

Closing of the Diocesan Process of Canonization for the

Servant of God, Joseph Engling

Trier, June 17, 2008

Homily by Father Joachim Schmiedl, ISSS, Vice Postulator

Trier, St. Antonius

Reading: 1 Cor 9: 16-24; Mt 5: 43-48

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The apostle Paul had his problems with his community in Corinth. He devoted a good deal of his time to the self-assured, sometimes unruly port city dwellers, yet they caused him a lot of concern. They even dispute his office as apostle. Numerous times in his letters to Corinth, Paul sets up a defense. Today's reading from the 9th chapter of the first letter to the Corinthians is part of such a defense of his apostolate. Paul knows how to engage his opponents whether they are Jews or pagans, whether they adhere to the law of Moses or the law of Christ. He has become all things to all men. Selflessly he serves his community and each individual.

On the 29th of June in a talk to the Marian Congregation in the House of Studies of the Pallotines in Schoenstatt, the Spiritual Director, Fr. Joseph Kentenich picks up this saying of Paul. Under the title, "Brotherly communication: St. Paul's attitude and way of acting" he describes that "to be all things to all men" is not the expression of a weak character that knows no autonomy. For Paul, it is far more about empathizing with the situation, mood, in the perception and frame of mind of the soul of the other, to think into the other in order to treat each individual according to his make up, abilities and needs in a pastoral way, to serve them and so win them for Christ." The young spiritual director thereby characterizes not only the attitude of the apostles, but also his own life's program.

These words found great resonance in Joseph Engling. They went into the formulation of his own life's program, his personal ideal: to be "All things to all men and entirely Mary's own." What's behind this?

This ideal is an expression of the goal of his vocation. Joseph Engling wanted to become a priest and missionary. He wanted to be sent to Cameroon, the missionary territory of the Pallotines. He, from the small place of Ermland later said, “The whole world is our field!” The missionary incentive shaped his life. The ideal of the priesthood, however, which he learned in Schönstatt, was not directed toward missionary activity. Joseph Engling wanted to become a holy priest. He made an agreement with his classmate, Karl Klement, to mutually remind each other of this goal. “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” This call of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount fell upon ground ground in Joseph Engling. And so, though he live a century before, he would have answered the call of John Paul II to the youth of our day with great enthusiasm. He was not afraid of becoming a saint of his century. The ideal of holiness shaped his youth.

It proved itself in the First World War. Joseph Engling was not an eager soldier. That distinguished him from some of his classmates. Neither was he was not a gutsy soldier. His poor eyesight made him a miserable shot. His soldierliness looked different. On numerous occasions he volunteered for special assignments. He had literature sent to him in the trenches in order to read himself and to distribute it among his fellow soldiers. He learned the language of the military opponents – french and polish. He didn’t receive the Iron Cross because of his bravery against the enemy, but rather because of his selfless service to his comrades.

The new commandment of love for God and neighbor was the great theme of the last years of Joseph Engling’s life. We find this explicitly expressed in his resolutions in August and September 1918. His last particular exam is expressly related to this double commandment: “God, the good father of all people is with me. He sees how I ennoble my innate passion for the well-being of others.”

If Joseph Engling understood himself as a soldier, then as a soldier for Christ and Mary with the commission of the Marian formation of the world in Christ.

For several decades now we have been aiming at his beatification. In 1952 the requisite process of examination was introduced in Trier. In 1964, the documentation was brought to Rome by the Vice postulator, Fr. Alexander Menningen. However, precisely at that time in October the separation of the Schoenstatt Work from the Pallotines was announced. The process then was put on ice for a long time, for Joseph Engling was and is the prototype of the lived Schoenstatt

spirituality for Schoenstatters. That the process was picked up again we owe to the Pallotines and for that I would like to very cordially thank them now. This day is therefore also a sign of inner Catholic ecumenism. After decades of working next to each other, we have completed this process – which above all is about proving the on-going veneration of Joseph Engling – together. I see in it a sign of reconciliation, which happens best by way of common apostolic projects. May Joseph Engling prepare the way for continued collaboration, particularly at the place which became for him the “cradle of sanctity”, the Original Shrine in Schoenstatt, which was so important to him that he visited it in May 1916 two hundred and three times.

We are convinced that Joseph Engling has brought about reconciliation in many ways since his death. The most obvious is the understanding for one another in the venues of his birthplace and place of death. The relationship between Germans and Poles, between Germans and the French have been improved by a soldier of the First World War, who fought at both fronts. Encounters were made possible; friendships were initiated because on both sides of the former enemies of war, the engaged striving of a German soldier for a religiously grounded working together helped overcome hate. Many people could tell about how such encounters have occurred. I like to remember a meeting with the pastor of his home parish in Prosimy on the occasion of a pilgrimage, the mass on the Feast of Corpus Christi in the Roessel parish in Ermland, an evening meeting of French youth at the occasion of a trip to Cambrai with the Schoenstatt Men’s Youth, the many contacts with civil and ecclesial parishes of Merville at the dedication of the memorial at Lys last year. Without the conciliatory working of Joseph Engling in the background such meetings – even in a united Europe – would not have gone so harmoniously.

Certainly that is insufficient for a beatification. The decisive reason why Pallotines and Schoenstatt still pursue the beatification of Joseph Engling (and will continue to pursue it with great dedication after today) is another. Joseph Engling has exemplified for us how a religious life under difficult circumstances can be successful. And since his death, that’s what youth measure by. It’s what inspires them and helps them shape their daily life according to his example. Above all they allow him to challenge them with regard to their decisions in life. Many examples could be told. One will represent the many. It is told by a Sister of Mary. „I have had a connection with Joseph Engling since I got to know Schoenstatt, in other words, for over 50 years. Between 1953 and 1960 I belonged to the Schoenstatt Girls’ Youth. A group of Schoenstatt youth was formed from our parish group. The Schoenstatt priest of our parish together with a Sister of Mary who could only come on occasion, caused this to come about.

Since there was temporarily no group leader locally, the assistant pastor took over the leadership. It often happened that he was unable to come to the group meeting. At those times we let Joseph Engling inspire us. I remember that our group meeting room was frequently locked because our group meeting had been forgotten. We sat down on the steps and read from the book, "Joseph Engling." What we read brought about a conversation about him and about Schoenstatt so that it was simultaneously an introduction to Schoenstatt....

In August 1959 we went to Cambrai for the first time as the „Schwarzhorn Circle (the diocesan and district leaders for the Schoenstatt Girls' Youth). This trip became a profound experience for us. We were very impressed by Joseph Engling in his consistent striving for sanctity, in his attachment to head, heart and home and ultimately by the complete dedication of his life for the fruitfulness of Schoenstatt. It urged us to emulation. Again and again we heard the imperative: who is ready to become a second Joseph Engling? A feminine Joseph Engling? To become a young saint?

Just half a year after this trip to Cambrai some of these girls entered the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. Others, I among them, followed half a year later. Still others decided to become Ladies of Schoenstatt or Women of the Federation.

It was a serious time when we entered the community in 1960... We live in the confidence that if we did everything for Schoenstatt and its founder, then the Blessed Mother would do everything from her side that Schoenstatt and Fr. Kentenich would soon be free again. This faith awakened our youthful idealism.

Joseph Engling was a shining example in our noviciate in 1961. We let ourselves be essentially inspired by him. We, too, strove for complete dedication to God in Schoenstatt; we wanted to sacrifice ourselves for the founder and his return home from exile.

So it happened that we elected Joseph Engling as our course patron. His person stood for a life as a true Schoenstatter. Fr. Kentenich had confirmed him often enough as such.

If we would begin to tell one another stories of our life with Joseph Engling, we would probably not cease to be amazed. In all Schoenstatt communities, - and among the Pallotines, at least of the older generation, the example of Joseph Engling's life was decisive for the vocation of a whole string of members. This holds true for the generation that contributed in the 50's and

60's to the design of his place of death in Cambai, as well as for the following generations till today. It holds true for Germans as well as South Americans, for Africans as well as North Americans. And that is the reason why we seek his beatification. His life challenges us to go a similar path. The youth of today too aspire to the audacity of sanctity, when and because they let Joseph Engling inspire them to choose a religious path. Hence, it is our great petition today: Joseph Engling, lead many young people from all parts of the earth to your way of sanctity. Amen.

Translation: scm, Schoenstatt