

Sermon

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## Requiem for Fr Heinz Kuenster

8 November 2016

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Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

In the night between All Saints and All Souls, towards midnight, our merciful Father called Fr Heinz Kuenster to himself. When I asked how he slept, he said that for some time he had slept till about midnight, then it was time for the first Rosary - in his armchair for as long as he could get up, and in which he often fell asleep again.

So it was in the early hours that he finally encountered “the Friend of his life” - led by our Mother.

In his last Testament we read:

“My life was an adventure - led by our Mother.

and while I write this

an even greater adventure lies before me - death,

led by our Mother and Fr Kentenich.

And I am looking forward to it.”

He has now had this adventure and completed it.

So many have wished this for him recently,

how much he himself longed for this, his greatest adventure,

after it had been granted to him

to experience how the Symbol of God the Father

found its destined place in the Original Shrine

on the hundredth anniversary of Schoenstatt's foundation,  
and he had carried out his commission to safeguard  
the Father Symbol for the Original Shrine,  
and hence spread the message that God is our loving Father.

It is not by chance that we think of the words of the old man, Simeon:  
"Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your  
word; for my eyes have seen the salvation, which you have prepared in the  
presence of the peoples" (Lk 2,29-31).

From Schoenstatt, from the diocese of Trier, from his former parishes and  
all over the world, echoes arrived in these days following his death, and  
almost all concerned Fr Kuenster and the message of our merciful Father-  
God. In this context allow me to recommend the brief biography that has  
been displayed at the entrance to the house chapel.

However, the echoes address other aspects:

His humble services, his understanding, his open ear and constant readiness  
to listen, and his benevolence.

He was at the service of everyone who came, and he was patient when, as  
happens not only with people from Latin America, they arrived late.

The vivid way he talked about our founder - as a faithful son in the  
footsteps of his spiritual father.

The fatherly way he accompanied people, his priestly fatherliness, "a  
genuine, priestly friend".

His loyalty and self-giving.

His generosity, sensitivity, cordiality and simplicity. "Totally a father".

"I can't imagine Schoenstatt without him; without him Schoenstatt won't be  
the same."

And again and again: His sense of humour and his blessing. Recently, when I  
always asked him for his blessing before I left, he sometimes said, 'Everyone  
wants my blessing' - and he always included everyone.

Two aspects need to be highlighted in particular:

1. Fr Kuenster prayed a great deal. People could entrust their cares to him, and be sure that he would include them in his prayers. Even after a longer time he was able to remember the intention entrusted to him, and at times even asked about it.

2. He was a popular confessor, and many of us will miss him.

In the last twelve years Fr Kuenster and I lived here together in the Marienau; he had been its Rector in the previous twelve years. We have known each other as confreres in Priests' Federation for decades, but living together is another matter. We had to get used to each other, and also patch things up at times. I did not know, for example, what a tease he was and what sense of humour he had. Even at our last meeting it flashed out. At the end we always prayed the little consecration prayer and while we were praying he asked to stand somewhat to the side because I hid his big MTA picture - "I want to see our Lady", he said.

In retrospect I think: That's the point! This hotline to heaven - led by our Mother. This unity between heaven and earth, between all that is human and the reality of supernature.

If we were to describe Fr Kuenster, we could say:

He was an independent and very individualistic person,  
he knew what he wanted and acted accordingly,  
he knew life and set his own priorities,  
he went through life, but not without difficulties and wounds,  
nor did he live above the clouds;  
yet all this doesn't quite describe him.

There was something else,

which I would cautiously call "his secret",

which he personally discovered step by step, as some of us were allowed to know, and which he called in his Testament "led by our Mother".

Sisters and Brothers,

the month of November with All Saints and All Souls, with Remembrance Day and Christ the King, places us perhaps more often than usual before the question: Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? Do you believe in “life afterwards”?

Jesus was also asked this question, as we heard in the Gospel last Sunday. He answered it clearly with Yes, and connected the question of the resurrection with the question about God, while looking at the creative power and creative love of God. He went his way through life trusting in the God of life, and when this led him to the deadly consequence, he placed his life in the hand of the Father, whose power over life and death was shown in his resurrection to life.

If we were to ask Fr Kuenster: What did you think of the resurrection of the dead? What did you experience after the adventure of your death?

He would perhaps answer:

That is the key question of our lives, it is the decisive adventure of our lives;

Answer it, live it with a hopeful yeas, and led by our Mother - also in a world marked by death, by painful deaths, incomprehensible death, dreadful deaths, and also in view of your own fragility and mortality.

Trust in our Lord Jesus Christ and trust without any guesswork, and without an know-it-all attitude, that you have a place in the love and care of the merciful Father after your death.

Trust in God whose possibilities and power reach much further than any person could ever imagine.

Place your life, which is fragile and attacked, totally in God's hand in order to be free from every fear about yourself, and free for others, free for your task in the world.

It doesn't matter whether you will have an easier death one day; what matters is that you live your life here and now with great courage and strength,

that each day you set out with your modest strengths and without fear to leave behind traces of peace, love and heartfelt warmth,

that your final future with God allows you to be more serene here and now,  
more human, more broad-minded and above all more joyful.

Sisters and Brothers,

We now begin to celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord, Jesus  
Christ, who has gone before us on the path of faith, on the path into life,  
into the resurrection, and who has opened for us all the gates of life.

Heinz, you may follow him,  
we are still faced with this adventure.

Translation from German by Mary Cole, UK.