

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



***Week Three***

***The Covenant of Love  
in the Second Milestone 1942***

## 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.<sup>1</sup>

## Reflection

We spiritually visit our Shrine, our cherished place, with hearts full of gratitude as we reflect: *Our entire history 'is one unique, great story of the covenant, one unique great story of Providence.'*<sup>2</sup>

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 Families.**

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.

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<sup>1</sup> Heavenwards, Morning Prayer. Pgs 15, 17

<sup>2</sup> On Monday Evenings – Speaking to Families No. 1 To Live out of the Covenant of Love; pg 55 (adaptations)

## Reading

In the First Milestone of 1914, the Blessed Mother took her abode in the Shrine through the original Covenant of Love between herself; the founder and the founding generation. Over the years the Covenant of Love quietly developed and became effective. Those who had given themselves to her as her instruments were now ready to be educated by her to a very high level of living the Covenant of Love<sup>3</sup> in the *Blank Cheque*<sup>4</sup> and the *Inscriptio*<sup>5 7</sup> surrender.

The period of persecution by National Socialism in Schoenstatt' s history is of important significance. *'The whole history of Schoenstatt is a unique, great story of love; a story of the covenant; a story of Providence. You can see this in a unique manner during the time of persecution. What does the story of the covenant mean? It is a story of love but also a story of sacrifice. It is a story of faithfulness on the one hand and the story of the cross on the other.'*<sup>6</sup>

The Second Milestone is an important event that took place in the Carmel prison on January 20, 1942. Our founder described it as *'the inbreak of the Divine in a heroic act of trust.'*<sup>7</sup>

With the arrest of Fr Kentenich by the Gestapo in September 1941, the Schoenstatt work and its founder were now separated by force. When he was imprisoned first in a bunker, then in the Carmel prison, the leaders of the Schoenstatt Movement made

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.; pg 56 (adaptations)

<sup>4</sup> The Covenant of Love in a Blank Cheque surrender is striving for a total conformity to God's will.

<sup>5</sup> The Covenant of Love in an Inscriptio surrender is striving for love of the cross.

<sup>6</sup> On Monday Evenings - Speaking to Families No. 1 To Live out of the Covenant of Love; pg 55 (adaptations)

<sup>7</sup> 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 18 (adaptations)

great efforts to spare him deportation to Dachau. An important official of the Koblenz city corporation won over the prison doctor to co-operate in a plan to declare the founder unfit for deportation due to health reasons. The doctor however stipulated that the application be made in writing on a printed form. Members of the Schoenstatt family now urged the founder to sign this application.<sup>8</sup>

What took place on January 20, 1942? Fr Kentenich recalls:

*'The 20<sup>th</sup> of January arrived. I had spent the night struggling with myself in order to understand God's will.'*<sup>9</sup>

*Of course, the loyalty with which the whole family watched and prayed is most touching. It is analogous to what Scripture says about the time when Peter was in chains. (cf. Acts 12:5)<sup>10</sup>*

*But it was so clear to me that I must not use natural means. Go to Dachau! You cling so much to the conviction that the Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother is a reality. You are convinced that she takes seriously the responsibility she has over you and the Schoenstatt family, if you and the entire family take the Inscriptio seriously. I therefore turned down all the help being offered and said, 'I want to go to Dachau. I am convinced that the means by which I will be freed is that I and the family take the Inscriptio seriously. My prayer is therefore - take the Inscriptio seriously. Then I will be free.'*<sup>11</sup>

*'Of course, it could have come to a very bad end. Going to Dachau meant the loss of all hope. Humanly speaking, I knew I was going to certain death. And the entire work was not yet solid enough. I had*

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<sup>8</sup> Fr Kentenich in Dachau; A Menningen; pg 3 (adaptations)

<sup>9</sup> A Movement in Chains - Sketches of Schoenstatt and Fr Kentenich in Dachau; J Niehaus; pg 30

<sup>10</sup> Brushstrokes of a Father, Volume 3; J Niehaus; pg 93

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; pg 86

*to reckon that if I die, the whole work would be too fragile. Precisely that which is so difficult for me – Lord if you will it, then I ask you to make it so!’*<sup>12</sup>

Fr Heinz Dresbach, one of the closest to Fr Kentenich in Dachau soon grasped how important January 20 was to the founder. He had this to say about the magnitude of this event:

‘January 20 was an especially clear, powerful impulse from above, a grace which corresponded to the founder’s decision. No one in Schoenstatt could see that the entire situation was an *‘open door’* except our father, with his keen faith in Divine Providence. He was afraid he would be misunderstood and thought ungrateful. After all, they had done so much, including things that were not without danger, to free him from prison and he did exactly the opposite. But, when the family understood and were trying to go along, when they wanted to follow his urging and strive with all their strength for the Inscriptio, then his distress left him. For our father, this was new proof that the Holy Spirit was behind it and that the Blessed Mother was at work.... He had decided to accept death. This was the practical content of his decision to go to Dachau – it was much more likely that he would not return alive than survive. He was therefore ready to give up his life for the family.’<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, when Fr Kentenich arrived in Dachau he knew his task was to be totally at the service of his Schoenstatt work. Fr Dresbach said:

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.; pg 94

<sup>13</sup> Brushstrokes of a Father, Volume 3; J Niehaus; pg 92-93

‘I don’t know of any other priest in Dachau who arrived with such an outlook and such clear goals.’<sup>14</sup>

In later years, the profound effect of this milestone can be seen when our founder significantly referred to January 20 as the ‘*axis of Schoenstatt’s history.*’<sup>15</sup>

As January 20 was not a hidden act but one which required both the total surrender of the founder and his entire Schoenstatt family, it placed the entire Movement in a life and death situation. At the same time, it also placed this covenant heroism at the centre of the family’s awareness. Fr Kentenich characterized the inner meaning of January 20 as ‘*standing in divine confidence*’. He spent the rest of his life actively challenging the members and communities of his Movement to make January 20 their own, in order to strive towards the interior freedom so needed for our time.<sup>16</sup>

*Pause*

## **Prayer**

Father, we believe that you are with us ‘from heaven’ as you promised. We thank you for your heroic act of trust in your decision on the 20<sup>th</sup> January. Father, go with us into our daily lives and once again intercede for us the genuine spirit of the *Blank Cheque* surrender and the *Inscriptio*, after the example of

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.; pg 112

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.; pg 86

<sup>16</sup> 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 179 (adaptations)

the founding generation who, along with you, were willing to give their lives for the Schoenstatt work.<sup>17</sup>

*Pray the Fifth Sorrowful Mystery - The Crucifixion*

Mary, I see the Redeemer of the world hanging on the cross, urged thus far by the ardent longing of his love.

You relinquish your motherly rights and freely offer him up that we might receive salvation and light.<sup>18</sup>

'See to it that we love the Saviour and learn to live and die for Him.'<sup>19</sup>

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**

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<sup>17</sup> Covenant Sunday Closing Benediction; October 20 2013

<sup>18</sup> Heavenwards; Rosary of God's Instruments; pg 97 (slight adaptation)

<sup>19</sup> Adsum Prayer written by Fr Kantenich in Koblenz prison; 1942

**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.*

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.*