

FATHERHOOD

BRIEF DEFINITION

Refer to video: *Fatherhood*

is the source of authority in the family. He has the primary power because he shares in God's procreative activity. The authority of the mother is only complementary and dependent on the father's (Father Kentenich, 1951).

IN THE GOSPELS

So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. (Mt 6; 32)

This is how you are to pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. (Mt 6; 10)

Philip said to him, "Master, show us the Father, and that will be enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you for so long a time and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on my own. The Father who dwells in me is doing his works.

Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else, believe because of the works themselves. (Mt 14:8-11)

A FATHER

A father may share in the qualities of God the Father, qualities which are not changeable; they are eternal.

A father generates life by his actions. Therefore, he is called to protect life and always be willing to do what is necessary for the healthy unfoldment of that life.

A father wants life and accepts life. He knows the life entrusted to him; he has insight into its development. Therefore, he tries to ensure that life grows and matures in the best way possible.

For Father Kentenich, the life that God called into existence through him was the Schoenstatt Family. For this family, he was willing to do and sacrifice everything.

OUR FATHER

Neither mother nor father with all their noble parental love could cherish their dearest child as deeply as I love this family chosen by God.

For its sake I would gladly give up my good name, life and limb, health, strength, and talents if it would better serve the family's interests and gain for it the crown of God's love and fruitfulness (*Heavenwards*).



In Schoenstatt's History Second Milestone

It was January 20, 1942. Fr. Kentenich was in a prison cell in Koblenz, Germany, imprisoned by the Nazis. He had been given a physical examination a few days earlier and had been determined healthy enough to go into the Dachau concentration camp. To go to the concentration camp meant almost certain death, especially for a Catholic priest. However, Fr. Kentenich had a weak lung; there was a chance that he could request to be examined again and be declared “unfit,” i.e. too weak, for the concentration camp. His followers, the priests and sisters, urged him to take this opportunity, to apply for the second examination and therefore avoid going to the concentration camp. They urged him to take this road in order to escape death and reach out for freedom, and be there for the family. The decision was very difficult for Fr. Kentenich. Again and again, he struggled to discover, “What does God want?” Let us listen to his own account of the situation:

That [the opportunity for a second examination] was for me a “dangerous thing.” Yes, why a dangerous thing for me? You see, now I had to consider: May you use this natural means to be saved from the concentration camp? I have to go back again to the covenant of love. I personally believed unshakably in the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother. This is for me a reality, much more real than perhaps the books or the table. It is a tangible reality.

You see, then I thought like this: It must be taken seriously. I took the covenant seriously, and the Blessed Mother also took it seriously. And what did she promise? (If we) surrender ourselves completely, then she will take care of the Work. Yes, and then I told myself: No, I do not want any more natural means; we have used enough natural means. They wrote letter after letter that I should have a physical examination. It would be certain death to go to the concentration camp; it meant to be murdered. And what would it mean for the whole movement? On one hand, I was shown that it was certain death for me; on the other hand, the movement would be ruined if I would die. Therefore, letter after letter, one after the other. (...)

For me it was inner security: No, I will not use more natural means; I want to go to the concentration camp because the condition is that we surrender ourselves completely, (...) now surrender ourselves to her completely until death. She must do everything else. (...) You understand that was simply a supernatural attitude; everything natural fell away. The bare supernatural ground, the firm conviction: the covenant of love was real, the Blessed Mother had obliged herself, and there was nothing else for me to do but to surrender myself to her totally. (Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *On Monday Evenings* Vol. 1: *To Live out of the Covenant of Love*, pp. 76-78).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- Father Kentenich's love for the family was radical; this account of January 20, 1942 shows it clearly. When we think of our responsibilities as leaders, with our groups, branches, in our dioceses, or in our parishes, where can we imitate Father Kentenich's total dedication to the family?
- What are we willing to sacrifice for the sake of Schoenstatt's growth, for the sake of those we lead and inspire?
- Make a list of the attitudes that characterize Father Kentenich's decision of January 20, 1942. Choose one of those attitudes and discuss how to become a leader who embodies that attitude.
- In covenant with the MTA Fr. Kentenich surrendered all his life's strength for the family. Think of one highly demanding experience as a leader. What can you learn from Fr. Kentenich's attitude for any such future experience you have to confront?

IN FATHER KENTENICH'S WORDS

A SCHOENSTATT LEADER

must be completely dedicated to the companions, to all the companions. He must be willing to give all what he has to the companions – to become more and more one heart and one soul with the companions. Yes, we must be willing to give our lives for our companions, too (Fr. Kentenich to the Schoenstatt Boys in Milwaukee, 1963).

Father Kentenich shared with the couples in Milwaukee

about the events surrounding January 20, 1942. Already in 1956, he acknowledged:

... the history of Schoenstatt concentrated on part of the story of my personal life. This meant practically: As representative! The story of my life became the story of the family. Yes, now I should actually tell a great, novel-like story so that we take it all in... (Fr. Joseph Kentenich, *On Monday Evenings* Vol. 1: *To Live out of the Covenant of Love*, p. 67)

We pray from *Heavenwards*:

My fate is so interwoven with the family's that all who praise it must praise me and all who despise it must despise me, too— so much must we be seen as one! O God, may my right hand wither, should I forget you, Schoenstatt.

Whatever the family does which pleases God and whoever enters as a new child into its ranks touches me as if it were my very life— it is, will ever be, my second self on earth. O God, may my right hand wither, should I forget you, Schoenstatt (*Heavenwards*, 152).

LEARNING FROM OUR HISTORY

On January 20, 1967, Father Kentenich said to the Schoenstatt Family:

We spontaneously recall January 20, 1942, the 25th anniversary of which we celebrate today. Evaluating this day, we perceive it as the axis around which our whole [Schoenstatt] family history revolves. It is well-founded to state that whatever happened before January 20th aimed at this day, and whatever followed is to be considered as its effect. Evidently, we do have a slight notion of its import...

My dear Schoenstatt Family, this is the event, this is the wonderful gift which God lavished upon us, namely, that we grew into the supernatural reality. We may at least repeat the words written on the second [historical] milestone with the date of January 20, 1942: Standing in divine confidence!

Every human source and cause of confidence and hope has been deliberately pushed aside. They have been pushed aside deliberately! Only one word stands before us, divine confidence...

It was [also] a deed, an extraordinary act of strict self-denial, not only an attitude of self-denial... A deed of strict self-denial! For both head and members, it was a question of life and death. For the head of the Family, it was a death-leap, most likely a leap into mortal death. Indeed, an extraordinary deed of self-denial! (...)

DURING HIS DACHAU TIME

Father Kentenich not only suffered for the Family, he also:

- ◆ kept extensive communication with leaders and members of the Family
- ◆ Founded new communities and groups of Schoenstatt
- ◆ Inspired his followers and helped them reach out for the highest in the midst of distressing circumstances
- ◆ Established new contacts for future expansion
- ◆ Wrote down directives and the rich texts of prayers of *Heavenwards*.

Fatherhood and Leadership Today

The leader must be totally dedicated to the members of the group...

A Schoenstatt leader must be completely dedicated to the companions, to all the companions. He must be willing to give all what he has to the companions – to become more and more one heart and one soul with the companions. Yes, we must be willing to give our lives for our companions, too.

This is a high, higher, highest task.

Recording, Father J. Kentenich, June 30, 1963.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

- ◆ How are my communication skills, and with my group?
- ◆ Am I ready to start new groups or reach out to those who have not come to meetings for a long time?
- ◆ How do I prepare the material for meetings, gatherings, or celebrations?
- ◆ Do I keep contact with the diocese, with my pastor, and others who may benefit from knowing about our apostolate?
- ◆ Do I let myself be inspired by the prayers found in *Heavenwards*?

LEARNING FROM THE PRESENT TIME

The father loses his place in the home and in the family, as authority loses its strength and recognition in society. Many of the responsibilities are passed on to institutions, authority is given to the mass opinion through social networks. More and more the father figure loses ground. With the disintegration of the fatherly figure comes the disintegration of the family. Even the experience of personal development and growth in striving for independence after knowing what is shelteredness, understanding, and forgiveness, can only come from living under the care of a father.

Without fatherliness there can be neither calm nor order, there can be no freedom in the world. Without fatherliness, the most practicable way to God has been blocked (Fr. Kentenich, Study 1952 (Cf. *Regnum*, 1975, 80ff) in *Rediscovering the Father*, 151).


Under normal circumstances, without the profound experience of being the child of a father (or of someone who substitutes for the father) on the natural level, it is extremely difficult to have a supernatural father experience and father image (Fr. Kentenich, *Forming the New Person*, 18).



LEAD FROM THE SHRINE TO LOVE FOR THE FATHER

“We could also say that the special mission of the dear Blessed Mother here in the shrine is to take care that she will give us a real sense for the Father-God and educate us to be genuine Father-children. Isn’t it true, we are used to it—we usually say—that the Blessed Mother leads us to the Savior. But that is not enough. Where there are Schoenstatt Shrines, there are the Blessed Mother’s centers of education (she leads us) in the Savior to the Father.

“You see, from this point of view, we also understand much better that one specific grace from the shrine consists in our becoming children of Divine Providence *per eminentiam*. To be a child of Divine Providence and to be a Father-child is always the same because the degree in which I am child of Divine Providence, I place the reins of my life into the hands of the Father-God” (Fr. Kentenich, June 1956, *On Monday Evenings*, #21, 188).





WHAT IS TOTAL DEDICATION TO THE GROUP?

*For Father Kentenich the groups are places where mainly three experiences should take place: being at home, renewal, and growth — just like the three miracles that take place in the shrine. Paraphrased from *Forming the New Person*, 1951:*

The group an **experience of home**: For our father the material, talks, reflections, retreats, and so on will only be effective and fruitful in the soul as long as they go hand in hand with experiences, life experiences. Therefore, the kindness and goodness of our MTA, the being at home in the shrine, and the fatherly love and concern of the founder can best be experienced through the leaders. To the extent that a leader has a living connection to the shrine, finds a home in the heart of the MTA, makes frank efforts to see God behind the happenings of daily life, and is nurtured by the original source of the founder's words and teachings, the group will recognize a sure source of information, formation, guidance, and most of all, will experience Schoenstatt live in a person.

The group a **place of renewal**: In his talks from 1951, compiled in *Forming the New Person*, Father Kentenich speaks intensely of the needs of our times. Among other things he mentions how humanity has always experienced profound renewals as a fruit of the life unfolded in small cells, in small groups. All the great revolutions and turning points in the history of humanity fermented in a small circle of people. Because Schoenstatt is a movement of renewal it depends on the life of small groups, small communities who make Schoenstatt's mission of moral and religious renewal their own. Practically speaking, it means that without some kind of community life something of Schoenstatt's message is not fully transmitted, given on. We can have many individuals, who belong to Schoenstatt in different areas. They might even be attached to a nearby shrine. However, whether Schoenstatt will set roots and become fruitful for the Church and world in that area will depend on the leaders' manner of bringing the different members – scattered as they may be – together for simple but concrete community experiences. It may very well be the covenant renewal once a year or once a month. It may be an anniversary, the blessing of a home shrine, or a pilgrimage. Whatever it may be, it is always necessary to provide a little of this community experience.

The group a **place of growth**: If we really want Schoenstatt to fulfill its mission through each of its members we need to find creative ways of unfolding the originality of our charism in new circumstances, in newer times, in less crowded regions, in ever changing ethnic circles, and so on. All of this is part of our growth. The leader has to dedicate time and strength and discover when it's time to upgrade or to preserve things. Father Kentenich proposed already in 1934, "In the same way in which the community of the first Christians needed to be creative in order to continue growing [and not remain stagnant], the small groups in Schoenstatt – and in the Church in general – need to be creative."