

**Novena in Preparation
for our
Annual Feast Day**



Week One

***The Covenant of Love
A Perfect Exchange Of Hearts***

Introduction:

In this extraordinary year which has seen our nation battle drought, bush fires and the corona virus pandemic, we want to prepare for our Annual Feast Day in our Home or Heart Shrines as it is not possible for us to gather at the Kew Shrine at this point in time.

This Feast Day each year marks the anniversary of the “re-conquering” of our Kew Shrine. After 30 years of no activity at the Shrine, on the Feast of the Assumption in 1999, we invited the Blessed Mother to once again take possession of the Shrine and make it a place of grace. Over these past 21 years we have experienced the blessings and educative activity of our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt in this first Schoenstatt Shrine in Australia.

As we journey towards our celebration let us give thanks for all gifts that our Mother Thrice Admirable has done to support us during this unique year and reflect in our Novena on aspects of the Covenant of Love, the source of grace and strength for our everyday lives.

Prayer

We are united in the shrine
where the flames of our hearts
beat for our Mother Thrice Admirable
who, through us, wants to build your kingdom.

Let us glow like brands of fire
and joyfully go forth to the nations,
giving witness to redemption
and jubilantly leading all people to the Triune God.¹

¹ Heavenwards, Morning Prayer. Pgs 15, 17

Reflection

We spiritually visit our Shrine, our cherished place, with hearts full of gratitude as we reflect:

*All the great and valuable things which we have received in this holy place can be directly traced to our Mother and Queen of Schoenstatt. She is simply the gift which God in his wisdom, kindness and omnipotence gave to our family in a special way on October 18, 1914, and through our family in a new way to the world. All that has come about from here is **her** work²*

To remind us of our unity and as a symbol of the light that Christ brings to all as the risen Lord, let us join together and **light a candle in our altars or Home Shrines** as we pray for each other and our community.

Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, we stand in the light of this candle representing our nine week novena.

This week we pray especially for a deeper love for Mary and her guidance in everyday life, especially in these times of the Corona Virus Pandemic.

May we always stand in the light of the Covenant of Love, which our founder and the founding generation, made with you, more than a hundred years ago.

Reading

The Covenant of Love with Mary as *a perfect exchange of hearts* first took place in the heart of nine-year old Joseph Kentenich.

² The Second Founding Document, October 18 1939; pg 45

On April 12, 1894 Katharina Kentenich took her nine-year old son to St Vincent's Orphanage in Oberhausen, West Germany. Before saying good-bye, the mother went to a statue of Mary. In her distress she turned to the Mother of God and in a consecration, entrusted her dearest possession to her - her only son. Katharina must have prayed aloud, for Joseph later remembered exactly what she said. In the midst of this sorrowful hour of suffering, something took place which so impressed Joseph that in later years he would mention this consecration again and again. Here is how he described this event, twenty years later:

Several years ago I saw a statue of the Blessed Mother in an orphanage with a gold-plated chain and cross around her neck. Chain and cross were the remembrance of the First Communion of a mother whom adverse circumstances had forced to give up her only child to an orphanage. She herself could no longer be the mother of her child. What could she do in the anguish and apprehension of her heart? She went, took the one precious remembrance of her childhood - her First Communion cross - and hung it around the statue of the Mother of God with the beseeching plea: Educate my child! Be entirely his Mother! Fulfil for me my duties as mother!

The consecration went deep into Joseph's soul. From now on, Mary *was* his mother. In a letter in 1955 Fr Kentenich wrote about the impact of this event:

Someday I will tell you a secret about my life which happened to me in my ninth year. To it I personally trace back the entire Schoenstatt work, especially its most unique source - the Covenant

*of Love between the MTA and Schoenstatt. ... It was not a mystical experience. ... It was really something quite simple.*³

Our Covenant of Love is a mutual exchange of hearts and love.

*What is this mutual conformity of hearts if not a mutual fusion of hearts? After all, love is a unifying and assimilating inner force. Love lives by a mutual transference of life. That two people become similar in thought and action is, as experience teaches, a fruit of the deep union of their souls, of the mutual fusion of hearts. ... When I love the Blessed Mother perfectly, she will respond to this love in the same way. But the implications run in the other direction too. I need to make every effort to love the Blessed Mother in my thoughts and deeds just as she loves me. This is what is meant by the perfect mutual exchange of hearts and love.*⁴

Pause

Prayer

Father, we believe that you are with us 'from heaven' as you promised⁵ and we thank you for your perfect exchange of hearts in the Covenant of Love with our MTA and for the gift of your abiding presence. Father, go with us into our daily lives and once again intercede for us today a deep faith in the fruitfulness of the Covenant of Love.

³ Brushstrokes of a Father, Volume 1; J Niehaus; pg 53-55 (slight adaptations)

⁴ Mary Our Mother And Educator; pg 162-163

⁵ In 1967, when Sr. M. Aloise asked Fr. Kentenich when he would visit Australia, his response was: "From heaven". We believe he fulfilled this promise on 15th September, 1968 when God called him home.

*Pray the Fourth Joyful Mystery - The Presentation of Jesus
in the Temple*

Mary, filled with longing for our salvation, you present in the Temple, the One you conceived of the Holy Spirit.

Your motherly gaze is turned to us as you return him unconditionally and entirely to the Father.

Like you, the great servant of the sacrifice, I give everything I hold most dear for the salvation of souls.⁶

Our Father ...

Hail Mary (ten times) ...

Glory Be ...

RENEWAL OF THE COVENANT OF LOVE

Before we renew our Covenant of Love and exchange our hearts with that of our Mother Thrice Admirable, let us prepare inwardly and ask ourselves:

Whom do I wish to entrust to our Mother Thrice Admirable in this coming week?

Which spiritual gift can I bring as my gift of love (such as a prayer; a sacrifice or a good deed), which will help me prepare for our Annual Feast Day and make the Covenant of Love more real and practical in my life?

⁶ Heavenwards; Rosary of God's Instruments; pg 94 (slight adaptation)

Pause

United with all those who will take part in our Celebration
we renew our Covenant of Love:

*My Queen, my Mother, I give myself entirely to you, and to show
my devotion to you, I consecrate to you this day my eyes, my ears
my mouth, my heart, myself without reserve. As I am your own,
my good Mother, guard and defend me as your property and your
possession. Amen.*

We pray for the beatification of our father and founder:

*Eternal Triune God, for love of you and your holy Church,
Schoenstatt's founder always strove to do your will and win many
hearts for you. Through the intercession of Mary, the Mother Thrice
Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt we pray that he may soon be
raised to the honour of the altar so that he may work even more
fruitfully than while on earth for you and your kingdom. Amen.*