

September 15, 2009
Homily by Rector Hans Schnocks, Berg Moriah

Dear Schoenstatt Family,

Today, we commemorate the death of our Father and Founder, his “going home” to the Heavenly Father, in the year of the priest and in preparation for his 100th priestly jubilee. For this reason, we want to look at him as a priest, which means as a priest in whom we may recognize the features of Christ. The priest represents Christ not only in administering the sacraments and in proclaiming the good news, but his entire priestly life is to be an imitation of Christ. So, too every Christian is called upon to be a reflection of Christ.

An example of Christ revealing his features is especially illustrated in the life of St. Francis as depicted in the murals in the Church of San Francesco in Assisi. In the upper church the famous painter Giotto¹ has portrayed the life of Francis, not in an historical manner, but rather to make it clear that Christ was present in the life of St. Francis. For example, the scene depicting his receiving the stigmata on Mount Alverno, is portrayed as a type of Transfiguration or the transfer of his body to Assisi is patterned after Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The images reflect the conviction that Francis is an image of Christ. Christ is experiential in him. In this regard, we want to look at how our Father and Founder also reflected the special features of Christ. For the moment, just a few exemplary aspects may be singled out.

The Sermon on the Mount comes to mind when reflecting on the homilies and talks given by our Founder, namely that Jesus spoke with “authority”. Indeed, our Founder spoke powerful words because his word and his life were in agreement. With a grin, it may be added that our father followed the example of Jesus closely when giving his homilies; for it states in the Gospel that Jesus spoke *at great length* to the people.

Crowds flocked to Jesus in order to listen to him; still, at the same time, Jesus turned his interest to the individual in a very personal manner. Scores of people came to listen to our father and yet, he was all ears, totally attentive to the individual, as if he or she was the only person in the world. How many did he assist in discerning their vocation, encouraging them to courageously follow their way?

The life of Jesus circled totally around the will of the Father, to the point that it was even *“his food to do the will of the Father”*. Searching for God’s will through practical faith in Divine Providence was a part of the existential content of our Founder’s life. The demeanor of Jesus as Son, that is to say, his attitude as a child toward his Father was also evident in our father and founder. Msgr. Dresbach tells how on one occasion in the Dachau concentration camp he said to Father: “You are a real child,” and Father answered: “Yes, I am the greatest child!”

The disciples, whom Jesus gathered around himself, were the people “that the Father had given”, for whom he had prayed, inclusive of those who would one day follow Him on account of the disciple’s words. Our father also saw every Schoenstatt member as given to him by God. He asked for them from the Blessed Mother, not excluding those who would come in the future. Jesus cared for an intimate community of life and destiny with the disciples until his death. Similarly, our founder’s relationship to his followers and his total devotion to them manifested Christ’s own. Out of a relationship with him, out of a bond wherein he fostered freedom, many

¹ **Giotto di Bondone** (c. 1267 – January 8, 1337), better known simply as **Giotto**, was an Italian painter and architect from Florence in the late Middle Ages.

vocations developed through his selfless service. We will allow his own words to clarify his attachment to his Family, as stated in Heavenwards:

We are closely united in Christ Jesus,
Deeply united in his holy wounds -
We, his members, and he, the mighty Head:
This is the message which no one can take from us.^{2*}

And: If he chooses that my life become the ransom,
I joyfully place it at his disposal.
In return, may all who have dedicated themselves to you
And Schoenstatt live with the Blessed Trinity forevermore. Amen.³

A young woman on the way to becoming a Sister of Mary explained to our father that she had a close relationship to Christ, but was lacking in a relationship with the Blessed Mother. In turn, our father responded that she should foster a relationship to the whole Christ -- and that included his Mother. For Jesus is not only a child of the Father, but also a child of the Mother. With no other human being is Jesus so intimately united as with his mother, Mary. From childhood on and especially as he was almost nine years old, our father was so united to the Blessed Mother so that he could say that no other person had a deeper influence on him as the dear Mother of God.

As a final point of comparison to the exemplary life of Jesus, we look once again at the intimate relationship of Jesus to the Father. Jesus is not only associated with the father, but proclaimed the Father to us, in him the Father is manifested. Whoever sees Him, sees the Father. It is especially easy for us to experience God the Father in our Founder. Repeatedly, he told us about the merciful, loving Father God and embodied him in his life himself. For this reason, the word "father" rings so true to the many who experienced the fatherliness of our Founder. As regards this beautiful title, we find ourselves in good company. I may once again come back to St. Francis, who was usually known as Brother Francis. But Francis is much more frequently referred to in the *Fioretti*-- the ancient legends that give us clear knowledge as to the original lifestyle of the early brothers-- as "holy father". Thus the term "Holy Father" does not designate the Pope but rather, St.. Francis.

I remember an ordination in Rome in Sant 'Ignazio - a former intern of mine was to be ordained - he had completed his training in Rome at the Jesuit run Germanicum. During the ceremony, the Litany of the Saints was sung. Ignatius, the founder of their Order, was referred to as "Holy Father Ignatius". A footnote in the Order of Worship noted that the Jesuits have the privilege to call their founder "Holy Father".

I am not talking here about privileges, however if even the Kolping Family can self-understood call Adolf Kolping, "Father Kolping", then it is certainly true that our Founder, as a special figure of Christ, most certainly may be called "Father". Amen.

Translation: Sr. M. Angela Macari
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² Heavenwards, p. 129. American Edition (Version 4.0)

³ Heavenwards, p. 139. American Edition (Version 4.0)