



## 12. The Founding Process – Seen in the Light of Faith in Divine Providence

*The study, “Key to an Understanding of Schoenstatt” was written in 1951. The Apostolic Visitor, Fr Sebastian Tromp, SJ, had removed Fr Kentenich from all the offices he had held, and he had to leave Schoenstatt on 22 October 1951. He went to Switzerland, where he spent a few weeks in the Norbetine Monastery, Mount Sion, near Uznach. It was there he wrote this study to explain Schoenstatt to Fr Augustin Bea, a consultant to the “Holy Office” (today the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith). In the study he tried to offer orientation through the confusing web of accusations and charges – in the light of faith in Divine Providence.*

*The objective of the “new person in the new community” can be followed up through the following text like a guideline. Fr Kentenich testified that the idea of the new person in the new community was something he had been born with. It arose in him in such a way that he was unable to say precisely when and on which occasion he had become aware of it.*

*When he was appointed the Spiritual Director of the College in Schoenstatt (October 1912) he recognized that the time had arrived for him to carry out this innate idea. Its translation into practice could only happen through concrete, historical processes. For him, however, history was always inwardly connected with Divine Providence. He understood historical processes as a “race between divine guidance and human obedience”.*

*The text used here has been taken from the study “Key to an Understanding of Schoenstatt”, which was published in: Texte zum Verständnis Schönstatts - Texts to explain Schoenstatt, Vallendar - Schönstatt - 1974, p. 185 - 206.*

So Schoenstatt’s history became a race between divine guidance through the law of the open door, and human obedience; an exciting, holy game between God’s lavish efforts to win our love, and our loving and generous answer; a drama in which God lovingly pointed out and prepared the way, and we courageously walked that way. Everything, however, serves the one goal: the gradual unveiling and realization of God’s mysterious plans, which are given a definite and concrete form by Schoenstatt’s great idea of the new person in the new community characterised by the universal apostolate. It was in this way, and no other, that everything came into existence – the smallest and the greatest. Nothing, absolutely nothing, came about through human whim, or wilful human plans. It is possible that God spoke to millions of people in a similar way at the same time, and revealed his will to them. ... They could even have answered him. The difference

between them and us probably is that we regarded ourselves as pioneers, and we consciously interpreted and responded to all events as the gradual revelation of God's great, overall plan. ... "It is in God's plan!" As time went by those words became a stock phrase that was filled and loaded with meaning. They gave all the events in our own lives, and in the history of our Family and the world, a very personal note, the character of a warm and challenging call from God. "*Vox temporis vox Dei*"<sup>58</sup> became our favourite motto. The more we interpreted the voices of the times as God's voice and wish, and treated them accordingly, the less our Lord's reproach applied to us, "You know how to interpret the signs of nature, but not the signs of the times in the heavens".<sup>59</sup>

Let us start by trying to explain Schoenstatt's outward structure, its outward face, from the point - of - view of this goal. Every feature, every wrinkle, bears the heading: developed according to the law of the open door.

This door to the times opened for the first time when the Spiritual Director of the newly built Schoenstatt College held his programmatic talk as he took up office. It has gone down in history as the Pre - Founding Document. It was in October 1912. Autumn storms raged not only outside, but also inside the College. An open crisis of obedience, a revolution, had broken out among the students. The Spiritual Director saw it as an "*ostium apertum magnum et evidens*"<sup>60</sup> that above all called for the new person, who puts heart and soul into what he does, and is attached to ideals mainly from the point - of - view of genuine freedom, without neglecting the idea of the new community characterised by the universal apostolate. This is proved by the text of the programme. It gave the direction for every stage of the development that followed. It can be compared with a seed that already contains the completed flower. "Under the protection of Mary we want to learn how to educate ourselves to become free, strong and priestly characters..." The explanation of the programme that was added dwelt at greater length with the first guiding star, but unmistakably drew attention to the other two.

The idea of true freedom never let go of us again. It became the key to our spirituality. It was not by chance that thirty years later a hymn that originated in the Koblenz prison spontaneously sang,

We therefore stand united today,  
formed by God's love,  
fearless in the struggle  
with all Satan's offspring,  
so that new men and women arise  
who are, like Christ,  
both free and firm on earth,  
in joy and in sorrow.<sup>61</sup>

The key ideas of the Pre - Founding Document clearly reappear without my consciously referring to it.

Education to strength of character and true freedom remained Schoenstatt's great objective. Even as early as 1912 it battled against the masses. We were conversant with the concept already then. Two decades later it was a generally accepted concept to describe the Bolshevik or collectivist person who has denied and destroyed all God - willed attachments – to their homes, to people and to God...

In the concentration camp at Dachau the Family's great educational ideal found expression in the Hymn of the Home. One verse praises the idea of love - imbued freedom,

Do you know the land, like heaven itself,  
the so ardently longed - for kingdom of freedom:  
where magnanimity and sense of the fitting

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<sup>58</sup> The voice of the times is the voice of God.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Mt 16,3.

<sup>60</sup> A wide open and visible door.

<sup>61</sup> J. Kentenich: *Heavenwards*, Prayers for the use of the Schoenstatt Family, Vallendar 1973, p. 164f. (German edition).

overcome the downward pull of nature;  
where the slightest wishes of God are binding  
and receive in answer a joyful decision;  
where they, in accord with love's fundamental law,  
are always victoriously put into action?  
This wonderland is known to me –  
It is the meadow radiantly lit by Tabor's sun,  
where our Three times Admirable Lady reigns  
in the midst of her favorite children,  
loyally rewarding each gift of love  
with the manifestation of her glory  
and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness:  
It is my home, my Schoenstatt Land!<sup>62</sup>

In the time of persecution many fetters of slavery were freely, willingly and joyfully borne in the concentration camps and prisons in order to intercede for true freedom for the Family. How often we renewed the resolution: I will gladly bear forever the somber chains of slavery  
if it stands as ransom for the family's freedom.<sup>63</sup>

As the fruit of countless, manifold sacrifices – these included the serious offer of people's lives – the hope grew that in his kindness God wanted to give the community as a whole and for all time the great good of the freedom of God's children. We were thinking in particular of the formations without vows. On account of their structure they are prone to the danger of getting stuck half way, of confusing freedom with license, and of losing the palm of total self - surrender in competition with the communities that take vows.

True freedom is the heart and centre of our spirituality. That is why it has occupied us all these years. It will continue to do so in future. It is not without reason that right from the beginning the law of the open door, in conjunction with obedience, has made us aware that love - imbued obedience makes us free. Precisely the Schoenstatt communities without vows cannot value every degree of obedience too highly as an expression of freedom, and as a means to become free, nor can they stress it too often or too seriously. If we ever forget this, God will not leave us in peace. Bolshevism, with its dangers of creating mass - mindedness, is a constantly effective judge and warning.

Let us return to October 1912. It didn't take long for the door to be opened a second time, this time on behalf of the new community.

At that time missionary associations for the studying youth were coming into existence everywhere. *Vox temporis est vox Dei*. Besides this, the Pallottine students intended to become missionaries later on. What was more obvious than to do something about it? Although the structure of an association was somewhat unusual for the circumstances of our boarding school, it offered an opportunity to deepen the ideal of the new community – our inner relationship to one another – and to awaken a sense of responsibility for a common goal. The association came into existence in January 1913. It was not brought about by a decree or command, but by way of movement through the personal decision and agreement of the students.

The idea of the community never left us again. We heard about the Marian Sodality for students in Maria-schein through one of the students whose brother was studying with the Jesuits there. It was a new sign from Providence that made us aware for the first time of a form of community that connected and strengthened the community bond to the supernatural world, and offered a sound opportunity for self - activity, allowing the students to grow to become autonomous personalities. It also cultivated openness towards the apostolate, and placed the Blessed Mother in the foreground. The re - modelling of the missionary association into a Sodality again occurred by way of movement, this time accompanied by vehement battles. The solemn act of foundation took place in April 1914. This opened a door that was never closed again. It led us into a room where we soon felt at home, and we furnished it according to God's wish and

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<sup>62</sup> *ibid*, p. 159.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid*, p. 121.

hint as time went by. Some years later it developed into a separate, large dwelling – the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt. In the course of time the Sodality custom of collecting May blossoms gave rise to the written control and spiritual daily order. Already in 1912/13 a little booklet had made us aware of this practice. It was entitled “Three ways to save our youth”. The first means it offered was this method of control. The second was having a permanent confessor. Pallotti’s life and teaching also drew our attention to the same point. Later this became the monthly account of the spiritual daily order to the permanent confessor or spiritual director. So these outward forms of self - sanctification, which became an obligation for the members of the Institutes, Federations and League, established themselves from insignificant beginnings according to the law of the open door. It is obvious that deeper psychological and metaphysical contexts and insights were added, and supported and strengthened the building. We never merely accepted a hint in an outward way; we always worked creatively with it. We did this because we always saw it connected with a commission. Otherwise we would never have discovered and carried out such a huge and comprehensive plan ...

The Marian idea was indicated and impressed upon us by the Sodality for a fourth time. Firstly, it was something we inherited, it was natural to all of us from our homes; secondly, it came from Pallotti; thirdly, it was included in the booklet already mentioned. It happened a fifth time through Grignon de Montfort. We would have had to be deaf not to understand this clear language. The door was not opened just once – it happened five times in quick succession. We allowed ourselves to be led until the Blessed Mother, as the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, solemnly entered our shrine. She became Schoenstatt’s treasure and the great power in our family history.

#### **How did everything come about? Everything happened in keeping with the law of the open door.**

The First World War broke out in August 1914. For us it became a rich declaration of God’s will and the revelation of his mysterious plans, so that at the end – in 1918 – we had a clear insight and hence a firm direction for our future development.

There were two events at the beginning that had no direct connection with the war, but their clear language put us into a position to understand and answer the signs given us by the war. I am referring here to two insignificant publications. The first was a short article in the *Allgemeine Rundschau*<sup>64</sup> by Fr Cyprian Fröhlich.<sup>65</sup> In it he briefly recorded the origins of the famous Italian place of pilgrimage at Valle di Pompeii. Bartolo Longo had founded two large institutions for orphaned girls and the children of convicted prisoners, as well as a place of pilgrimage, on the ruins of the ancient heathen city. The reporter asked, “How did all this happen? It is simply a miracle. Even if the Madonna of Pompeii had not incontestably worked miracles there, the fact that an unknown lawyer was able to found a place of pilgrimage on the ruins of a heathen city in modern Italy after 1871 would be the greatest miracle of them all.”<sup>66</sup>

Once faith in Divine Providence has become second nature to us, we will see little messengers and messages from God everywhere, even in insignificant events. St Bonaventure called them *nutus Dei*; St Augustine called them *manutergium Dei*.<sup>67</sup> In a figurative sense the Annunciation scene is repeated on countless occasions, and each time requires us to reflect, as did the Virgin in her room in Nazareth. Mary reflected on what the greeting could mean. She questioned, “How is this to be done?” Then she said yes with all her heart, “*Ecce Ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*”.<sup>68</sup> This also happened here. The question immediately arose whether it could be “in God’s plan” to prevail upon the Blessed Mother to take up residence in the ancient little chapel of St Michael, which had become a storeroom for old garden tools, in the

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<sup>64</sup> A German newspaper (General Review). Nr 29 of 18 July 1914, p.521.

<sup>65</sup> A Capuchin, he was the founder and first director of the “Seraphic Work of Love for Endangered Children” and co-founder of German Caritas.

<sup>66</sup> Quote from “*Unter dem Schutze Mariens*”, p. 288. The complete text of this article by Fr Fröhlich, and an introduction into the history of Valle di Pompeii near Naples given in: REGNUM, III/1968, p.133ff., and the main passages in *New Vision and Life*, p. 93 - 95.

<sup>67</sup> “Hint from God”, and “tip from God”.

<sup>68</sup> Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. Let what you have said be done to me” (Lk 1,38).

same way as she had done at Pompeii? She should not so much work miracles in the natural, as in the supernatural order – miracles of spiritual transformation, of finding a spiritual home, and fruitfulness, in the way Pallotti had envisaged her activity when he coined the saying: She is the great missionary, she will work miracles. So she is the great educator of the people, the foundress and leader of an apostolic movement of renewal and education, and should use Schoenstatt and all Schoenstatt children as her instruments.

Please note the progression in the reasoning and in God's strategy. The Pre - Founding Document placed self - education in the foreground, and chose the Blessed Mother to be our protectress; the Marian Sodality brought about a shift of emphasis and concentrated our attention more strongly on the Blessed Mother. According to what we suspected was God's new plan, she had to become the focal point as the permanent helpmate of our Lord in his work of salvation, and our educator. She required and inspired the self - education we had started as a condition for her activity from Schoenstatt, and crowned it with her wise educational work. On 18 October 1914 this idea was presented to the students in the chapel, which had in the meantime been got ready for human occupation. The words spoken that day are called the Founding Document today; the 18 October is considered the founding day, and the 18th of every month is celebrated in this sense everywhere in the world wherever Schoenstatt has taken root. ...

In the Founding Document mention is only made of "miracles of grace", and of the "treasures" the Blessed Mother wants to distribute here. It has the character of a covenant of love, "*Ego diligentes me diligo ... Show me that you really love me, ... then I will take up residence among you and distribute plentiful gifts and graces. ... Then in future I will draw youthful hearts to myself and educate them to become useful instruments in my hand*". Our serious self - sanctification and the apostolate were to be the proof that our love was genuine, "I require this self - sanctification of you. It is the armour you are to put on, the sword with which you are to fight for your wishes. Work hard to bring me contributions to the capital of grace. Through the faithful and most faithful fulfilment of your duties and a zealous prayer life, earn many merits and place them at my disposal."<sup>69</sup>

The plan was taken up enthusiastically by the students. It gradually penetrated to the roots of their souls and became the great power that drew Schoenstatt from darkness into the light, attracting ever - widening circles into its sphere of influence. Later important youth leaders visited Schoenstatt to discover the secret of its success. It is and remains the same – the mysterious and effective work of the Blessed Mother from her little shrine, and the attractive force she exercises on human hearts from there, encouraging the same serious co - operation (through contributions to the capital of grace). She richly blesses such work of self - education in her service through *transformatio in Christum et Deum*.<sup>70</sup>

There is no doubt about the facts. Everyone who is prepared to see and hear has sufficient opportunity to discover them. It sticks out a mile that human genius is not in the foreground here, but that God is mysteriously at work. Later a large number of daughter shrines were built throughout the world. They are an exact copy of the original shrine and have similarly become the focal point of a comprehensive movement of renewal.

This answers the question: Was the idea presented on 18 October 1914 merely a pipe dream, or did it correspond with God's plan, was it "in God's plan"? ...

Was the chink, the tiny opening made by contact with Pompeii at the time, too small, too impenetrable, for us to speak of it as the unveiling of God's plan? The circumstances at the time gave us an insight into only two truths. The first is a general law by which God governs the world, "How often in world history has not what is small and insignificant been the source of the great, even the greatest things?" From this we concluded, "Why should this not also be the case with us?" The second truth was the conviction the God had guided the young student Sodality in a special way. From this we concluded, "Whoever knows the past of our Sodality will not find it difficult to believe that Divine Providence has something special in mind for it." From these two truths we came to the conclusion that the great idea could probably be God's plan, and it was presented in basic outline with the challenge, "Your hearts have been set on fire. You have made my

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<sup>69</sup> This and the following quotations from the Founding Document are taken from "*Unter der Schutze Mariens*", p. 289 ff. They can also be found in: Schoenstatt, *The Founding Documents*.

<sup>70</sup> Transformation into Christ and God.

plan your own. I confidently place it and its execution into your hands and have no reservations about entering it into our chronicle. Future generations can pass judgement on us.”

The mere conjecture, even the possibility or probability, that we had discovered God’s wish and will awakened growing heroism everywhere. After five years we tried to define its distinctive features from the fruits of the tree, from the effects. For the first time the reasoning suddenly became clear to us that convinced us that we had been right when we looked through the tiny chink in 1914 and discovered God’s plan.

In 1944 a study<sup>71</sup> written in Dachau took up the proof. It points out that

„after we had fortunately survived the First World War, the reasoning has been repeated on countless occasions since 1919, and year by year has increased in content and strength. It centres on the thought: Schoenstatt has the three criteria of a work of God written all over it:

The insignificance of the instruments and means,  
the magnitude of the difficulties that stood in its way,  
the depth, duration and scope of its fruitfulness.

Whoever applies these three criteria critically to Schoenstatt’s history after they have arrived at a deeper insight into every detail, whoever believingly meditates on the powerful river of life that started from tiny streams, and made its way despite the greatest obstacles on all sides and the lack of humanly effective means and incentives; whoever knows how much heroism has been awakened in every walk of life, so that countless people have offered their lives and freedom to the Blessed Mother for her work, will not find it difficult to believe our claim. It easily and convincingly consolidates itself to become a *certitudo moralis*.<sup>72</sup>

The book, *Unter dem Schutze Mariens* ends a similar investigation with the conclusion:

So the historical investigation can be closed with the finding that there is absolutely nothing ‘special’ in the laws by which Schoenstatt came into existence. There was only the clear knowledge and purposeful application of the generally valid principles of Catholic life and Catholic education, so that a similar work could have come into existence somewhere else through faithful self - surrender to God’s concrete directives.

The Founding Document is a classic example and proof of how carefully the intentions of Divine Providence were picked up from the language of events, so that not human thinking and actions, but God’s will, determined the beginning. Now that in the light of history Schoenstatt can look back on a richly blessed development, despite the inadequacies of the early beginnings and human instruments, the initial probability that the reflections of 1914 had correctly discovered God’s intentions gain in reliability to practically become certainty, to the extent that it can be reached in such matters relating to life. So it would be criminal disloyalty to give up a work thus begun and blessed, and as it has developed, as long as God’s Providence does not indicate a different direction. Today those words apply: Will our Sodality really produce a saint? We don’t know, but we are hopeful. There is one thing, however, that we do know: that the generation which allows this work – the work of Divine Providence – that has cost us so many sacrifices, to perish or become stunted, will bear a heavy responsibility and invite the anger of our heavenly Mother. Woe to the governing body that allows it to come to this! It will be justly punished!<sup>73</sup>“

Experts offer three criteria that have to be present if one is to speak of a *sanctuarium*<sup>74</sup> in the actual sense of the word: an influx of people, an answer to prayers, and recognition by the Church through the granting of indulgences, or in some other way. All three criteria apply to the Schoenstatt shrine.

**The shrine is dedicated to the Mother Thrice Admirable.**

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<sup>71</sup> “Schoenstatt as a Place of Grace” (1944), published in, *Texte zum Verständnis Schönstatts – Texts to Explain Schoenstatt*, Vallendar - Schönstatt 1974, 101 - 139.

<sup>72</sup> Moral certitude or certainty.

<sup>73</sup> From Fr Kentenich’s talk to the Marian Sodality, 14 June 1914.

<sup>74</sup> A shrine that is a place of grace.

How did this come about? Again, according to the law of the open door. This time it was through a book by Hattler about the *Colloquium Marianum* in Ingolstadt, which came into our hands in the first months.<sup>75</sup> It told us the story of an elite group that formed under the leadership of Fr Rem in Ingolstadt. They had consecrated themselves entirely to the Blessed Mother under the title of Mother Thrice Admirable, and their work for the renewal of Southern Germany at the beginning of the modern era was richly blessed. This knowledge once again made us aware of how much influence can be exerted by a small group of people if God's plan is behind it. It gave us the courage to greatly enlarge the radius of our Lady's educational activity from Schoenstatt. We asked the Blessed Mother to make Schoenstatt today what Ingolstadt had been for Southern Germany at that time: the source of renewal for Germany, indeed for the whole world. That was our request, our hope. The Missionary Association had already awakened our apostolic spirit and motivated us to act accordingly. The Marian Sodality did exactly the same. The world war cast our Schoenstatt youth of that time onto the battlefields in the East and West, and in this way gave them plenty of opportunities to carry out the third part of their towering ideal – the impact of the universal apostolate... However, they now had to do so as instruments in the hands of the Blessed Mother, in order to help her to carry out her task as the educator of the people.

Although we were convinced that we had hit upon God's plan through such a widening of our horizons and field of work, we did not dare to talk about it outside our own circle. We took our bearings from the catacomb discipline of the Ancients and chose as a title to hide our high aims the "Ingolstadt - Schoenstatt Parallel". You can read those two words at the bottom of the light frame in the original shrine. At the same time you can see two dates: 1914 – 1919. That is to say, from 1914 until 1919 we lived Schoenstatt's great idea of renewing the world under the cover of the Ingolstadt - Schoenstatt Parallel.

Ingolstadt gave us a second thing – the title for our picture. The picture, like everything else, bears the stamp of the law of the open door. It came into our possession "by chance". A friend had bought it from an antique dealer for about 23 Marks. Since we were bitterly poor at the time, and were unable to take the initiative, we had to be satisfied with it. We couldn't bother about its artistic merits. That was in May 1915. It did not appeal greatly to German tastes. This could have had the advantage to us [Germans] of bringing home the *mysterium crucis*.<sup>76</sup> The feelings of the Romanic peoples, on the contrary, quickly come to terms with it. It stood us in good stead later when Schoenstatt became international.

After God's fatherly love had undertaken such preparation right at the beginning of the war, the law of the open door could lead in every direction and reveal God's plan more clearly. The young Sodalists in the barracks, at the front and in reserve positions felt extraordinarily responsible for carrying out the parallel. This had an effect in two ways: firstly, in their relationship to one another. Despite their youth and the quite extraordinary stresses of active service, and the effects of weapons of war, they combined to form small groups, either on a person - to - person basis, or by correspondence – they formed the *congregatio militaris*.<sup>77</sup> Love for the Blessed Mother helped them to overcome great obstacles; she helped them to love one another, and saw to it that they supported and upheld one another. In this way they grew more and more deeply into the ideal of the "new community". Their comrades in arms observed their ideal striving and joined them, becoming members of the groups. That was the second effect.

Such success drew our attention to Pallotti's guiding idea at an early stage – the great apostolic organizational network he had planned. As I have said, it became the focus of our attention already in 1916, and has never left us since then. His plan converged with the one God was showing us through circumstances. The two merged and complemented each other.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> F. Hattler SJ, *Der ehrwürdige P. Jakob Rem und seine Marienkonferenz* – Rev. Fr Jacob Rem and his Marian Sodality, Regensburg 1896.

<sup>76</sup> The mystery of the Cross.

<sup>77</sup> The Military Sodality, or Outer Organization.

<sup>78</sup> In these sentences Fr Kentenich clearly depicts the unique relationship of harmony and difference between Pallotti and his plans, on the one hand, and Schoenstatt with its vitality and life, on the other. Cf. Text 5: Fr Kentenich's Relationship to Vincent Pallotti.

Towards the end of the war people who were not pursuing an academic career also wanted to join our *congregatio militaris* as individuals. We accepted them. The centre for the Sodalties in Vienna was considering something similar at the time. From it we took over the name "League".

As a result, the fundamental structure of the Apostolic Movement was complete. The war had come to an end. The Schoenstatt students returned to Schoenstatt, the others who had joined them, "the Externs", returned to their seminaries, colleges or their homes. Again we had to wait for a sign from above in order not to make a mistake. Was it really "in God's plan" that the weak beginnings should be developed? In the spirit of the law of the open door this depended on whether the idea set the "Externs" on fire to such an extent that they took the initiative to demand the expansion of our work. It didn't take long for them to report back and call for a sign to gather. It was given in 1919. The gathering took place in Hörde. It couldn't take place in Schoenstatt, because it was in an occupied zone and was difficult to enter. The constitutive gathering merely gave a form to what had already developed according to the law of the open door. It differentiated between the Federation and League. All those who wanted to create a close - knit community composed of localized or correspondence groups, striving for the ideal of the greatest possible perfection and apostolic activity in every available field, were counted as belonging to the Federation. The League distinguished between members and co - operators. The former strove in a similar way to the members of the Federations, without being obliged to form a closer, external community. The forms of self - education are the same for both groups – a daily control of the spiritual daily order and a monthly account to a confessor. In addition to this, to secure the juridical attachment to the spirit of the community, the members of the Federation reported to their group leader each month on whether they had carried out these obligations. Whoever was not striving either for a definite degree of self - sanctification, or the apostolate, joined as a co - operator of the League. Later a further circle was added – the Pilgrims' Circle. It was expressly decided that the all - uniting bond was to remain "our devotion to Mary", which had proved itself in the war.

So the work was complete. Throughout the course of seven years – from 1912 - 1919 – it [Schoenstatt] had been eavesdropping on God's plan according to the law of the open door. God's guidance and human obedience had called it into existence. ... The idea of the new person in the new community characterized by the universal apostolate had taken on a concrete form, which none of the human instruments could have foreseen or expected in detail at the beginning.<sup>79</sup>

The whole work took its name from Pallotti's example: "The Apostolic Movement to spread, defend and interiorize the Faith and Love". It had two main sections – the Apostolic Federation and the Apostolic League. The ship could set out on the high seas.

However, it soon showed that the building was not quite complete. God's plan had foreseen a third floor for it: the Institutes.

How did we come to them? As usual, according to the law of the open door, which was at work in our family history with almost irresistible force – and still is today. In the first years the ship was crewed only by seminarians and college students. We were thinking of future diocesan priests. They were meant to be the main supports of my work. And that is what they became. Gradually both sexes and all walks of life came on board. In 1921 the first woman, a teacher, applied. This was the reason for opening first the League, later also the Federation, to women. The idea of a universal apostolate and Pallotti's design was decisive in this. In 1926 the first Institute, in the sense of what were later called the Secular Institutes, developed out of the Apostolic Federation for Women: The Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. The reason to do this was the law of the open door, in this instance the needs of the time and the inner urging of graced souls. The development of the young community, which immediately sought recognition from the Pallottine Superior General as a legitimate member of the *Apostolatus Catholicus*, as well as the blessing of the local Bishop, developed

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<sup>79</sup> It was Fr Kentenich's intention in this "Key to Understanding Schoenstatt" to explain through practical examples how Schoenstatt had come into existence. It is how people see Schoenstatt today. It cannot be really understood without knowledge of its background and the context. What is important is that both the origins, as well as the slow development, can be traced back in detail to God's inspirations or initiative. At least this is how Fr Kentenich saw and interpreted it.



in a quite extraordinary way both inwardly and outwardly, but always according to the same law. This was the only way we could be sure that we were doing what was “in God’s plan”. (...)

Then came revolution and the Second World War. In 1939 the externs developed within the community of the Sisters of Mary.<sup>80</sup> In 1942 the foundations for the Institute of the Brothers of Mary were laid in Dachau. In 1944 the Institute of Diocesan Priests and the women’s Institute of our Lady of Schoenstatt became autonomous, always according to the same law. So today there are four autonomous and equal Institutes: the Institute of Diocesan Priests, the Brothers of Mary, the Sisters of Mary and the women’s Institute of our Lady of Schoenstatt.<sup>81</sup> With great satisfaction we heard in 1947 about the *Constitutio “Provida Mater”*.<sup>82</sup> It confirmed that with our Institutes we had been on the right track, they were “in God’s plan”.

The outward structure of the Family is now complete. It is in truth the child of divine guidance through the law of the open door and human obedience, and hence a God - willed expression of the idea of the new person in the new community characterized by the universal apostolate. It is even more than this: It is simply the first and only timely and universal realization of Pallotti’s whole idea of the Catholic Apostolate, which has been acknowledged by the Pallottine General Council as authentic, and hence may be seen exactly a hundred years later as an essential completion of his foundation.

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<sup>80</sup> As a Secular Institute the Sisters of Mary do not all have to live in a community of shared life. Depending on the needs of education and the apostolate, they live in house communities, or individually as “externs” in the different professions and occupations.

<sup>81</sup> Two more have been added since then: the Schoenstatt Fathers, and the Family Institute.

<sup>82</sup> Promulgated on 2 February 1947 by Pope Pius XII. It created the juridical framework for Secular Institutes in the Church.