

**En Route on the  
Highway of marriage**  
Working documentation

# Suggestions

## how to work with the book

Being together on the way is an image of our marriage. We are together on the way through the highs and lows of life, through happiness and despair. As we go on pilgrimage along Schoenstatt's Highway of Marriage we are invited to follow up all these facets of our marriage and partnership, and in the process to grow with each other and towards each other. We are invited to set out and come into dialogue with each other – as marriage partners or as a group, in Schoenstatt itself, or somewhere else.

Let us ask ourselves when we look at our partnership:  
How are things between us?

- What does me good; what does us good?
- Are we on the right path or do we need to change direction?
- Are there moments when we are allowed to experience God's closeness and guidance?
- Which paths do we want to take a new look at together?

## *Prayer*

*Kind and loving God,  
we stand before you as husband  
and wife;  
we stand before you with our  
longing for a good marriage and  
partnership.  
Together we are setting out on the  
road  
leading to ourselves and to each  
other.  
We ask you  
to fill us with joy in each other and  
in life;  
strengthen us when the questions  
become more difficult;  
accompany us when uncertainties  
arise;  
give us serenity when for a moment  
we don't know how to go on;  
remain with us when new roads  
open up before us;  
let us become an image of your love  
for us.*

*Amen.*

### **Why go on pilgrimage?**

When we are on pilgrimage a great tendency breaks through in an elemental and graphic way: Away from what is merely ideas! Enter into what is strong, practical and vital, and rich in sacrifice!

*J. Kentenich, 25 November, 1965*

# The Highway of Marriage as a Source and Inspiration

The Highway of Marriage mirrors the fullness of life in marriage and partnership. No matter how varied our experiences of the different situations in life, the possibilities, inspirations and ideas for new incentives are just as manifold. Here you will find some ideas for married couples and groups – there are no limits to what imagination can achieve!

## On pilgrimage as a couple

The accompanying book can be used while on pilgrimage along the Highway of Marriage; when you are travelling together somewhere else and are looking for inspirations for your partnership and marriage; for a time together as a couple wherever you may be. It is recommended that you choose one or two stations that are topical for you at the moment. Less is more.

## On pilgrimage in a group of couples

Travelling together as a group

The group moves from one station to the next and takes turns in reading something from the accompanying book.

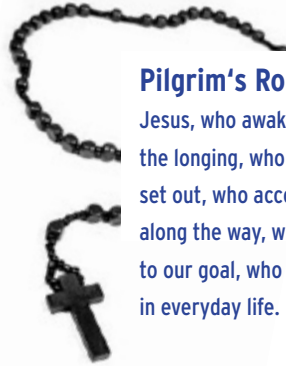
Each couple chooses a station and prepares it for the group. Positive experiences of the couple could be shared with the group.

Together the couples meditate on the picture and the incentives in the text. Their ideas can be shared, “What touches me ...“ Associations with their own lives can also be shared.

## As a group setting out independently of each other

After a common introduction, the couples set out independently of each other. Echoes and experiences can be shared when the group comes together again.

Each couple looks for the station that applies to them at the moment. They spend some time there together. Each couple could then share with the rest of the group: What spoke to us at this station? What touched us? What has been a positive experience to us? In the process they ensure that what is personal to themselves remains unspoken; they only pass on what they have agreed together.



### Pilgrim's Rosary

Jesus, who awakens in us  
the longing, who helps us to  
set out, who accompanies us  
along the way, who leads us  
to our goal, who goes with us  
in everyday life.

# Working with ...



## Working with images

*(While observing the copyright law, the images can be downloaded from [www.eheweg.de](http://www.eheweg.de))*

- The images of the individual stations can be put up in the room or placed before the group. Individually or as a couple the members look at the images and discover which one appeals to them. They then share with the group what touched them particularly.
- By copying some of the hand positions and experiencing them you could discover deeper access to the stations. Feelings and emotions will well up and you can become more conscious of them.
- The image of a station is placed on a table around which the group has gathered. In a written meditation – in silence – each member enters into the image in writing and also writes down what is awakened within them.
- A page is divided into four parts (Oeporello). On the first page there is the image of one of the stations. On the second page they write how they experienced that station. On the third page they write some of their hopes and longings. The fourth page is left open for the Word of God that is spoken into this situation in life.

## Working with the meditation texts

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Choose a text and read it out to the family group. A minute's silence is followed by re-reading the text. Which saying, which sentence has come alive in me? Which image, which thought appears in me? This is shared with the group.

Choose a station. While all walk around in the room slowly and individually, read out this text and repeat it. Afterwards the couples re-unite and exchange their experiences.

During a family group one station is chosen. After that each member is given the beginning of the meditation text of that station. Then all are invited to complete the text for themselves.

# Working with ...

## Working with the Stations

- A Station could be the subject for a group meeting with married couples. The title of the Station could be written on a page and inspire free association – spoken, or as a written conversation.
- The text of each Station could inspire a discussion.
- The snapshots could be read out in the group and inspire the members to talk about their own „snapshots“.
- The suggestions for discussion could be dealt with by each couple – for a short time, or even for half an hour, or a whole hour. Afterwards they could share their experiences with the group (on what has been agreed together beforehand).
- Each couple could choose a Station of the Highway of Marriage after a brief introduction.
- They could enlarge on it during a time for private discussion, and then share something of what they had been discussing, or a text from the accompanying book, with the group.

### Working with the following texts

- Choose one of the following texts from the Stations on the Highway of Marriage and work through them according to the suggested methods in family groups.

#### Possible methods

- Taking it in turns to read a paragraph
- If needed explain the text, but no discussion
- Silence: What speaks to me?
- Repetition of words/parts of sentences/sentences, that have appealed particularly – without comment
- Each may say what he or she has understood through the text: experiences, thoughts, feelings ...
- If required there is now space for questions and discussion.

# Making Each Other Happy

## Selfless Love

What do we married people want to give each other by giving our bodies to each other? We want to make each other happy. Please do not forget that we not only want to give and allow each other sexual pleasure, we want to make each other happy from person to person.



At the beginning of a marriage it is usual for us to want to be happy in possessing our partner. We want our partner to be happy as well, but in the foreground is our own happiness. I want to be happy in possessing my wife, or my husband. If our married love develops, that is to say, if it doesn't get stuck in the first stage, sooner or later something else will move into the foreground: I retreat; I am mainly there to make my partner happy.

That has to apply to both partners. (...) What does it presuppose? That both partners constantly woo the loving response of their partner. So the wife has always to woo her husband's love, and the husband has always to woo his wife's love. It's not just a matter of the wife being charming, for example, by dressing in the way her husband likes to see her; the wife must be so mature that she always gives her husband a certain calm and shelter in her heart.

If he is to embody the idea of a man as perfectly as possible, not the idea of a sexual adventurer, what must he do? Exemplify the ideal of a selfless, strong and chivalrous man. How did he do it when we got to know each other? He must do the same again now. Of course, the husband must also have time to cultivate love with his wife. He also needs to have time to cultivate love for their children.

We came together through marriage in order to make each other happy and to perfect our mutual love. This includes for example, bearing with the faults of my partner; or the way in which I make my partner aware of his or her bias, or weaknesses; or, whether we continue to respect each other, although we become so dreadfully aware of each other's weaknesses.

Only a very high degree of love, perfect love, is able to bear with our mutual weaknesses in this way. Notice the degree to which education of love goes in marriage. Married love is crowned by unshakable faithfulness and loyalty. That is what is meant by keeping pure, preserving and perpetuating our first love.

Unfaithfulness consists not only in our going to another man or woman. Unfaithfulness also consists in not giving my heart very selflessly to my partner, in not having time for him or her, in only following my hobbies, having more interest

in all sorts of other things than my own wife, or my own husband, and my own children.

Unless we married people lead a religious life, unless we make use of every means at our disposal to remain united to God, unless we try to cultivate our love life and also do without many things, it will be difficult to remain faithful.

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 20 February 1961*

### **Repeatedly woo each other**

As the husband I have to woo my wife again and again. When we met for the first time, how did I woo my wife? I showed respect for her personality. I had the courage to behave as a strong character in order to awaken her respect for me. Just as I didn't let myself go in this time, so in the time that follows I may also not let myself go.

Vice versa, a wife has to try to please her husband time and again. We need only consider for a moment how we did things at the time when we got to know each other, and how the young woman behaved towards the young man. Indeed, I have to know what my husband likes in me, what clothes, or which way of behaving, he enjoys.

Just as every love has to be cultivated, so also married love has to be cultivated. If throughout my life, or throughout the day as a whole, I do not cultivate my married love, the union of our souls, love cannot grow.

*J. Kentenich, 13 February 1961*

# Reformation of Family Life

## Basic cell of life

If human society today is to become Christian once again, we have to start at the source – and the source of human society is the basic cell of human society: the family. What we have conquered in the course of the last years, and received as a gift – the Shrine of the Families – increasingly helps us to make our own family life, the reform of our own family life, the focal point of our lives and striving.

*J. Kentenich, 2 April 1966*

## Islands of life

I imagine the missionary journeys and missionary work of the Apostle Paul in much the same way: He visited individual families and they were converted. Then they were joined by other families in the neighbourhood. Gradually the church community developed in this way. During the lifetime of the Apostles they met in the Synagogue. Our “Synagogue“ is the local shrine, then the home shrine. On the whole the Apostles worked with the individual family, in the individual homes. If God blesses all these undertakings, they point the way for the pastoral work in the time to come. Please think for a moment of the pluralist society. We have used the expression so often. You know what it means. There is no distinctively Catholic atmosphere in the world around us. If we have to do without a religious atmosphere life will naturally be extremely difficult for us. However, from whom must the religious atmosphere proceed; by whom does it have to be cultivated? By the families in the individual houses. That is why I like to use the expression ‚flying islands‘ when I bless a home shrine. They are flying islands! This does not mean that they are a compact mass. They are simply tiny, tiny islands where Christ’s spirit has taken root

*J. Kentenich, 9 December 1963*

## From house to house

That is how Christendom came into existence. It didn’t permeate public life overnight. Instead the Apostles visited the individual homes, they mobilised the individual homes, and later directed the spirit from there into public life at large. We need to visualise the renewal of the world today in a similar way.

*J. Kentenich, 31 May 1966*

A home shrine is the special form of a prayer corner at home. Besides the Cross and picture of Mary we find other religious symbols or personal objects. With our home shrine we invite God and the Blessed Mother to live and work with us, in our home, in our family, in our everyday life.



# Difficulties are Tasks

## Whirlpool of life

Part of a programme for our lives, which we all really have to write down and stick behind our mirror, or even better, engrave into our hearts, is this: Every kind of difficulty is a task. Truly there are not a few of us who have had to overcome the greatest difficulties in their lives. You see, the principle behind this life's programme is: Difficulties are tasks! Expressed quite simply: Difficulties exist in order to be overcome. Difficulties, the difficulties of life, are life's tasks! Indeed, we may even say: The difficulties of life are unique trials of trust and trials of love. It could be a gift from above if we are pushed into the whirlpool of life.

## Don't break down, but trust

So our answer has to be not to break down, but to be alerted: What does God want now? Grit your teeth? Of course, that is all well and good, it's all fine, but ultimately we also have to open heart and mind for the grace from above to pour in. You need to think again about the thoughts we have just formulated. So, take the difficulties that are plaguing you now! What are they for me? A task for life.

## God leads us through the blows of fate

Until the end of our lives the God of Providence will lead us through the blows of fate in our lives. God the Father always

remains the great educator of his favourite children. How does he do it? Through the blows of fate. So it would be a great impropriety to think, for example, I am now thirty, forty, fifty years old – if I think of myself, I am 80 – so now Almighty God can take a rest. He doesn't rest! Why doesn't he rest? As long as we live he will educate us. So I may never say: I am done!

## Always remain flexible

I am never done. I have said jokingly that at best his education comes to an end after we have died. If we hold onto this thought, we will remain eternally alert, we will never become obstinate and rigid. So never want to be complete, always want to remain in motion. You know the old saying: Preparedness is everything! For what am I prepared? To say yes to the wishes of Eternal, Infinite Love.

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 20 February 1961*

# I know my own



## Getting to know each other

My heart must glow for my child. I have to know the “material“, I have to know my child, what he or she likes, or what they don’t like, their disposition, etc.

Firstly, the first four years in the life of a child are most important. In this time their emotional life is essentially formed.

Secondly, the atmosphere emanating from father and mother is most important. The soul of a child is like a bit of wax. Each impression goes into his or her heart. (...) Imitate the Good Shepherd. “I know my own and my own know me.“

Get to know your children, all their wishes and needs, what they like and don’t like; get to understand them, what their actions mean, their glances, even their silence. From the way they say things, not just what they say, get to understand them and what they mean. Help them to get to know you, to trust you. Let the worries of your children become your worries, and the friends of your children your friends; but hand everything over to our Mother Thrice Admirable. Trust her completely. “A child of Mary will never perish.“

*J. Kentenich, Spring 1955*

## Protect the originality of a child

I don’t know how often you sit together in the evening and consider how to characterise your children, and what you can do in their education. Always remember: Don’t think of unity as all being the same. Allow each child to be what he or she is. It will give you much joy to see your children in their very different inclinations, and then to say to yourselves: I want to protect this originality, develop it and also make the child aware of it. Each child has to learn to accept himself or herself. If as father or mother I accept this, the principle has to be to leave each child as he or she is. God created them that way. They don’t have to be like me. Each has a right to be original. It could happen that I make a mistake; it is even probable. It is simply difficult to distinguish between a child’s nature and naughtiness. So when you sit together at the table and philosophise about this or that child, you will see how much joy it gives you. If you live in the correct atmosphere, you may never overlook that Providence also holds your children in his hand. He also has me in his hand, and he forms me through circumstances.

*J. Kentenich, 4 June 1966*

## Despite all naughtiness believe in the good

It may be particularly difficult to have an uplifting understanding when our children have entered the teenage years.

What are our worries when our children stand before us? I would like to lead them to the Blessed Mother, but they are interested in football. It is nice if father and mother can also take an interest in it. But what is more important is to believe that things aren't hopeless. From an evolutionary point of view a lad at this age has to have these interests. Girls also have their crushes. You must only manage it in such a way that your children remain open with you. If in these times your children are open towards you, you will have won. If your children at this age come to you with their fears and worries, and you can share in them without appearing like a judge over life and death, this is uplifting understanding.

When does understanding uplift? When, despite all the confusion and darkness in the other person, I can see the light; when, despite all their naughtiness, I can still believe in what is noble and good in them. I believe that the lad who is now lolling about will still become a capable person. Don't label him as a criminal. You have to believe in the good in him and in this way strengthen the good. That is uplifting understanding.

*J. Kentenich, 3 June 1950*

## Bless the children

Now if one of my teenage children objects year after year to my influence and is always unruly – If I know the time, I will not just apply the usual pedagogical means in order to overcome it, but also quietly bless that child without him or her noticing it.

Let me tell you that I do this personally every morning to the four points of the compass, and all are included whom God has led to me. You are part of them. I know a family, an elderly and dignified father, who does this. All his children have left home and are working in various countries. He is one of those fathers who says very little. Yet every evening before he goes to bed he goes to the door and from there blesses his children.

I have no idea what customs you have at home. Actually it is a genuinely Catholic custom for parents to bless their children, especially the little ones, before they go to bed. Once the children are a bit more grown up they usually don't like it much if it is done outwardly. You have to do it quietly on your own. The same applies when my children are no longer there, for example, if they have gone to study somewhere. How simple it is to bless them every evening. The more quietly it is done, and the less anyone notices it, the better. You don't have to make a song and dance about it.

*J. Kentenich, 9 April 1956*



## Helplessness

Parents worry greatly: How can we educate our children correctly? From the home shrine the Blessed Mother will distribute plentiful gifts and graces. She does what we can't do, or can't do on our own – she has promised it. I simply don't manage to form and educate my children in a religious sense. SHE will now draw hearts to herself and educate them. What a great help this is for me when I am helpless in educating my children!

If I am convinced that this is so and my neighbours come to me and tell me their worries, their financial worries, or their difficulties in educating their children, and things like that, it is obviously my task now to lead them to my home shrine.

*J. Kentenich, 18 November 1963*

### Protect our children's hearts

Our children are now in their teenage years. It may well be the case that we, their parents, have hardly any visible influence on them any more. So we plead all the more to you, our Mother, to draw our children to yourself with the warmth of your love, especially in this particular stage.

With all our hearts we beg you: Protect the hearts of our children; watch over them. We are thinking mainly of those children who increasingly discover the world, take it in, and want to become more and more independent.

Mother, be the only queen of the hearts of our children and also in our home.

*J. Kentenich with Yank family, 23 February 1964*

# Communion of hearts



## Union of hearts

What did we want? We wanted to enter into a communion of hearts with one another now that we have experienced our limitations so strongly; now that we have deeply understood the differences of our characters, and sometimes even shaken our heads in disbelief.

What could that mean: A communion of hearts? What could we do to arrive at a communion of hearts? Or, we might do better to say: What must my heart be like so that I can offer it to the others? What must my heart be like so that I can prepare a place, a dwelling, a nest in it for others?

## Importance of the communion of hearts

What sort of dwelling must we prepare for one another? How can we describe our heart? More precisely, how can we describe the love that unites us deeply and inwardly

with one another like a tie?

I think I would have to emphasise three essential qualities:

### Sheltering love:

First of all, it would have to be a sheltering love – I shelter the other. And if it really is a communion of hearts, you need only look into a sound family, for example. People say that the mother reflects the ideal of love, sheltering love. Suppose someone – a son or daughter – quarrels with the family. No one wants to have anything more to do with him or her. We take it for granted: This child still had a sheltering home in the heart of the mother. (...)

So let us suppose for a moment that one of us goes off the rails. It is obvious that if we are serious about our communion of hearts, we are obliged – we don't need to feel obliged, it is taken for granted: All without exception have a sheltering home

in my heart in every situation, even in exceptional circumstances. We shelter one another, we really do it seriously, openly, honestly, but with all our weaknesses.

### **Uplifting love:**

Secondly it has to be an uplifting love, not one that drags down. What does that mean? (...) We need only recall for a moment all the laws of gravity in nature: We need only remember the cultural situation into which we were born; we need only look around ourselves to see how great the danger will be in the foreseeable future that we will drag ourselves down, instead of drawing ourselves upward! So it has to be an uplifting love, a love that always draws upwards, that flames like a powerful fire, a divine fire lit by God, and draws everything with it upwards into Infinite Love.

### **Bearing and forbearing love:**

And the most essential, the most practical? It is bearing and forbearing love.

### **Living out of this communion of hearts**

What do we have to do if we are to be able to offer one another this great gift of a communion of hearts? To put it another way: How must we educate our heart?

### **A reverent heart:**

We have to see to it that we have a reverent heart within us. What is meant by a reverent heart? A heart that shows reverence for the other person,

genuine reverence. We must also show reverence when we see through the others in all their weaknesses, in all their limitations, in all their wounds and breakdowns.

### **A kind heart:**

I need an exceedingly kind heart. A kind heart that overlooks limitations, a kind heart that responds to so many things that wound, to the many limitations that humanly speaking disturb a relationship, in such a way as though they simply don't exist. But not with some purpose in view, for example, because I tell myself: The other person has to put up with me, so I will also put up with him or her. No, it must be an expression of overflowing kindness. An inner abundance of genuine, benevolent kindness must simply hurtle through and pervade our heart. Reverent love, kind love.

### **A responsible heart:**

If sooner or later we end up on the wrong track in some way, and our family members don't dare to draw our attention to it... It should be something we take for granted that we take responsibility for one another and are frank with each other.

## Want to discover the good

You will probably not find or discover a person who doesn't have a good core, or in whom there is not a treasure of precious stones. Of course, I have first to discover this and recognise it. Of course, you will also not find someone in whom these jewels are not covered by a great deal of dirt and every form of rubble.

It is then our task to see to it that the jewels begin to shine, that everything else that prevents the jewels from attaining their perfect lustre is increasingly removed and chipped away.

It is a sign of human superficiality if we usually see the image we have of one another streaked with all sorts of blemishes, and contemplate the bright sides too little. It may be the case that as long as we meet one another in our Sunday best we naturally have a great many illusions about one another. However, from the moment we really get to know one another, when we are together day and night, the danger is great that we only see everything in the other as a confusion of threads. That is a great mistake.

You have to be honest, and for a time very one-sided, consciously one-sided, in seeing the lovely features, the noble disposition in the other. This will mean educating yourself to poked all that is negative – you don't need to deny it – and you will then discover what rich hearts your little community has, although mostly hidden and slumbering. What rich hearts, what noble intentions they have; and surely also how much inner clarity exists in each one! This does not mean that everything is mature, but everything is on the way. Since we are so easily inclined to drag one another down and see the deformity and caricature, we don't encourage one another enough. The greatest feat is to live closely with one another, to live and love in one another, to esteem one another, to protect one another, and still to see clearly the limitations each one of us has.

It is a work of art without compare to be highly striving, indeed to reach up to infinity, while accepting our limitations and calmly going on our way.

*Cf. J. Kantenich, 20 April 1963*

# Reformation of Family Life

I have been sent out, we have been sent out! People may accuse us of making too much fuss about our mission. What is our answer? Didn't the Apostles and Prophets also constantly refer to their mission? We may personally be amazed by our mission, rather like the Blessed Mother who asked, "How is that to come about?" „And she thought about what this greeting could mean.“ From time to time we may ask ourselves, "How is it possible that we have been given such a mission? With all my miseries and weaknesses how could I have been drawn into this great missionary current?" It may also cost us inner battles, in fact so many that I want to repeat with the Prophet, "I cannot, I am so clumsy, so useless.“ We may feel that we are weak and useless, we may tell the Blessed Mother about it time and again, but we are nevertheless convinced that we have been chosen. In public life we appear with an unshakeable belief in our mission, "I have been commissioned.“

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 31 December 1945*

## Find and live my and our task

**The rational way to self-knowledge:** This means studying my disposition: the temperaments, my character, typology, in order to recognise the direction in which my nature is borne and driven. Of course, I also hear God's voice and what he has laid down in me.

**The irrational way to self-knowledge:** We presuppose that God created my nature and my personality in the way he wanted them. He had something in mind when he created me. How can I discover without long reflection – "very spontaneously" – what he has laid down in me? By studying what is spontaneously awakened in me, and works vitally within me, what basically drives my heart.

**My favourite saying:** Let us ask ourselves: What is our favourite motto? Is there a motto (a Scriptural verse, a verse from a song, a saying) that spontaneously occurs to you? Is there a saying that enkindles something in you? It will electrify me if it reflects a fundamental attitude in me. It touches the nerve of my personality.

**My favourite brief prayer:** Ask yourself what is your favourite prayer. If it seems to flow out of you [spontaneously], your personality is involved.

**My favourite occupation or hobby:** Ask yourself what is your favourite occupation or hobby. Why? Something irrational in your personality resonates in it. You notice everywhere the word "favourite". So it isn't something acquired with great labour, but something that has grown, that has developed.

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 18 October 1951*



# When I am weak, then I am strong

## The middle years

When “the years” arrive sometime, nature shows itself as it is. We lack the zest, we are overcome with a certain tiredness, we are irritable. Spiritual dryness also sets in. This is connected with our nature, and in these years it is something we can often take for granted, it isn’t a special trial! The means to overcome tiredness in the middle years: humility and self-surrender.

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 29 December 1947*

## Trust

God sees to it that when we are older, when we have become more mature, that we experience in practice how weak our own actions are, how helpless we are. People today have to be given an answer to this. What is our way of thinking? Simply because we feel so weak we have to be serious about trusting in a higher power. Those are contradictions. We allow God to take us into his arms and carry us upwards.

*J. Kentenich, August 1956*

## Saying yes to my limitations

When we, at least we who have grown older, begin to feel the burden of the body differently from when we were young, what does it mean? We are admitting that we have physical limits. Or, how strongly the body is exposed to decay; it is exposed to a number of illnesses, whether we are young or old! What does it mean? I say yes to my limitations.

*Cf. J. Kentenich, March 1966*

## Allow disappointments

Disappointments in ourselves, when with the advance of age we feel our limitations more strongly; disappointments in others, when we notice that they try to outsmart us. ... And when God sends disappointments, he does so in order to draw us to himself. We may, however, not fall into the trap or the mad idea that we can do without people. That is an exaggerated spirituality and results either in complete atrophy of the emotions, or in exaggerated sexuality.

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 25 August 1950*



### **Avoid substitute satisfactions**

Let us suppose that my soul is undernourished. Now come bacteria that cause illness. These may be sensuality, they may be sensual, overblown fantasies, feelings and emotions. They are the substitute satisfactions we seek in our dreams and imagination. For example, my struggles and striving have not been acknowledged. Others are given preferential treatment. So now I create a realm for myself in my imagination. I am the focal point. I am the martyr. I picture to myself all the things I could still become, how others will have to make amends later because they have hurt me. It is the greatest sanctity to be spiritually untouched by such substitute satisfactions. If you only knew how much we are subject to such self-deception.

For once take a look at what I look for as a substitute satisfaction in all sorts of pictures painted by my imagination. I am not thinking of something that is bad or sinful. You have to go down this road sometime in order to recognise the weaknesses of our poor and burdened nature. You will then be better able to understand how high the ideal is for which we are striving. It is the complete divinisation of every area of our nature, especially the complete divinisation of these secret realms

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 5 March 1933*

# The Art of Growing Old

## An old, mature person?

A time will come in our lives when we will find it difficult to see our children becoming independent. Unless we have educated ourselves from the bottom up to be selfless, especially since we married, we will always make ourselves the focal point when we are old.

In general, when people think of an old person, they think of someone who is mature. What does that mean? They are happy that the children have grown up and have become independent, and don't constantly keep them on leading strings. So I don't demand that my children have to do things exactly as I want them done. For example, in reality I do not allow my married daughter the freedom to cook what she wants, or to furnish the house the way she wants it.

Maturity means: I don't forget that she is now no longer a child of six; I know she has to be independent, she has to govern her own house. I am in the background, rejoice in her growth and allow her to go on growing.

The same applies when, as the father, for example, I have my lad with me at work. When he starts to think in modern ways, somewhat differently from me, that's the end of the subject. He may not breathe, he has to ask me!

In practice this means that I have forgotten to educate myself in such a way that I exemplify the ideal of an old father, an old mother, a mature wife, a mature husband. Can you see that as a result [of what has just been said] it is difficult for my children to respect me? Why? Because I have completely disappointed them. The children say: They are actually the greatest troublemakers, we cannot develop.



## Serve life

If I have lived my life only to govern, if I have not lived to develop the life in my children, will I not have to say at the end of my life: Why did I actually live? Only for myself! You may simply never forget: As parents we have the duty and right to serve the life of our children. It has to be our ideal to educate them in such a way that they can manage without us. To express it in other words: It has to be our ideal that we educate ourselves to be superfluous. We will then not be able to bear it until we are completely superfluous.

*J. Kentenich, 12 November 1956*

# There Heaven touches Earth



## God has a definite plan for my life

God has a definite plan for my life. Although I don't know the way – it is mysterious, convoluted – yet I believe that God has ultimately used all these situations in my life, the mistakes and confusions, the disappointments and the blows of fate to carry out his great goal for my life. Where is it going? Home! We are all on the way home into the heart of God the Father. We have come from this heart – a heart full of love, a heart full of wisdom, a heart full of omnipotence.

*J. Kentenich, 2 December 1962*

## Heaven and earth unite

We believe in the communion of saints! We know that those who were with us on earth remain in most intimate contact with us from eternity. Accordingly we know that human beings who have passed over into eternity as pure, noble-minded and God-pleasing people, continue to carry out their task from above, and do so even more effectively. We have talked so often about heaven. This world and the next unite in a most intimate way. We are one family. And as a family we have but one great task. Here on earth we want to transform the world. We are too weak to do so on our own. So we fetch the departed out of heaven. We and they, they and us – together we carry out our great task according to the mind of Christ and Christendom.

*J. Kentenich, 12 May 1933*



### **Remain in constant contact**

If father and mother are now in heaven, they know far better what I am thinking and doing than they did here on earth. Why? They can read it from God's being as though from a mirror. That is an extremely consoling thought. This world and the next are not separate, there is constant contact.

In order that you can imagine it better, think of a telephone, or the radio and TV. Speaking in images, it is almost as though God has a TV up in heaven. Up there they can see everything that happens down here. There is constant telephone contact – to and fro. Up there they say: Who's there? However, we down here say: Who's there? far too rarely. We listen too seldom to what is going on up there, and know too little.

We should really cultivate all this again: To keep in contact with the others, with the other world. We Catholics actually need never be lonely. We are always in contact with the whole of eternity.

*J. Kentenich, 4 June 1954*

# Get Rid of Taking Things for Granted



## Gratitude as an attitude for life

Gratitude is always a sign of a noble-minded person, and we always want to be top-quality noble-minded people. It is easy to attune our heart to the feeling of gratitude. We want to adjust ourselves to re-examining and savouring God's mercies, and to saying an enlightened, profound and sincere „Thank you“.

In everything and above every event we see God and the Blessed Mother as though on the roof of our house, or the top of the Cathedral tower. Our task consists in always setting up the ladder for the mind in order to discover in the light of faith the kind hands that uphold our life and our destiny; and then to put up the ladder

for the heart and embrace the one who again and again forms and moulds our life according to the great plans of Eternal Wisdom. We are used to thanking, and in the time to come it has to become even more of a habit in our lives.

However, to attune our souls today is easy because we don't have the least idea what we should really make the object of our thanks. This is because the burden of gratitude that rises before us is so enormous. Please don't forget to thank!

*Cf. J. Kentenich, 18 October 1945*

### See God in everything

Get rid of taking things for granted. What does that mean? We take everything for granted. We take it for granted that we can eat and drink, that we have healthy limbs. It is so important and significant for the education of our children that they don't take everything for granted. People today are often like animals: Their heads always hang down. Each tiny detail should be a wake-up call from God and enter into my heart. For example, that at the moment we have fine weather, can we take that for granted? How it hurts us when our children take all our services and cares for granted. What do we expect? A grateful heart. Unless you feel that, love is not awakened.

In this context I like to say that we all have to become like big or small chickens before God. What does a chicken do? Even if it drinks only a sip, it lifts its head again. That is what we all have to do. Take a sip as we bend our heads, then lift them up to thank. This is how we need to see each detail in everyday life. We have to take it so far that it becomes a task for life to follow up the traces of God's loving actions all the time.

*J. Kentenich, 28 April 1952*

### Champions of joy

Regard all that is noble and good as given to us by God, and consciously received as a gift of his love, his kindness and his heart. Get rid of taking things for granted! Is it something we can take for granted that I am a noble-minded woman, that I am a noble-minded man, that my children have grown up to be honest, and that we again have enough to eat? Or, think of other things: God placed the sun there also for me. The stars are also there for me. Those people are champions of joy who can extract the tiniest drop of joy from

every little detail. Of course, the day lies between two nights. I can sigh: If only something would come along and take me with it! I have drunk a glass of wine and am already thinking that I will have to fast tomorrow! However, we could say the opposite: The night lies between two days! Our goal has to remain that we have to become champions of joy!

Regard everything as a gift from God's love, as his wooing for our love, and then answer him with love.

*J. Kentenich, 3 June 1950*



**En Route on the  
Highway of** marriage

Description of  
the Pillars

# The Symbols on the Pillars

Description of the Pillars by Maria Kiess

## “Before God ...“

These words begin the marriage rite at Church weddings, “I will take you to be my lawful wife, my lawful husband“. Then the couple continue, “to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.“

Marriage, the indissoluble covenant between two people, is connected with God. This covenant is an area for the development of society and the Church. This area is a Church in miniature. How can you depict this area? How can you best and most memorably express a process that is both practical and spiritual at the same time?

We create our world with our hands. Hands pass on a non-verbal message from the person before us, and they can indicate emotional states. With our hands we can give love, we can touch tenderly, form, give, but also defend ourselves, hurt and hit. What happens when two people hold hands and say, “We will remain together“? They start out on a way together. For this reason the symbols interpreting the texts on the pillars of the Marriage Highway portray hands, and the relationship of hand gestures.



The images should actually speak for themselves. Nevertheless I am offering some hints as to how to interpret the symbolism of the images, although this is not exhaustive. I have consciously left room for your personal interpretation.

## The colour of the distinctive features:

### Two colours, one sign.

Two coloured arches, one a warm colour, the other cold, join at two opposite points to form a whole. The two colours symbolise the different characters and personalities of the married couple: red and blue. They are not rigid bars, nor are they separating waves, but two similar and flexible arches that unite.

A mandorla, that is, an almond-shaped symbol. As a symbol the mandorla embraces a figure like a halo, and in the Middle Ages it was only used for Christ (sometimes also for the Queen of Heaven). Geometrically it is shaped like an ellipse. The geometric shape of an ellipse has two foci. Symbolically the one focus stands for Christ and the other for the married couple. Together they form a whole.

This hint at a relationship to Christ is relevant to our aim. Christ is the Third Partner in the covenant of a married couple. If he is in the area we form with our hands, it becomes a sanctified space.

### The outward form of the pillars

That this is how it has to be is indicated by the outward form of the pillars. They are juxtaposed in such a way that although each could stand on its own, they offer each other support. At the top they form an opening, a triangle. They are open yet independent. Placed together their outline forms a triangle. The triangle stands for a house, but also for the Triune God.

The narrow shape that reaches upwards awakens the association of a tower. Tower, triangle, opening upwards like a Church in miniature, like a space to take in God's breath and pour it out again.

### The coloured symbols on the right

The coloured symbols on the right of each pillar are abstractions. They aren't intended as illustrations of the text on the plaque, but are a coloured emphasis and sort of visual token of the written word.

# Pillar 1

We have found each other,  
you and me



*you  
and  
me*

A heart formed from two hearts. Two colours, a masculine and a feminine, form a new whole. Two hands touch each other tentatively. Search and find, feel and grasp, is the beginning. At the same time – think of the words in the marriage rite: In God’s presence – the area begins to form in which we create space for God: a dome, a vault, a cathedral – a little church, the church in miniature. Something blessed, something that is a protective space, something that traces an arc. We have found each other.

# Pillar 2

We create our home



*at  
home*

Put more extensively the heading could be: We look for the rituals that give us our identity, and our inner world a visible home. With our hands we create the form around us and express what is within us. Just as the potter forms the clay so that it becomes a utensil, or a tool, or a container, so we create what we call our living space by creating room for life. The forming hands of the potter on the second pillar is an image of the care, love and know-how with which our life’s surroundings have to be created. It also includes the idea that God can be the potter who forms and moulds the human person. The married couple have to allow themselves to be formed – by each other and by God, because only if this process of formation and maturation is allowed, does God have space. The clay, the potter, the hand, the container – all images of what lays the foundations for our life’s home in marriage. The colourful form of the second pillar takes up the proverbial “four walls“. They are supported and filled by the love coming from the red heart.

## Pillar 3

Loving with body and soul



Touched

Two hands clasped together, embracing closely, as though they are only one hand – “they become one“. “What can we do to keep the fire of our love alight?“ Fr Ken-tenich put it this way, “...I may not say that we are ,by the way‘ also a married couple. ... You see, everything must be a way to God. Also the marriage act is not just something by the way, no, it is a way to God.“ “Touched“ – the coloured symbol takes an element out of the signet and exchanges them. The semi-circles touch and form a new sign – a creative act.

## Pillar 4

Love may hurt



disappointed

Now a contrast. If we want to grasp and portray life as it is, bitter weeping, pain and hurt have to have a place. Love has to prove that it is genuine. In the picture the hands are held protectively before a face. We see the backs of the hands, the emotion is within. What can we do? Weep. Admit the pain. Our Highway of Marriage has 15 stations, one more than the fourteen Stations of the Cross. The coloured symbol on the right of the pillar takes the form of a crown of thorns. The pierced heart of the Mother of Sorrows, and the thorns of the crown of thorns, are symbolically connected like a cry of pain.

## Pillar 5

Growing together  
through difficulties

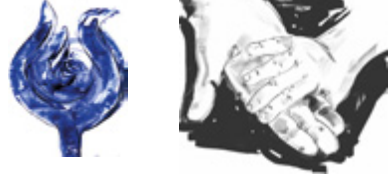


challenged

The pointing digital fingers have something aggressive about them. The concentration of pointing fingers suggests dynamic movement but also challenge. They illustrate the stress to which we are exposed when so much rushes in on us at the same time. The pointing finger seems to be accusing. Red, when it obtrudes so penetratingly, has an unsettling effect. Tangled, knotted, twisted, faltering, unfathomable – we are exposed to such muddled situations. We often think we can't go on. However, together we can sort out many things again and iron them out. A quotation from the accompanying book, "It is a great help that we can walk this difficult path together."

## Pillar 6

We strengthen our  
children for life



for  
life

A blue tree of life, like a flame, like a bowl, like a flower. A flower that opens upwards hides a treasure deep within. Something growing and sheltering at the same time is shown like an opening flower. The delicate life in the depths of the form is cherished by the protective petals surrounding it. At the same time the petals bend outwards with a subtle, joyful momentum.

And the hands? The little hand lies casually on the large, open hand. The big hand carries the little one, holding it and offering it support. The child's hand can remain there as long as it wants. The coloured flower and the supporting hand convey the same. Protective, affirming, but also allowing freedom – that is the service of the bigger to the smaller.

## Pillar 7

Together we are stronger



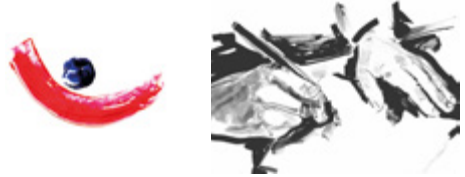
together

A red fabric against a blue background shows how holding and being held creates a strong structure. The interweaving of the elements is brought about by connecting them from right to left and from above downwards. No connecting points may be missed, otherwise the fabric will have holes and become fragile.

Together we are stronger ... The attitude of the hands and the togetherness of the differently sized hands create an arch that are bound together by the interplay of brightness and darkness. There is movement that suggests giving and taking, cohesion and sharing the load.

## Pillar 8

We have been commissioned



our  
idea

The coloured symbol can be interpreted in many ways. Blue dot, blue ball on a red curve. Not in the middle, but in the upper section, so that you could imagine it is rolling. We could compare the dot or the ball with the pearl in the shell, or the treasure in the field. It is what we have been given in the way of abilities and our mission. It is our very specific nerve centre, the best in us. The good, indeed the best, has to find its standpoint. The track along which the ball glides is curved.

The ball will take some time to come to rest at the centre. In particular, if the bowl were also to move, it would take a sensitive game to bring everything into balance. The ball is sent on its way – “Go, I am sending you!” Also a married couple is sent on their way.

## Pillar 9

### Orientation in the Middle Years



*looking  
to the  
future*

Two hands reach out tentatively to each other looking for orientation. The palm of the hands lie against a dark background, the fingers are extended in order to search and feel as much as possible of the background. The palms of our hands feel if something is hot or cold, as well as the nature of the surface we are touching. From what we discover, from what we feel, we deduce what we are dealing with. When we find ourselves in the middle years, we have to orientate ourselves to the past in order to gain a new direction for the future, or to be able to stabilise ourselves. We base our decisions for the future on our experiences in the past. Just as a wheel turns, so time disappears into the past and turns towards the future. The wheel of time does not stand still. As the Book of Ecclesiastes tells us, „everything has its time“. In the middle years the wheel of our lives takes a new course. It is always fixed to the hub where the spokes meet. It is held by a single point for as long as the wheel turns. God holds the course of our lives in his hands.

## Pillar 10

### We remain faithful



*faith –  
fulness*

The yes we spoke to each other is documented by our wedding rings. The “Yes Ring“ in the coloured symbol connects three letters and is held together by a blue point. The capstone is the e. it connects everything for the good. We could ask ourselves what our e is. In the image, the e is the starting point and end of the ring. Alpha and Omega – we call Christ. We are united in Christ, that is why we are faithful.

We hold together because we are upheld. That is the message of the hands. We hold hands and support each other. To be faithful means to accept the other partner as he or she is, and stick by them. We support each other. We allow nothing to pull us apart. To be faithful means to entrust ourselves to the other.



# Pillar 11

We let go



*empty  
hands*

Empty hands. We have nothing in our hands. The palms of our hands open upwards and form an empty bowl. Who can fill it?

Empty hands are like a petition,

- to God to look upon our poverty,
- to be set free
- to arrive at the fullness of our lives.

The hands opening upwards are like a paten on which we present our lives to God. „Accept, Eternal Father!“ Those are the words of the priest at the Offertory. The empty hands are a sign of all we have left behind.

We place everything into the chalice. The blue chalice has a bright triangle at the centre – a symbol of God. If we let go, God can fill the empty hands of our existence. He can turn everything into a blessing.

# Pillar 12

Young and old –  
we are there for each other



*young  
and  
old*

Three hands, a weak, a strong and a weak hand, placed on top of each other. The strong hand is connected with the other two. Is it a burden? Is it a stronger force? Hands are there for each other. They offer each other stability without holding onto each other. They want to give and to feel the good. They are connected by the laying on of hands. The red bond of love and affection moves like an arch over a blue structure. We have recognised that a red and a blue arch are the elements forming the markings on each pillar. The two differently coloured arches are connected to form an ellipse as the symbol of the couple, but here the blue arches are shortened and connected to one another in many ways. United with one another in various ways, we are upheld in love by the red arch of solidarity and affection.

# Pillar 13

We mature and harvest



*enriched* Bread is a staple food for our lives. We appreciate the gift of food in the breaking

of bread. In the Our Father we ask for our daily bread, which we need if we are to lead good lives.

The process of breaking bread with our hands gives rise to a feeling of reverent gratitude. The making of bread requires a number of different processes. The prosperity of the people depends on their efforts in planting the corn, the growth and maturation of the corn until the harvest, and the work of threshing, grinding the corn, and preparing and baking the dough in the oven, which take a long time. In the Eucharist the bread is called the “fruit of the earth and work of human hands“. So bread is a “fruit“, the result of a process of maturation. If we are able to break our bread and eat it, it is a gift. This is even more true if we are able to share our bread. The gesture of breaking bread and sharing it out is common to all cultures; it is an act of brotherly and sisterly love and affection. It creates an area of unity and freedom. Peace within ourselves and with one another is a gift we receive if we learn to accept the process of maturation out of God’s hands.

The blue vessel with the ears of corn indicate what the hands symbolise. The fullness of our lives, from beginning to end, from the ear of corn to the baked bread, is a gift from God.

# Pillar 14

Everything has Meaning



*follow  
UP*

The two colours of the ellipse combine here in the symbol of a circle. It shows that everything closes and is united. The circle is a sign of weakness. If we can discover meaning in our lives, we experience it as happiness. When we look back on events and see that they are meaningful, or when we recognise the greater context, our lives become „round“. Once again two hands touch in the picture and form an arch, as on the first pillar. Now they are allowed to hold a rose. The rose is a symbol of love, faithfulness, celebration and joy. As Angelus Silesius wrote, “The rose has no why, it flowers because it flowers. It doesn’t consider itself, it doesn’t ask whether anyone sees it.“ The mere existence has a meaning in itself.

# Pillar 15

We thank

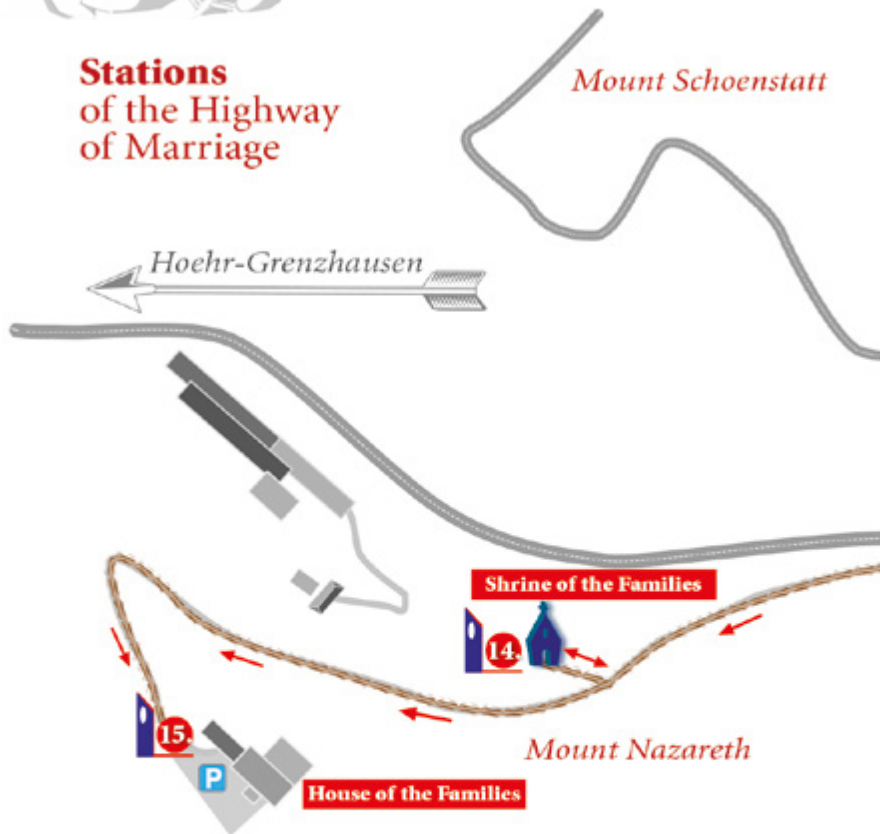


fulfilled

Hands joined in prayer and thanksgiving. Thumb covers thumb, index finger covers index finger, both hands tightly knit. Composed. When we thank, we compose ourselves. We remember. What is decisive is that we receive ourselves from God's hand, as Romano Guardini put it, "... In the stillness of your presence teach me to understand the mystery that I am. That is what I am through you and before you and for you." Here all gratitude converges. When our hearts warm with gratitude, when our hearts are afire with joy and thanksgiving, a "firebrand" breaks out. Both hearts are filled with light. Fr Kantenich prayed, „Firebrands glowing for Christ, emitting bright and blazing sparks, until the world, a flaming sea, is ablaze in homage to the Trinity.



## Stations of the Highway of Marriage



**Schoenstatt**



Station:



Highway of Marriage:



creek:



**For GPS:**

56179 Vallendar, Am Marienberg I (Pilgerinfo)

