

United in Mary—on fire, we go forward!



2019-2020 COVENANT RENEWAL REFLECTIONS

We unite in our ideal: Mary!

Formulating a year's motto is similar to finding words for our personal ideal. We meditate on the voices of the time, but also on the wide array of Christ's features and Mary's glories. We find one that best captures the heart's genuine aspirations for the *here-and-now*. We put it into words and then into action.

This month's discussion on the year's motto will focus on the personal ideal. We unite in Mary! Each of us finds in Mary the embodiment of his or her personal ideal, because she is the ideal image of the human person, of the Christian soul. She captures the sincere longing of all hearts, as we are meant to live in the *here-and-now* of our daily living. Relying on words from Father Kentenich, we will see the relevance of the personal ideal for our times.

From the shadow of mass-mentality...

If the core of the human person is dissolved into the masses, the longing for God is lost.

[The] person with a crowd mentality who radically denies and destroys from within all attachment to God: Think and live mechanistically! Separate everything – thinking, living, and loving... [the] person is inwardly dehumanized, depersonalized, massified. It is self-evident that a person whose nature is so broken and torn no longer has a sense for the supernatural, for the divine. Lastly, we live in interdenominational times; tomorrow and the day after they will be undenominational. All in all, we understand the reasons for the fact that, at times, our hunger for God, the drive for God can be repressed.¹

Questions:

- Losing our connection with God leads us to lose a sense for those around us. Share examples of moments when we lose sight of the human as a result of estranging ourselves from God.
- How can we preserve our core as persons and as community?
- Father Kentenich even comments on the necessity to be clear about our denomination otherwise we may also lose a sense of belonging with regards to our faith. How can we guard ourselves against that?

... to the light of personal determination

Observe life and name someone who has aspired toward something great and has accomplished it... You will encounter [in that person] a mentality of determination. Name someone from the marketplace. Isn't he characterized by a unique perspective from which he repeatedly contemplates and evaluates in an instinctive way all that takes place? "How much does it cost? Will it be a good business?" That is the expression of his mentality, a mentality specifically oriented toward economy. We can

¹ Father J. Kentenich, *Forming the New Person*, 1950.

observe the same specific mentality in Christ and the saints. Their fundamental attitude was none other than “glory to the Father and peace on earth; I do what pleases the Father.” This was their fundamental attitude. Before each new situation, he asks: “What does the Heavenly Father think of this?... How can I be an instrument of peace among others?”²

One practical way of understanding the concept of personal ideal is by seeing it as the formation of our *fundamental attitude* in life. If my goal in life is to make money, I might fall prey to greed. But, if my goal in life is to bring God to others I might fall into the habit of always thinking of others.

- Who determines a person’s aspirations? Can we educate ourselves to *want* the best?
- Father Kentenich mentions some phrases that characterized the disposition of our Lord and of the saints. Can you mention some phrases from some Schoenstatt Heroes, that kept them focused on their personal ideal?
- Why is it so important to form personalities with a mentality of determination?
- What is needed so that this determination leads us upwards, to God, and not to center on ourselves?

Forming the core of the personality

If we are able to embrace religious experiences with heart and soul, and not just perform them as practices imposed by order and command, we have the opportunity to educate ourselves into personalities. The personal ideal *is* that religious experience. Father Kentenich tells us how Mary simplifies this process:

Religious experience *touches the deepest core of the human soul*, the heart of a person, where creative powers, the profound depths of human nature are hidden. Religious experience moves elemental powers, inmost fundamentals which ultimately secure the basic attitude of the human person and the corresponding predispositions. We should weigh these two expressions. (...)

Love transmits life. If I love the Blessed Virgin she transmits her life to me. In her person we find the outstandingly womanly heart. Love for Mary is an excellent means to cultivate the heart on a religious level. (...)

If we ponder Our Lady’s image in this light and put it into the context of the great laws that govern religious experience, it becomes easy for us to ask and beg time and again: Mother, if only I were like you! More yet: Mother, if only I were you!³

Questions:

- Mention at least three ways in which Schoenstatt helps the faithful to look up to Mary as the ideal of the Christian soul.
- Let as many people in the room as possible mention their favorite image of the Blessed Mother. (The mysteries of the Rosary, the litanies of the Rosary, or particular passages of Scripture may be mentioned in order to highlight the “favorite” image of Mary.)
- Have each person write on a piece of paper how the image or title they mentioned inspires them to face challenges. (Have a few share their thoughts.)

For Father Kentenich the tendency toward that particular image or the fact that a distinct feature of Mary’s or Christ’s life calls our attention has to do with our calling, with our mission, with our personal ideal.

² Father J. Kentenich to the youth educators, quoted by Paul Siegel, p. 185.

³ Father J. Kentenich, *Forming the New Person*, 1950.

Something of Christ's priestly character or of his shepherd's gifts God wants to give on to me. Or, something of Mary's mercy or motherliness God wants to convey to others through me.

May Mary, the one blessed among women, the choir director of human society as a whole, the ideal image whom the living God places before our eyes, bless us all so that we may form ourselves after her image. As the Mother of Catholics who is at work in Schoenstatt as the singularly great educator, may she bless us. *Trahe nos!* Draw us after you! We want to follow the fragrance of your ointments [Cf. Song of Songs 4,10].⁴

⁴ Father J. Kentenich, *Forming the New Person*, 1950.