

## Obtaining more clarity

Interview by Bruno Sonnen, editor of Paulinus, with the Bishop of Trier, Dr. Stephan Ackermann, in [www.Paulinus.de](http://www.Paulinus.de)

Historian Dr. Alexandra von Teuffenbach made serious accusations against the founder of Schoenstatt within the context of the beatification process for Fr. Joseph Kentenich. Bruno Sonnen interviewed the Bishop of Trier, Dr. Stephan Ackermann.

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Last week, you announced that instead of a second commission of historians, as the “Sanctorum Mater” Instruction is known, [a group of various professional experts would join the beatification process](#). Why this change in the procedures?

With the documents and the accusations made by Alexandra von Teuffenbach in her book, possible new aspects have come to light. After consulting with academics in various disciplines - besides historians, psychologists and educators were also present - I realized that now we need to adopt a wider focus over the process.

Two reasons motivated me: One is respect for the possible victims. If there are accusations of sexual or spiritual abuse, we should take them seriously and investigate them. The second reason is respect for the Schoenstatt Movement. Here we have a great movement that is spread throughout the world, with a very large footprint at the service of the Gospel. I believe that I owe it to the movement to adequately examine the accusations that have now been made. And the Schoenstatt Family is asking for this.

## ***Why do you believe that the new procedure will help the process?***

We have more freedom in the way we work. Together with the academics, I was able to define different working themes pertaining to historical, psychological or pedagogical aspects, for example. We can compare and debate the provisional results, and above all, we will be able to speak about them openly. A commission of historians according to the "[Sanctorum Mater Instruction](#)" compels us to secrecy. And I don't think that this is appropriate.

Secondly, I would like to reexamine another part of the process that was, in fact, concluded.

There is an accusation by an American citizen against Fr. Joseph Kentenich, who claimed to have been abused by him between 1958-1962.

The accusations were made in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee in 1994 and were examined there, especially in light of the beatification process that was underway. The investigation into the accusations by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee gave rise to a report written by the local Church tribunal. The report stated the position that it was not necessary to continue with the matter at that time. In the diocesan phase [of the process], they sent us all the documents. They were evaluated with the conclusion that the investigation by the Archdiocese of Milwaukee was coherent and could be considered conclusive. The allegations and the investigation into them are part of the minutes in the beatification process.

Since then, more than 25 years have passed. In this time, we have gained a great deal of experience -- all over the world -- in bringing to light alleged cases of sexual abuse. However, I would like for it to be reexamined, also with regard to the accusation already investigated in the USA, if the investigation carried out at that time can also be considered sufficient according to current criteria, or if it ignored aspects that should definitely be taken into account in a final assessment. In this case, the investigation from that time will need to be completed, and if necessary, the results should be corrected.

## ***What are the next steps?***

Now we are defining the various work responsibilities: both with the aforementioned experts with regard to the questions raised in the book by Ms. von Teuffenbach and with regard to the accusation from the United States. As for the examination of this latest accusation, I will make contact with the United States. These are the next steps to establish more clearly if the beatification process can continue.

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Translation: Sarah-Leah Pimentel, Cape Town, South Africa