

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



Week Two

***The Covenant of Love
in the First Milestone 1914***

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

Reflection

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

Yes, we have all come to the Shrine, *'our favourite place with heartfelt gratitude, fervent love and ardent expectation.'*²

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 entrust to your special care our Youth and Young Adults.*

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.

¹ Heavenwards, Morning Prayer. Pgs 15, 17

² Schoenstatt The Founding Documents; pg 41 (with slight adaptation)

Reading

Schoenstatt developed according to a particular history. From a humble beginning, significant milestones marked a growth process from a small group of boys towards an international movement. Fr Kentenich particularly referred to four milestones in Schoenstatt's history which signified its unique identity and God given mission. Not only is each milestone a historical event but most importantly, each one was an '*inbreak of the Divine*' in which, at that moment in history, God's unique creativity made Schoenstatt what it is today.³

The First Milestone is the *original Covenant of Love on the October 18, 1914* and '*the beginning of our history.*'⁴ Our founder described it as '*the inbreak of the Divine in a heroic act of faith.*'⁵

If we could return to the year of 1914 what would we find?

Twenty- nine-year old Fr Joseph Kentenich had been Spiritual Director of the Pallottine Minor Seminary for two years. With him a small group of 17 and 18-year-old seminarians founded a Marian Sodality article on a pilgrimage place in the valley of Pompeii, Italy was published in a Catholic newspaper. The First World War broke out on the 1st of August. The small chapel of St Michael on the seminary grounds was a place rarely used and housed old garden tools.

And how did it all come about? In 1950 Fr Kentenich recalled the origin and development of the Schoenstatt Shrine.

It was Providence that placed an article into my hands in the Autumn of 1914. It reported on how Bartolo Longo had been converted from Free

³ 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 18 (slight adaptations)

⁴ Brushstrokes of a Father, Volume 2; J Niehaus; pg 42

⁵ 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 18 (slight adaptations)

*Masonry and then 'founded a place of pilgrimage' on the ruins of Pompeii, a dead city.*⁶

The inbreak of the Divine came in our founder's heroic act of faith. *How many thousands of people probably read this article? Who took it up? ... I read it.*⁷ ... *The question immediately arose in my mind – it arose quite spontaneously – wouldn't it be possible to do something similar here? Doesn't this answer the question of (what) Divine Providence seems to have planned for Schoenstatt? Perhaps it (lies) in this direction. At any rate it is not impossible. ...*⁸ *I reflected: What does God want to tell me through this article? This reflection obviously took some time, longer than is usual in my life. From July 18 to October 18 is quite a considerable time.*⁹ *I was convinced that such an interpretation was the expression of extraordinary boldness and daring on my part.*¹⁰

The idea was 'so incredibly simple.'¹¹

*Couldn't it be possible to draw the Blessed Mother down to us here? We talk so much about self-education, but it naturally has its limits. If the Blessed Mother allowed herself to be drawn down to us here, to take the education of the young men in hand, we would have three things: a place of grace, a place where the Blessed Mother is uniquely at work as an educator and a place of pilgrimage where self-education would have an essential part to play. The program of self-education proclaimed in 1912 would remain. So I gave the talk, which has gone down in Schoenstatt's history as the Founding Document.*¹²

We want to spiritually place ourselves in the Original Shrine, in the presence of our founder and the founding generation as we listen to words of the Founding Document.

⁶ The Shrine Source Of Life; Peter Wolf; pg 27

⁷ Kentenich Reader Volume I; pg 95

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ The Shrine Source Of Life; Peter Wolf; pg 32

¹⁰ Kentenich Reader Volume I; pg 95

¹¹ Brushstrokes of a Father, Volume 2; J Niehaus; pg 36

¹² The Shrine Source Of Life; Peter Wolf; pg 27

(You might like to read some words of the **Founding Document** at the end of this week's novena – see p. 7)

Pause

In the Schoenstatt Shrine, the Blessed Mother was asked not to work physical miracles but miracles of education and inner transformation. These miracles of inner transformation were dependent upon human co-operation expressed in the form of making contributions to the Capital of Grace¹³. During this talk the boys made Fr Kenterich's plan their own and together with him, sealed the first Schoenstatt Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother. The Shrine, as place of the covenant has since become the source of grace for the entire Schoenstatt Movement.¹⁴

Prayer

Father, we believe that you are with us 'from heaven' as you promised. We thank you for your heroic act of faith and the original Covenant of Love you sealed with our Mother Thrice Admirable. Father, go with us into our daily lives and once again intercede for us the spirit and enthusiasm of the founding generation.

*Back then in this insignificant place, a plan unfolded with the spoken request: Mother, allow yourself to be drawn down; to be reborn. Speak your Fiat (here) anew! And she spoke it ... and from here established her throne of grace.*¹⁵

Pray the First Joyful Mystery - The Annunciation

Mother, you speak your Fiat without hesitation and are allowed to bear the Saviour beneath your heart.¹⁶

¹³ For Explanation of 'Capital of Grace' see p. 7 of this novena booklet.

¹⁴ Cf. Schoenstatt The Founding Documents; pg 25-26

¹⁵ April 7, 1929

¹⁶ Heavenwards; Rosary of God's Instruments; pg 93

May we truly become genuine Schoenstatt children, who quietly in the background daily tell ourselves: I need to make Schoenstatt work and to speak my free, sacrificially ready fiat, each day anew. I need to be a living Capital of Grace!¹⁷

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?

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.

¹⁷ 8 September, 1933

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.

What is the “capital of grace”?

The Church's teaching on merits and our possibility to cooperate in Christ's work of salvation (see Col 1,24: “In my own flesh I make up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church”) encourages us to actively strive for sanctity and make ourselves available for the building up of the Kingdom.

A special form for this in Schoenstatt is the “contributions to the capital of grace.” In the covenant of love with Mary, we actively bring our prayers, sacrifices and striving for sanctity and make the merits of these good works available to the MTA for her mission in the service of Christ.

The image of “capital” is taken from finance, where large sums need to be gathered for major undertakings such as establishing a business. From 1915 on, Schoenstatt has spoken of a different kind of capital: that which we bring to Mary in the Shrine comes together (like money from different investors) to assist the MTA in whatever major undertakings she has in mind from the Shrine, especially those relating to the moral and religious renewal of the world in Christ. Because this “capital” is not financial, but on the level of grace, it is called “capital of grace.”

The theological foundations for this are found in the Church's teachings on the communion of saints (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, No. 945-948), intercessory prayer (No. 2634-36) and merits (No. 2006-2011).

Extracts from the Founding Document. 18th October, 1914

First of all, I greet you again after quite some time with the beautiful salutation: *Nos cum prole pia, benedicat Virgo Maria* (Virgin Mary, bless us with your holy Child). ...

My challenge goes incomparably higher. Each one of us must achieve the highest conceivable degree of perfection and sanctity according to his state of life. Not simply the great and the greater, but the greatest heights ought to be the object of our increased efforts. You will understand that I express such an extraordinary challenge only in the form of a humble wish...

Undoubtedly, we could not accomplish a greater apostolic deed nor leave our successors a more precious legacy than to urge our Lady and Queen to erect her throne here in a special way, to distribute her treasures, and to work miracles of grace. You gather what I am aiming at: I would like to make this place a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace for our house and for the whole German province, and perhaps even further a field. All those who come here to pray shall experience the glory of Mary and confess: "It is good for us to be here. Here we want to build our tents; here shall be our favorite place". A bold thought, nearly too bold for the public but not too for you. How often in world history have not small and insignificant beginnings been the source of great and greatest accomplishments? Why could that not also hold true in our case? Whoever knows the history of our sodality will have no trouble believing that Divine Providence has something special in store for it. ...

Do not worry about the fulfillment of your desire. I love those who love me. Prove to me first that you really love me, that you take your resolution seriously. Just now you have the best opportunity to do so. Do not think that in times like these, when momentous decisions are being made, that it is something extraordinary to increase your striving beyond that of previous generations, indeed to the highest degree. According to the plan of Divine Providence, this World War with its mighty incentives is meant to be an extraordinary help for you in the work of your self-sanctification. This sanctification I demand of you. It is the armor that you shall put on, the sword with which you shall do battle for your desires. Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace. By fulfilling your duties faithfully and conscientiously and though an ardent life of prayer, earn many merits and place them at my disposal. Then it will please me to dwell in your midst and dispense gifts and graces in abundance. Then from here I will draw youthful hearts to myself and educate them to become useful instruments in my hands.