

Sermon on July 11, 2004 in Waukesha

Dear Schoenstatt Family!

Moved by great gratitude we embarked on our pilgrimage to Milwaukee. These past fifty years have been a unique school of faith for us. For many of us the recollection of that time is connected with much pain. For some of you it is a happy remembrance of blissful days. Nobody would have dared to dream that one day we would gather here from all parts of the world with such joy and gratitude.

1. Gratitude to the Schoenstatt Family

With increasing clarity the Schoenstatt Family of the USA developed an understanding of the exile heritage. They have evaluated the silent event of the 14 years and called it *exile legacy*. They have protected the experiences as a treasure and made it fruitful. For this we express our heartfelt gratitude to the local Schoenstatt Family.

At the event of the centennial of the birthday of Father Kentenich in 1985 they defined this legacy as a *holy task*. They have expressed the wish that this legacy would become a blessing for the entire international Family. For this they strive. Again and again they invited us foreigners and cordially offered us a home; most recently many youth came in connection with the WYD in Toronto. More and more we from abroad have discovered a certain wealth of this legacy.

Many years ago, in our awareness Milwaukee was a place of suffering. Many believed it would be better not to go there. Today, pilgrimages to Milwaukee are insiders' tip. It is obvious that whoever has not been to Milwaukee has a harder time to organically align her/himself with an important part of our founding history.

On behalf of the international Family I say a heartfelt thank you to all those who have worked towards this aim.

2. The living exile legacy

Dear Schoenstatt Family, we searched for our father and therefore we came. And during these days we were allowed to see his face, the features of this fatherly person who was totally at home in God and at the same time completely available for the people. This is the actual legacy that he has embodied for us and left to us. He was led a special way to realize how one can be completely with God. His public messages given after Dachau were proven here during 14 years. It is God's seal upon his work and thus upon his life. He was with God and this was his unshakable strength of faith. He completely turned his heart to the people and this created family. We are proud of him, as one can only be proud of a father.

Two years ago, when I came to Milwaukee for the first time I was wondering: from where does this father gain such a security?

Such a security which allowed him to remain consoled and calm though his years passed by.

Such a security that at the same time he could unshakably hold on to his great mission for the church.

Such strength to unite both and to bear the tension. He stands before us as a father with prophetic strength.

If we asked him this question today, he would take us by the hand and lead us to the exile shrine. There he would kneel down and point to the MTA:

she followed me. She has given me the shrine, she has glorified herself; it is all her work. For this reason we have given to our Queen the crown anew. With this we express our gratitude for the adventurous and admirable guidance of Divine Providence. In view of this experience our present questions and challenges become small and don't need to burden us. God has let our Fr. day by day, he leads each one of us. This is our security.

3. To carry his legacy into the heart of the church

The celebration of this jubilee encourages us to vigorously and with a wide horizon' walk into the future. At the end of the Year of Grace 2000 our Holy Father called out to us with such a vigor and wide horizon: "Duc in altum! Let us go forward in hope! A new millennium is opening before the Church like a vast ocean upon which we shall venture, relying on the help of Christ." *Novo millennio ineunte* 58)

Yesterday, we were at the lake. The image of our father at the lake is deeply anchored in our hearts; it is also the image of this hour. He would emphatically entrust the sentences of the Holy Father to our hearts and call out to us anew: Go, enkindle the world; he would entrust the *dilexit ecclesiam* to us anew.

We love the church "*Dilexit ecclesiam*"

Why did our father risk so much; how could he endure, suffer so much; why did he stake everything? Because of his love for God, the Blessed Mother and the church. We know how it is when we love genuinely. We are constantly thinking of the other and this is no burden. We share much and it does not hurt. We renounce habits and we rejoice. We look at the beloved and by the same token forget to think of ourselves.

Are we capable of loving the church in such a manner? Sometimes we are still a little insecure in our love: we wonder if the bishops and priests truly appreciate us; if the other Christians take us seriously? There are not many bishops who express: I Love Schoenstatt, as we heard yesterday. If we encounter too little love in return we might be inclined to react melancholically and to withdraw to our own ranks.

Could the Blessed Mother offer us in a yet greater measure the grace of a vast selfless love? She has to, she will intercede for us this grace to be totally true to ourselves and to completely live our lives in surrender to the church.

To love the church - how does it work?

This is the question in the gospel which we heard today. Who is my neighbor?

Jesus replied, A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. A priest, likewise a Levite, happened to be going down that road, but they passed by on the opposite side since they had better things to do. But a foreigner was moved with compassion at the sight.

In our language this could mean that we do not take it easy on our mission consciousness because we possess everything and now we have more important things to do.

Love is always very concrete. It shows in the here and now! Love makes contact, love is obliging, it is energetic and effective. Each engagement to the honor of God and to the benefit of my neighbor is a *dilexit ecclesiam*. Love is able to recognize my neighbor in each person, including those who think differently, including the stranger and even the enemy. Every little gesture strengthens the heart of the Church.

Milwaukee and Rome

The timely connection between Milwaukee and Rome could be an inspiration for us. In 1965, at the end of his exile our father blessed a location for a shrine in Rome and symbolically offered the corner stone for it. This was meant to be a sign for Schoenstatt's presence in the heart of the church with the *dilexit ecclesiam*.

You know that it took 40 years to receive the building permit. We received it last year out of the blue sky so to speak, [it happened] just as suddenly as the end of the exile. In two months we will celebrate the dedication.

Why did it take so long? Was the time, was the family not ready for it?

For me it is a masterstroke of Divine Providence that we may now celebrate the rich fruit of the exile and that in two months many of us will again meet in Rome in order to finally ransom the promise.

Isn't it a quiet yet audible invitation to view Milwaukee and Rome in an inner unity? The event in Rome could mean a challenge for us: *Duc in altum*. Embark into the sea, cross to the other shore, and carry your legacy into the heart of the church!
What can we carry across the sea to the new shore?

We bring the shrine and we bring our home shrine

In September when Cardinal Ruini will dedicate the shrine in Rome and when we on the following day will present its key to the Holy Father then we who have been in Milwaukee include also the past and present life around the exile shrine. The many home shrines and the tremendous wealth connected with it. This is our gift for the church.

When the Holy Father receives the key to the shrine then he in representation for the church will also receive the key to our home shrines. The church may count on us. To reach the heart of the church with the shrine means to love the church with our capital of grace, because our capital of grace comprises the vigor of the shrines.

We bring our father and with him the entire family

How can our legacy reach the heart of the church if not through the father of the family? Thus we carry our father to Rome, prepare his way, make him known so that he can become the father of many including those who do not belong to our family and those who only understand part of his charism.

In this connection let me share a little secret with you. The new bishop of Trier, Bishop Reinhard Marx, is happy that Schoenstatt belongs to his diocese. He promised to do everything so that the beatification process can soon be concluded in Trier and be sent off to Rome. The postulator (Father Strada) says after his last meeting two weeks ago, that this can happen already next year.

When we will carry our father into the heart of the church then he will take us along because he is unthinkable without his family. This he confirmed again and again. Thus we will be asked to take our place in the heart of the church more visibly. This is a joy and challenge. For sure our father may count that each one of us will give their best.

Our hope and security is that there is already a place which we have offered to our MTA through the shrine. She dwells there already; she awaits us in Rome; she needs us in the heart of the church. Let us go there with hope and confidence.