

CHAPTER 8 - BEING AN APOSTLE AT ALL TIMES



Keynote: The love of Christ urges us on. (2Cor 5:14)

Scripture John 17:9-26 – The farewell discourse of Jesus during the last hours shortly before his suffering and death. He knows what is awaiting him & he turns in a kind of testament once again to his disciples, praying for them to the Father.

Jesus' prayer is:

1) carried by a strong movement of emotion. His prayer is permeated by a wonderful warmth and intimacy, by a moving concern for those who are his. An apostle can only be the one who has experienced being surrounded by warmth and love, that God is not an idea but a person who addresses me personally, who gives content and meaning to my life. Whoever has made the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother and has experienced its reality and effect in their own life, is urged on to act, out of this love, to make themselves available in love and out of love. The covenant of love has an inevitable result: urgency towards the apostolate, in whatever form.

2) His apostolic prayer for his own. In his farewell discourse, Jesus presents himself as an apostle. He is the one sent by the Father who has come into the world to fulfill the Father's will, to lead mankind home to Him. He knows that it is only possible through the way of consecration, consecrated in truth holy, as the Father is holy and he himself is holy. That is the goal of the apostolate, which does not let him rest. He must demonstrate holiness in his life, in every situation, at every opportunity, so that they too can become truly holy. This is and remains also for the Schoenstatt member an essential way of the apostolate, that we consecrate ourselves for others. On every page, of every month of the Spiritual Daily Order is the sentence: "I consecrate myself for them" (John 17:19) – whoever that may be according to my intention – for them I take it upon myself to educate myself according to a plan and to keep a SDO about it. I consecrate myself for them, the others, so that they – through me – are consecrated in truth. That is putting on the mind of Christ, living the spirit of the Savior.

3) a prayer that emphasizes the attributes of an Apostle. Just as Jesus was sent into the world by the Father, so will and must he now send his disciples into the world. Will his disciples be capable of doing it? Truly, they are capable, because:

He himself is glorified in them. He has given them the glory he received from the Father – everything that he himself is, he, the eternal Son of the Father God. This is our glory: that in him and through him we may be children of the Father. To be a child is one basic attribute of an apostle.

They have received the grace of unity. They are a family whose center is the Father, whom Christ never tired of proclaiming. To be active as an apostle means to draw people into this community, to invite them to participate. That can always and everywhere become a reality where we lead people to Schoenstatt, where we win them for a pilgrimage, a day of reflection, a group meeting, where we take on responsibility, that in this community and through it the nature of God, which is love, is made manifest.

They shall have joy. Joy in abundance. That too belongs to the basic attributes of an apostle. We have to proclaim the good news which we live ourselves. The joyful person goes through the world with open eyes seeing what is going on around him or her, and knowing how to say the right word at the right time.

And Love. Love is certainly the basic attribute of the apostle, the most important charism. The Savior, throughout his earthly life, made every effort to convey this love to his followers, a love that is a reflection of the love present between his eternal Father and himself. The task of an apostle, then, is to draw people into the great stream of love. A Schoenstatt apostle would say: to lead them to the covenant of love into which we ourselves were led at one time, which we conquered and which has given our lives meaning, direction and depth. Whoever makes the covenant of love, not only enters into the special protection by the Blessed Mother, but also enters into her service, becomes an apostle of the MTA.

I. Created and called to apostles

We influence others and others influence us. We are here for one another in order to guide each other to our eternal destiny, to show each other the way and to facilitate reaching the goal – to return to the One from whence we came. That is the meaning and purpose of each human life. The nature of being human coincides with the nature of being an apostle. Being human means being an apostle. More precisely: a life of solidarity means an apostolic life. Because we have been created and called to be apostles, we have been given a fundamental apostolic disposition. We have been endowed to be apostles. Everyone can be an apostle, because everyone has

1. natural inclinations for the apostolate with which God has endowed each person, enabling them to be apostolic. According to the translation of the original Greek word, we know that apostles are ambassadors and messengers. Every person is sent into the world with a unique mission, that is, to do something to the benefit of others. Everyone yearns for this in the depth of his heart because part of being human means having the desire to achieve something in this world, to be active. We are ambassadors, coming with hands and hearts filled with gifts to share.

I ask myself:

What can I do especially well? How can I put this talent to more and better use for the benefit of others?

Do I have still unused talents, inclinations? What can I do to activate them? Allow yourself and others the joy of discovery!

2. The supernatural points of departure – Just as we are born into natural life and into being-in-the-world, endowed with everything we need to fulfil our tasks, so too are we born into the supernatural life. Baptism is the hour of birth of the child of God, who from then on belongs to a supernatural family, the Family of God. We become members of the Body of Christ and with that we share responsibility for this body, for its health and well-being. If I am “healthy”, the whole body is healthy, and really only then. If one member suffers, then every other member is challenged to help alleviate this sickness or at least to bring balance.

Our founder says: “Through Baptism a person participates in the divine life, in the life of Christ. That means: this participation in the life of Christ is at the same time a participation in his life’s task. Christ’s purpose was the redemption of the world, the world apostolate. Therefore, every Christian has the ability and the obligation to make the Savior’s task of the renewal of the world his or her own. What is laid down as a seed in the sanctified soul through Baptism, will be more strongly developed through Confirmation, the knighting of the Christian. Christ breathes warrior strength and warrior courage into the soul so that she will engage herself strongly and boldly, in spite of all difficulties, for the mission of Christ. Hence, duty and ability for the apostolate are also supernaturally laid down in our soul” (J. Kentenich, 1927).

Perhaps we should sometimes live more consciously out of the grace of Confirmation, that is, we should live more consciously with the Holy Spirit, so that our capability for the apostolate – in all the ways the apostolate can be carried out – will come more strongly to a breakthrough in our nature.

(Read page 220 & 221 – a Schoenstatt youth describes how she activates/cultivates the relationship with the Holy Spirit)

I ask myself:

Where do I experience that I belong to a natural family of God (diocesan family, parish family, Schoenstatt family)?

What can I contribute to the Church being experienced as a family?

How does my co-responsibility for the Church show itself?

How can I be more active, live more consciously out of the graces flowing to me through the Sacraments? (Use holy water, make the sign of the cross, prayer to the Holy Spirit, etc.)

II. Schoenstatt, an apostolic movement

In Schoenstatt we understand ourselves to be an apostolic movement. To be sure, we could mention many aspects of our being: we are Marian, of course, we are a movement of educators and of education, a movement of grace. But all of it is to serve the apostolate. In Schoenstatt we want to fully realize the meaning of being Catholic. And to be Catholic, to be an apostle, means to be salt and leaven in a world that is of a totally different kind and orientation.

1. Schoenstatt's goal: the apostolate – Religious and moral renewal of the whole world from Schoenstatt. Father Kentenich showed this universal goal in three parts:

The new person in the new community, with universal apostolic character. Father Kentenich pondered this goal even before the founding of Schoenstatt. With the establishment of the Shrine it took on concrete form. All who offer themselves to the Blessed Mother in the covenant of love are taken into the work of realizing this great goal: the formation of the modern saint.

Preservation of the salvific mission of the Western world. In 1914 a definite goal was set for the apostolic fervor which Father Kentenich was able to enkindle in his young disciples: the highest imaginable degree of perfection and holiness, according to one's state in life, was meant to move the Blessed Mother, "to free the fatherland from its overpowering enemies and to place it (religiously and morally) at the head of the Western world." Wherever in the world where the shrines of the Blessed Mother become pockets of renewed faith and genuine Christian living, a part of the salvific mission is being realized which originally, in early Christian centuries, was given to the Western world.

Creation and inspiration of a World Apostolic Confederation. Meant is the confederation of all apostolic forces throughout the world to increase the total impact of the work of the Church. The idea goes back to Vincent Pallotti who could not realize it during his lifetime. In 1916, our founder adopted this goal for the work of Schoenstatt. Schoenstatt wants to help the Church make the apostolate effective in all areas. The covenant of love with the Blessed Mother is meant to be an animating force for the organization of the world apostolate. To renew the whole world from Schoenstatt! An incomparably immense goal! Yet, great goals have always awakened enthusiasm and activity, and have let people grow beyond their own expectations.

2. Schoenstatt's Shrine: A place of education and commissioning of apostles for our time.

The Shrine is the guarantee for reaching our goal. Our father and founder built on that and relied on it, as is apparent in the following quotation: "Let me always repeat that I would never have had the courage, and I still do not, to approach the solution of our enormous tasks, if our Shrine in its intrinsic value and symbolic meaning had not taken the place in the entire Family which it has been given in the plan of God" (J. Kentenich, *Das Lebensgeheimnis Schoenstatts*, Band I). The Shrine was so important for him with regard to the apostolate that he called it the "guarantor of a divine vocation", the "source of a powerfully flowing stream of graces in the spirit of our great mission – the local concentration point of the entire organizational net – the symbol of a distinctly modern way of education and pastoral care." Such a glowing praise of the Shrine is well founded, for it is there that the Blessed Mother, the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, is effective in a very specific way:

She calls apostles, us too, that we may participate in her very own task and mission from the Shrine.

She educates apostles by giving us the grace of finding a home (in God, in her and in the Schoenstatt Family) and she helps us that we may be apostolic by our very being. Through her we become persons who radiate something, radiating (God's life) into our environment.

She uses and sends apostles. Through her mission, we receive graces in the Shrine. We are convinced of this with our father and founder, who said on the occasion of the closing of an annual League workshop: "I am sent, we are sent, the Family is sent! One may hold against us that we make a big deal about our mission. What do we say to it? Did not the Apostles and Prophets refer to their mission again and again? We ourselves may wonder about our mission, as Mary did: "how shall that be?" And she wondered what this greeting could mean. We too may ask ourselves occasionally: how shall

it be possible that such a small family receives such a mission? And I, with my wretchedness and my weaknesses, how shall I be drawn into this great mission stream? Proper mission consciousness is paired with instrument consciousness. We work for the Blessed Mother, we are instruments in her hand. She may use us according to the motto “Nothing without you – nothing without us!” With the Blessed Mother we can dare much, if not all. Our founder is a shining example of daring. Trusting in the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother, he dared words like these: In the shadow of the shrine the fate of Church and world will be essentially co-determined for centuries to come. Even for us personally, the shrine must always be involved when we are apostolically active. The founding document tells us: “Undoubtedly we could not do a greater apostolic deed or leave our successors a more precious legacy than to persuade our Queen to set up her throne here in a special way, to distribute her treasures and work miracles of grace.” Therefore: Our Apostolate must be a Shrine Apostolate!

III. Our call to Schoenstatt, a vocation to concrete apostolate.

Although being an apostle belongs to the life of every baptized Christian, it seems that some experience a special call to the apostolate at some point in their lives. An inner fire urges them on; similar to what the Apostles experienced after the Holy Spirit had descended upon them. They could repeat the words of St. Paul, “In fact, preaching the gospel gives me nothing to boast of, for I am under compulsion and I should be in trouble if I failed to do it...” (1Cor 9:16). Father Kentenich, too, experienced this inner urging: “I cannot otherwise, I must proclaim”. He proclaimed to the Church the mission which God and the Blessed Mother had given to him and to Schoenstatt, not only through his words but even more so through his significant foundation. He was the apostle called by the MTA (Mother Thrice Admirable).

We are drawn into this mission by grace. As he was, we too are instruments of the Blessed Mother from the Shrine. Our call to Schoenstatt may not have been an extraordinary experience, like the first Pentecost was for the Apostles, and yet this vocation is equally important for us. In our lives, too, this vocation must continue. The call from God and from the Blessed Mother can and must be lived each day.

1. Attentiveness to the daily call. On the Spiritual Daily Order form is found the Scripture text: “The love of Christ urges us on” (2Cor 5:14). These words need to be taken seriously. Our SDO should be a constant, silent but very eloquent testimony: I cannot do otherwise than make acts of love, contributions to the capital of grace, which will be fruitful for others. Through my SDO, I want to make a gift of myself.

“The love of Christ urges us on” are words of calling to the apostolate and at the same time words of solidarity with our father and founder. As we let ourselves be urged on by love to carry out our program of self-education and apostolate, we follow closely in the footsteps of our founder and thereby enable Schoenstatt to carry out its service in the Church. This service must be rendered in small ways and at the place where God’s providence wants me to be.

I am called to that service daily, one could even say from hour to hour. Self-sanctification and apostolate are for a Schoenstatt member two sides of the same coin.

On the one side: our self-sanctification has a positive effect on others. Father Kentenich prays in ‘Heavenwards’: “It has its place in the framework of our apostolate and it helps to enkindle zeal for souls,” and: “What you are and do affects their lives, determines their misfortune and increases their happiness.” Or: “So it is that family love will give us wings, motivating us to discipline our evil passions and strive for the heights of sanctity in sacrificial spirit and simple joy.” Our own striving for sanctity will then become family love and help the family joyfully bear all sorrow, drawing down to it the Father’s joyful gaze and becoming its sure and permanent staff and shield” (Heavenwards pp. 122-29). **(Read page 229 – the bishop’s letter)**

The other side of the coin: our apostolic action has a positive effect on our self-sanctification. We learn to handle success and failure, to process it in the right way, to intensify our prayer life, to give it new motivation; we learn to take advice from others, to listen to others, to step back from ourselves, etc.

I examine:

In what way does my SDO help me to be apostolically active through self-education?

Do I check my apostolic activity in at least one point on my SDO?

What reciprocal effect does that effort have on my education?

2. Living the Covenant of Love.

The Love of Christ urges us on. But the love of the Blessed Mother also urges us. How many members of Schoenstatt are carried by the awareness – and that makes them deeply joyful – that they are specially endowed by God and the Blessed Mother. Some of us will say: the greatest gift God has given me is that I have found the way to Schoenstatt, that I have learned to love the Blessed Mother and the Shrine, that there is a community to which I belong, which carries me and which I may help carry through my being and life, through my sacrifices and prayers, that I have found direction and support. Schoenstatt urges me to share what I have received.

The call to Schoenstatt is indeed always a special vocation to the apostolate because we have made a covenant of love with the Blessed Mother. Whoever unites with the Blessed Mother will be drawn into service by her, will be drawn into her mission. The Queen of Apostles needs people who help her to spread the Kingdom of her Son. That is accomplished through the manifold forms of the shrine: through the daughter shrine, the home shrine, the heart shrine, the pilgrim shrine. Where the shrine is and is alive, there is the Christ and Father Kingdom also, at least in its beginning stage.

The founding generation was deeply convinced of this: if we succeed in drawing the Mother of God down to the shrine, then a movement of renewal will break forth from this shrine into the world and Church. What has proven true for the first shrine, the original shrine, is valid also for every other form of Schoenstatt shrine. The shrine conquers the world. But it takes people to prepare the shrine from which Our Lady can work, again and again, everywhere.

A League member accepts the pilgrim shrine. Not sure whether she would ever be able to pass it on to someone else, she watches and waits for the Blessed Mother to open to her the way to others.

Another League member feels inspired to accompany the pilgrimages of the Blessed Mother with her prayers and sacrifices, and again and again to renew her covenant of love.

However, we cannot proclaim Schoenstatt everywhere and at all times or can work “in the spirit of Schoenstatt” in addition to working “for Schoenstatt”. Nevertheless, there are many that can be contacted for Schoenstatt, many who perhaps are grateful if I open the way.

And if I am at a total loss as to how and where I can do something for the apostolate – with my weaknesses, limitations and the unfavorable circumstances I face – there is always the capital of grace, to be highly estimated as the great opportunity. We can consider the diligent gathering of contributions for the capital of grace as one of the most important means of the apostolate. What is most important, above all, is that graces be mediated and “passed on”. To give many “contributions” into the hands of the Blessed Mother that she can distribute them is an apostolic activity in which we all can still grow. Everyday life gives us many opportunities for it. Let us take advantage of them!

3. Forms and realms of the apostolate.

a) Apostolate of being.

This is primary and can be practiced always and everywhere. To become an exemplary person is our first and permanent task in the apostolate. Towards this end we apply all our striving in self-education, everything covered in this book, beginning with the prayer life to the striving for the blank check, the P.I. and P.E., the SDO, the monthly report and confession. We make a great effort to practice this form of apostolate which cannot be replaced by anything else. What we pass on to others, what we want to proclaim we must have ourselves, therefore: apostolate of being! To lead people to the Shrine means first of all to be a shrine myself.

b) Apostolate of doing.

When we speak of it, one can go on without end about boundless kinds of apostolate in ways as many and different as there are people. Moreover, each time and place offers possibilities for the apostolate. The first members of our Schoenstatt Movement called out to each other, “the whole world is our field”. Father Kentenich wanted to “activate all powers for the apostolic penetration of our time”, that was declared in Schoenstatt from the beginning and was its self-evident goal. Every form and area of the apostolate was and is welcome. Nothing shall be excluded.

However, direct apostolate for Schoenstatt takes a special place. What we love, we make special efforts for, even more so when we have an insight like this: “Schoenstatt can help every person to find himself and his mission within human society, eventually to reach his eternal goal. The more a person opens himself to the influence, to the education of the Blessed Mother and the graces from the shrine, the faster and greater his progress will be. Whoever looks to our founder and father will not only be able to master his own life but also be able to give to many others advice and help, support, light and guide on the journey. Through Schoenstatt and the covenant of

love faith is strengthened, hope increased, love deepened, the three capital virtues and the gift of Baptism are unfolded and applied" (from a letter).

"Undoubtedly, we could not accomplish a greater apostolic deed nor leave our successors a more precious legacy than to urge our Lady and Queen to erect her throne here in a special way, to distribute her treasures, and to work miracles of grace" (J. Kentenich). To erect her throne here...Here! That is here, where I stand, there the Mother of God wants to work as the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt.

Possibilities for direct Schoenstatt Apostolate:

- to acknowledge Schoenstatt; to tell what Schoenstatt means for me and all that it has given to me
- to give testimony to Schoenstatt through the home shrine, work shrine or vocation
- to draw others' attention to community days, to take them along to Schoenstatt events
- to promote pilgrimages to Schoenstatt, to invite to covenant days
- to recruit new group members
- to promote the apostolate of the pilgrim shrine
- to open a way for the Blessed Mother in the MTA picture by distributing her pictures
- distributing Schoenstatt literature, giving it as a gift
- to offer Novenas to Father Kentenich, helping to spread the literature from Father Kentenich Secretariate
- to promote the Schoenstatt mission, especially Schoenstatt activities

In addition to the examples of specific Schoenstatt apostolates, there are also the many Possibilities of Apostolate which the Church puts before the eyes of the faithful. The "Decree on the Apostolate of Lay People" of Vatican Council II lists apostolates of being as well as apostolates of action (see pages 236-238 for completed lists):

- Apostolate in the parish, diocese, and universal Church
- Apostolate in and for the family
- Apostolate for the youth
- Apostolate at work, leisure, and in every aspect of social life
- Apostolate on the national and international level

This compilation shows that there are almost endless possibilities for being apostolically active. But it is not the number of activities that counts. That could too easily lead to mere activity without a soul. It was a concern of our father and founder that we be apostles in our state of life and immediate surroundings. For example, as a father or mother one's family should be the first apostolate. Everything that concerns the family must be foremost in my heart. It is there that I must work, even if it is especially difficult for me. The place where I work or study is also the place of my apostolate, in most cases as difficult as it is rich.

4. From the Statues

The Apostolic League demands of its members persevering apostolic activity in their walk of life, subject to the responsible pastoral leader (pastor, parish priest, chaplain, etc.) (see Appendix)

"Walk of life" is meant here in the broad sense of the word: the areas of life determined by my profession and vocation, for instance, as father or mother in my family, as daughter, son, brother, or sister, etc. as someone with a unique responsibility in a given area.

"Persevering" apostolic activity means I carry it out, first of all, in my place in life in each phase of life and at all times. Motivated by love, I use every opportunity. In everything I am carried by the conviction: the Blessed Mother will and can use me as an instrument.

A principal field of apostolate – and that is true for every Christian, but especially for us as members of Schoenstatt – is my parish. As Schoenstatt members we would not fulfil our mission and shirk our responsibility if we performed all kinds of apostolic deeds but disregarded our own pastor and parish life. We belong to a parish and see how we can provide responsible cooperation. The pastor must know that his Schoenstatt members are excellent people on whom he can depend.

We are there for the Church so that the Church, through convinced laity, can be the soul of the world. In the "Catechism of the Catholic Church" this important service of the laity is indicated with the following words:

"Since, like all the faithful, lay Christians are entrusted by God with the apostolate by virtue of their Baptism and Confirmation, they have the right and duty, individually or grouped in associations, to work so that the divine message of salvation may be known and accepted by all men throughout the earth. This duty is more pressing when it is only through them that men can hear the Gospel and know Christ. Their activity in ecclesial communities is so necessary that, for the most part, the apostolate of the pastors cannot be fully effective without it" (900).

Let us therefore again and again be inspired, enthused, set on fire by the thought: I am needed, and others ask for help in what I can do – and I can do a great deal. The Schoenstatt girls' youth has expressed this open, joyful apostolic attitude in the stanzas of a song by Gertrud Wackerbauer: "Find what sets you on fire! Draw deeply from what you can do! "Nothing without you – nothing without me!" Life in abundance for you!"