

IMPULSES

3/2019

for Daily Living



Father Kentenich-
Childhood in light and shadow
Excerpt from the new biography



Secretariat Father Joseph Kentenich

“Joseph Kentenich

Childhood in light and shadow”

Reading sample

In the two previous editions of "Impulse for daily living" 1/2019 and 2/2019, the new biography of Father Kentenich was already announced. This issue No. 3/2019 brings you now a reading sample.

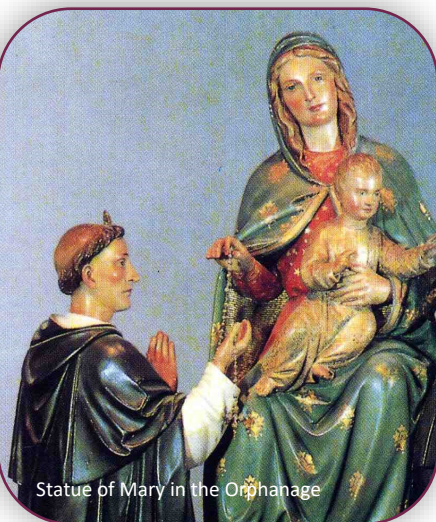
It begins with the entrance of Joseph Kentenich in the orphanage in Oberhausen. He was then eight years old. The family circumstances were so unfavorable that his mother and the grandparents couldn't take care of him. With a heavy heart, his mother brought him to the sisters in the orphanage in Oberhausen. When they arrived there, the mother went to the house chapel with little Joseph, knelt in front of the statue of the Blessed Mother and gave her child to Mary, the Mother of God. She asked Mary to take care of her child in her place

from now on, because she herself was no longer able to do so. Joseph made this act of his mother very much his own. He knew that the Blessed Mother would take care of him. This conviction carried him all through his life.

In the biography it says under the headline

Childhood in light and shadow:

What was it about that consecration to the Virgin Mary that touched him so deeply and that would have such power over his life? There is no doubt that Joseph personally experienced a mysterious reality at the moment of the consecration that would influence his life even more than before: God. In the midst of the pain of the separation from the beloved mother he had the experience of a tremendous nearness of God through Mary: God is there. He loves me, very personally, even if he allows suffering. In the arms of Mary, I am as secure as the Child on her lap. The experience is so strong that it never lets go of him as an impression, even in times of crisis. Later hints indicate that through Mary he had profoundly experienced what God is really like. It was the encounter with the "mercifully loving Father God, who can't help himself but loving us endlessly," as he later formulated it.



Statue of Mary in the Orphanage

This core experience carried him through the following, not easy years in the orphanage. The

experiences that he had there cleared the way to a new pedagogy. "From childhood I have always observed, what education is and how in general it was practiced, and I said, No. You can't educate like that, you have to do it differently." It was somehow in his blood to observe life and think about it. God spoke to him through people and their souls and the "soul attunement". He considered the "voices of soul " as a source of knowledge for what God wanted, possibly also because he himself suffered much early on and he witnessed the suffering of others at close quarters. The difficult childhood and youth experiences became a driving force behind him, as he himself admits, pushed towards the priesthood: He wanted to give a home to others, "although my own heart also screams for a home."

Joseph lived through difficult years. He was homesick and ran twice away from the orphanage. Picked up on the way, he asked, where then is the Erft, the river that runs through Gymnich? He was "not easy to educate" one of the sisters from the orphanage said. But another tells that she met him one day, alone in the laundry room, where he was sent as a punishment. There he kneeled immovably on the floor, he was "completely oblivious" and he hadn't even noticed me. But it was obviously not only the religious power that he felt and that helped him to survive this time in one piece. Joseph's joy in learning, in knowledge, in books, increased. The school became an

intellectual refuge for him. When the older orphans graduated and left the orphanage he and his companions yearned for their freedom. One said, "Will we ever get big like that?!" Then Joseph replied to this: "It doesn't matter, but – and he tapped his forehead – it depends on what you have here!"

His spiritual refuge lay in the inner certainty: My mother thinks of me; she prays for me. She didn't just put me here but she handed me over to Mary. To cope with the suffering, to process it, he got himself a rhyme booklet, to write poetry. His first poems -as his orphanage companion, later journalist Hermann Müser can remember - dealt with suffering. Joseph was forced early to learn how to deal with difficult circumstances and with suffering without losing himself or breaking from it. You have to face the pain, to suffer it: You don't want to push it down. To write away from his soul helped him. On April 24, 1897 Joseph made his First Holy Communion at the age of



eleven. It was the day on which he told his mother again that he wanted to become a priest: a priest I will be. "Boy, then we're going to have to do a lot of praying." That's the only thing that the mother answered to that. But this one sentence gave little hope to him. An illegitimate child could not become a priest at that time. The situation forced him painfully to deal more intensely with his family's destiny. But he remained firm in his decision. The end of school time in Oberhausen was approaching. Once again Katharina Kantenich visited her son. Since the First Holy Communion he's changed a lot. The thirteen-year-old has entered puberty. A married uncle from Cologne, Reiner Greiss, who is particularly close to them, has accompanied the mother and is now sitting between them on the bench at the orphanage. He talks and talks to Joseph to explain the situation. "He is a fine gentleman," Joseph thinks, he just wants to help." Yet Joseph stares sadly and disappointedly. Why isn't his mother helping him? The uncle shows very proudly his new camera. - Joseph reflects: "Such a thing can only be bought in Cologne. Here only the real photographers have that!"...

When his mother returned to Cologne, she cannot forget his sad look and again and again she thinks everything through. What the boy has in mind is hopeless.

But how could one fulfill his wish to become a priest for him, how overcome obstacles?

One day a possibility opens up. Father Savels had heard from his sister, a Dominican from Arenberg, that the missionary society of the Pallottines in Ehrenbreitstein ran a boarding school for their vocations... There you could earn a high school degree. The Pallottines, as they were called, trained priests as missionaries for Africa. They would also accept boys from poor families and family situations similar to those of Joseph. But the mother hesitated. Although the joy that Joseph could become a priest at first was great, she was hoping that he'd be closer to her. But now she was supposed to separate from her child again, and that for a long time: Joseph would go to the mission in Cameroon, and from there, perhaps never return?! Was there no other possibility? Or should she, as she had suggested to Father Savels, still marry the father of the child, so that Joseph could be legitimized and become a diocesan priest? Then he would not need enter a missionary society and could stay in Germany ... No! Her confessor had definitely disagreed with her: If that's the only reason to get married, then he strongly advised against it. Now what? How little the mother could make friends with the thought, that Joseph should become a missionary priest is revealed by a poem of the fourteen-year-old at Easter 1900. In a Hymn to Love ("Power of Love") Joseph expressed the request: "May you direct the thoughts of my mother whom I don't want to offend!"

The boarding school near the fortress Ehrenbreitstein

Already on August 15, 1899 Joseph had obtained his diploma in

Oberhausen. But the decision for Ehrenbreitstein was delayed well into September. At the last minute, the mother had agreed with her confessor with a heavy heart... Now everything had to be done quickly because the school year at Ehrenbreitstein had already begun. Still in Oberhausen he had to undergo a physical examination and be certified, the questionnaire had to be filled out and be signed by Joseph. All this happened on September 22, 1899. The next day Joseph was sitting with a small suitcase that the mother had packed and brought to the Cologne train station in the train to Koblenz-Ehrenbreitstein. In the new suit, finally with long trousers, as it should be, he enjoyed the ride along the Rhine full of expectation and anticipation of what would begin now: the High School as the first important stage on the way to the priestly vocation I've longed for. Opposite him Father Savels sat and looked at the boy thoughtfully. What experiences Joseph had already behind him, just 1,50 meter tall and of slim stature! And what he had not already done to achieve the impossible, to make this possible! The boy was strong. Arrived at the Pallottine boarding school, Pastor Savels took first care of some formalities and paid the 200 gold marks, the annual advance payment for maintenance. Proudly Katharina Kentenich had declared to her confessor that she would pay for the costs of the studies, but of course, the money wasn't together fast.



Joseph Kentenich: the second on front row

Now Joseph stood for the first time in the inner courtyard of the Pallottine property with the elongated main building, the two opposite outbuildings and the former mill. Joseph looked around and looked at his new home: the beautiful, ivy-covered terrace above near the old quarry stone wall towards the mountain. He turned around, because opposite was - at right angles to the main building wing - a pretty, stylish annex with a large study hall on the first floor, which had direct access to the courtyard. At both sides were many windows, which made the room bright and friendly. The study hall even had a built in stage, as Joseph had heard because it was at the same time serving as a recreation room for the upper classes and as festival hall. Above it was the house chapel with its arched, colorfully decorated windows.

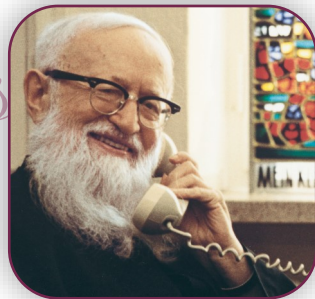
Page 24 to 29 ff:

Dorothea Schlickman

JOSEPH KENTENICH

A LIFE ON THE EDGE OF THE VOLCANO

He Helps



Suitable workplace

My brother has a new job in the area where his family lives... He was before a lot on the road within Germany and many days of the week not at home. He has three little boys 1, 3 and 5 years old. Now the children see their dad every evening. He can also help put them to bed. We are all very happy that he is no longer in the sales department and now can be more with his family. Thank you, dear Father Kentenich!

V. R., October 2018

Four months ago, my daughter had to give up her training because of excessive physical and psychological strain. Now she was alone in a strange city without money and without health insurance. During her training, she had spent her own money to get insured. After many applications and only occasional employment, without health insurance, my concern became bigger and bigger. Then I remembered Father Kentenich and began to pray novenas. Last week she finally got an employment corresponding to her qualification. I thank the Blessed Mother and Father Kentenich warmly for this great help! Hereby I redeem my promise for publication.

S. H., December 2018

Assistance in the event of an accident

Where's your God? I do not see him and I don't hear him. I don't feel him. And yet he sometimes gives us experiences, which we call the "lucky moments" in our lives; and they work within us. An example from the last summer vacation: A mother, two daughters, a boy friend of one daughter and the dog were on a walk in beautiful summer weather. They went by car for the first part, and then continued on foot through the cool forest. They had already gone a long

way, when suddenly the call reached the mother: "Mama, come quickly!" What had happened? While fooling around the friend had missed the path and was in danger of sliding down the embankment... In the last second he reached out to the barrier. Unfortunately it was made of barbed wire. He tore his finger and also his hand. He was bleeding all over. Because they found nothing better, they tied his hand with the dog leash. One daughter tried to reach an ambulance on a cell make a telephone call. Radio hole! Shortly before the next town the emergency doctor was on the scene. An ambulance brought the young man to the hand-clinic. The next days were still quite exciting. Will the fingers and the hand be saved?

We asked the Blessed Mother and Father Kentenich for help. The sisters helped with their prayer. I promised Father Kentenich the publication of the answer to prayer, when the hand and the finger are all right again. Meanwhile the hand is restored and ready for use. God also works among us today. We can experience it every day.

I. W., October 2018

Double help

I would like to inform you today that our prayers had a great effect. I am quite certain that Father Kentenich helped us. I had written to Schoenstatt because our daughter didn't finish her studies. She is already 30 years old. We were worried. Now two great things happened that I like to report to be published. Our daughter handed in her Bachelor thesis as part of her studies as "art therapist" on 5.10.2018. Whoever does not know the

connections, will think that this is normal, but we don't, because the due date was repeatedly postponed. Eventually she needed another medical certificate. Now we are very happy and grateful that we, through your prayers and the intercessions on the 15th of each month experienced the help of the Almighty God through intercession of the Blessed Mother and Father Kentenich. In the days before the completion of the Bachelor thesis I prayed a novena and rewrote a verse in view of the concrete request. Praying these lines again and again have helped me a lot.

Now to the second event: The day after our daughter had to submit her thesis she got a job that relieved us much after many difficulties. She may start her work on November 1. Isn't that wonderful? It is a workplace that offers social insurance which is very good. So, this temporal connection between the first and the second problem, the right place, have made me completely convinced of the help of Father Kentenich.

Thank you once again for your support through Schoenstatt. We will be in contact, at least through prayer.

U. F., October 2018

Health Problems

Fr. Kentenich, thank you for interceding on behalf of my son, Michael, who went for back surgery. Through a series of unforeseen events, the surgery was cancelled. He was able to get a 2nd opinion within a week at a renowned hospital in New York City. He was told NOT to have surgery because it wouldn't correct his back pain. He only needed physical therapy. He is getting better with therapy!

J.C. New York

I went on a trip and I needed to get an injection for my health condition every week while there. I miscalculated the time and was short one shot. I asked Fr. Kentenich for help. It was not possible to

get the injection because of the safety and short notice. The inspiration came to ask a Doctor for a sample of the medication and we were able to get it on time.

A.O., Puerto Rico

Help in need

I needed something from the store urgently but had no time to go. I asked Fr. Kentenich to provide. Later in the afternoon someone asked me if I would need anything from the store since she had to run errands anyway. With that I got what I needed. Thank you Fr. Kentenich!

J.U., Wisconsin

In serious illness

A year ago, my husband was diagnosed: he needed a new heart valve. We were all very afraid of the operation, but against all odds, it went very well. When he had to go to rehab, there was no progress. He also got a bad cold and a diagnosis of Parkinson's.

The rehabilitation was unsuccessful, because my husband could not move well, and he was almost rigid. The drugs did not work for him. When the three weeks of rehab were over; he was discharged as a nursing case. Now we started at home with the Ergo- and Physiotherapy and with much prayer. On his birthday in March, he could already be up in the wheelchair to celebrate. A month later, there was a total recovery and his condition continued to improve. One day he could get up and today he's walking at the walker again and doesn't have to be in bed anymore. The therapists and the nursing staff speak of a miracle. I thank the Blessed Mother and Father Kentenich for their help. I prayed daily: Father Kentenich, at this jubilee year anniversary, please, help my husband. I always prayed a decade of the Rosary with the addition: Father Kentenich, glorify yourself. He did it. Many thanks, dear Blessed Mother and Father Kentenich.

M. B., December 2018

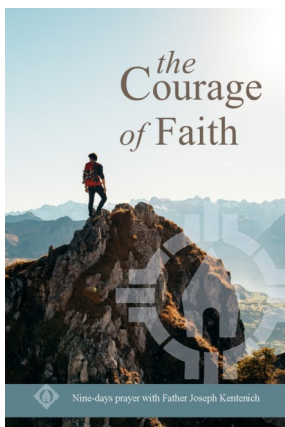
Father Joseph Kentenich

- Founder of the International Schoenstatt Movement -

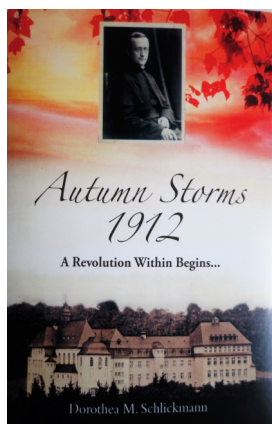
was born on November 16, 1885, in Gymnich near Cologne and died on September 15, 1968, in the Trinity Church of Berg Schoenstatt, immediately after the celebration of the Holy Mass. He is also buried in this church. His sarcophagus bears the inscription *Dilexit ecclesiam - He loved the church.*

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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Contact Addresses in the USA:

Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary
W284 N698 Cherry Lane
Waukesha, WI 53188-9416
Phone: (262) 522-4300

Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary
House Schoenstatt
134 Front Street
Rockport, Texas 78382-7800
Phone: (361) 729-2771

Contact Address in Australia:

Mount Schoenstatt
230 Fairlight Road
Mulgoa, NSW 2745
Australia

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.