



## 11. How did the Founding Document come about?

*Schoenstatt's covenant of love is based on the general fundamental structure of our (prayerful) relationship to God, or the Blessed Mother. It always has the character of a covenant.*

*In the following text Fr Kentenich pursued the factors that make this fundamental relationship to God concrete, and led to the original Schoenstatt covenant of love. He mentioned three: The development of the Marian Sodality that had been founded shortly before; the history of the foundation of the Italian place of pilgrimage at "Valle di Pompei", and his personal structure that orientated him to education. In his interpretation of all three reasons, faith in Divine Providence plays the central role. This is the belief and conviction that God speaks through actual circumstances and through inspirations in the soul.*

*The text is taken from the "Zwanzigerbrief" ("Letter for the 20th"), so - called because it was written in anticipation of 20 August 1954. The letter was addressed to Fr Menningen, but it was meant above all for the "Treuekreis" (Circle of Faithful Followers). This was the group of German Pallottines who remained true to the founder during his time of exile, and who wanted to offer their lives in the so - called "Engling Consecration" for the founder and his recognition by Church authorities. The Treuekreis undertook this consecration on 20 August 1954. In preparation for it the founder wrote a very comprehensive study (236 A4 pages).*

*The passage quoted here is taken from p. 38 - 41 of the duplicated version (A4, Mount Sion 1969).*

If I may dwell on the Founding Document for a moment, I would have to ask you to differentiate between two points - of - view. It can, as you know, be understood as a request and as a consecration. In both instances it clearly bears the character of a covenant of love.

According to our Lord's words, every petition we direct to God is a covenant. Let us meditate on our Lord's admonition, then it will become obvious to us. Our Lord tells us, "Ask and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you".<sup>54</sup> "Whatever you ask the Father in my name, he will give you."<sup>55</sup> Even the outward form of these words has the character of a covenant. We really won't find it difficult to read the text as saying: if you ask, if you seek, if you knock, I will hear you, I will find you, I will open to you. The covenant character can hardly be expressed more clearly.

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<sup>54</sup> Mt 7,7.

<sup>55</sup> Jn 14,13.

The same can be said of the consecration to the Blessed Mother. The Marian Sodality has seen it from the first as a mutual covenant of love. That is why the Document attributes those words, "*Ego diligentes me diligo*"<sup>56</sup> – First show me that you really love me, then I will ...", to the Blessed Mother. Again, the covenant character is obvious.

However, its specific originality is determined by the content of the covenant. In order to understand it – or we would do better to say that in order to grasp in detail how we arrived at it – we must know its history. Here that ancient saying applies: if I know how something came into existence, I will also know what it is.

The Founding Document drew its water from three sources. All three owe their origin to practical faith in Divine Providence, or the law of the open door. To put it more precisely, all three clearly point to a divine plan, which is not difficult to recognize.

The first source is the short history of our Marian Sodality. At the time it had not existed two years. However, this source can only be correctly understood and interpreted if we look at it in the light of faith in Providence. Please read the Founding Document, then you will know what I mean. We are told, "Whoever knows the past history of our Sodality will not find it difficult to believe that Divine Providence has something special in store for it." Please underline the two words "Divine Providence" and "something special". From this you can conclude that God was the first to speak, not man. To put it another way, God, as the God of Life, stands at the beginning of Schoenstatt's history, not human beings with their self-centred hopes, with their petty expectations and beguiling wishes. It is not superfluous to emphasize that. It is also God who appears, not with an everyday, but with a specific, very special plan. We are therefore justified in speaking in our case of a *Providentia specialis*, indeed, *specialissima*.<sup>57</sup> Compare this, please, with the conviction that is alive in our Family that it has a special mission. At the time God's special intentions were still shrouded in deep darkness.

The darkness lifted in the same way, that is, by the ways of Providence. It happened through interpreting the history of the origin of Pompeii, the great place of pilgrimage in Italy, and my official nomination to educate the students as their Spiritual Director. You know about both sources, so I can be brief.

It was Providence that played an article into my hands in the Autumn of 1914. It reported on how the Advocate, Bartolo Longo, had been converted from Free Masonry and then "founded a place of pilgrimage" on the ruins of Pompeii, a dead city. Later it was authenticated by countless miracles and became world famous. The question immediately arose in my mind – it arose quite spontaneously – wouldn't it be possible to do something similar here? Doesn't this answer the question as to where we will find the special quality that Divine Providence seems to have planned for Schoenstatt? Perhaps it goes in this direction. At any rate it is not impossible. If you work through the Founding Document carefully, you will not find it difficult to pick up these thoughts between the lines. You will also understand the brief reference to the theology and philosophy of history in the text. On the one hand, I was convinced that such an interpretation was the expression of extraordinary boldness and daring on my part. Please read the text, "A daring thought, almost too daring for the general public, but not for you." In order to take this attitude into account, we later developed the camouflage title, "The Ingolstadt - Schoenstatt parallel". On the one hand, however, the knowledge urged us to act, "How often in world history has not what is small and insignificant been the source of great, even the greatest things. Why should this not hold true in our case?"

Such considerations prepared the ground very well for an understanding of the third source. Its purpose was to point out the distinctive feature and direction according to which God's plan probably wanted Mary to reveal her special effectiveness. If you are to understand this, I will have to remind you that as a true *Providentia* child I regarded my appointment as Spiritual Director in 1912, with its commission to educate [the students], as a divine directive for my whole life. You will find clear traces of this attitude in the Pre-Founding Document. You can read there,

„Now comes my appointment as Spiritual Director – I had absolutely nothing to do with it. So it must be God's will. I submit to it and have firmly resolved to carry out my duties towards you all, and towards each

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<sup>56</sup> I love those who love me (Prov. 8,17).

<sup>57</sup> A special Providence, a most special Providence.

individual, as perfectly as possible. I now place myself at your disposal with all that I am and have – my knowledge and my ignorance, my abilities and inabilities, but above all my heart.“

This characterized and defined my future way through life as an educator. Everything without exception was subordinated to it and sacrificed in the service of this Divine calling and vocation. My soul was so strongly filled with it that when I became conscious of the idea the inner relationship was immediately set up with the place of grace God probably planned. You can infer the extent to which my vocation as an educator moved me inwardly from the fact that the programme drawn up in the Pre - Founding Document became the programme for my life and educational work. It contains in seminal form all that later became a reality in Schoenstatt's history. Not even the organizational structuring of the Movement as a whole was excluded. It was not without reason that the statement was made at the end,

„According to your Statutes we have to cultivate devotion to Mary in community. The outward signs are already there in the beautiful banner and medal. However, the main thing is missing – an inner organization in the form of the Sodalities, which, as you know, exist at various colleges and universities, but in keeping with your circumstances. We want to create this organization. We, not I, because I will do absolutely nothing in this regard without your full agreement. We are not dealing here with a short - lived work, but with an institution that will be of use to all future generations. Your successors have to live off your zeal, your knowledge of the soul and your prudence. I am convinced that we will bring something useful into existence if we all co - operate.“

Given this fundamental attitude it stands to reason that this third source, which was opened up by Divine Providence through the law of the open door, should unite with the other two and form a single riverbed. From this came the great idea that the Blessed Mother should simply come down to us as our educator in this shrine. We did not just want to educate ourselves under her protection, as was said in the Pre - Founding Document, she had to come and dwell in our midst, and take in hand our education and the education of all who give themselves to her. She is the one who at all times set our self - education in motion from here. She has called a comprehensive, well - structured movement of renewal and education into existence. She wanted to lead it and make it fruitful. In order to motivate her to do this we offered her our merits in the form of contributions to the capital of grace to the heights of the Blank Cheque, Inscriptio and Engling Consecration. Ultimately we gave ourselves to her with all that we have and are. In return we expected her to prove that she is really the great educator from here, and lead us to the heights of sanctity and a fruitful apostolic life. According to the Document she accepted this form of covenant of love. She said,

Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace. ... Then I will gladly come to dwell with you and distribute rich gifts and graces. Then in the time to come I will draw youthful hearts to myself from here and educate them to become useful instruments in my hand.

That is the basic and original form of Schoenstatt's covenant of love, which was later extended according to the law of the open door and creative resultants to become Schoenstatt's vision of the future.