



64. The Growth of the Covenant of Love

Schoenstatt's founding history constitutes a fascinating organism. Our founder lived his conviction that his foundation had been read in every detail from the guidance of Divine Providence. So its history contains the principles according to which God himself has led us. In retrospect, therefore, our founder was able to say, "Our Schoenstatt history is something like our Sacred Scriptures" (Cf. Text 21).

This "Scripture" can be read from various points-of-view, so that various facts and highpoints are drawn into the foreground each time.

From the point-of-view of integrating St Vincent Pallotti and his mission into Schoenstatt, the highlights are 1916, 1919 (Hörde), 1942 (rounding off the decision of 20 January on the 22nd),²¹³ 1964 (juridical separation from the Pallottine Society).

From the point-of-view of developing his work into the various formations, the important dates are 1919/20 (Federation and League), 1926, 1942, 1946, 1965 (Foundation of the Secular Institutes).

From the point-of-view of the development of the shrine in its importance and dimensions we hit upon the dates 1929 ("in the shadow of the shrine"), 1943 (daughter shrines), 1948 and 1962 (home shrines), and from 1965 the heart shrines and "shrine building site".

From the point-of-view of developing Schoenstatt's pedagogy, our history is marked by the Pre-founding Document (1912), and – what was called at the time – the courses for Spiritual Directors, as well as the pedagogical courses of the 1930s.

The milestones play a special role in this history of Schoenstatt's development: 1914, 1942, 1949, 1965. According to our founder's experience and teaching, they are marked by far-reaching decisions, and accompanied by special divine initiatives. They are the landmarks by which the entire development was marked and measured, and through which the importance of the founder himself was increasingly drawn into the foreground.

The ascetical development of the covenant of love took place somewhat parallel to the milestones, although not completely congruent with them. The point-of-view of our selection of texts is as

²¹³ The anniversary of Vincent Pallotti's death, 22 January, followed shortly after the momentous decision of 20 January 1942. In the face of such a high likelihood of death, Fr. Kentenich examined whether he had done everything in his power to realize Pallotti's mission. He concluded that he had and "was given the renewed inner clarity, as he had been given in 1916 for the first time, that he and his Movement had been drawn into the mission of St Vincent Pallotti, and were called to fulfil that mission" (Monnerjahn, p. 172f).

follows:

1914: *Identification with the founding act through entering into the covenant and contributions to the capital of grace*

1939: *Blank Cheque and Crowning of the Blessed Mother*

1942: *Inscriptio*

1952: *Joseph Engling Consecration*.

There is no succinct text in which Fr Kentenich has described the development of the covenant of love in historical sequence. However, in order to show clearly in our Reader that our entire self-education and asceticism centres on the covenant of love and its development, we are quoting two brief texts here.

*The first text is taken from a letter to Fr Menningen of 9 December 1953 (Heinrich M. Hug (ed.): *Mach heimisch in ihr Führerfähigkeiten – Grant them the abilities of leadership* – p. 30-32). It emphasises the importance of history and its follow-up, but also contains a brief reference to Joseph Engling and the Joseph Engling Consecration. It was written in preparation for 1954, when Fr Kentenich was trying to bring about a “re-foundation” of his whole work.*

The second text is taken from the Chile Tertianship of 2 February to 1 March 1951, p. 129-131. It stresses above all the character of the decision behind such a consecration, and points out the difference and inner connection between the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio. For a more detailed description of the Blank Cheque – actually the central act of the covenant of love – please refer to the Second Founding Document.

The present generation has an easier time insofar as it may see it as its task to enter very carefully into the school of our Family history. Not only one or the other tiny star shines forth, but – we may say this in a limited sense – the heavens are filled with stars, indeed we might even talk of a Milky Way that repeatedly attracts our gaze.

Without using images this means that we want to, and may, attune ourselves to repeating in every detail the original development, as well as the profound and comprehensive spiritual currents, that mark the forty years of our Family’s history until now.

So your leadership is easier to the extent that you only need to orientate yourself each time to certain high points of our Family history. Through them God has shown you the way and goals, as well as the high points, towards which you may and should lead your followers with calm, persistent and tenacious consistency.

[Relief for and demands made on subsequent leaders]

The relief this brings requires, on the other hand, a stronger and more reverent attachment to the tradition living in the Family, and to the tried and tested laws of development and formation, as well as the stages of development. However it does not dispense the leaders from making use of the methods applied, that have proved themselves until now, and that each time either clearly or diffusely revealed God’s plans.

Although, on the whole, the way future generations have to go has been predetermined, this does

not mean that individual directives are superfluous. If in the past it was our task to be pioneers in the actual sense of the word; what we now have to do is to listen very carefully when God wishes and requires the orientation of the followers as a whole, or as individuals, to one or the other proven goal.

Put more precisely, in the time to come we have to attune ourselves to

- a repetition of our Family history's stages of development until now,
- a repetition of the methods used, and
- a repetition or re-awakening of our elemental, God-willed goal.²¹⁴

[Repetition of our Family history's stages of development until now]

By stages of development I mean the stages by which the covenant of love, which the Blessed Mother entered into with Schoenstatt as a place and as a Family, has grown.

What Joseph Engling, with his profound religious emotions and unique genius, immediately understood, experienced and lived as a whole, the Family as a whole only saw and conquered bit by bit through slow and organic development.

The stages became visible – as is generally known – 1939 (Blank Cheque and Crowning), 1942 (Inscriptio), and 1952 (Engling Consecration).

It is natural that a seed has first to be planted into the ground if it is to develop. In our case this means that as far as possible from the beginning the education in our Family was oriented to this covenant of love. From the beginning it required careful cultivation. This implies in detail that the Family as a whole, and the individual members, have to be introduced to this covenant not only intellectually, but by way of life and love. That was the case from the beginning.

Our Tertianship has reached a decisive stage that no one foresaw in this way, or consciously planned. We are being urged to come to a decision. In the process we want to take the safe route and not decide superficially. What is the direction of our decision? It is the direction taken by what we have called "Schoenstatt's secret", or "Schoenstatt as a work of God". If we want to be drawn into the covenant of love that the Blessed Mother entered into with Schoenstatt in 1914, we have to decide to do so. Our consecration is a consecration in Schoenstatt's spirit, in the spirit of the founding contract; that is the original content of the consecration. With that I have in spirit joined the ranks of those who have lived in Schoenstatt since 1914, and who were called by the Blessed Mother. In practice this means that we are affirming what we have called Schoenstatt's secret.

There are various degrees of the covenant of love. To which degree do we want to surrender ourselves to the Blessed Mother? Seen historically we know of three degrees:

- in general: I place myself at her disposal,
- in the spirit of the Blank Cheque,
- in the spirit of the Inscriptio.²¹⁵

²¹⁴ The text we have selected only reproduces the introduction to the discussion of the first point, since we are concerned here with the ascetical development of the covenant of love. The organisation of the whole treatise shows clearly the vast context into which Fr Kentenich placed "re-living Schoenstatt's history".

²¹⁵ This talk was given in 1951. Only a year later the Joseph Engling Consecration evolved in Schoenstatt's history, so that its members became consciously aware of it. Cf. the above text.

We should give serious consideration to such a decision, because these things penetrate deeply into each individual person's life, as well as into the community life of the (Pallottine) Province. In reality, what we are discussing together at the moment urges us to come to a decision. All this is not just said for the body. The question has been awakened in the soul: **So what should I do now?** We can see not just logically that Schoenstatt can be united with Pallotti. The question is: Do I want to allow myself to be borne by the stream of grace, do I want to decide? Should the breaking in of the divine mean it is breaking through into our souls, so that grace can flow into us without restriction?

Let us return to the covenant of love. We saw that its starting point was 18 October 1914, and have followed its development until the Blank Cheque. After that everything revolves around 20 January 1942. It took twenty-five years before the whole Family had understood that we have to give ourselves completely to the Blessed Mother. Later greater dangers arose and we told ourselves: We have to do more: Inscriptio.

So 20 January 1942 arrived. I had the opportunity to liberate myself from the concentration camp, but I told myself: If Almighty God has foreseen that I am to be set free, then the only price can be that the whole Movement makes the Inscriptio.

Perhaps it would now be worth our while to think through the logical argument, and answer questions that have arisen here or there.

In my opinion, the greatest holiness is to be found in the most perfect self-surrender to God's will. If we look at people as they really are, we will have to admit that by nature we are negatively programmed against the cross and suffering. So that is the greatest obstacle to saying YES to what God wills. Since our nature unconsciously cries out, and our unconscious deludes our intellect too strongly, we have to be honest and admit how often it happens that our feelings are more interested in saying NO to suffering. Now, in order to remove this obstacle to saying yes to God's will, we have to see to it that our negative mindset becomes positive. This won't work without a great deal of grace. We can prepare for this inner transformation somewhat by practice, but ultimately the Holy Spirit has to give it to us as a gift.

What are you doing through the Inscriptio? Redirecting the negative mindset into a positive one. If I shoot, I must first of all aim higher. The real goal of holiness is total self-surrender to God. The Inscriptio is the removal of the greatest obstacle to the Blank Cheque. I say: Dear God, if it pleases you, I don't just say yes, I beg you for it as fervently as I can. If I know that God wants me to die in the concentration camp, I pray: Let me die! The Inscriptio is merely a psychological means to remove obstacles. We don't ask for suffering at all costs. We can only undertake such an act if we have the correct concept of the Father, because we know that God is Father, God is good! We can find it more difficult to dedicate ourselves to something, than to renounce ourselves. At that time, on 20 January 1942, I didn't find it particularly difficult to give myself completely; what was far more difficult for me was to allow my work to be destroyed.²¹⁶

We are approaching the completion of the foundation of our Society. So we have to be united by an awareness of our founder. I can offer myself to the Blessed Mother in this or that spirit: in the spirit of the Founding Document, or in the spirit of the Inscriptio. Ever since I personally undertook this act in a very tangible way, and on behalf of the Family, an awareness of victory has been alive in me. The simple reason is that the condition set by the Founding Document has been fully met.

²¹⁶ Cf. *Heavenwards*, 117.

On 18 October 1944 the representatives of the whole Family undertook the act of self-surrender in the spirit of the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio. This fulfilled the condition for my freedom, and soon afterwards I was set free.