable capital investment of the parents. If the parents are bad, I must also take it for granted that they have made a bad investment of their capital. What bad qualities such children, such a boy - let us call him Peter - what sort of bad qualities must not Peter have? And yet the boy now wants to become a priest. Everyone will say: 'Impossible! Go home!' Let us suppose that the boy now says: 'No, I am convinced that I should become a priest.' And he works for it. He uses every possible means, he works and studies, and one day - let us say, after twenty years - he comes to his parents and says: 'Look, I have reached it! I can say 'Dominus vobiscum' and 'Ite missa est'. I have become a priest.'

Can you now understand why I made use of this example? If, after twenty years, I examine the life of this young man who has now become a priest despite all the obstacles, must I not say: It is obvious that what was alive in the boy at that time came from God? How do I know this? Because Divine Providence has led the boy in a most wonderful, almost miraculous way. Can you understand what I am driving at? Practical belief in Divine Providence tells me that the plan at that time came from God. Think about this! You will then understand what I am saying. Study the example, understand it, then you will also understand what I am going to say next.

Let me summarise. According to purely human standards there was absolutely no prospect that the boy would become a priest, and if he did, then in normal circumstances he would be a bad priest. Why? The parents were so poor that they did not have enough to eat. On top of that comes the

genetic inheritance they have passed on to him. - We want to presuppose this. - What sort of genetic inheritance was it? The worst one can imagine. Despite all this the boy became a priest, indeed - let us suppose this - a holy priest.

What conclusion must I draw from all this? That the plan that took hold of the boy came from God. Isn't that true? Why? Because Divine Providence has carried out his plan in an extraordinary way and contrary to all human expectations. Therefore, practical faith in Divine Providence tells me: the plan and its realization come from God. God has intervened. In this case we cannot take it for granted. This vocation, according to our thinking, is the result of an extraordinary intervention of Divine Providence, an extraordinary work of God and gift from God. This is obvious. If you think about it, you can only say: it is an extraordinary work of God. I don't need a tremendous amount of light from above, I only need to reason things out a little in order to come to this conclusion.

Now let me apply this example to myself. Now I am the boy who wants to become a priest. In order that you should understand what I want to say, I must anticipate a little. You could ask Sister to explain it to you in greater detail later, but not in learned terms. She should go into the most intimate details. You must know every little detail, because this is also your family tree. What I am telling you is your family history. You have grown out of this family tree. I want to know the history of my family. I want to know what happened to father and mother, to my grandparents, what they experienced and how we became what we now are.

That was in 1912. I was still very young. I was made Spiritual Director in an institution like the one over there⁴. My God-given task - also through my calling - was to educate the boys. So I became an educator and led the boys to educate themselves. I had said to myself: The goal of every education is to get self-education going⁵. We worked at this for two years. I then realised: No matter how talented I may be in this regard, human beings remain human. Our Lady has to help me, otherwise I cannot educate myself, nor can I educate the boys, still less can the boys educate themselves. I suddenly had an idea. I won't tell you how I got it, or we will lose the thread of my thought. I suddenly had an idea. What was it?

Think of the boy. He suddenly had the idea: I want to become a priest. I had a strange idea. It could

⁴ The reference is to the Seminary in Madison.

⁵ Fr Kentenich had been ordained in 1910 and was then appointed teacher of Latin and German in the junior classes of the Pallottine College in Ehrenbreitstein, near Coblenz. In 1912 he was called to the newly completed College at Schoenstatt, near Vallendar. The talk he gave to the boys when he took up office has come to be known as the Pre-Founding Document, because he laid before them essential elements of his spirituality in the form of a programme. See 'Founding Documents'.

even have been a mad idea. The boy's idea could also have been mad, couldn't it? What was this idea? I thought: We must come together and ask the Blessed Mother to come down to this little chapel, to this little shrine. Do you know what it was at the time? A shed⁶.

Think of my former example.

⁶ The shrine involved here is called the original shrine, because it has been copied any number of times in various parts of the world. Before it became a place of prayer in 1914, it was used by the gardeners of the Pallottine College as a garden shed, because it had lost its meaning as a 'Chapel of St Michael' for the cemetery of the ancient monastery.

*The family*⁷, what was it like? There was no prospect that anything good could come out of it. The *chapel* - there really was no prospect that it would one day become the focal point of a religious movement.

And the *community* I belong to, the Pallottine Society? I think I may also say that at the time it was small and unknown, nothing very special.

You see, if I had been a Jesuit and had said that we wanted to do such a thing, humanly speaking there would have been more prospects of it being a success. But here! You should picture it to yourselves. Humanly speaking there was absolutely no prospect of success. Isn't that right? Humanly speaking none at all. That is to say,

1. the chapel was a garden shed,
2. the man involved, who had such stupid ideas, was very young and hardly known,
3. together - the boys were also there - the boys were not worth much, just as little as I was. So altogether we weren't up to much.

Let me tell you, this is something you probably won't find a second time in the whole history of the Church - the way Schoenstatt came into existence. But I had the idea, and so we begged: 'Blessed Mother, I ask you, let us do it together!' We sat down and said, 'Blessed Mother, we do want to educate ourselves, but we won't manage without you. So we are now asking you: *Come down to us here. Get our self-education going.* But you shouldn't do it without us. We want to give you everything we do for our self-education *so that you can come down here and work as our educator.*'

Suppose that one of you were to come forward and think out such a plan. You would probably tell yourselves as well: 'The man is mad. He's got a screw loose!' Or wouldn't you? That could well have been the case. Now take a look. How long has Schoenstatt been in existence? Since 1914. It is now 1953. Next year Schoenstatt will be forty. After forty years can I look back to see whether the idea we had at that time was humanly speaking mad, or whether it came from God?

Think again of the boy who wanted to become a priest. Once he had battled his way against all the obstacles and had become a holy priest, doesn't sound thinking, a sound intellect, tell me: *God must have been behind it!* And what has come out of Schoenstatt? It is the focal point of a movement of renewal.

Look at our Sisters of Mary! They developed out of this shrine. They hatched out of this egg, this shrine. Think for a moment how many of them there are today - in a very brief space of time. A new type of community. When you see Schoenstatt one day, or if you look at a film, you will see that a whole new 'world' has come into existence here. Where did it come from?

We always said that we never had a vision. I never had one, and the other co-founders never had one, everything simply developed on the basis of faith in Divine Providence. God gave me the idea. Did it

⁷ Fr Kentenich is picturing his foundation at the time. Note that he called the Sodality a family.

come from God? After forty years we can say that it has been proved that it came from God.

How do I know it? Simply through practical faith in Divine Providence. I believe that the Blessed Mother inspired me to discover the plan, and through the years she has carried it out. Therefore, I believe! It doesn't have to be a pumpkin faith, at least I don't think so. Sound human reasoning will find the proof so clear that I won't even need heroic faith. I merely need a bit of common sense, not even a mustard seed faith. What do I need? What you, my dear Schoenstatt Family, must allow yourselves to be given: *knowledge of our history*. You must know Schoenstatt's history. Just as I had to know the history of the young priest. When you know what sort of timber he has been carved from, which circumstances he has come from, and if you have a little faith in Divine Providence, you will not find it difficult to say: I believe that the Mother of God has descended to Schoenstatt and wants to renew the world from there.

I think that I have now given you a very simple and down-to-earth answer to the question: How do I know that our Lady is at work in the shrine? The answer is: through practical faith in Divine Providence. The Church has acknowledged this and granted a number of indulgences for visits to the shrine. By doing this she has closed our whole argument.

What I have just said to you in such simple terms will be repeated in one of the following conferences in a more learned way. You can feel that *faith is the foundation*. Here we find the simple, believing conviction that the Mother of God is really at work in the way we described in our first conference. That is naturally the foundation for our Schoenstatt existence, also for our Schoenstatt Family. So it is worth our while if I later put it in more learned terms and trace everything back

1. to the law of the open door, and
2. to the law of creative resultants.

Once I have discussed this with you and shown you how the law of the open door has been at work in Schoenstatt, as well as the law of creative resultants, even the most critical mind will easily and quickly say: *I believe!* What do I believe in? I am convinced through faith that this is true, that what I described in the first talk is true. You will then see how you can learn to see your own lives in a completely new light if you apply both of these laws to them. A whole new world will open up before you - a world that has been carved out of your own lives and that applies to your practical, everyday lives.

The Question about Schoenstatt

**as a work of God
is answered by pointing to
the law of the open door and creative resultants**

The law of the open door

Law of the creative resultants:

the insignificance of the instruments

the magnitude of the difficulties

the magnitude of the success

Once again: The child as our capital investment

**Recollection Day - 13 September 1953
Third Conference**

My dear Schoenstatt Family,

What we have discussed today is really very profound and all-embracing. Firstly, the Blessed Mother lives here, she whispers here in a very special way; secondly, How do we know this? The answer is very simple: *through practical faith in Divine Providence*.

I would like to ask you to look at this picture. Please pass it round. You can get an explanation afterwards. What is the shrine? What is the meaning of the child inside? What is the meaning of the thunder and lightning? What is the meaning of the powerful and large hands of the Father with a long beard? What is the meaning of it all? God's loving Providence!¹

All of us need such a symbolic expression of the ideas we want to remember. *How do I know that the Mother of God is at work here as the great educator in the sense we mentioned?* The answer: through practical belief in Divine Providence.

Let me give you the same answer in another form. I know it because of *'the law of the open door' and 'the law of creative resultants'*. I must first of all explain the two laws to you and then apply them to our present state of affairs, i.e., to Schoenstatt. I will therefore have to say something about both laws. Three thoughts.

1. *What is meant by the law of the open door?*²

It is a popular expression for what we call faith in Divine Providence. I didn't coin the expression, it comes from St Paul. He was educated precisely in the same way as God wants to educate me and all of us. Paul asked all the time: 'Dear God, what do you really want of me?' He did not wait for an angel to come, or until he was lifted up into the seventh heaven. He deduced God's will from circumstances.

You see, it happened, for example, that at this or that place he asked himself: Where should I go now? He had so much work to do. So he said to himself: Wait, over there in Macedonia a little door has opened. God wants me to go to Macedonia. And then he told himself: If God wants me to go to Macedonia, I shall go there. He has opened the door (cf Acts 16,6-10; 2 Cor. 2,12).

What is meant by the law of the open door? God opens a little door and invites me to go through it, and I go through.

¹ This was a picture that was particularly important to Schoenstatt members in the 1950s as a symbolic expression of the loving Providence of God the Father.

² I have opened in front of you a door that nobody will be able to close (Rev. 3,8); cf Acts 14,27; 16,6-10; and Paul's letters: 1 Co. 16,9; 2 Co. 2,12; Col. 4,3.

Now that was the strange thing about Paul - it doesn't apply to me to the same degree, although to some extent - he went through a little door, it wasn't wide open. If a big door is open, it is easier. However, God often only opens a chink. Then Paul slipped through. And when he was in the room it didn't take long before everything was in chaos and he was beaten. The Lord God then opened another little door somewhere else. Paul went through this door and history repeated itself. That was St Paul's task in life: to slip through a chink, spend a little time in the room, then a new door would open a chink, again he would go through, and again he would be beaten, ill-treated, then he would again slip through a chink, until he eventually landed happily in heaven. Once he got there, he never fell out of it again. Now he is eternally happy. He doesn't need a little, open door any more. Now everything is full of light and full of bliss. That is the law of the open door, that is practical belief in Divine Providence.

Now apply this to Schoenstatt. I think I must first of all tell you something else. When I recall, or if you can recall what I said about our hypothetical case - about the boy who wanted to become a priest although he came from a family that really did not offer the right soil for such a vocation. The boy had had an idea. Well, and now? Now he has to look constantly: Dear God, how do you want to carry out this idea in my life? Open some little door for me! If you want it, you must help me and open a door!

I could continue to enlarge on this, but it would take us too far today. Please study it for yourselves and see how God did this and opened a little door.

Now for the question: *How did the law of the open door show in Schoenstatt?* The answer is very simple. At that time God had given me the task of educating the boys. And I had a very definite ideal towards which I wanted to educate them, much like the one God has given you for your children. You should not merely beget your children, you should also educate them. And so you started to educate them, you had a definite ideal towards which you wanted to educate them. It was the same with me at that time, that was in 1912/13.

Suddenly, in 1914, the war broke out. The boys had to go out to the battlefields, and I was responsible for them. The law of the open door! During this time, as the boys were being called up, I (put in very human terms) chanced upon a thin newspaper. There was a little article in it, perhaps a column long, it was very brief. What did it report on? An advocate, an Italian lawyer who had once been a Freemason. The Lord God, the Blessed Mother, used him to found a famous place of pilgrimage. You may have heard the name of the place - Pompeii. It later became a big, world-famous place of pilgrimage. Suddenly I got the mad idea. I don't know, you might have also got it! If you love your children, if you have no other idea than to love your children, you are always thinking: How can I serve my children?

I once used a beautiful saying: Educators are people who love and never relinquish that love. You can beat them to death, they never stop loving their community or their followers. So you will probably understand that I suddenly got the idea: Wouldn't it be possible for our Lady to descend

here and work great things from here, wouldn't it be possible to draw her down to our little shrine?³ I have been given the task to educate my boys, and according to God's plan the Blessed Mother is our great educator.

Now you should recall that the chapel in Schoenstatt was just a little garden shed. So it meant that we wanted to draw the Mother of God down to a garden shed. Why? What for? She should educate the boys, because I couldn't run behind them in the war. And even if I had been as able and powerful as may be, it was impossible for me to be everywhere - on the Eastern Front and again in the North. No! On top of this came our helplessness - my helplessness and their helplessness. What should we do?

So I had the idea: *Law of the open door*. What does that mean? God opened a door. Of course, it was only a tiny chink, it was this short article. What sort of idea was that? Our Lady descended there (in Pompeii). Couldn't she want to do the same here? And since I am always a very sensible person - hmm - I simply came to the conclusion: It could well be the case. Although I was inwardly convinced it was the case, I never said so, I merely thought: I could well be possible.

Then, on 18 October, I went and presented the plan to our boys. You should read the Founding Document one day, then you will understand the idea. It is really wonderful if you see it against this background.

The boys were so 'stupid' that they fell for it. They said: Yes, we will help to bring this about together with our Spiritual Director. What shall we do?

These things are so closely related. I had been commissioned to educate and I wanted to educate. So from the first I saw our Lady as our educator and I introduced her to the boys. She said: 'Good, I agree to the plan, but under one condition.' What was this condition? 'That you continue to educate yourselves purposefully, and you should do so 'like crazy'! Nothing may be left out. You should become masterpieces. You must raise the demands you make of yourselves to the highest degree. If you do this, I will come down. I will allow myself to be drawn down. And then, yes I will start a large movement of renewal from this little spot.'

That was in 1914. *The law of the open door*. Can you now understand in how far this plan came into existence according to the law of the open door? But now comes the cardinal question: Who opened

³ 'Draw down' - these are the words used in the First Founding Document: 'This sodality chapel should become the cradle of our sanctity, in the same way as a chapel of our Lady in Florence was for St Aloysius, our second patron. This holiness will exercise gentle force on our heavenly Mother and *draw her down* to us here.'

the door? Did the devil open it? Could the devil have inspired such a plan? Think of it: What sort of devilish plans Hitler had! Can the devil inspire something like that? Yes, actually he can. Or was it my own ambition? There is not just a devil outside us, there is a devil within us, selfishness. Or was it God who had opened the little door? That is the cardinal question⁴.

It is obvious that one may only slip through a little door - even if it is only a tiny chink - if God has invited one to do so. I will answer this question later. At any rate, since that time the law of the open door has shown us the way.

We put it this way - the boys and myself: If the Mother of God really does want it, she must show us that this is what she wants.

The boys were then thrown onto the battlefields. And there they said to themselves: We want to see whether the Blessed Mother really has agreed to the plan. They tried to draw all whom they could approach and who were open in this regard into their circle. The boys wanted to help them with their prayers and sacrifices, so that our Lady really and truly could create a movement to renew the world from here.

Later, after some years, we dared to think that the First World War happened because - I am not saying only because, but also because - our Lady wanted to set to work from Schoenstatt. If the war had not happened, our students would never have landed on the battlefields in the East and West, South and North. And that is where they were most faithfully at work.

We put it this way: If the Mother of God really wants such a movement, we can also dare to take the plunge. Our young students, and they really were very young, were thrown out into the world. They had to stand their ground on their own in the barracks. Then we got the idea: They must keep in contact out there. They must form little groups. Whoever has experienced what it is like in a war, knows that it is humanly speaking almost impossible to come together in a group in the midst of military service, in the upheaval of war, or to form a group by correspondence. What was the purpose? To support and help one another, to educate themselves, so that our Lady would have an easier task, and to prevail upon her to carry out her task from Schoenstatt. *The law of the open door*. Which little door was opened? We must form groups. Even correspondence groups were formed. The Apostolic Union developed out of this later. It is really wonderful to see this if you can follow it up one day ...

⁴ In his attempts to recognise and carry out God's will, Fr Kentenich always reckoned with the influence of diabolical powers. In this regard he followed the theological position that satan has power to influence people inwardly and outwardly, directly and indirectly, in order to achieve his goals. An impressive and practical proof of this, as far as he was concerned, was his own experience and that of others with the Nazis in the prison in Coblenz and the Dachau concentration camp. He gave expression to his teaching on demonology in the prayers and meditations of this time, but also in what he wrote during his exile in the USA.

Yet this was not enough. I told myself: The boys must also be kept together. We had no money. If I remember rightly, we had 23 pennies. We began with 23 pennies. How much is that? About 6 cents! With those cents we founded a periodical. My thought was: 'If that is part of the plan, it will succeed.' There you have it again: 'Faith the size of a mustard seed will cast mountains into the sea ...' Now, however, comes the pumpkin faith. We needed pumpkin faith. 'If you, Blessed Mother, are behind this, you will have to see to it that it succeeds.' And it did succeed! Afterwards a whole host of magazines developed out of it. Everything out of nothing.

Later, in the course of the years, we repeatedly asked ourselves: How will the little door open? Seminarians who had worked in these groups came along. Priests arrived. Even bishops joined us later. Women applied. That was the egg. And the Sisters of Mary developed out of these women. The Sisters of Mary hatched out of this egg. God opened a little door and we walked through. *The law of the open door.*

All that has developed in Schoenstatt, absolutely everything, also this shrine here in Madison, or the fact that the Sisters are here, all came about through the law of the open door.

So I can also repeat: Not merely the original plan, but everything that later developed in Schoenstatt, was not the result of a vision or a dream, it quite simply came about in the way that is available to all of us - that is, by way of the open door.

Now comes the question: Who opened this little door? Couldn't it have been the devil? Couldn't it have been my own human ambition? Was it really God? The answer is provided by the second law:

2. *The law of creative resultants.*

Through the law of creative resultants it is possible to prove whether, and in how far the law of the open door was inspired by God. The law of the open door has to be examined. The question is: Did God open the door, and has God helped us to go through the open door in such a way that the whole work came into existence? So is it a work of God? The answer is given by the law of creative resultants.

Once again the question is: How is this to be understood? The expression comes from a German psychologist and philosopher⁵. He did not believe in the existence of the soul and repeatedly conducted experiments in psychology. In the end he had to say: When I observe people in the way I now know them, I cannot trace everything back merely to matter. There has to be something in human beings which is unable to unite itself with matter, and which develops a creative force. The result is that something remains behind which I cannot explain when I examine and study everything. This resultant, that which is left over, that which I cannot grasp from the point of view of matter,

⁵ Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920), pioneer of modern experimental psychology. His *Principles of Physiological Psychology* (2 vols, 1873-74) was one of the first scientific approaches to the study of the conscious mind (Macmillan Encyclopedia).

must develop a creative force, and that is the soul. This is how he arrived at the reality of the soul. By way of his experiments he suddenly came to the conclusion that the soul is the creative resultant which creatively governs and interpenetrates everything in human beings.

Later a great German historian⁶ who studied the history of Rome, the Roman people and the Church wrote a number of books. When he arrived at the point at which the Roman Empire was gripped and filled by Christianity, he suddenly became unsure of himself. He had studied history using modern criteria. He didn't just list fact after fact, he *enquired into the creative forces and the leading ideas*. He asked: Where are the driving forces? He had to admit: The way Christianity came into existence in the world and overcame the Roman Empire cannot be explained through normal, human forces. There must be other, divine forces behind it. And because he did not want to admit this, he never wrote the final volume of his history of Rome.

Can you now understand what is meant when we talk of the law of creative resultants? It is a law that draws our attention to the fact that there must be secret forces, indeed divine forces, at work in a life process.

If we apply this to Schoenstatt, it means that our history points to such forces. The law of the open door makes us aware of intangible and mysterious forces. Applied to Schoenstatt the question is: When I consider Schoenstatt's history, can I explain it in purely natural terms? Doesn't Schoenstatt's history, with all that has come about out of nothing, prove that here divine powers have been at work?

The law of the open door is explained by the law of creative resultants. I cannot explain it in merely human terms, behind it there is a divine power, a divine force. And these divine forces show me, they prove to me, that God is in actual fact behind everything.

To put it more precisely - I do not know which of you has heard about the proofs of Christianity's divine origin. There are various proofs. One of them is this: The inadequacy of the instruments, the magnitude of the difficulties and the magnitude of the success. Apply this to Christianity. *The inadequacy of the instruments.* Who was used as an instrument to bear Christianity into the world? Simple fisher folk, not learned professors, just simple folk.

The magnitude of the difficulties. Look at the magnitude of the difficulties from within and without. First of all, difficulties from within. What does Christianity demand? That our inordinate drives and passions are overcome. What does Christianity demand? Love for the cross and total self-surrender to God.

The magnitude of the difficulties. Paganism persecuted Christianity to the point of death. There you have it: the inadequacy of the instruments and the magnitude of the difficulties.

⁶ Theodore Mommsen (1817-1903), German historian and politician. In his major historical work, *The History of Rome* (1854-85), Mommsen adopted a modern critical approach, effectively demythologising Roman history (Macmillan Encyclopedia).

The magnitude of the success. What became of Christianity? What has come of the message which simple fisher folk proclaimed to the world? Christianity has become a worldwide religion, it has spread over the whole earth.

Can you now understand what is meant? *With regard to Christianity, the law of creative resultants shows us that if the divine had not broken through, if there had not been a divine initiative, a divine intervention, Christianity would be unthinkable in the way it has developed in history.*

Now apply this to Schoenstatt. I have told you how insignificant the instruments were. I have told you that Christianity began in a stable in Bethlehem. Schoenstatt, where did Schoenstatt begin? In a garden shed. The insignificance of the instruments. I was very young and the boys were still younger. What simple, stupid little people we were! The insignificance of the instruments.

And the magnitude of the difficulties? What does our Lady expect of us? Self-education to the extreme. The magnitude of the difficulties. Indeed, I could tell you a thing or two about that. To start with they came from my superiors in Schoenstatt who didn't want the whole thing. Then the Pallottine Society was up in arms against it. Then came the German bishops. Then came the Nazi state. On their account I was sent to Dachau. Why? For a change of scenery! They wanted to behold the whole work. That is simply part of it: the magnitude of the difficulties.

And the magnitude of the success? You can see it for yourselves. If we had not said yes in 1914, you would not be here today. How many great and beautiful things in the Church and world would not have come about! *The law of creative resultants.*

Can you understand it now? What does the law of creative resultants in combination with the law of the open door prove to us? Faith in Divine Providence convinces us: It is true! The Mother of God lives and reigns here. 'She is whispering here!' She is whispering here in a special way, as I showed you this morning.

All in all, therefore, practical faith in Divine Providence, or the law of the open door and creative resultants convince us in faith that the Blessed Mother really and truly lives and reigns in this shrine in order to educate us and our children, in the first place, and to carry out a great educational task in America from here.

Of course, now comes a difficulty. You will probably not have this difficulty here in the USA, but people in Germany would raise it. The Germans would say: Just think of National Socialism, think of Hitler: the insignificance of the instruments and the magnitude of his success! What about the Nazi ideology? There were seven men who were mainly involved. What sort of people were they? With the exception of Ludendorff⁷ they were not worth anything. They were not generally known.

⁷ Erich Ludendorff (1865-1937), German general in World War I. He became chief of staff under Hindenburg in 1914 and was largely responsible for the German victory at Tannenberg. After being appointed Quartermaster General (1916), Ludendorff exerted considerable political as well as military influence, forcing the resignation of Bethmann-Hollwegg.

They were people who developed in the background, they really were nobodies, insignificant instruments. Yet they created chaos in the whole world. The magnitude of the difficulties and the magnitude of the success! Just compare them. What is the difference?

The insignificance of the instruments was there, but what about the magnitude of the difficulties? Were the difficulties really so big? Please do not overlook: What message did the Nazis proclaim? They appealed constantly to what is lowest in human nature. They provided an excuse for human drives and passions. I know from Dachau how much freedom was given to human passions. Were those great difficulties? Definitely not. They allied themselves with the lowest drives in human nature.

The magnitude of the difficulties. Most people don't know this. The government of that time constantly allied itself with the Nazis. The government protected them constantly, although outwardly they pretended something else. But in the background they promoted the Nazis constantly, because they believed the Nazis would overcome Communism and then disappear automatically. Then the government leaders of that time would be able to take the reins in hand again.

Magnitude of the success? Yes, what success was that? A world revolution. What sort of success was that? A negative one.

The law we mentioned before is true, you cannot explain with purely human means what the Nazis managed to bring about. But which law of creative resultants is that? It is a law of devilish creative resultants. There were devilish forces behind the Nazis. The reason? I think I have mentioned it and touched upon it.

In contrast to this, when we think about Schoenstatt we can say with great conviction: Truly, we can pass the test. We can see and say clearly everywhere: The Blessed Mother has really and truly taken up her abode here. The whole of Schoenstatt is a work of God, and so we are ready to give even our lives for this work of God.

Once we are sure in this way that our Lady really is at work here as our great educator, we will not find it difficult to enter into a covenant of love with her. I enter into it for myself. You can enter into it for yourselves - the husband on behalf of his wife, the wife on behalf of her husband and her children. Yes, on behalf of the children. Who of us does not think of the children and of the future? Which of us parents believes - no matter how gifted and pedagogically brilliant we may be - that we can bring our children safely to the shores of eternity? Which of us believes that we can manage this on our own in the present-day world?

Let me tell you a story, again it is a legend. You know that it didn't really happen, but the key thought it illustrates is very informative.

He himself resigned after the German defeat and from 1924 to 1928 sat in the Reichstag as a Nazi (Macmillan Encyclopedia).

A couple, husband and wife, were living happily together. God had given them a child. For both of them, father and mother, who loved the child deeply, this was the most beautiful, the greatest and best gift God could give them. They made all sorts of sacrifices for the child. They denied themselves many pleasures and enjoyments so that the child could become great - physically, mentally, religiously and morally. Suddenly the husband died. His wife had to do everything on her own. And because she loved her child so much and was financially helpless - there were few possibilities for earning a living in the country, which is where she had lived until then - she said: 'I can't do anything else, I will have to move to the city, even if I have to give up the independence I enjoyed as long as my husband was alive when I become a servant, I want to look after my child.' We can follow this quite easily so far. Perhaps each of us is thinking: I would have done the same. Now comes the legend.

The woman moved from the country into the town. On the way she had to cross a mountain. It was possible to go through the mountain, because a road had been blasted through it. Now when the mother came to the mountain - this is a legend - it suddenly opened before her and she heard a voice: 'Come in! Choose whatever you want! You have an hour in which to do so. But don't forget - the best!'

The mother heard these words repeated twice, three times. Although it seemed a bit odd to her - please don't forget that it is a legend - she looked into the open mountain and saw how everything glittered with gold, silver and diamonds. Once again she heard the voice: 'Take whatever you want!'

What did the mother do? The legend really has a very deep meaning. She put her child down in a corner and started to choose things. Here is gold, there silver. There were all sorts of things, I don't know what they are called today. She looked and she chose. And her heart warmed and her eyes grew wide.

Suddenly she heard the voice once more: 'Careful! The mountain will close in five minutes! Choose whatever you want! But don't forget - the best!' I am sure you can imagine this to yourselves. Five minutes are quickly over. What is still there? She packed and packed. She had collected all sorts of things. Then suddenly, beware! The mountain was closing. Quickly out of it! And once she was outside the mountain she suddenly remembered: The best of all, her child - she had forgotten him. Her child was lost to her. - A legend with a very deep meaning.

Do you understand it, my dear Schoenstatt Family? After all we have discussed together in the past weeks and months, we know that the child is our greatest capital investment, our greatest treasure.

Let me summarise: the best that we have is our children. We may die, our children must live. We can go to the dogs, our children must become big and strong and happy. I don't matter, the children matter.

Are your children also the best that you have? And if they are the best - I think I may invite you to do

what I do, that is, to give all the children God has given us to the Blessed Mother once again. *We enter into a covenant of love with her on their behalf and hand over the responsibility to her.*

Let me repeat: the best that we have belongs to her. Since I cannot look after them as well as she can, I consecrate and surrender them to her. She will lead my children through thick and thin. She will see to it that they reach the shores of eternity, that they will lead holy lives and die holy deaths. She will look after everything. *She is our great leader and educator.*

Don't we all want to do this - enter into a covenant of love with our Lady of Schoenstatt? You can then be happy and without worries. You will then not need to fear that you, like the woman in the legend, will consider some earthly trinkets, some worldly trinkets as the greatest values, and overlook the best and most beautiful.

Do not forget to give your most valuable possession to the Mother of God - our greatest capital investment, as we called it, so that she can be responsible for it!

Appendix

1. Early Schoenstatt History in the United States

1. Chronology of the Early History of Schoenstatt in Milwaukee and Madison

- 1921 The Pallottine Fathers take over Holy Cross parish in Milwaukee
- 1924 Three Pallottine seminarians from Schoenstatt's founding generation (Otto Boenki, Francis Lorscheid, Nicholas Wilwers) come from Germany to finish their studies in the United States. They are ordained for the Milwaukee Province. Father Boenki was a classmate of Joseph Engling and Father Johannes Tick.
- 1935 Father Boenki convinces seminarians Joseph Haas and William Brell of Germany to finish their studies in the United States and join the Milwaukee Province. Both were decided to work for Schoenstatt in the United States.
- 1948 Father Kentenich visits the United States for three months (June 5-September 6) to get to know this country with such influence in the Church and world. He was also looking for places for the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary to begin work in the United States. The main center of his visit was Holy Cross parish in Milwaukee.
- 1949 The first Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary arrive in Corpus Christi, Texas (September 10) and Madison, Wisconsin (November 2).
- 1950-51 Various groups begin in Madison and Milwaukee under the leadership of Father Brell and Sister M. Winfriede Wagenbach, including the first couples group in Madison (the 'Laufenberg group').
- 1952 Sister Winfriede begins a second couples group in Madison (the 'Love and Charity' group).
- Father Kentenich arrives in Milwaukee on June 21. His home during the exile (until September 16, 1965) will be the Pallottine house at Holy Cross.
- The cornerstone-laying for the Schoenstatt Shrine in Madison (October 18) is also the occasion for the covenant of love of the 'Love and Charity' group.
- 1953 Father Kentenich holds days of recollection for the Madison couples (January 18, February 15, March 29, May 10, and September 13), primarily from the Laufenberg group. THESE ARE THE TALKS IN THIS BOOK.
- June 20 - Dedication of the shrine in Madison.
- 1954 The Marian Year is the occasion for sermons written by Father Kentenich and presented by Father Ray Piskula at Holy Cross Parish (published in *Mary, Our Mother and Educator*, Waukesha 1987).
- June - Gilbert and Joanna Schimmel first meet Father Kentenich. They become the founders of the Pioneer Couples group in Milwaukee that begins to form in 1955.
- October 18 - Dedication of the Schoenstatt Shrine at Holy Cross (the 'Exile Shrine') as a gift of the parish to Our Lady in the Marian Year. Starting at this time, Father Kentenich's daily Mass is in this shrine.
- 1955 As the Pioneer Couples group begins to form, Father Kentenich begins to hold regular talks for the couples. By the end of the year these weekly talks are being held on Monday night (hence known as the

'Monday night talks'). By the end of 1964, when the series ended, Father Kentenich had given over 350 talks to couples.

1956 February 2 - Covenant of love of the Pioneer Couples in Milwaukee (in the Exile Shrine at Holy Cross).

1958-65 As he had done for the Madison couples in 1953-55, Father Kentenich now visited the homes of the various families to bless their MTA-picture or crown the MTA in the homes; later his visits were to bless the Living Shrines and home shrines.

1959 February 15 - Mr. Gilbert Schimmel, founding member of the Pioneer Group, dies of cancer after offering his life for Schoenstatt.

Around Easter - Father Kentenich begins his work with the German-speaking Catholics of the Milwaukee area. He celebrates the Sunday Mass at St. Michael's Church for German-speaking and develops many pastoral contacts, including home visits. This work continued until he left Milwaukee in 1965.

1960 July 8 - Father Kentenich's Golden Jubilee: he celebrates 50 years as a priest with a jubilee July 10 in Holy Cross parish and July 24 at St. Michael's.

1962 Fall - the beginning of the Living Shrine life stream among the families and the start of the home shrine-- at first quietly in two families, then in 1963 spreading to other families (see: Jonathan Niehaus, *The Birth of the Home Shrine*, Waukesha 1994).

1963 November 18 - Father Kentenich formally declares the home shrine 'an order of shrine' (in a talk known as the 'Founding Document of the Home Shrine')

1964 October 17 - On the eve of Schoenstatt's 50th anniversary, the Schoenstatt Shrine at the new International Center west of Milwaukee (between Waukesha and Delafield) is dedicated.

1965 May-June - Father Johannes Tick visits groups and families in Madison and Milwaukee.

September 13 - Father Kentenich receives a telegram calling him to Rome.

September 15 - Farewell benediction for Father Kentenich in the Exile Shrine, Father Kentenich's last visits to two of the Milwaukee families occur that evening.

September 16 - Father Kentenich's final Mass in the Exile Shrine and departure for Rome via New York.

1965-75 Father Tick continues to keep in contact with various families in Milwaukee and Madison and helps with the formation of the first U.S. course of the Institute of Schoenstatt Families (1970).

2. *Historical Background of the Days of Recollection for Madison Families, 1953*

The days of recollection which Father Kentenich gave in Milwaukee in 1953 for couples from Madison are part of the 'Pioneer history' of Schoenstatt in the United States (see the Chronology on the preceding pages). By the time I investigated the circumstances of these talks, they had already receded 40 years into the past, and the eyewitnesses could give only limited information.

Nonetheless, a good deal can be said about these talks, once the scattered memories are brought together with the documentation gathered when I did the research in 1982-83 for the book *a History of Schoenstatt in the United States* (Waukesha 1983). It can be summarized as follows:

Who? Judging by the available information, the couples taking part in the days of recollection were almost certainly the members of the 'Laufenberg' group from Madison (see below).

Where? The days of recollection almost certainly took place in Milwaukee, namely at the Provincial House of the Pallottine Fathers at Holy Cross. The exception was September 13, when the day of recollection could take place in Madison, in the new shrine.

1. **Early Couples Groups in Madison**

The first Schoenstatt couples groups in the United States began in Madison in the early 1950s. The main instigators were Father William Brell (1911-1977) and Sister M. Winfriede Wagenbach (1912-1990).

The first group was the '*Laufenberg group*'. Mr. Casper Laufenberg met Sister Winfriede on Holy Saturday, 1950, which led to the beginning of a group in 1950 or 1951. Evidence points to the group's covenant of love coinciding with the dedication of the shrine in Madison, on June 20, 1953. Talking with some of the Schoenstatt members from that time allowed the following reconstruction of the names of the members of the group, along with the occupation of the husbands:

Casper and Lydia Laufenberg (meat-packer with Oscar Meyer)

Adrian and Mary Ann Haubert

Howard and Laurena Schneider (electrician)

Ray and Mrs. Sweeny (owner of a plumbing wholesale supply who drove truck a lot between Milwaukee and Madison)

Norm and Mrs. Herro (attorney)

Dan and Mrs. Kobeson (telephone company, belonged only briefly to the group).

The average age of the group members at the time was about 40. In 1952 the Laufenberg family celebrated their 20th wedding anniversary and were expecting their twelfth child. Around 1958 the group was dissolved and Laufenberg, Haubert, and Schneider joined the 'Love and Charity' group of Madison.

The second group was the '*Love and Charity Group*', sometimes known as the Madison pioneer group. This group started meeting with Sister Winfriede in Spring of 1952 and made their covenant of love on the day of the cornerstone laying of the Madison Shrine (October 18, 1952). The original members of the group were (with the occupations of the husbands):

Henry and Dorothy Gmeinder (research analyst, statistician)

Roman and Fern Gmeinder (warehouseman)

James and Mildred Fisher (printer)

James and Marian Tormey (artist, often unemployed; Mrs. Tormey worked for State of Wisconsin)

Anthony and Helen Post (dry cleaner)

This group was somewhat younger than the Laufenberg group (about 7-8 years younger), with the couples all in their 30s and having many small children. Like the Laufenberg group, this group was led by Sr. Winfriede.

3. The Days of Recollection in 1953

We need to imagine the pioneer situation of the Schoenstatt Family in the United States in 1953. The Schoenstatt Sisters had only arrived in 1949 and did not yet have their own house. It was only in July 1952 that the Milwaukee Province of the Pallottine Fathers had formally decided to make Schoenstatt its 'Outer Work' and began to assign Fathers to develop a Schoenstatt Movement. And it was only in June 1953 that the first shrine, in Madison, was finished.

Until this point in time, when the walls of the shrine stood ready for religious celebrations and talks, the couples met in their homes. The only retreat facilities available to the movement for days of recollection in the first half of 1953 was the second floor of the Pallottine Provincial House at Holy Cross, which was set aside for such retreats and days of recollection. The facilities at Queen of Apostles in Madison which sometimes served as an alternative, were not available at this time due to construction at the school.

Father Kentenich was asked to lead these days of recollection. Since his arrival in Milwaukee on June 21, 1952, he had been asked on various occasions by his Pallottine confreres to offer talks and spiritual insights on Schoenstatt. This was a genuine service to a province that had decided to make Schoenstatt its official apostolate, but in which many of the Pallottines were still unfamiliar with what Schoenstatt was and what its aims were. Father Joseph Haas, then the provincial superior, invited Father Kentenich to offer talks and even a small tertianship to the Milwaukee confreres to introduce them to Schoenstatt, and later invited him to offer other talks and days of recollection to the first groups, including the couples. Since his English was broken, Father Kentenich gave his talks in German. These were translated into English by one of the Pallottine Fathers like Father Otto Boenki or Father Nicholas Wilwers (two members of Schoenstatt's founding generation) or Sister M. Winfriede. For the days of recollection for families, Sr. Winfriede did the translating.

What were these days of recollection for families like? It was apparently the couples' first chance to hear Father Kentenich speak. The couples, primarily if not exclusively from the Laufenberg group, took this in as a supplement to their regular group meetings at their homes in Madison. How many couples made the two-hour drive to Milwaukee? At one point in a talk on February 15, 1953, Father Kentenich refers to 'eleven or twelve' listeners in front of him, indicating that about 5 or 6 couples were present. What were the couples like? As we have seen, the couples were age 40 or so and were in the midst of raising their children. They came from the typical Catholic background of that time in Madison: middle class with the basic catechism grounding in their faith. This common Catholic background brought together the rather wide array of professions held by the group members, ranging from meat-packer to electrician to plumbing wholesaler to attorney.

The format used for the days of recollection was a series of three or four talks on a Sunday morning and afternoon with lunch in between. Father Kentenich's choice of topic reflects his first contact with families in the United States. He focuses on the basic but important question of: What is a Schoenstatt Family? He also addressed concerns that were of interest to the couples, like issues in raising children and in the mutual relationship between husband and wife. Father Kentenich, in his characteristic style, then went on to stir a sense of the greatness of the mission to which the Blessed Mother was calling families in our time--from her Schoenstatt shrine.

Fr. Jonathan Niehaus
July 12, 1995

2. Letter from Santa Maria 1948 (Founding Document of the Family Movement)

C.Chr. urg.nos!¹

Santa Maria, 15.4.1948

It was a good idea to reserve Pentecost for yourselves again. The day is in keeping with the dignity and importance of the work for which you are being used as an instrument.

Since it is difficult even for individual people to let themselves be governed by grace, it may seem almost impossible to create a family according to the example of the Blessed Trinity or the Holy Family of Nazareth. It has always been difficult to do so. Our present-day world, however, which brings about the uprooting of stable living conditions everywhere, shows its destructive effects most fully within the sanctuary of the family. If our Blessed Mother wants to create a new human society and a new person from Schoenstatt, she must necessarily concentrate all her power and graces on creating and increasing strong Schoenstatt Families. That is why we pray in our Schoenstatt Office:

Your shrine is our Nazareth in which Christ the Sun shines warmly.

With its clear and radiant light it forms the history of the Holy Family, awakening quiet and strong workaday sanctity in happy family unity.

God wants to save families in the Nazareth for homeless times, and mercifully grant workaday sanctity when people consecrate themselves to Schoenstatt.

Mother, grant that Christ may shine more brightly in us. Unite us in a holy community. May we be prepared at all times for every sacrifice our holy mission requires of us.

May God the Father be joyfully honoured through Christ, with Mary, highly praised, in the Holy Spirit full of splendour, by all the universe for all eternity. Amen.

Whoever knows life today, whoever knows what terrible catastrophes are approaching for the world and Church, must be deeply convinced that the entire Schoenstatt Family, as a whole and in its individual parts, will not be able to carry out its mission unless every effort is finally directed towards creating holy islands of Schoenstatt families, who increasingly unite to form a single Family Movement.

In moments of calm deliberation it may sometimes seem an impenetrable mystery why our Lord spend thirty years in the loneliness of a family while the world around him rushed towards destruction. Involuntarily we might even ask ourselves what he could have achieved if he had placed his divine powers sooner at the service of the world. This problem can only be solved by the one answer: 'I always do what pleases the Father'. 'I speak the words that he has placed upon my lips, and I do the works that he gave me to do'. This immediately shifts the question and re-directs it to the Heavenly Father. The answer is not unknown to us. The Father unmistakably wants to safeguard the immeasurable blessing that goes out from genuine Christian families.

May our Lady in her Cenacle, therefore, intercede for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon you, so that you may understand the great importance of your God-given, freely chosen, and freely willed new task in life correctly. May you also receive the strength to carry into action the moral code laid down for families by the Popes in their encyclicals, to work out a useful spirituality and educational system for families, as well as to perpetuate tested and meaningful family customs. If you do this, you will become the vessel from which all the other sections of the Movement will be nourished and renewed.

All of us without exception are interested in this new miracle of Pentecost. Therefore, let us unite and pray fervently for a new and effective miracle of transformation. Take our Lady's picture with you and give her a place of honour in your homes. These will then become little shrines in which the picture of grace will mediate grace, create a holy family and form holy members of the family.

In the Founding Document our Blessed Mother promised to see to it that our country should again be placed at

¹ Caritas Christ urget nos! (2 Cor 5,14) A motto used in the Schoenstatt movement from the beginning.

the head of the Western world. We now know that this can only be achieved if we create holy Schoenstatt family islands. The MTA will carry out her promise if we carry out the conditions laid down in the Founding Document.

With warm regards and my blessing to all present and to all whom they represent.

J.K.