

IMPULSES

4/2018

for Daily Living



Foto: A. M. Jäger

*Father Joseph Kentenich-
one who lived out of joy*



Secretariat Father Joseph Kentenich

Father Joseph Kentenich- one who lived out of joy

Joy in the midst of joylessness

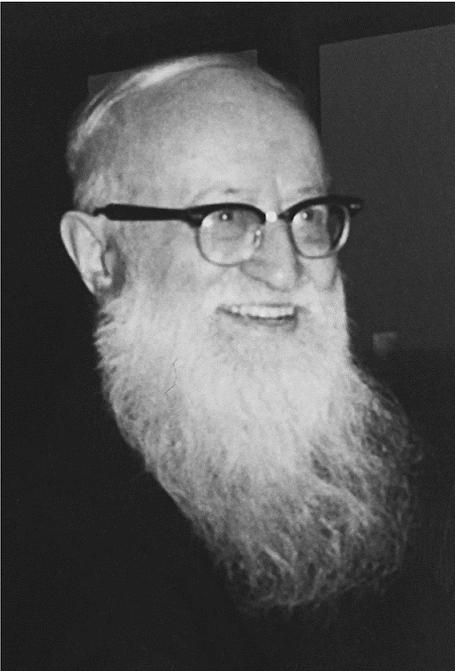
Almost as if written on his face, Father Kentenich consistently reflected serenity, cheerfulness, and joy. This inner attitude attracted many people. How was it that he radiated so much joy, even in difficult times and situations – a joy that could be so contagious? A co-prisoner told about the difficult years in the Dachau concentration camp: “Seldom in life did I laugh as heartily as on Sunday afternoons when we, although it was forbidden, met with him in the sick bay.” With a glow in his eyes, Father Kentenich walked through the camp, “as if all this could not harm him.” Even during his exile, this radiance did not fade. Photos show him with a radiant face just moments after he had received very painful, even crushing,

news. Instinctively we ask ourselves: From what sources did he draw so that the harshness of life couldn’t rob him of his inner joy?

Joy gives wings to the soul

He placed great emphasis on the cultivation of joy. It is an “elixir of life“, wonderfully suited and necessary for the “cultivation of the spirit”, that is, for the nurturing of love, of the religious and ethical values of people. Wherever he could, he suggested that we enjoy and treat ourselves and others. He encouraged rest, happy relaxation, and play.

Father Kentenich practiced the pedagogy of joy because, like Don Bosco, he recognized the value of “whatever joy is doing to a person” and that protects genuine, healthy relaxation from substitute addictions and dangerous recreational areas, especially those for children and adolescents. He was convinced: Those who find much joy in the family will not be looking for it in the wrong place. He simply knew that “people cannot live without joy”. His talks often included humorous passing comments so that the listeners often burst into resounding laughter. He was always up for a little joke. Already at the minor seminary in Schoenstatt where he became the Spiritual Director in a very delicate and tension-laden situation, he began his first talk with several humorous anecdotes. Wherever possible, he tried to lighten the mood, and he was often successful in transforming the sad



distraught mood of the other person to joy. He was able to create a joyful, cheerful atmosphere with just a few clarifying words. He knew how important it is that Christians “always spread a unique, joyful, happy atmosphere where others would feel well.”

For Father Kentenich, natural and spiritual joys were an elemental prerequisite for becoming holy. Saints have always been joyful persons: The words of St. Francis de Sales, “A sad saint is a sorry saint” was often quoted by him.

As pastor of the German community in Milwaukee, he encouraged relaxation, such as dances and a joyful community at parish festivals. It was a joy for all when he initiated a church choir. He stressed the significance of joy and cheerfulness for community and family life. “Joy with one another next to the Sacrament of the Altar is the most important thing for community life”. He explained to parents from the family circle in Milwaukee: “If we cannot be relaxed and play with our children then we also cannot speak with God.” One could learn from him.

Mastering joy in small things

As educator Father Kentenich taught the art to enjoy the little things in life and to be grateful for them. He encouraged and pointed out, “We always have opportunities to rejoice.” “If you do not scorn little joys, you will never lack them.”

Perhaps they are the first rays of sunshine, the singing of the birds, waking up in the early morning, newly strengthened, the fragrance of

a good cup of coffee. Perhaps it’s the friendly wave allowing me to merge into the needed lane between cars in heavy traffic, or the door that someone holds open for me, or a loving greeting, an unexpected phone call, or any other sign that someone thought of me or prayed for me. It’s the thousand little things that we so easily overlook in the expectation of great joys in everyday life, little things that didn’t escaped Father Kentenich, however, and for which he repeatedly expressed his heartfelt gratitude.

Precisely his attitude of gratitude was a source of joy that constantly filled his heart. No service given him was too little so that he wouldn’t have thanked for it. He inspired others to do the same: not to overlook the little messengers of God’s love.

“These are great persons who bless the world: real joyful children who live down to earth, who are joyful, serene, and outwardly cheerful and kind.” J. Kentenich

Sr. Dr. M. Doria Schlickmann



Always Only God

Parts 1-4 tell the early founding history of Schoenstatt, the first difficulties from Church authorities and the persecution by National Socialism until the incarceration of the founder in Koblenz. The situation escalated more and more.

God tested the founder and gave him an opportunity for a free decision. In mid-January of 1942 the news arrived that the prisoner had to count on being transported to a concentration camp. That was, according to human measures, considering his age and weak health, a sure way to certain death. Persons in Schoenstatt succeeded in finding a way that possibly would lead to freedom. But the founder hesitated and considered the pros and cons. He knew how painful it was for his followers when he did not use the opportunity; he was aware that his work and his mission that God had given him were still incomplete. He knew, humanly speaking it was madness not to use the way that perhaps could spare him from being sent to the concentration camp. In prayer and by celebrating holy Mass he struggled to make the right decision. Then his decision was firm: to stake everything on one card: If freedom, then only through supernatural means, through the prayers and sacrifices of all whom God had entrusted to him. Thus the momentous decision was made on January 20, 1942: The founder went voluntarily to Dachau. He wrote to Father Menningen, one of his closest co-workers:

“Please, understand the answer out of faith in the reality of supernature

and the interwovenness of destiny of the members of our family.” With this, the Schoenstatt family was irrevocably directed to supernature, to God and his will. The unity of destiny and life between founder and his followers, the father of the family, initiated in God, was raised to consciousness in its entire significance. The founder placed his personal fate and the fate of the work completely into the hands of God. ... He wrote: “Freedom is the most valuable possession of human beings. I offer this freedom with sincere, glowing love so that the dear God will give the spirit of this inner freedom of the children of God forever -for this I am prepared to bear the chains of imprisonment.” The most loyal ones understood the founder and were ready to go with him, that is, through a life of total surrender to make the effort to fight for this inner freedom and thus to win the release from the external chains of imprisonment in this manner.

January 20th became a milestone of decisive significance in the life of the founder and his foundation so that the future development cannot be understood without it.

On March 11, 1942, the time had come: The transportation to Dachau began in an uncomfortable prisoner-railroad-car. Father Kentenich felt very deeply the triumph of evil in the camp of shame. But he did not become restless, nor bitter, or desperate. In the midst of “the city of slaves, fools and death” he sought God and found him, and he made an effort to create a colony of heaven. A co-prisoner reported in concealed language: “There is a rock in the

midst of this stream; the waters cannot harm it ... Clouds never hide the peak of this rock. He sees stars during the day in brilliant sunshine, and the sun does not set for him during the night. His thoughts are united with the plans of Eternal Wisdom, and his eyes are only open for hearts. But his heart has left mortality long ago: It has become love for all who give themselves to him. ..." We can hardly estimate what Father Kentenich meant for many prisoners, for priests and lay persons, for Catholics and non-Catholics, even for Communists in the hell of Dachau.

In clogs and prisoner clothing, in inhuman conditions and an existential situation of distress that is aimed at destroying personality and human sympathy he remained the personality, the founder, the father and leader. So, he was a sign of hope for his surrounding, and sometimes also a sign of contradiction. The former Reichstags deputy Joos remarked in his Dachau book, *Life Until Further Notice*, that Father Kentenich, by the way he was, had to be "very attractive or repelling as is true of all men of absolute faith." As soon as he senses that God wants something, the most adverse conditions, even the threat of death, cannot keep him from doing it." So, he was able to work for Schoenstatt with extreme concentration and purposefulness. He dictated tirelessly. For the sake of better concealment, the texts were written in verse form. He gave answers to personal questions and problems of the whole family in numerous letters. He wrote discourses and his spiritual legacy. By this way, the prayers of "Heavenwards" came into being. But

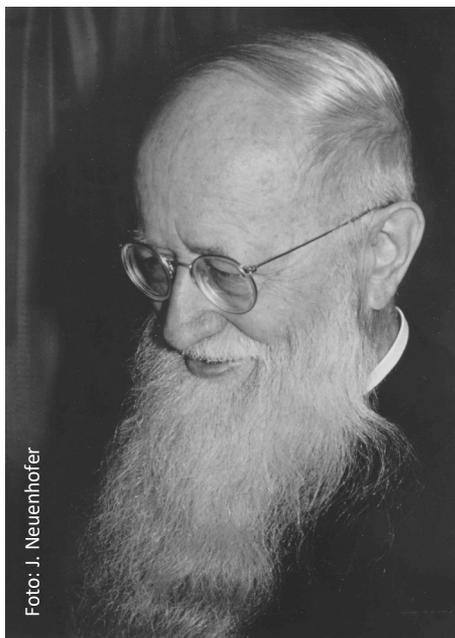
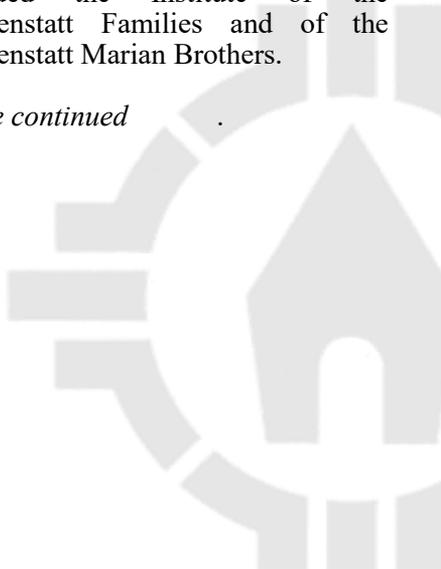


Foto: J. Neuenhofer

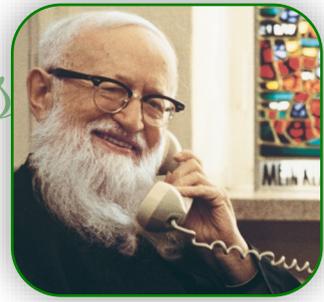
that is not all. The founder was also active in the camp; he preached sermons and gave talks in the evening, fostered community for all who were interested in Schoenstatt, conducted schoolings and conferences and continued to build up Schoenstatt. On July 16, 1942 - still a prisoner at the admissions block - he founded the Institute of the Schoenstatt Families and of the Schoenstatt Marian Brothers.

A.K

To be continued



He Helps *He Helps*



IN SEVERE ILLNESS

In December of 2016 a doctor found that I had a malignant intestinal tumor. Serious surgery was necessary. It was a shock for me and a great disappointment. Why me? I thought immediately of Father Kentenich and the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt. I prayed novenas, and that made me confident and calm. I wrote to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary and to some women of the Schoenstatt Movement. They prayed for me. And I often said the novena *Courage of Faith*. The surgery took place in Bern on January 31, 2017. It went well. I had no severe pain, but I had to take thirty radiation treatments and Chemo. I always had the check-up on the 18th of the month. The reports were always positive. Thank you, Father Kentenich, for your intercession and thanks to Mother Mary! Thanks, too, to the sisters and all who also prayed. I am relatively fine. I am content. Thank you! Thank you! **R. L., Switzerland, May 2018**

TERMINAL DISEASE

I prayed for a young man named Karl who had a rare and terminal disease that was crippling him. His family, which includes three young children, were preparing for the worst. We prayed to Father Kentenich for a miracle. We are experiencing one in that Karl is now stable and in fact, a little better health-wise. We trust in Father Kentenich's continued intercession. **IND**

SEVERE MIGRAINE

A young girl named Lucy suffered from severe migraine headaches. She signed up to go to a Catholic youth summer camp but the leaders were warned of her condition by her parents and told to call them if she got bad and they would come to pick her up. A Schoenstatt youth named Mary prayed with Lucy one night when the latter was suffering from a headache. They petitioned Father Kentenich to help relieve her of her headache and he did! In fact, she hasn't had a migraine headache since! It has been a blessing and healing for the entire family since these headaches usually were so severe that the whole family was somehow affected by it. **MN**

SERIOUS ACCIDENT

Last year in November, I entrusted my petition to Father Kentenich for the first time. My son, age 35, suffered a serious head injury in a fall. He had surgery on December 11th. At that time I asked the sisters again to pray for my son. The surgery went well and was without complications. To the surprise of the doctors the process of healing went very well. It meant that in spite of the serious accident recovery went well. After one month, my son could leave rehab and at the present time is recuperating at home. He will probably soon be able to go back to work. After the serious accident he seems to have no permanent damage. Because this is

unusual I am convinced that prayer, confidence in the help of the Mother of God and Father Kentenich, decisively contributed to this outcome. *M. E., March 2018*

IN TRAFFIC

I got lost on the way to a very important appointment and it made me very nervous. I placed the situation into Father Kentenich's hands and trusted that he would somehow help me find my way again. Up ahead I found a young man walking his dog and asked for directions which then led me right to my destination. I was indeed late, but the Doctor too was behind schedule so he could still see me. Thank you, Father Kentenich! **WI**

RETURNING TO THE FAITH

A good friend (85) often told me when discussing religious questions that he simply could not believe. His intellect did not allow that. Because his death could happen any time at his advanced age, I asked a Schoenstatt Sister of Mary whom I knew for advice and her prayers so that he would return to the faith. She promised to present the intention to Father Kentenich. My wife and I did the same. Because of his poor health, his wife suggested that he should talk to a priest, and he agreed. A Franciscan priest who visited him prayed with him and anointed him. He also received Holy Communion. His health deteriorated more and more. Although he could hardly speak, his final words were, "Jesus, Jesus." He died peacefully and detached. My friend returned to his faith in time. We ascribe it to the intercession of Father Kentenich. *H.F., 2018*

STUDYING

Hereby I want to report another answer to prayers. I have often prayed to our revered Father Kentenich and the Mother of God for my intentions, and much has changed for the better. Again and again we turn to them, ask for advice, for help and direction and could experience help. Our great intention was the studies of our daughter that was often not easy and burdensome for her. But in situations of crises, in tests and now for the finals we could experience the wonderful power of intercession of Father Kentenich and the Mother of God. Our many prayers were heard and answered. Our daughter finished her studies well and also received direction for her future profession. She looks confidently ahead, and we know that we can continue to rely on the intercession of Father Kentenich. It reassures us very much. Gratefully and endlessly relieved we send our greetings to all of you in Schoenstatt.

E.D. & J. B., May 2018

FREED FROM ALCOHOL

My son successfully finished his alcohol withdrawal treatment. That is an answer to prayers that is not a matter of course. The Mother of God quickly noticed how dependent our son was on alcohol. He was in the middle of an alcohol dependency delusion. My husband and I prayed to the Mother of God and to Father Kentenich to help him. On his own, our son was not able to rise from the bottom. On December 8, 2016 he realized that he needed help. He went to the regional hospital to get help. Now he has been "dry" for nine months. Many thanks! "Mother takes care" – we have experienced it. *S.P.*

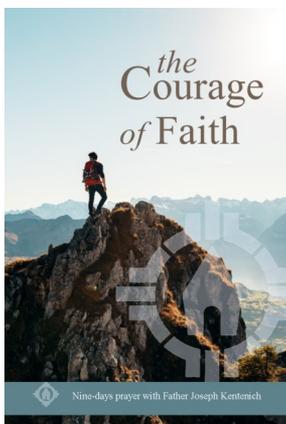
Father Joseph Kentenich

- Founder of the International Schoenstatt Movement -

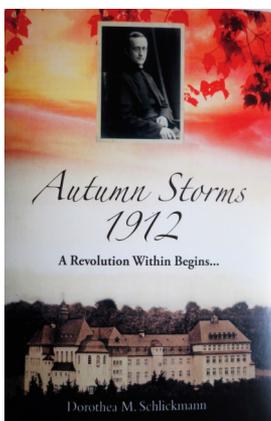
was born on November 16, 1885, in Gymnich near Cologne and died on September 15, 1968, in the Trinity Church of Berg Schoenstatt, immediately after the celebration of the Holy Mass. He is also buried in this church. His sarcophagus bears the inscription *Dilexit ecclesiam - He loved the church.*

The **Secretariat Father Josef Kentenich** distributes information about Father Kentenich, to those who are acquainted with Schoenstatt' spirituality and pray on his intercession. You will be able to find more information and novenas from Fr. Kentenich in our centers.

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Whenever this pamphlet directly or indirectly states that Father Kentenich is a "saint" it is always the expression of private opinion. The decision of the Church is in no way anticipated.