

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



***Week Four***

***The Covenant of Love  
In the Third Milestone 1949***

## 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 Blessed Mother has established her throne of grace here in a special manner, and she has revealed her glories to the world in many ways.*<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 Priests and Sisters.**

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

## Reading

The First Milestone of 1914 was the original Covenant of Love between the Blessed Mother; our founder and the founding generation. The Second Milestone was Fr Kentenich's decision on January 20, 1942 because he believed it was God's will for him to place nothing in the way of his pending transportation from the Koblenz prison of the Gestapo to a Nazi concentration camp.<sup>3</sup>

The Third Milestone is an important historical moment that took place in the unfinished Shrine in Bellavista, Chile on May 31, 1949. Fr Kentenich placed upon the altar a letter to Church authorities warning of the dangers of 'mechanistic thinking' within the Church. Years later he described this milestone as *'the inbreak of the Divine in a heroic act of love.'*<sup>4</sup>

On the occasion of the Third Milestone's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, Fr Rafael Fernandez described May 31 in this way:

Until Dachau, Fr Kentenich had concentrated, especially during the Nazi years, on affirming and consolidating the Schoenstatt family from within. After Dachau, he changed strategies. What brought about this change of strategy?

The war had just ended. Father could have thought: 'Now at least we have the peace we need to continue our work. The nightmare of Nazism is behind us.' Just the opposite was happening. The world was becoming even more unstable and he saw even greater problems arising.

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<sup>3</sup> The 31st of May – The Third Milestone; J Niehaus; pg 9

<sup>4</sup> 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 18 (adaptations)

And at the same time, it became evident to him that the Church was in a weakened state, presently unable to take on the tasks coming her way. She lacked the vitality she needed to creatively take on the new times and impress on them the face of Christ. Because our founder sensed this crisis of the Western world, felt this weakness of the Church and saw before him the Blessed Mother, as Schoenstatt's gift, he felt compelled to hasten the march.

What was the crisis of the Western world which also weakened the Church? Our founder referred to it as '*mechanistic thinking*'.

What is mechanistic thinking?

It is a way of thinking that separates or pulls apart ideas from life; God, being the first cause, from human beings as secondary causes; life processes that belong together; ideas that belong together. What heals and opposes mechanistic thinking is organic thinking which respects life as an integrated, healthy whole organism of attachments and relationships to others and to God. <sup>5</sup>

Through January 20, the family had reached its highest interior realization. Now the moment had come to share its fruits and to 'go public.'<sup>6</sup>

How did this change in strategy take effect?

Fr Kentenich began to visit bishops, published the prayers 'Heavenwards' and did so to reach many people so they get to know Schoenstatt and be able to see what God had done

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<sup>5</sup> 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 103-104 (adaptations)

<sup>6</sup> The 31<sup>st</sup> of May . The Third Milestone; J Niehaus; pg 32-34

there. He sought out official recognition of the bishops for the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. The apostolic visitation was an integral part of this strategy.

This urgency and the force of the graces of January 20 gave father the impulse to undertake his travels overseas to Africa and South America. Schoenstatt could not stay in Germany or Europe alone, but had to reach every continent. The crisis of the West is complete and radical and a solution can only be hoped for, according to our father, if the Christian elite of all nations arise and work closely together to take on this mammoth task. This is the reason why father encouraged Schoenstatt international throughout his travels and why he supported and promoted, with the same intent, the Daughter Shrines.<sup>7</sup>

What was the letter on the altar?

Fr Kentenich called it the *Epistola perlonga* or the 'very long letter' written over the span of three months and composed of 200 typed pages. It was the composition of a lengthy answer to the report on the Episcopal visitation. On May 31, 1949, when the first part was done, he took it to the little Schoenstatt Shrine in Bellavista, Santiago, Chile. There he placed it on the altar and, joined by twenty Schoenstatt Sisters, offered it to the Blessed Mother. In a talk he gave at that crucial hour, he stated his awareness of the risks involved, even for Schoenstatt, but that the danger to Church and world left him no choice but to act.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The 31<sup>st</sup> of May - The Third Milestone; J Niehaus; pg 35

<sup>8</sup> 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 187 (adaptations)

Our founder was seeking neither a confrontation with the Church nor for the Church to merely approve Schoenstatt by saying there was nothing here contrary to faith and morals. No, he wanted the Church to receive Schoenstatt's charism, the gift which God had given it, and to profit from it. Father knew Schoenstatt was not just something that came from him but was an initiative of the Blessed Mother and the God of history.<sup>9</sup>

The sending of this letter initiated a chain of events that led to Fr Kentenich's fourteen-year exile by the Church and nearly led to the dissolving of his Schoenstatt work. However, it also initiated a new lifestream in Schoenstatt that took up the commitment to overcome the grave dangers facing the Church in our times, especially 'mechanistic thinking.'<sup>10</sup>

### *Pause*

#### **Prayer**

Father, we believe that you are with us 'from heaven' as you promised. We thank you for your heroic act of love in offering the Schoenstatt work to the Church on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 1949. Father, go with us into our daily lives and once again intercede for us the genuine spirit of '*organic thinking, loving and living*' to overcome '*mechanistic thinking,*' so that the Schoenstatt Work can be a gift for our Church today.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> The 31st of May – The Third Milestone; J Niehaus; pg 34

<sup>10</sup> 200 Questions About Schoenstatt; J Niehaus; No. 187 (adaptations)

<sup>11</sup> Covenant Sunday Closing Benediction; October 20 2013 (adaptations)

## *Pray the Third Mystery of Light - The Proclamation of the Kingdom and the Call to Conversion*

Jesus said, 'The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!'<sup>12</sup>

Thy kingdom come, that kingdom of the Father in which you alone, are honoured, recognized and loved above all things. Thy kingdom come, the kingdom of the Father: to the nations, to families, to those who are alone, the old, the sick, to the poor and the rich, to the persecuted and those who persecute others, to our friends and enemies, to all people, also to me. <sup>13</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>12</sup> Mark 1:15

<sup>13</sup> Prayers to God The Father; Sr Maripetra Sues; English translation Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, South Africa;1999

**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.*