



### 30. The Covenant in the Framework of the Movement

*Our specific covenant of love of 18 October 1914 is based on the world's fundamental law of love. As such it is generally valid in the sense of a universal history of salvation. At the same time it is a dynamic breakthrough of life, and hence has a direct tendency to find an application in structures and forms.*

*The text given here dates from 1928, so it is an early witness to the process. The Movement that developed out of the covenant with the Blessed Mother, and that spread during and after the First World War, had to organise itself. The first "Constitution" was the Statutes for the Federation drawn up at Hörde in August 1919. A year later it was followed by the Statutes for the League. In the 1920s Fr Kentenich worked on the basis of this organisational foundation and allowed the Movement to grow in extent and depth until in 1926 the Sisters of Mary formed as the first Institute. As far as structure and form are concerned, they became the model for the other Institutes. It is characteristic of the year 1928 that in the text printed here the Institute as a structural element of the Movement is not even mentioned.*

*When he structured the Movement into the League, Federation and Institute, the idea of the covenant played a special role in Fr Kentenich's thinking, and was given a special place in it. This statement applies not only to the Priests' Federation, which is the subject of this text, but also to all the Federations in Schoenstatt. For Fr Kentenich the covenant is the classic way of life of a Schoenstatter: Holiness, the perfection of one's state, without obligatory ties, wholly motivated by generosity. Fr Kentenich was realist enough to recognise that this way of life can only be upheld in the long run if it exists in a context of tensions: with the League, on the one hand, and communities with greater juridical securities, the Institutes, on the other.*

*In the text presented here, it is particularly important to note how much Fr Kentenich saw, on the one hand, that the spirit has to express itself in forms, but, on the other, how jealously he was on his guard to prevent the form from swallowing the spirit. It is within the context of this tension that he defined the Federation and its development. It is a legacy to all future generations.*

*The text is published in "Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre der Apostolischen Bewegung von Schönstatt – Teaching on the General Principles of the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt" (H. Schlosser, ed), Vallendar-Schönstatt 1999, p. 42-60.*

## **Structure of the Federation**

### **A. Division of the Movement according to the degree of its formal cause**

And now the *causa formalis*. On the basis of our history this is what I call the Marian and apostolic community spirit. Depending on whether the *causa formalis* is present to a greater or lesser extent in this or that form, we can conceive of various possibilities of organisation.

#### **1. Co-operators of the League**

The lowest degree of Marian and apostolic spirit is required of the co-operators of the League. From our perspective, we presuppose that they have the lowest degree of the formal cause of the Marian and apostolic community spirit. We only require as much community spirit of them as one can expect of every Catholic who is in connection with the Church, because such a Catholic has to have some community spirit and apostolic spirit, which includes being in contact here or there with the Blessed Mother. This is the lowest degree.

#### **2. Members of the League**

A second degree: We presuppose that the people who belong to the second floor of the Movement have a much stronger apostolic and Marian spirit. We will see that in them the apostolic spirit has developed to such an extent that it motivates them to work apostolically all the time in their professional circle. So we have to expect that their community sense is greater, because otherwise they will not be able to decide to adopt this intensified and constant apostolic activity. The more their awareness of being a Catholic has grown, the more strongly they will be aware of being Marian people. Here we have people in whom the formal cause is present to a higher degree.

#### **3. Members of the Apostolic Federation**

On the third floor we have people in whom the formal cause has taken very specific shape: a marked community spirit, a marked apostolic spirit and a profound Marian spirit.

Let us pause for a moment and consider this division into three floors. I am only attempting to introduce you slowly and more deeply into an understanding of the Movement. We call the people on the third floor the members of the Apostolic Federation. Those on the second floor we call the members of the League, and those on the first floor we call the co-operators of the Apostolic League.

### **B. The Apostolic Federation**

We are particularly attracted to the Apostolic Federation. What is the meaning of the Federation for us priests? Didn't we speak in great detail this morning about the lay apostolate and the Lay

Apostolic Movement? What are we priests doing in the Federation? Please don't forget how Pius XI defined Catholic Action. It is participation in the apostolate of the hierarchy. All Catholics are meant to take part in the apostolate of the Church. The focal point of the whole apostolate must always be the priests. Today the question of the lay apostolate is less one of organisation as of the pastorate. So, whoever wants to organise the lay apostolate must first of all have [the co-operation of] the clergy.

I would take it even further and say that all the spiritual currents in the Church, if they are to be longlasting, must be built on the shoulders of the diocesan clergy. This is based on the place of the diocesan clergy in the hierarchical order. You will find this confirmed particularly in Holland. Retreats and the Liturgical Movement progress there better than with us, because they are built on the clergy. So the first thing is to embrace the clergy!

So we have a right to exist in the Apostolic Movement, indeed, we uphold the Movement. In the Apostolic Movement we put all our eggs in one basket – the diocesan clergy. If they fail, that will be the end of it. Once again this is a new incentive for us to understand our task within the Movement because we have grown very deeply into the Movement from the grassroots upwards.

So what is the aim of our Apostolic Federation for Priests? I want to give you two definitions which shed a light on our task from various points-of-view.

### ***1. Community spirit***

Firstly, we may not and don't want to be "first class" priests who look on the others as "second class" priests.

Secondly, we have a goal that doesn't go beyond that of other priests. What we want is the perfection of our state. Each priest must also strive for perfection according to his state.

So why do we unite to form a community? When I am asked what the priests in the Federation are aiming at, I can say: What each and every priest should aim at, we want to achieve through forming the closest possible loving community with one another. So we have no goal that goes beyond the goal of other diocesan priests. Doesn't every priest have to strive for perfection within his state, and at least have the spirit of the universal apostolate? Without doubt! Shouldn't each one have a Marian spirit? Without doubt!

However, the community – that is the decisive characteristic – is not everyone's cup of tea. A priest may be extremely holy, and as practical and successful in his pastoral work as can be, he won't fit in with us if he does not possess the degree of community spirit we require.

### ***2. A community of leaders***

A second definition, which is generally valid. It places the Federation in the midst of present-day spiritual currents and emphasises its specific character more strongly. It applies not just to us priests, but to all who belong to the Federation. I would like to define it in this way:

**It is the task of the Federation to deploy a new type of community of dynamic leaders in the world, with the distinctive spirit of the religious orders and a strong Marian colouring, which consumes itself in close affiliation to the Church and Schoenstatt for the religious and moral renewal of the world in Christ.**

Allow me to say one or the other thing to the individual concepts.

## 2.1 The focal point of everything is the concept “community of leaders”

It is not necessary for the members of the Federation to have visible positions of leadership. If someone fulfils the demands of the Federation, if he or she tries to strive for the greatest possible perfection according to their state, they are leaders even if they don't have a leading position; they will definitely have the effect of leaders on those around them. Now the Federation wants to amalgamate these leaders. If you look at the directives, you will notice this immediately.

So the Federation is a community of leaders, and the leaders of the Federation are the leaders of leaders. Let us look at an analogy: I am the Rector of a Seminary. I want to be apostolic in every possible way. However, that is impossible. The field of my apostolate is the seminarians. I am the educator of priests. If I educate them correctly, my apostolate will have an effect far beyond the confines of my professional work. Take the example of a stone that is thrown into the water and gives rise to ever widening circles of waves.

From this you can see how important it is for you as leaders to reserve a little time for your office of leadership. It may be that as a leader I have to leave this or that bit of work undone in order to do justice to my task as leader. I must first fulfil my duties as a leader. Consider the Church as a whole: If I carry out my task for the group members, the whole Church will have gained more blessing and fruit than if I had completed this or that little job. I am talking about a community of leaders. The word community has a different resonance to the word society. It has a different resonance to mechanism. A community is an organism. So the task of the leader has to be to make use of every means at his disposal to carry out his responsibilities.

## 2.2 Deploy

If we are dealing with a community such as our Federation, which in a certain sense is a further development of the life of the Orders and Religious as a whole, then we have to aim at embracing all our members moderately and combining them, much as in the life of the Orders. We do this not just by praying for one another in private, no, we have to be responsible for one another in every regard, hence we are also responsible for their good reputation, their health, and their suitability for our vocation. All vital connections have to be moderate, making due allowance for the circumstances in which we live as diocesan priests.

We cannot live in a house community, we cannot be constantly together. It would be ideal if such a community could be together in a presbytery. We priests need such a community. Look at how many priests break down because they are so alone. If a scandal with a priest becomes public knowledge, it hasn't happened over night, it happened gradually. The reason is almost always because this priest has not been able to find contact to a community.

If a priest belonging to a religious community begins to find a home outside it, and no longer feels at home in the community, he has begun to be lost. That is also the danger for our missionaries. As long as we don't satisfy our need for a community outside that community, everything is alright. As soon as someone begins to find his home and his friends outside the community, that is the end of the matter. The ideal situation for us diocesan priests would be to live a *vita communis* in a presbytery, not just in the most elevated ascetical and intellectual sense, but as human beings.

## 2.3 An apostolic community of leaders

That is a community of leaders in the apostolic field. It cannot be our task in the Federation to exhaust ourselves only in looking after others and bringing them into contact with the Mystical Body of Christ. No, we want them to be touched and captivated in an apostolic sense, we want to inspire them in some form or other to become apostles again. If we do this, the Federation would be what Cardinal Faulhaber called a working commission, a working community, a leaven for priests.

#### *2.4 A new type*

What is the new quality? “Only as many obligatory ties as absolutely necessary, as much freedom as at all possible.” We are bonded upwards, bonded to the ideal. We have to impress this very deeply on ourselves. Our ideal is the renewal of the world. The more this urges me onwards, the less will I look in a narrow-minded way for forms, and the less I will need obligatory ties. A feeling of responsibility follows automatically. These are the upward bonds. We must have as few obligations as possible.

That is the spirit of the early Church. In the early Church everything was borne by the spirit of the *Parousia*.<sup>82</sup> At that time the same idea dominated: Only as many obligations as necessary, but as much freedom as possible. However, it is always the case – with every organisation, including the Church – and it can easily be proven historically, every idea creates a form of organisation, and afterwards the form of organisation consumes the idea. The idea creates forms, and later the forms cause the idea to retreat into the background. The danger is there. We in the Federation, who want to be leaders, have to hold onto the leading idea: Don’t allow new obligations to be imposed by any means, otherwise we will become fossilised.

Forms are only created for a certain time. In the course of time they destroy themselves. The times disappear and so do the forms. Our leaders must be men with strong ideas. A form can change – like this today, like that tomorrow. If we no longer have men who can distinguish between the form and the idea, we will easily throw everything overboard when the forms destroy themselves. If someone is only satisfied if he has a certain form in which he can rest, the spirit will have disappeared.

#### *2.5 The distinctive spirit of religious orders*

We want to bear the spirit of the Orders into the world, so also to the clergy. We are not dealing here with the vows. At the beginning someone prophesied: Wait a bit, it won’t take long before you all have vows. We have not thought of the vows so far.

The meaning of the vows is the spirit of the vows. We feel that the vows can be our comfort zone. They don’t have to be, but it happens very often today. Look at how many communities of women have fallen prey to this weakness! The spirit is often not deepened.

Everyone who wants to be holy has to cultivate the spirit of the vows; whether they are married or not they must cultivate the spirit of chastity.

What is the spirit of the vow of poverty? Freedom from disordered attachment to material things. Also we have to strive for this, and we do so as a means of the apostolate. Precisely today this is of utmost importance.

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<sup>82</sup> The expectation of the immanent return of Jesus on the “last day”.

That is why we have to be responsible for one another also in this regard. For example, the Federation does not demand that we appoint someone to travel around and see whether everything is in keeping with the spirit of poverty. As soon as we start to create new obligations, we will start to deteriorate.

The same applies to the spirit of obedience. The spirit of the vow of obedience consists in being inwardly independent of inordinate attachment to our own will.

The same applies to holy purity. The spirit of the vow is freedom from inordinate attachment to sensual pleasures. As people belonging to a community we are responsible for one another. In that sense our aim is the same as that of religious communities, only in another form, seen from a different angle.

## *2.6 With a strongly Marian colouring*

Yesterday I proved from history why we should be Marian. Here we have the new character. For us it is essential to achieve the greatest goal while using the least possible effort and time. Otherwise we exert ourselves to no avail. For us what matters is to recognise and grasp the laws of the supernatural order of being. Take someone who has an upset tummy. Only when I know the stomach's and the food's laws of being can I bring them into balance. It is the same in the supernatural world. If I know its laws of being, I will achieve a great deal with very limited means in a short space of time.

We have got into the habit of holding onto a saying of Pius X, who said that the easiest, surest and shortest way to God and to perfection is via the Blessed Mother.<sup>83</sup> We have got used to recognising that the Blessed Mother is the universal Mediatrix of Grace for the Federation. We also need more and greater graces. If that is the best means, why should we take side roads? I need not point out that the way via the Blessed Mother is not a detour. Of course, our Lord is the focal point. Every devotion to Mary and to the saints, which focuses our interest solely on a created being, is idolatry and superstition.

It is the task of the Federation to deploy a new type of community of dynamic leaders in the world, with a distinctive spirit of the religious orders and a strong Marian colouring, which consumes itself in close affiliation to the Church and Schoenstatt for the religious and moral renewal of the world in Christ.

## *2.7 In close affiliation to the Church*

We take this for granted. The Church as such has the *missio*,<sup>84</sup> and we don't want to be apostolically active without the Church and its *missio*.

## *2.8 In close affiliation to Schoenstatt*

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<sup>83</sup> "For can anyone fail to see that there is no surer and more direct road than by Mary, for uniting all mankind in Christ and obtaining through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God", from: *Papal Teachings – Our Lady*, St Paul Editions, 1961, p.168.

<sup>84</sup> Authorisation to preach and teach the Faith.

Unless it has a local centre, a Movement that is as lightly and freely structured as the Federation will not be able to remain united. The more generous and liberal a Movement is, the more strongly it needs attachment to a place, and the more firmly it must be bonded to a place.

We must also develop these thoughts from another aspect. We would then have to say: We are trying to trace our whole Movement to ultimate principles, and to study and observe the supernatural ontological laws. There we find that the life of religious communities today, as well as the ancient monastic way of life, has a great deal in its favour. Modern communities have centres, Mother Houses, but not *stabilitas loci*.<sup>85</sup> That is the heart of the matter.

It is wholly in keeping with the feeling of people today who have become uprooted. We need a home. If love is rooted in a place, it does far more justice to the situation of souls today. If our need for a home is to be satisfied in a sound way, a new community has to press to have a place that is more than its headquarters.

We need a home, and normally the feeling of being at home has to be connected with a place. So it is within the meaning of the Movement that it has a localised centre. It is not essential for it to be in Schoenstatt. The centre could be somewhere else, but this is how it has developed historically. We believe that special graces are connected with Schoenstatt. An outsider cannot grasp the value Schoenstatt has for the Movement. We forego other houses,<sup>86</sup> because we have developed this way historically, and because the Blessed Mother has connected special graces with Schoenstatt. The task has to remain connected with Schoenstatt.

## 2.9 Dynamic

By that I want to emphasise that we are, first of all, an educational Movement, but the tendency is for us to prepare ourselves for the regular pastorate.

### 2.10 In the world

Yes, we must remain in the world. I don't think that anyone can live out in the world in the same way as an individual member in a cloister. However, if we want to cultivate the spirit of the vows in the world, it automatically provides us with the direction for our striving for sanctity and living in the presence of God.

At any rate we have to appreciate that we remain in the world and have to erect cloister walls for ourselves in the world. So our living in the presence of God has to be far more actively focussed than we are taught in books. Everything that approaches me from without has to become a flight of stairs leading me to God, and uniting me to God.

With that I would like to draw a line under what has been said until now.

So what is the Movement? The Apostolic Movement is a chosen work and instrument in the hand of the Blessed Mother for the religious and moral renewal of the world in Christ.

Now we also know what the Federation is. What is its task? To deploy a new type of community of dynamic leaders in the world, with a distinctive spirit of the religious orders and a strong Marian

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<sup>85</sup> A permanent place of residence – St Benedict's principle.

<sup>86</sup> In the meantime Schoenstatt has become a worldwide movement, and a great many houses have been built around the original place of grace, above all the central houses of the individual communities.

colouring, which consumes itself in close affiliation to the Church and Schoenstatt for the religious and moral renewal of the world in Christ.

Allow me to ask in the form of a corollary: What is a member of a Federation? A Federation member is a chosen and extraordinary instrument in the hand of our Blessed Mother for the religious and moral renewal of the world in Christ. So this has also to apply to me. So I may attribute my calling to the Federation to the Blessed Mother.