

Milwaukee04: Golden Jubilee of the Exile Shrine

Our Gift-in-Return to the Church

The Mission of the Exile Shrine for the Post-Conciliar Church

Talk on Sunday, July 11, 2004

by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus

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Introduction

My dear Schoenstatt Family!

Johannes Brahms, the great composer, had a gruff exterior. But this only added to the surprise effect of his mischievous sense of humor.

One day in his later years, Brahms met a friend he had not seen for several months and told him: "While you were away I started many things, serenades, parts of songs and so on, but nothing worked out well. Then I thought: I am too old. I have worked long and hard and have achieved enough. Here I have before me a carefree old age and can enjoy it in peace. I resolved to compose no more."

The face of Brahms' friend fell and he exclaimed in disbelief: "Compose no more!"

The great composer smiled and went on: "And that made me so happy, so contented, so delighted that all at once the writing began to flow again¹."

When Father Kentenich arrived in Milwaukee in 1952 he had lived a long and fruitful life and, like Brahms, could have thought of carefree old age and a peaceful twilight of life. But this was not his way. The very reason he was sent into exile was because he loved the Church and saw grave dangers threatening to undermine the work of the Gospel. He could no more stop working for the mission of the Church than Brahms could stop composing.

When Father Kentenich returned to Germany in 1965 at the end of the exile, he invested the final years of his life to helping his Schoenstatt Family engage in the mission of the Church in the modern world. It did not matter that in the past 14 years the Church had treated him and his work harshly. What mattered was the mission of the Church he loved.

Before we return home to our different countries at the end of this Jubilee celebration, I think we have a responsibility to ask what our father and founder expects as the **forward-looking fruit of this jubilee** and of **us, his Schoenstatt Family**.

¹ Cf. Herbert V. Prochnow, *The Toastmaster's Handbook* (New York, 1949), p. 348.

I think it is fair to say that the expectation of our father and founder is this: that we, with grateful hearts for the abundant gifts given to us by the Church, **must give the Church a gift in return.** And what might this gift be? Put simply:

**the presence of our MTA,
the place of grace, our Shrine,
our father and founder as prophet of the new shore
and the exile and its legacy.**

Or let me begin differently. This jubilee is an occasion when we give thanks for four very special gifts. In one way or another we owe each of them to the Church. They are:

- ! Mary – for without the Church we would not know her,
nor be able to build on such a rich tradition of Marian devotion and life.
- ! Our Shrine (in particular the Exile Shrine) – for without the Church
this Shrine would not have been dedicated and been made a place of grace.
- ! Father Kentenich – for without the Church he would not have been a priest
and we would never have known him or his unique priestly fatherhood.
- ! Even the exile – for God used the Church as his instrument to provide our history
with the “privileged space” of the 14 years of exile, complete with blessings
beyond count, such as the home shrine, the heroism of Sr. Emilie, John
Pozzobon, Gilbert Schimmel, Mario Hiriart, and a clear understanding of
what Schoenstatt is – “head, heart and home².”

If we look at it this way, does not this jubilee stir our hearts to gratitude for the vast riches which Holy Mother Church has given us? Indeed, even the suffering of Schoenstatt at the hands of the Church brought great blessings. Our greatest gift-in-return would follow the same lines. We cannot help but want to offer the Church today the same treasures which she gave us long ago:

- ! Mary.
- ! The Shrine.
- ! Father.
- ! Our exile legacy.

Indeed, if great gifts are tasks, then the gifts we have received imply a great task for the Church.

***Note on the Text Booklet “For the Church”:** To help unfold some of the features of this gift-in-return, I have compiled a booklet of quotes by Fr. Kentenich from 1965-68. The quotes have been chosen 1) to shed light on Schoenstatt’s mission for the Church, especially after the Second Vatican Council, and 2) to provide insight into how our founder connected this mission with the exile.*

During this talk I will not read from the booklet, but refer to many of its key passages. The texts are numbered from 1 to 41, and relevant cross-references will be indicated in this script by the numbers in parentheses. I would then encourage you to not only re-read this talk

² This was a phrase that was coined during the exile (1955) as a result of the struggles in Germany over which elements were essential to the being and life of Schoenstatt.

later, looking up the texts, but to also read the text booklet in its own right, reflecting light on our contribution – TODAY – to the future of the Church.

1. Why We Love the Church

Let us begin with the question of the Church: Why should we concern ourselves with giving a gift in return *to the Church*? She is held in so little esteem today that one might think such a gift mere sentimentality or misguided conservatism. Why not focus our gift on society or culture? Or science and progress? Or the betterment of the world?

Our reason is clear: We owe everything to the Church. The very life of our souls – the gift of grace – is mediated to us by her. There is no salvation without her. But as a movement we also owe everything to the Church. Schoenstatt was born in the heart of the Church with a mission taken right from the heart of the Church. Anything we have to offer for the renewal of society, culture, science, politics or world-betterment only has value if it comes *from the Church*. In our 90 years of existence we have learned to hold in high esteem the Church as Bride of Christ, as our Mother, and as God’s instrument of salvation for the whole world.

Moreover, we owe our existence to our covenant of love with Mary, who is *the Mother of the Church*. When Christ said from the Cross, “Woman, behold your son. Behold your Mother!” (Jn 19,26f) he bound Mary to the Church in an indissoluble covenant. Looked at as children of the Church, our life of grace is infinitely richer with her than without her. And looked at as covenant partners of our MTA who love her with all our heart, we see that *she* desires our cooperation so that *she* can fulfill her mission in the Church of today. Our own hearts burn with the desire to turn the words of the Founding Document into a joyful refrain of love to Our Lady: “MTA, do not worry about the fulfillment of your desires! We will do everything we can to help you fulfill your mission for the Church!”

1.1. Father Kentenich’s Love for the Church – Tested and Proven in the Exile

Finally, our reason for wanting to give a gift of love to the Church is no more difficult to find than in a visit to the object of our celebration: the *Exile Shrine*. Here our father and founder was tested and found worthy in many regards, but most especially in his *love for the Church*. The very reason he confronted the Church on May 31, 1949 was out of love for her. The “crusade of organic thinking, loving and living” had no other purpose than to restore the vigor of the Church so that she can fulfill her mission in our times. That the years of silent suffering in Milwaukee were unmarred by bitterness – and indeed radiate joy and confidence to us even after all these years! – is a testimony to his understanding of the lofty purpose of his love. In fact, when it was all over and he was called back to Rome, he had no better “revenge” than to promise to Pope Paul VI that he and his movement would do everything in their power to help realize the mission of the post-conciliar Church³ – all past injuries were forgiven!

The final embodiment of his love for the Church was a heartfelt wish, first expressed in a letter to the Holy Office in 1962 (during one of the darkest hours of the exile), and repeated to the Schoenstatt Family in the first days after his return to Germany. It was the wish that the inscription on his tombstone read: *Dilexit Ecclesiam* – he loved the Church! His motivation was not merely to underline a feature of his personality, but to mark the “doorposts” of the new era of the Church. In the text booklets, you will find him say (on December 31, 1965):

³ A promise made during his audience with Pope Paul VI on December 22, 1965, and one of which he constantly reminded the Schoenstatt Family during his first months after returning of exile.

(Text 1) It is absolutely clear that we are at the threshold of a new era in our family history. (...) More than anything else I would like to write on the coming years, on the doorposts of the coming years and decades the words I once wrote for the Holy Office: *Dilexit Ecclesiam*. (...) I would like to have these words engraved on my tombstone and to know that they will be remembered in the times to come: *Dilexit Ecclesiam* – he loved the Church, the Church which nailed the family to the cross.

In a further text (also December 31, 1965) he speaks of the particular meaning which this “*Dilexit Ecclesiam*” should have in the situation after the exile:

(Text 3) Truly, *Dilexit Ecclesiam!* Love for the Church has urged us to call this work into existence, or better: God decided to give us this mission for the Church’s well-being. *Dilexit Ecclesiam* – love for the Church has urged us even to go the Lord’s way of the cross, to accept the cross and crucifixion of Our Lord from the Church. *Dilexit Ecclesiam!*

Dilexit Ecclesiam! Love for the Church now urges us to love with infinite tenderness the same Church which persecuted us, to forget the past, and to now work with all our might so that our family would fulfill its great mission to help the Church victoriously reach the shore of the newest world, that is, to realize the ideal of the new Church, of the Church on the newest shore.

This is an astonishing quote. While totally aware of the great suffering caused by the exile – he uses the image of being “nailed to the cross” (see also 2) – he calls on the family to “forget the past” and to forgive, so as to “help the Church victoriously reach the shore of the newest world...” Behind these words are an act of faith in Divine Providence: that the exile was part of God’s plan to prepare Schoenstatt to be able to *help the Church realize her mission in the newest times*.

1.2. The Challenges Facing the Church Today

If this act of faith is well-founded, then we can expect to find clues in the legacy of Father’s exile and in the heritage of our Exile Shrine – clues that will help us love the Church today. And we must admit that the Church today faces extraordinary challenges. Let me remind you of just a few:

– *challenges from the outside:*

secularism, religious indifference, individual freedom made supreme over truth
neo-paganism⁴, direct hostility to Christian faith and morals
breakdown of the family, lack of respect for life, assaults on the sanctity of marriage

⁴ For just one example, see Zenit.org News Agency, “The Return of Paganism,” February 9, 2004. “Denmark has announced it will allow a group that worships Thor, Odin and other Norse gods to conduct legally-valid marriages, the Associated Press reported Nov. 5 (2003). ‘It would be wrong if the indigenous religion of this country wasn’t recognized,’ said Tove Fergo, the government Minister for Ecclesiastic Affairs and a Lutheran priest.”

– *challenges from within:*
scandal, polarization, willful dissent
erosion of faith and morals
vocation shortages in the priesthood, religious life, to holy marriage

The spectrum of challenges facing the Church today is so broad and profound that one might wonder if she has a real chance to be more than just window dressing in a rapidly secularizing world. And yet, in the United States alone, this Easter (2004) was witness to an enormous influx of some 150,000 new Catholics into the Church, not counting infant baptisms. There seems to be a paradox at work: Even as society becomes more secular, it becomes “hungrier” for God.

In the end, I cannot help but think of our own father and founder’s diagnosis of the times – the *uprootedness and homelessness of modern man* that is tearing apart the very fabric of culture, of personal happiness, even of religion. It was the urgent acuteness of this affliction that finally drove him to seek out highest Church authorities in the events surrounding May 31, 1949, and risk his entire life’s work. Why? Because what was at stake was nothing less than the long-range vitality of the Church and its sacred mission to bring salvation to the whole world. As I described it two years ago during our 2002 Jubilee celebration:

Fr. Kentenich, too, saw the erosion of Catholic faith by modern culture (...). At its root was the *ultimate homelessness of the modern soul* (...). The soul needs *roots, attachments*, even and especially *human attachments* which, while they can be prone to excess, are essential and must be wisely directed. Otherwise the modern soul – and the modern Church and world – cannot enter into an attachment to God or overcome the void and unhappiness of a godless society⁵.

This task remains undone. Indeed, all around us we can see that the breakdown of attachments is leading to a meltdown of even the most basic institutions of society like marriage and openness to new life in the family. Like Father Kentenich we understand that the Church alone, with the healing power of Christ and the Gospel, can heal such deep wounds. Even in our awareness of the weakness of the Church, we know that we must love her as our founder did – and become part of the answer, giving her our gift-in-return.

2. Point of Reference: The Post-Vatican-II Church

At first blush, connecting the jubilee of a shrine built ten years before the Council with Vatican II (1962-65) might seem out-of-place. But there are good reasons for doing so. I have three that I want to emphasize today:

1. Nothing has so shaped the landscape of the Church today – both positively and negatively – as Vatican II. As the most dramatic turning-point in modern Church history, it set forces in motion which we must appreciate so that our gift to the Church is “on the mark.”

⁵ Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, “We Welcome Father Kentenich,” talk of June 21, 2002. In: *Milwaukee 2002: Your Gift, Our Mission. Leaders’ Convention, June 20-23, 2002* (Waukesha, 2002), p. 10-24, here p. 18.

2. Father Kentenich was deeply convinced of the importance of Vatican II for the Church. He understood the fundamental theme of the Council envisioned by Bl. Pope John XXIII – to make the modern Church a full and effective player in shaping the modern world from the vitality of the Gospel. *And* he knew that this was ultimately the same mission that God had given to Schoenstatt in 1914. In this light, our founder’s promise to Pope Paul VI in 1965 – that Schoenstatt will do all it can to help realize the aims of the Council – is a reminder that we cannot just ignore it.

3. Divine Providence allowed the end of the Council and the end of the exile to coincide, both concluding in December 1965. God chose to set Schoenstatt and our founder free not in time to join the deliberations of the Council⁶ but rather right at the moment when the much more challenging *post-conciliar era of the Church* began. In fact, the very lessons of the exile can lead us to believe that God intended Schoenstatt’s contribution to Vatican II to be much more than a talk at the Council or a paragraph in a Council document. It is nothing short of helping the Church find her way to what our Father liked to call the “newest shore of the times,” or – in short – the “new shore.”

2.1. Vatican II – Light and Dark

It is not the purpose of this talk to go into depth about the mission and message of Vatican II. Nor can we do more than scratch the surface of what Father Kentenich saw as important in the Council and in Schoenstatt’s post-conciliar contribution to the Church. I will have to leave it to you to study the topic on your own. To this end, I have included some texts in the text booklet that you may find helpful for your own study (Texts 4-14).

For our purposes here it will have to suffice to quickly sketch a few broad features of the Council and its mission. It was ultimately a Council about the “Church in the modern world⁷.” Even while maintaining the sound footings of her 2000-year history, the Council was concerned with freeing the Church from a certain “bunker mentality” that kept it from being in dialogue with the world – and thereby from uplifting the world with the Gospel and the work of salvation. The Church therefore had to grow from a more static self-understanding to a more *dynamic* and mobile one. Her unity needed to grow from uniformity to a richer *pluriformity*. And her apostolate, so long carried by the priests and religious, needed to expand in appropriate ways to engage the *laity*. All in all, if this effort succeeded, the benefit would be nothing less than the restoration of a genuine “Christian soul” to modern culture, politics, family life, etc.

But the effort also exposed the Church to very tangible perils. “Dynamic” can also become a buzz-word for endless, soul-numbing change. “Pluriformity” can also become the hiding place for a “live-and-let-live” relativism, robbing the Gospel of its strength. “Engaging the laity” can be misunderstood as rejecting the distinctive charisms of the priesthood and religious life. It did not take long after Vatican II for negative side-effects to throw the Church into confusion. Indeed, one of the great blessings of our founder’s long life was the fact that he lived to help guide his family through three years of this turmoil.

⁶ There are many examples of priests and theologians who had been under censures of the Holy Office in the 1950s (such as Yves Congar) who were effectively restored to good grace by the opening of the Council in 1962, and took an active part in its proceedings.

⁷ In fact, its final document, *Gaudium et spes*, was called the “Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World.”

A result of his steady leadership was a constant reminder of the positive purpose of the Church set forth by Vatican II, and a realistic eye for the perils. Based on the quotes (from Father's last three years!) that I have in our text booklet, let me give just a brief outline of some of the main features:

List 1: Father Kentenich's Views of Vatican II

- 1) Vatican II has a positive mission: "Open the doors..." (4)
 - The mission of the Church to reach the world of today (4, 12)
 - "Christ will and must be the soul of the newest times!" (4)
 - = "Church on the newest shore" (3, 4, 9, 10, 23, see also 5, 11)
- 2) Vatican II has caused negative side-effects:
 - "a complete confusion of opinions" (5)
 - like the "teenage years" (5, 6, 7, 28)
 - like a revolution, caused by pent-up life (6, 41)
- 3) Schoenstatt has an essential contribution to make to realizing the mission of Vatican II
 - a) to help the Church accomplish her positive mission
 - b) to help her overcome the negative side-effects
 by tapping into the vitality which God has given Schoenstatt in Dachau and the exile

2.2. Vatican II – Toward a New “Day”

What should become clear is that Fr. Kentenich did not confuse a short-term time of turmoil with the long-term fruitfulness of the Council. In fact, even during the Council itself, many observers of Church history gave the reminder that the greatest councils of the Church were typically followed by a phase (perhaps forty or fifty years in length) of confusion or even rejection of the results. After Vatican II it did not take long to see that many of the first fruits were negative, but Fr. Kentenich did not lose faith in the Council because of it. God's hand would show more strongly after an interlude, a time which he described as lasting "decades" (4) – but with a horizon that stretches out to "centuries" (also 4)⁸.

Our founder variously describes this **interlude** as a time of confusion, revolution, or like the "teenage years" (5-7). It will be long, but of limited duration, after which one can expect the Council's real fruitfulness to begin (25), a time which he calls the "Church on the newest shore" (3). Our attitude and actions (maturity or immaturity) can hasten or delay the coming of this time of fruitfulness (28). It is Schoenstatt's mission to be a positive factor in this interlude and to serve a certain model character when the Church does reach the **next juncture** (8-11).

Because the "interlude" and the "next juncture" play such an important role in grasping our post-conciliar mission for the Church, I feel compelled to coin a new term which can help us grasp this phase more readily. I wish to pattern my word after the idea of the "interregnum." An interregnum is the time between two kings. When one king dies or abdicates and before the next king accedes to the throne, there is a distinct and sometimes difficult time where many things are

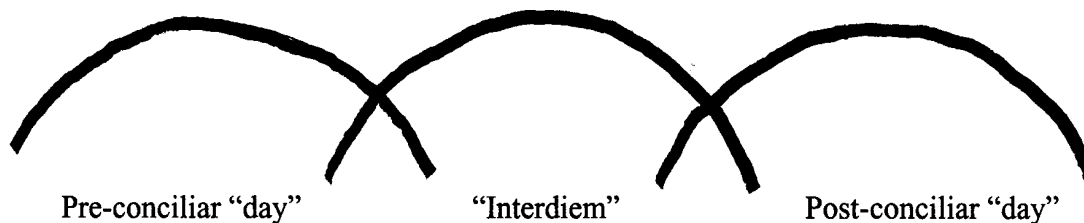
⁸ See also Fr. Kentenich to the Schoenstatt Priests, Dec. 28, 1965: "I would say that we will need 20, 30, maybe 50 years until the negative side-effects of the Council are overcome" (*Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 2, p. 68). For other examples, see also ("50 years") *Propheta...*, Vol. 1, p. 169 (Dec. 26, 1965); ("centuries") *Propheta...*, Vol. 1, p. 107 (Dec. 8, 1965) = *Exile Legacy Book*, p. 113; and Rudolf Weigand, "Symbolische Grundsteinlegung des Romheiligtums," in: *Oktoberwoche 1990*, p. 84.

in transition. The longer the interregnum, the more difficult it usually is, especially if there is a power struggle over who will be the next king. In parallel, let us consider the transition of a Council to be like the time between two “days.” The **first “day”** is the Church before the Council, with its own synthesis of Gospel life, its own energy, its own fruitfulness; the **second “day”** is the Church once it reaches the new maturity identified by a synthesis, energy and fruitfulness rooted in the actions of Vatican II. But in between lies the time, about a generation in length, that we can call the

interdiem,

that is, the time “between the days” (Latin: *dies* = day). I do not want to call this era “night,” for such a thing would portray too darkly a time in which many elements of light and growth are also seen. But many of the features of an interregnum are also typical of an interdiem: confusion, internal strife, unusually high levels of fear for the future, taking the law into one’s own hands, power struggles. We have “been there, done that” now for 40 years since Vatican II.

But the importance of using the word “interdiem” is to remind ourselves it is only a transition: a new “day” will dawn. The sequence of events could be sketched out this way: Notice that the arches overlap. The ebb and flow of history typically leads to an overlap.



Because of this, one is hard-pressed to put precise dates on when one era ends and another begins. The dates of the Council are clear (1962-65), but the transition into the post-conciliar era, although unusually swift by historical standards, was not immediate and everywhere uniform. And when it comes to the beginning of the post-conciliar “day,” who can say? Forty years after the Council, we can suppose that we have already entered the next “overlap,” but there is much around us that indicates the confusion and immaturity typical of the interdiem is still with us. As Fr. Kentenich notes:

(Text 25) The first effects of the Council will probably be largely negative. You can only expect the overall fruit of the Council when this next era [the “interdiem”!] has come to a close. But when will it end? When? We do not know. We only know that we must be the watchers on the towers of the times.

A benefit of using the term “interdiem” is that it helps us more quickly appreciate that so much of what Fr. Kentenich said immediately after the Council is actually directed at the time *after the interdiem*. That is, the ideal of the “Church on the newest shore of the times” is not actually so much directed to the time right after the Council (in spite of the great euphoria which Vatican II generated, leading many to think that the Church was “finally” at the new shore), as it is to the new “day,” that is, post-interdiem. This gives a new urgency to his message today – in 2004. Even as we celebrate this jubilee of the Exile Shrine – indeed, even as the new Rome

Shrine is about to be blessed on the ground which our founder blessed at the end of Vatican II – the interdiem draws near to its close. Signs of a more balanced and vibrant life are multiplying in the Church, carried by the younger generation that did not experience Vatican II at all. We must be ready, for the hour when Schoenstatt’s contribution is most crucial for the Church will soon be upon us.

3. What is Schoenstatt’s Contribution to the Post-Conciliar “Day”?

This leads to the question: *What will Schoenstatt’s contribution be to the dawning of the new post-conciliar “day” of the Church? And: Where will we find this contribution modeled for us?*

The answer may surprise us: It is not only our spirituality in general, that is, “in the shadow of the shrine” in general. No, our specific contribution to a Church facing extraordinary challenges in the decades and centuries to come is *the very same as the features etched by the MTA into the face of Schoenstatt in the exile years, that is, lived by the Schoenstatt Family – whether in Milwaukee or anywhere else in the world – in the shadow of the Exile Shrine.* Our father and founder even gives reason to believe (see sum total of text booklet) that God allowed Schoenstatt to be formed in such a sequence of trials, precisely to be a **gift to the Church in her effort to reach the “new shore.”**

To get behind this daring interpretation of Divine Providence, let me give the word to our father and founder. The setting is his first October 18 after the end of the Council and the exile; it is October 18, 1966. He is speaking to the Schoenstatt Family, beginning with an observation about the abrupt nature of the whole “change in times” brought by the 20th Century:

(Text 22) Why is [the Church] suffering [today]? Because she must now make the transition from the old times into these absolutely new times which are so desperately disjointed from the old times, or reject [the old times] altogether. The Church begins once more, we would almost like to say, to be born again so that *she* can give birth to the new times. (...)

Let me repeat: October 18 signifies a new divine initiative for *these* times. God chose Schoenstatt from deeper sources of the Church in order to anticipate the great, great task which the Church has taken upon herself [in Vatican II] for our times. (...)

Here we see that Father has two starting points: the Church and Schoenstatt. 1) Looking at the Church, he sees her struggling with a monumental task: facing times that want to have nothing to do with what is “old” – herself needing to be reborn in order to give new birth – to Christ! – in our times. 2) Looking at Schoenstatt, he sees October 18, 1914 as a divine initiative – preparing a way for the Church, well in advance of Vatican II, drawing “from deeper sources” not merely of moral virtue or human science, but “from the deeper sources *of the Church.*”

The two are meant for each other!

3.1. First Exile Gift: “No-Holds-Barred” Faith in the Supernatural

As Father continued his words on that important founding day in 1966, he reached into the storehouse of Schoenstatt’s most recent past to describe two gifts for the Church on the way

to the new shore⁹. The first of these was something we might call a “no-holds-barred” (total, holding nothing back) faith in the supernatural. To continue reading from October 18, 1966 (a passage not in your booklet):

Yes, if we look back once more and examine how the family has responded to the great gift, the great work which bears the imprint of the hand of the eternal God, then we must gradually admit and say with grateful hearts: From about 1939 until today – not only until 1945, that was only one stage which was soon followed by a second stage – the entire time since 1939 has been about an unconditional, deeply penetrating, an unconditional, radical self-surrender to the supernatural reality.

That is, reflecting on God’s gift to Schoenstatt since 1939, he sees God’s hand as particularly strong in the way Schoenstatt grew into “an unconditional, deeply penetrating, ... radical self-surrender to the supernatural reality.” This took place in two stages: in 1) the Dachau era and 2) “a second stage” that “soon followed.” This is, of course the exile!

In fact, numerous times in the years after his return from Milwaukee, he brings together Dachau and exile, his two-part “imprisonment” (e.g. 37), as the time of a continuous line of growth in the same direction: radical, total, no-holds-barred faith in the supernatural! If great gifts are tasks, as we so often say, then this “treasure in the field” is not only for us, but is part of the gift we must bring to the Church. Father continues in this vein:

(Text 11) The necessary consequence (...) is this: If we are standing at the beginning of the *newest* Church (...) and if we have been given an extremely special mission for [this moment] (...) – what does that mean for us? I think I can say, more than anything else: What you have inherited from your fathers, acquire it to make it your own!¹⁰ Please do not misunderstand me. *What we have inherited, that is, ...*

We now pay close attention:

*...this extraordinarily high degree of the covenant of love between Our Lady, our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, this high degree, this unconditional devotion to the other-worldly, the supernatural reality, indeed this inner freedom from all things worldly, just as we could experience it in these days, **this should be the gift that we contribute to the new founding of the Church for the newest times.***

The gift that we have to give to the Church in the new “day” of her history is this: an extraordinary depth of faith, anchored in our covenant of love, which gives us the inner freedom to be free from the things of this world opposed to God and free to form a new culture totally directed to God! It is the discovery of the supernatural world in a highly *personal* way¹¹ – not

⁹ The new Schoenstatt motto being proclaimed on that founding day (October 18, 1966) was: “Church on the new shore, we will help build!” (German: Kirche am neuen Ufer, wir bauen mit!).

¹⁰ A quote Fr. Kentenich liked to cite from Goethe’s *Faust*.

¹¹ Concerning the personal nature of Christianity and Schoenstatt, see the highly interesting comments by Fr. Kentenich in Text 36 of the text booklet.

least of all because of our covenant partners: the MTA, our founder, our family. It is the world of January 20 and May 31.

It goes far beyond the scope of this talk to discuss the formation of such a culture “on the new shore.” I direct your attention to a few hints found in the text booklet (Texts 12-21, 30-41), where Fr. Kentenich stresses that the key question of Vatican II – only addressed at the Council in an incomplete way – is the question of the Church and the modern world, and that the key to its success is the healing of the world of attachments (the mission of May 31, 1949, for which he went into exile in the first place!).

3.2. Second Exile Gift: A Roadmap for the Coming Times

But to this first gift is added a second gift. Without it, the first would be like an appliance without an instruction manual, or a destination without a roadmap. On October 18, 1966, our founder described it this way:

(Text 11) *A second great gift, a great gift for which we owe a debt of gratitude is [God’s] clear direction for the coming times.*

I have not yet been able to speak on this subject, but wish to do so later. For now it will suffice to sum it up this way: *The direction which [God has given us] since 1939 should determine our course for centuries to come!*

God has not only given us the experience of complete faith in the supernatural, but also a “roadmap” or typical path through which one can find it. It is Schoenstatt’s history from 1939 to 1965. Our family’s experience in Dachau and Milwaukee is not only a lesson on the past, but a direction for the future. This was so important to Fr. Kentenich that, starting in 1966, he began to teach all the institutes and the entire family about what he called the “four milestones” (24, 29)¹². They are so familiar to us now that we take them for granted, but behind them is the conviction of our founder that to know the milestones is to have a roadmap to heroic faith, hope, love and victory (28) in the Church!

In his talk of October 18, 1966, Fr. Kentenich goes on to describe the essence of the 1939-1965 experience. Again, it goes beyond the scope of this talk to discuss the details, but let me give you an outline, along with some cross-references to texts in the booklet. It pertains to our gift “to the new founding of the Church for the newest times,” and let me call it:

List 2: Steering a Course for the Post-Conciliar “Day”

1. The milestones of our history (22, 24, 29) – key to
 - a. deepest sources of Catholic life (22-26)
 - b. being at home in the supernatural reality (11, 29, 34)

¹² The four milestones are: October 18, 1914 (the founding covenant of love), January 20, 1942 (the decision to accept the sentence to the concentration camp), May 31, 1949 (offering of the letter on mechanistic thinking on the altar of the Shrine in Bellavista, Chile), October/December 1965 (the reinstatement of Fr. Kentenich at the end of the exile). He saw these four events as hallmarks of four essential traits of heroic Christian vitality: 1914 – heroic standing in divine light (faith), 1942 – heroic standing in divine confidence (hope), 1949 – heroic standing in divine strength (love), 1965 – heroic standing in divine victoriousness (victory is from God).

- c. heroic virtue (27-29).
- 2. The supernatural person (22, 29):
 - a. far-sighted (long-range view of the Council's fruitfulness)
 - b. with the daring of faith (26, 31-33, 35)
 - c. confident of victory (41).
- 3. Practical faith in Divine Providence (34-35):
 - a. necessary for the Church on the new shore (35)
 - b. safeguarded in healthy attachments on all levels (15-21, 39-40).
- 4. The *Marian Father Kingdom* (36-41):
 - a. anchored in our covenant of love (14 and 41)
 - b. that makes Mary present in our times (40).

This last point harkens to the great lifestream that came to full blossom in the exile years and is also expressed in the mission of our Shrine here at the International Center: *The International Shrine of the Father Kingdom*. This kingdom unites the love of Mary and the love for God the Father on which our spirituality is built, and anchors both in healthy earthly attachments¹³.

4. The Exile as Model for the Church to Come

The two gifts mentioned above form the core to our gift-in-return to the Church: 1) a no-holds-barred faith in the supernatural that will be able to carry the day in great challenges to come and 2) a “roadmap,” namely our history, especially 1939-65. In the view of our founder, they will be an essential part of our contribution to helping the Church exit the “interdiem” and fulfill the mission of Vatican II in the new “day” on the way to the “new shore.”

But as we celebrate the Exile Shrine, a vital task remains to be done before we go our separate ways. We must *look specifically at the part of the “roadmap” which is Milwaukee*. If the exile is part of God’s “clear direction for our times,” then we must clarify the features of God’s direction “in the shadow of the Exile Shrine.” I will proceed in three steps:

1. The exile serves a divine purpose.
2. It encapsulates the “entire fullness of genuine Catholic life.”
3. Both purpose and fullness of life are embodied in the Exile Shrine.

4.1. The Exile Serves a Divine Purpose

First, the exile serves a divine purpose. In a talk for Schoenstatt priests on August 26, 1966, Fr. Kentenich alluded to such a purpose:

(Text 10) I can even add: all the terrible confrontations and sufferings which we have been through since about 1940 (...) What was the purpose of those years? We were supposed to live in advance for the Church the whole Catholic feeling of life as God has

¹³ In this spirit, see also Fr. Kentenich’s remarks toward the end of the talk on October 18, 1966: “The great storm which has erupted over the nations, I think, is an expression of [God’s] fatherly love. Why fatherly love? Arrogant man, who thinks of himself as the creator of the world, must fall to his knees once more. First he must become a child again. Only then can God pour out the entire cornucopia of his love, his merciful love, on this poor, poor human race.” See *Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 11, p. 266.

foreseen it for the newest shore of the times! Unless you see it that way, what we have become and what we have been through [will not add up].

Let me break this down. He speaks of the time “since about 1940,” and so the observations apply to the exile as much as to, say, Dachau. Hence, the exile 1) was a time in which “we were supposed to *live in advance*.” God had in mind that what we went through would be a preparation, a help, a kind of pathfinding mission. 2) For whom? For the Church. This time of suffering and growth was not only for ourselves or merely for our own sanctification. No! It was designed to benefit the Church! 3) What did it encompass? The whole Catholic feeling of life – not merely a document or a teaching, but the *attitude and outlook on life* which will define the Church of the future, one that will become so second-nature it will be a “feeling of life” (*Lebensgefühl*) that sits deep in the soul. And not just a *part* of this feeling of life, but the *whole* feeling of what it will mean to be a Catholic. 4) For which time? Not for yesterday or today, but “as God has foreseen it for the newest shore of the times,” that is, for the most important phase to come after Vatican II: the time after the “interdiem,” the time that lies immediately ahead of us!

Fr. Kentenich also describes this purpose as giving an “ideal” on which the Church can orient herself (8). But in our text (10), our founder even hints at something bigger – the exile has lived in advance the “ideal for the newest times” – not only as it pertains to the interior life of the Church, but also to her applying the Gospel to the work of shaping the modern world!

(Text 10) You see, if you accept this premise even a little, then you will understand the past. It was always guided, ordered, animated by the living God[’s plan] for the future. We were supposed to live in advance, anticipate the ideal for the newest times, on the newest shore of the times.

4.2. The Exile Encapsulates the “Entire Fullness of Genuine Catholic Life”

Starting in early 1967, Fr. Kentenich uses a Biblical watchword to describe the meaning of Vatican II. It is from the Gospel of John, where Jesus says, “I have come that they have life, and have it to the full” (Jn 10,10)¹⁴. This quote implies the need for Schoenstatt to draw from its deepest sources of life, its fullness or abundance of life – in German: *Lebensfülle* (7, 9, 10, 24-26) – in order to fulfill its mission in our times.

What he is talking about is essentially the same as the “whole Catholic feeling of life” just discussed. But where does this come from? In Schoenstatt it comes from a spirituality that draws on “deeper sources of tradition than was usually done in our times” (23). It stands in

¹⁴ The earliest such reference I have found is on February 25, 1967, when he noted, “What meaning do the Council decrees have? What is the meaning of the Council? Not what we usually hear said. In 1966 Paul VI himself declared that what is at stake is this: to bring about the vitality of the Church for the transformation of the world in the entire coming era. What does this mean? The early Church coined a word for this: The Church must be the soul of the world, the soul of the world we live in. It has always been the Church’s ideal to be the soul of the world of each era. This was a favorite expression of Pius XII, and he applied it to today’s time and to the times to come. Hence, the Church is also the soul of the present tumultuous world. One of the theologians from the Council described what he experienced there, what he studied, with the words: The goal of the Council is to realize the words of Christ for the coming times: ‘I have come that they have life, and have it to the full’.” See also various talks from 1967 in *Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 14, p. 154 (March 5, Reception of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary), p. 206 (May 14, Dedication of the Shrine of the Women’s Federation), p. 267 (August 29 to the Girls Youth), and Vol. 15, p. 231 and 258 (September 4 to the Schoenstatt priests).

contrast to the broad Marian movement that swept the Church in the 1940s and 1950s, taking delight in the dogmatization of the Assumption (1950) and the Marian Year (1954, the occasion for the building of the Exile Shrine) only to collapse – sad to say, like a house of cards – at the first sign of adversity during the Council (38). Instead of relying on the building methods of the “old shore” – traditional formulas, Catholic enclaves, general enthusiasm of the Church for Mary – Schoenstatt’s founding generation set the pattern differently by insisting on going deeper. An “ordinary” Marian devotion was not enough; they wanted to dig their wells so deep that Mary would form and shape their lives, and they would do everything in, with, through and for the MTA. The stakes were raised with each new test: Nazi persecution. Then the separation from the founder during the exile. With each new test the MTA formed “vigorous figures who embody the entire fullness of Catholic life” (25).

This “fullness of Catholic life” is a voucher that the Church *can* find a way to overcome the depressed state in which we so often find faith in our modern times – anemic, battered, stagnant (see 30-33). This “fullness” is encapsulated in a unique way in the exile. As Father noted when speaking to the Family Work on August 27, 1966, again referring to the exile years:

(Text 26) You see, God has led our family in a most remarkable way in the last years. When you later see what went on behind the scenes, you will be amazed at what a gigantic battle it was. (...) You see, this is the way I see it: [during the exile] God forced the [Schoenstatt] family to live the entire fullness of Catholic life. And I think that you [my families] have the task to save and carry this fullness of life, this entire fullness of genuine Catholic life – with all the daring and risk-taking that this means – into the present post-conciliar era.

But if this is true, what aspects of the “entire fullness of genuine Catholic life” does the exile encapsulate? A first list has already been given; in List 2: “Steering a course for the Post-Conciliar ‘Day’,” including the points: the milestones, the supernatural person, faith in Divine Providence, and the Marian Father Kingdom.

But on the basis of our experiences during this Jubilee celebration of sharing and visiting the places of our founder’s exile, we can find other words which illustrate his point. Indeed so much of the fullness of life circled around our father and founder that we only need to meditate on *his life in Milwaukee* to understand what he meant. Let me only briefly list a few adjectives, and possible meanings. It is a list that each of us could add to and make “fuller.”

List 3: The Fullness of Genuine Catholic Life During the Exile

personal – a father concerned for each person who came (transparency of God’s love) and who never tired of advocating the power of *personal* love of Mary integrated (or, organic!) – uniting the natural and supernatural, ideas and life, Schoenstatt’s mission and heroic love for the Church
 radical (=rooted!) – a life that was not just on the surface, or built on external formulas, but deeply rooted in the full vitality of Catholic life
 coherent – in Milwaukee Father lived what he taught, including the 31st of May, and did so even under the most difficult of circumstances
 heroic – risking everything for his family and for the Church, accompanied by a family that did not give up believing in him or the MTA’s mission

prophetic – entirely attentive to his unique mission, and courageous enough not only to proclaim it, but also to live it in a hidden corner of the Church fruitful – bearing fruits of trust in God, new life, childlike joy, divine strength, freedom from self-made plans and complete freedom to do the works of God

To this list we could add two more important features of this “fullness of life.” 1) *It is not just about survival.* As he said on August 27, 1966 to the Family Work:

(Text 7) Our objective is not to [merely survive] the present difficult times. We must keep our goal before us: We want to pass through these teenage years of the times as a united [family] and vibrant with the fullness of Christian life, in order to portray for the whole Church on the other shore of the times a starting point for the whole Church so that God can again be part of the coming era.

And 2) *It is about offering a model of genuine Christian life* (or being a catalyst or giving an orientation) *for the Church* once the interdiem (here: “teenage years”) passes. Add to the previous quote, the following statement said to the Girls Youth on August 19, 1966:

(Text 8) If we remain faithful to our identity then as soon as the collapse is overcome, the Church and the Spirit of God will be able to use us as a catalyst, and we (...) will be able to help give a direction to many in the Church.

4.3. Both Purpose and Fullness of Life are Embodied in the Exile Shrine

Thirdly, both the purpose and fullness of life are embodied in a special way in the Exile Shrine. Both of the two previous presentations (by Michael Fenelon and Sr. Petra) have helped us appreciate the unique history and mission of this Shrine. It was “Father’s Shrine,” perhaps like no other. And after he left, it even became embroiled in a 14-year “interdiem” of its own, part of the aftershocks of the separation of Schoenstatt from the Pallottines, but also indicative of the turmoil of the immediate post-conciliar era. And finally, when all was said and done, the Shrine was not forever changed or forever closed, but given back to us as a challenge – we must take the legacy which it embodies and bring it to the Church in a new day of history.

The Exile Shrine is not just a monument to the past. No, like the exile itself, it is meant to be a two-fold gift to the Church acutely in need of our lived *Dilexit Ecclesiam*.

1. The gift of a place where one can experience a “no-holds-barred” faith in the supernatural that is so natural that one can practically feel Father coming to offer us a plate of cookies, and yet so heroically supernatural that one comes away ready, as Father was, to face the immense challenges of our times.

2. The gift of a “roadmap” offering benchmarks and directions, contours and strategies to living the faith heroically and fruitfully. Be it through the milestones, personal testimony from eye-witnesses, or Father’s own writings, ways and means are available to grow from the soil of earth-bound realities into the entire vitality of the covenant with God.

Indeed, might I be so bold as to suggest that our Exile Shrine could be destined by God to be one of those privileged pilgrimage places which not only embodies the encounter with a saint,

but also the encounter with an essential charism for the renewal of the Church? *Such* pilgrimage places are few and far between. One thinks of Assisi, no doubt, which one can still visit today and not only discover St. Francis and St. Clare, but also the power of the charism of love of poverty and the poor fused with love of Mary and the Church. Or one might think of Lisieux, perhaps, where St. Therese brings home the power of the “little way” to bring the Gospel to life. But do not these turning points in Church and world history pale in comparison to the mammoth struggle for the future soul of all mankind going on today? In that case, would not the Church be in great need of exactly a saint and a pilgrimage place like we have in our Exile Shrine?

I think it is safe to say that when the Church emerges from the “interdiem,” the mighty forces she faces now will not have vanished. No, it is likely that they will be stronger and more invincible, as the world measures invincibility. The persecutions and martyrdoms we hear of elsewhere could be enjoined in our own nations and families. What will the Church of the new “day” look like? It could well be that her greatest “kings” will look less like Solomon and more like Abraham, and her greatest “generals” will look less like Joshua and more like Job. She must expect that more and more of her institutions will be taken from her¹⁵ or no longer be sustainable, that she will not have such great properties and political influence as in the past. She will become more like Job, whose every earthly support is taken – family, land, riches, friends – but who discovers in the process that his total strength, his *real* strength is in the Lord. She will be forced to find out who she really is and where her true strength lies. And if she does, it will make her stronger along the lines of the great ideal sketched out by the concluding document of Vatican II, *Gaudium et spes*:

“The joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the people of our time, especially of those who are poor or afflicted in any way, are the joy and hope, the grief and anguish of the followers of Christ as well. Nothing that is genuinely human fails to find an echo in their hearts. For theirs is a community of men, of those who, united in Christ and guided by the Holy Spirit, press onward toward the kingdom of the Father and the bearers of a message of salvation intended for all men¹⁶.”

But how shall the Church be prepared for this “Jobian” task? Where shall she find the hope and confidence she herself needs when all is taken from her? Let there be Milwaukee! Is not our founder ready at any time of day or night, here in the shadow of the Exile Shrine to teach the secrets of this lesson to the Church? Look to his life! Precisely when he becomes Job, losing “family, land, riches, friends,” or rather, all juridical authority and official mandates to lead his family, we discover who he really is and on which foundation he has built – on love and trust and freedom. His work suffers losses, but in the end comes away stronger – because love is stronger,

¹⁵ A point which Fr. Kentenich also stressed. See for instance: third talk for the Schoenstatt Family in Dachau, July 16, 1967, in *Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 15, p. 53f: “A third or a fourth call [from God] (...) is the crisis of existence of the Church on the newest shore of the times, and the crisis of existence of our own [Schoenstatt] family. Crisis of existence of the Church. (...) [T]hink once more of the modern battles over the school plans. Again we recall what is right and not right. We will then probably have to admit that all of us will be forced, sooner or later, back to the last bastion, back to the family, back to our Family Work.” The implication is that the Church must expect to be driven even from her schools and be forced to rely even more entirely on the family.

¹⁶ Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et spes* (December 7, 1965), No. 1 (opening lines).

and trust uplifts the soul, and freedom makes resilient in time of trouble. We discover who he really is: a father whose concern for each person and community who comes to him is both down-to-earth and written in the stars. We discover who he really is: that in *every* trial he puts total faith in the covenant of love with our MTA and know she *will conquer in every need*.

If in another era Assisi could exemplify the qualities of a new way of being Church in turbulent times, might not Milwaukee and the places of our founder's exile also serve as a place for the sons and daughters of the Church to see in clear colors and practical daily life what Bl. John XXIII and the Council fathers saw and saluted from afar? In my mind's eye I can see a future Pope, in the midst of the storms of the times, battered and in need of a word of confidence. What does he do? He sends a trusted counselor on secret pilgrimage to Milwaukee – for the sole reason of drinking in the sights and sounds and imploring the graces which the future Pope is in need of to move forward with his own *Dilexit Ecclesiam*.

5. Conclusion: With Mary into the Newest Times

At the outset of this talk we considered banner gifts we have received from the Church: Mary, the Shrine, our founder, and the exile. In the end, this is our gift-in-return to the Church we love. In the shadow of the Exile Shrine we find these same gifts and want to give them so that the Church can more readily enter the great post-conciliar “day” foreseen by both Fr. Kentenich and the Council fathers of Vatican II.

As we go forth, it is imperative that we embody what we have found here. It is a spirit which must encircle the globe and uplift laity, priests and religious to the “entire fullness of genuine Catholic life.” To talk about a “no-holds-barred” faith in the supernatural and a “roadmap” to this faith, but to do nothing, would mean risking a still more prolonged “interdiem.” We must take action.

This action certainly involves a clear understanding of the exile, but it must also shape our lives (39). Not everyone we meet will ever get to visit Milwaukee and the Exile Shrine. We must be the “ambassadors” of this great treasure, we must be the “face” of this great model for the Church of today and tomorrow. This will begin by letting the graces of this event sink deep into our souls. It will then pass over into the graces of a home, of inner transformation and of apostolic zeal. We will need to be the necessary transparencies of this world of grace, including all the “little work” that this entails in our ordinary everyday lives. If the “sights and sounds and smells of Milwaukee” are to not only have the musty smell of old history books, but a soft glow that catches by surprise, intrigues the heart, and invites to discover something bigger and more alive in the adventure of faith... well, then it depends on us.

And here we meet our limitations. We realize that our faith is not as unconditional as our founder's. We realize that we are seldom as attentive to the personal needs of others as our father and founder was. We realize that the turmoil of the “interdiem” is still a factor, slowing our hoped-for progress. Perhaps the turmoil even casts a shadow on my love for the Church, and I become frustrated or want to give up. Whatever the limitations, they are a life-sized reminder that our gift to the Church on this Jubilee is, above all else, **the gift of our covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable**. Without her we cannot hope to attain the great ideals we see before us. Without her presence in the Shrine our hands will droop and fall.

Arise, O Mother Thrice Admirable! In this interdiem we have remained faithful to you. We call on you to form us into useful instruments for the Church on the new shore! Yes, there have been many who have scorned your place at the side of Christ, but we have not! As our founder said at the May opening in Schoenstatt, Germany on May 1, 1966:

“[You will ask:] What mission does *she* have for the world of today? After all, today one hears it said that the time of Mary is over. One hears the critique: She had a great mission in the past, but now it is finished. In the face of this we must first remind ourselves of what her mission looks like – precisely as a mission for *the world of today*. It is this:

Through her Christ shall be born again
in the midst of our changing times
for the image of the Church on the newest shore of history¹⁷.”

Arise, O Queen Thrice Admirable! In every time when we, your family, have faced impenetrable darkness, we have crowned you and begged you to show your power – and you came through! It was no small feat for you to do the seemingly impossible and restore our father and founder to his family after long years of exile, but you did it! We will stand at your side in whatever turmoil still lies ahead, and actively seek ways to make your love and power known. As our founder said at the same May opening:

“We must not overlook the fact that our task, to a great degree, consists in *defending* the person of Our Lady wherever we are and *standing up for her mission*. (...)

“A Frenchman, quite in tune with the modern world and familiar with the coming youth, recently said: The coming generation of youth (...) will [be ready to] face great tasks. Why? Because they are being nourished by the word of God (...) [and] the bread of God. But while both things are true, for them to be truly able to reach for the stars, that is, to become a generation of the stars and men and women of the sun, then what is still essential – in fact, bitterly essential – is that they (...) *rediscover the Blessed Mother!*¹⁸”

Arise, O Victress Thrice Admirable! In times when it has seemed that the Church is on the brink of collapse, is bankrupt and short of holiness, you are the voucher that her strength is not at an end and that her holiness has not been extinguished. We know this for we have seen your power and might with our own eyes. We will not be wanting in doing our part for you, helping, even as our founder did, to contribute to the arrival of the desired new “day” of the post-conciliar Church. Even as he reminded us in his last week here on earth (September 7, 1968):

(Text 41) *With hope and joy, confident in the victory, we go with Mary into the newest time.* (...) For fifty years we have experienced the importance, implications and fruitfulness of this motto as a fruit of the mutual covenant of love. Therefore we do not find it difficult to repeat it with great enthusiasm, and to orient ourselves towards it in the

¹⁷ Talk for the Schoenstatt Family, May Opening, Mount Schoenstatt, May 1, 1966. In *Propheta locutus est*, Vol. 4, p. 224.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 242.

coming fifty years, despite all the revolutionary tendencies in the Church and world. We are prepared to give ourselves to it, body and soul.

Dear MTA, let our gift to the Church – a resounding song of gratitude for all the treasures of the exile and our dear Exile Shrine be no less than this: that the covenant of love with you span the whole globe and penetrate each heart. Then the great vision of our founder (spoken on December 31, 1965) will become reality for the Church he loved, leading it from victory to victory on the newest shore of the times:

(Text 14) We believe we have been called to be *the heart of this Church*. Which Church? The Church of the years to come.

The heart! And what does it mean to be the heart? To be the profound *power of love* which overcomes all difficulties. A power of love which conquers the Church, which fills the Church with the heroism of love. The power of love – that is our mission!

What does this mean? How interiorly on fire we must be and how a blazing fire of love must enkindle us more and more! How we must try to unite – member to member, branch to branch – with the bonds of love! The ultimate effect of the covenant of love with our Blessed Mother must be, more and more, a covenant of love with the Blessed Trinity, a covenant of love with one another, a covenant of love with every member and branch of the Church, even a covenant of love with all the people in the whole world!

The heart – love, the power of love in the Church.