

Founding Day, October 23, 2011, in Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, USA, was a glorious day. It was attended by 250 people from Minnesota, Iowa, and Wisconsin. God gave us beautiful sunshine, good fellowship, and good food for our minds, bodies, and souls. There were so many things to celebrate! It is the 35th anniversary of the Jubilee Family Shrine, the closing of the Year of the Father, and the opening of the Year of the Shrine.

Sister M. Petra was our honored guest speaker. Her topics were an overview of Schoenstatt and an in-depth view of Father Kentenich. She was his secretary for three of his 13 years of exile in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Sister outlined some key traits that he possessed, that of tranquility, contemplative prayer, radiant joy, love, and compassion. She gave us examples of his inner joy, the reality of the Blessed Mother, the depth of his prayers, and how he could understand people and turn this into a learning experience, bringing comfort and joy to them.

Sister Petra emphasized how joyful and radiant Father was. He had been through a terminal illness, the Nazis concentration camp at Dachau, Germany, and suffered 14 years of exile from his beloved Schoenstatt. Through all of his intense suffering, he had complete trust in our Mother Thrice Admirable and in Divine Providence. He said that God is not only a God of love, but also of joy.

His prayer was a time for concentrated attention, total focus, and to live in God's presence. He admonished Sister Petra when she had a short petition to Mary by asking her, "And what did the Blessed Mother say? Did you leave her before she had a chance to speak to you?" He taught that we should expect nothing, give away everything, and that difficulties enable us to have detachment. Also, that we solve the global problems in our own homes by loving our families.

Father's compassionate love overflowed because he had experienced and understood suffering. He had the ability to take on other's suffering. He taught that the more we admit our smallness and weaknesses, the more we can receive God's mercy.

We were very blessed to have Sister Petra, who was able to give a first-hand account of our wonderful founder. The more that we learn of Father Kentenich we see what a great gift he is! Through Father Kentenich, we have a man who reflects God the Father to us, and through him we have received the priceless gift of the covenant of love and our shrine.

Lunch was catered by Hardees, with Sr. Rita Marie's wonderful desserts, followed by an opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation with Father Steffl, and then Mass con-celebrated by Father Kasel and Father Steffl. Father Kasel shared his joy to be a part of Schoenstatt. A small Holy Family Statue was blessed at the end of Mass and sent out from the shrine to travel to every Schoenstatt family in Minnesota, Iowa, South and North Dakota. Within these next three years, until October 18, 2014, our MTA will bring these shrine graces to strengthen family life and love. We processed to the shrine for benediction, renewal of the covenant of love, and to receive a beautiful magnet designed by Mark Rockers to commemorate the day.

It was a tremendous day to begin our year's motto: *Build Family Shrines of Life and Love!*

Jenny and Dave Baker, Farmington, MN