

## A Question about the Formation of Seminarians of the Schoenstatt Fathers (1966)

Fr. Joseph Kentenich,

Conversation with the General Council of the Schoenstatt Fathers, Mount Schoenstatt

Source: P. Joseph Kentenich *an seine Pars motrix*, Vol. 3 = 1966 (Mount Sion, 1989)

*The community bulletin (KN) reports that on this day “there was an extraordinary council meeting at Little Castle (Schlößchen) and on Mount Schoenstatt, where our father himself joined us for an entire afternoon.” The following passage about the formation of our vocations was recorded “almost perfectly” in shorthand by Fr. Klein; portions were published in the community bulletin (KN, July 27, 1966, p. 342-346).*

{213} If we, the older generation, do not sit firmly in the saddle, then the generation to come will create such insecurity in us that it will take us years to find a new foundation. A thought which I have already presented so many times, but which still moves me over and over again: You can see all of our people – whether the Sisters or the Brothers, the Ladies, or us as priests – we are approaching a time where only those who have firm foundations will be able to stand up to the times. As long as we still had a secure Catholic enclave, it was, of course, simple. One could ordain a priest at a young age. He entered a world which supported him and which he himself was able to support. But I think that the way the world is going [that will no longer be the case]. However, today things are not yet so far. It follows that one must be attentive to what, in the end, essentially co-determines the final image of the coming times, the final image of the overall structure. One’s deliberations ought to start with the final image in mind.

In practical terms this would mean: We must examine our outward development and our interior structures.

Outward development: Is it sufficient? Is what we are doing today the right thing? When we send our people out – and this applies to us as well – must we not first make sure that they are first of all a man, through and through, that they are sent out as men?

This was the psychology of Jesuitism: They consciously postponed ordination until later. I don’t know if they reflectively understood it to this extent, but: one is considered a man when one reaches 30 years old. Thirty years! If someone has been constantly going [through the Jesuit system] from atmosphere to atmosphere, then one can assume that this person can be sent into the world without any worries!

Of course, we should never do it in such a way that they are left alone. The battle which we must fight in life [is too strong]. It is irresponsible, it is inconceivable. Today one can still say that the times are not yet so godless. But {214} look at the coming times! And whoever is sent out, must first prove his faithfulness.

... Therefore, the answer to this is easy to give: We should try, since precisely today, where the exaggeration is present, the confusion – one extreme contradicting another – I would think, we ought to come with our people from atmosphere to atmosphere. It demands too much if we simply say: You must manage [on your own] today. I don’t think that this will work.

In addition comes something else – we already notice this with the Sisters – the vocations that come today are no longer from the solid families like they did years ago.

We must always [keep in mind] the final image. We cannot stop [by asking what we will do]

in the next step. Therefore, let me repeat again: Even if everything which the bishops suggest for the formation of the clergy would be implemented! I don't think it will have an effect.

I don't know if I can make this understandable to you so quickly. The ideal that is always before my mind's eye is the formulation – already for several years, that is, before I returned from the exile – the universal anticipation of the Church on the newest shores of the times. What does this mean? Of course this is another concept that is dangerous. It is otherwise usual to say that every family is a church in miniature. One can say that every association is a church in miniature. That is alright. But for us it is this way: In a certain sense we are the model for the Church of tomorrow. And if we do not go our way and shield ourselves from everything coming from the right and from the left, protect ourselves from everything which is hyper-modern, what does not fit [to our identity], then Schoenstatt will have lost its deepest mission...

*[The question comes up if we should imitate the Jesuits who, in their founding time, sent out their seminarians individually {215} or in small groups to different universities in order to form many people and to spread the young community. Our father:]*

I can say different things to that. It might still work because the substance is still there. But we have just been speaking about the most recent times. If you use the communities who existed in the Middle Ages or at the beginning of modern times as your point of comparison, you must always keep in mind: the atmosphere then was not the same as it is today. It was essentially a Catholic atmosphere, only partially negated. This made it a lot easier. Today you must simply expect – of course, always differentiate: we are not yet there! – a totally pagan atmosphere. This must be your starting point. If you do that, then I think...

I think I must add still one more thing: Yes, we should do it some day! Second, all the more since we should build our own university! We want all of this, don't we? If we believe in Schoenstatt's universal mission, we must do this; of course, then we must also have men who go out to all the other universities and study there with a strong awareness of how we are different. Do you know what this means: to study with a strong awareness of how different we are? Do you know what that means?

You see, today it is still possible. But is it advisable? And tomorrow it will no longer be possible. If you accept the premise that tomorrow everything will be infected, then we must shield our family from everything coming from the left and from the right; but with open doors and windows. In other words, not the way one jokingly says here and there about Schoenstatt: that today we are largely viewed as an out-of-date museum, a mausoleum. Whatever is stored in the mausoleum is no longer of any use today. I don't think that this image is correct, but it serves as a good explanation...

{216} Once more: I want to say in response to your question: Yes, today it could still be done, but I would advise against it because there is so much uncertainty in the universities today. For instance, I would have originally thought that we ought to send our young theology students to Switzerland, because I always thought: everything is still solid there...

We are standing in a time where one could make so many suggestions, and each of them would be more or less defensible. But I am rather inclined to make sure: stay together [in formation] as long as possible!...