



13. The Founding Document Six Promises and Six Expectations applied to the Home Shrine

The text that follows is particularly valuable, because it illustrates how much Fr Kentenich – because he believed in God’s initiative – lived from the founding event of 18 October 1914 and the Founding Document. He took his bearings from it, increasingly opened up the deeper meaning contained in the document, and enabled the event and content to develop in new areas.

The text illustrates this in view of the reality of the shrine in general and the home shrine in particular. Soon afterwards Fr Kentenich coined the concept “Building site shrine” to denote the whole complex of ideas.

In the years Fr Kentenich spent in exile in Milwaukee he got to know families living there. He usually met with them every Monday evening, and also personally accompanied them spiritually. A process started in which the couples were gradually introduced to Schoenstatt’s spirituality and led to the Schoenstatt covenant of love. One of the customs of the families was to hold a night of Eucharistic Adoration in the shrine at Holy Cross, the parish and Provincial House of the Pallottines, from 17 - 18th of every month. In 1962 their attachment to the shrine gave rise to the spiritual current of the “Living Shrine”. Work with this current led to each member of the family choosing a personal symbol from the shrine and trying to realize the ideal contained in the symbol in their lives. In order to make this more tangible, the families placed these symbols (the statue of St Michael, the bell, etc.) beside the MTA picture in their home shrine. At the same time the question arose: could we now invite the MTA to come into our homes in the same way as she has done in the original shrine and the daughter shrines? This started a careful experimentation with the “home shrine”. After he had observed this for a year, Fr Kentenich announced on 18 November 1963 that the “law of creative resultants” had shown that the home shrine is in fact part of the organism of the shrine.

The talk he gave on that evening is particularly important in view of the way he described the organism of the shrines, the reasons why the MTA had accepted the invitation to take up her abode in the shrine, and the connection with the Founding Document. He summarized it all in “six promises and six expectations”. The last point was a subject Fr Kentenich had introduced a month earlier (Monday Night Talks on 21 and 28 October, 1963) in order to explain the reciprocal character of the founding act, and the life process it initiated, as part of the preparation for the 50th anniversary of 18 October 1914.

*The text that follows is a transcription of the Monday Evening Talk of 18 November 1963. The original German text can be found in J. Niehaus, *Die Entstehung des Hausheiligtums*, Vallendar - Schönstatt 2003, p. 146 - 160 (*The Birth of the Home Shrine*, Waukesha 1994).*

We are happy that the Family has chosen the motto, "Found anew, to our origins true!" for the Jubilee Year.

So the Jubilee Year has to see us at work bringing the fundamental forces of the Family to new life. Where do we mainly find these fundamental forces? We know the answer: in the Founding Document.

Here in North America we find it particularly easy to apply the Founding Document to our new shrine.⁸³ We know that by virtue of the covenant of love, which she made in 1914, the Blessed Mother made six promises and expressed six expectations.

[1. The home shrine]

It is a good idea to become aware that these promises and expectations also apply to each daughter shrine. I think I would have to add an idea this evening, since it has made its way within our local Family, although it has not yet been thought through thoroughly. Which central idea is that?

First of all, I would like to list three concepts.

We have an original shrine,
a daughter shrine,
and among the daughter shrines a central shrine.

What is meant when we talk of a "central shrine"? At the time we said that the new shrine has to become a central shrine for this country, not just a daughter shrine. Now we are adding a third concept that is possibly unusual in this form.

It is "home shrine".

[2. The six promises]

What is meant by a "home shrine"? Many of us have not only dedicated their home to the Blessed Mother in a general sense, but have offered it to her as a "living shrine". Please listen carefully. What I am now going to say is of absolutely elemental importance for the future:

**what applies to the original shrine and the daughter shrines,
also applies to the home shrines.**

With that what we want to discuss together becomes really concrete. So what has been promised to the home shrine? And what is expected of us? The same six promises and the same six expectations in the Founding Document also apply to my home shrine. How extremely concrete it all becomes!

Let me take a family with a number of children. The parents are very worried: how can we educate our children correctly in this day and age?

„1. What does the Blessed Mother promise? "I gladly take up my abode here", I, the Blessed Mother, here in your home, and from here I want to "distribute plentiful gifts and graces" for the family. That is to say, from this place. So what may I expect? Firstly, that the Blessed Mother is now dwelling and reigning here in our midst.

2. Secondly, "I will draw youthful hearts to myself." Those words apply to my children. I simply don't manage to form and educate them in a religious sense. **She** now wants to draw the hearts to herself and educate them. She promises that what we can't do, what we can't do on our own, she will do.

3. "I will educate them", is the third promise. What a great help that is to me when I am helpless in educating my children! What is the aim of the Blessed Mother's education?

4. "To become useful instruments", that is her fourth promise,

5. and fifthly, "in my hand".

⁸³ This refers to the shrine for the International Schoenstatt Centre in Waukesha, west of Milwaukee, which was being built in 1964.

6. For what does she want to use the whole family, the children and the parents? For the three great goals the Family is striving to attain: the new person in the new community; saving the mission of the Occident in salvation history; and then finally, building up and extending a federally structured apostolic world organization.“

If I am convinced of this – that is, if I don't just echo what has been said, but really believe it – and my neighbour comes to me and tells me about her worries, about her financial worries, or her difficulties in educating her children, etc., then it suggests itself as a task that I lead her to my home shrine. Seen from the Blessed Mother's point - of - view, it is the same as if we bring her to the shrine here at Holy Cross.

[3. The six expectations]

Of course, on the other hand the six expectations also apply. Which expectations must I and my children meet? Now you can see what a powerful programme of education and self - education is expected of me.

„1. What is the first thing she expects? “First prove to me that you are serious about the covenant of love.” I have to take the covenant of love we have entered into together seriously. It has to be not just with our feelings, but also effectively in life.

2. What does the Blessed Mother require as an expression of how seriously we take the covenant of love? We have to strive seriously together for our self - sanctification; that is to say, husband and wife have to strive seriously for self - sanctification in keeping with the ideal of a Christian marriage, in particular in keeping with the ideal of a Schoenstatt family and a Schoenstatt marriage. Those are her expectations! I have to expect the same of my children. Of course, it isn't easy. It presupposes a very sound instinct that tells me how I can and may do it with my children.

3. The third expectation – you will find everything in the Founding Document. I think that if you have built a living shrine with your children, you would do well to discuss everything again using the Founding Document.

The third expectation is that we have to make the greatest possible demands on ourselves, and not just do one or the other thing any old way.

4. Fourthly, it applies in particular to the serious fulfilment of our duties

5. and to cultivating a life of prayer.

6. All of this – it is the sixth expectation – has to be given the character of contributions to the capital of grace.“

[4. Our families – an educational community]

We have been meeting for years now, and how often have we not said that we must gradually be able to hold a course to introduce others. I think that now we all have an opportunity to hold an introductory course in our families. It has to be very original in the way it is done. I have to present it to the children in such a way that they can understand it.

It has already been said that it is far more worthwhile to give a talk, or conduct a course personally, than to listen to twenty. In this case it is particularly valuable. We have talked for such a long time about education. What does education mean? Keeping in living contact. If we – I with my children, husband and wife together – repeatedly work it through in an original way, we will have a brilliant educational programme for the whole family – for husband and wife, and for the children.

We may not overlook that the children set us thinking; it is not just a matter of us setting the children thinking. Even if I had so much time in the past to study during the day, now I suddenly have another interest, that is, the lives of my children. I consider how I can explain something out of the great programme to them one step at a time. This is how I live with my children. Besides this they have their own courses or groups. There they are shown the same world again, but from a different point - of - view.

Then through your most beautiful gift, which you presented to me yesterday,⁸⁴ you have actually closed a great circle around the whole shrine movement.

⁸⁴ On his birthday.

What does that mean in practice? Each one of us personally wants to become a living shrine. If you take that seriously, you will have a new reason to suppose that the Blessed Mother will again make the six promises to us, and express her six expectations.

In order to complement and round off what has been said, or to overcome a certain feeling of antipathy, I must now add a thought. I have just spoken about two types of groups for children or youth. It is obvious that you may not now say ambitiously: my child has to belong to the religious group! I am not saying one group is better than the other. If a sense for a deeper religious life has still to be awakened in a child, it doesn't make sense if we send that child to a group where everything is presented with religious warmth.

The group that is striving in an ethical sense, that is, on a high moral plane, is the right thing for my child at present. I do not even want that child to go into another, religiously coloured group, because otherwise he or she will not get the nourishment they need.

[5. You have made my plan your own]

I think that I have now laid the foundation that will enable us to follow with particular interest the line of thoughts we want to discuss together. So, for example, if it is said that the Blessed Mother promises, "I shall gladly take up my abode with you ...", what does that mean?

Last time I explained to you what the shrine looked like at the time [in 1914]. It was a shed for all sorts of rubbish. This does not mean that I can now say: the Blessed Mother wants to take up her abode in my house, after all it is so untidy!

How were things at that time in our shrine? It had previously been a store for all sorts of rubbish. When we entered into the covenant of love, the shrine was cold and empty. Although the store and its rubbish had been removed, the chapel was unadorned. I may suppose the same of my home. As time went by the original shrine – or later on also our daughter shrines – was decorated and embellished till it looked noble, beautiful, attractive, so it is natural that also our home has increasingly to become a reflection of God's order, a reflection of the shrines.

If you now turn to the Founding Document, you will find there, among other things, a sentence that has become a reality in a very special way in the course of fifty years. At that time I first presented the great plan to the hero Sodalists on condition that it corresponded with God's plan. So it says: it is my plan, but it was my plan because I thought it was God's plan, it had been eavesdropped from God's plan and God himself.

And now the Founding Document states, "You have made my plan your own". What does that mean? You have made this plan – the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother, with its six promises and six expectations – your own plan. It is your task in life, the meaning and content of your life.

[...]

[6. The covenant of love – the secret of our lives]

So the fifty years are in practice the history of the covenant of love, or the realization of the words I have presented to you. I would be justified in saying that the whole Movement has given the last drop of its blood, as it were, in order to carry out the plan: the six promises and six expectations.

Found anew to our origins true! "Conquer what you have inherited from your forefathers in order to possess it!"⁸⁵

What we are about to do – that each Schoenstatt family also has a home shrine – shows us the way in which we can be even more faithful to our covenant of love than in the past fifty years. To start with, it is not our task to get involved with all sorts of outward apostolic activity. The main thing is that we hold onto the root of our being, the covenant of love, and take it seriously.

You need not fear that as a result the apostolate will suffer. When I spoke about the expectations, I stressed that we have to take our struggling and striving for sanctity seriously, that we have to give our

⁸⁵ Goethe: Faust, Part I, Night Scene (Wordsworth Editions 1999), translated by John R. Williams who renders the lines as: "What we inherit from our fathers should | Be ours to have and hold, to use it as we would."

covenant of love the character of contributions to the capital of grace. If we do this, everything we do has an apostolic character, it is coloured by the apostolate! If I make a sacrifice and give it to the Blessed Mother; if I try to become a little master of prayer with my children, I give it all to the Blessed Mother so that she can carry out her educational work for the whole country from here!

I don't know if you can grasp the full significance of what we have described briefly today. At any rate, everything we will discuss together now and in the time to come will have a much clearer and more concrete goal. We want to apply it to our home, to our Centre.

Let us now return to the six promises the Blessed Mother made to us in the Founding Document.

We know the first promise, "I will gladly take up my abode with you." Doesn't it give me great joy – if I am a mother – that the Blessed Mother is now dwelling in our midst? Some of our families don't just have a Schoenstatt corner, they have even started to set aside a whole room to be a sort of chapel in their house.

When I hear those words, "I will gladly take up my abode with you", here with you, just as in the original shrine, in the daughter shrine and the central shrine – if I believe this profoundly and understand it in a religious sense, it means that we have someone living with us all the time in our home. Just as the Blessed Mother is particularly active in the original shrine and in the daughter shrines, so she is also at work next to me; she is at work on me, on my husband, on my children here in our home.

If, for example, I notice that my children are running away from home – the danger is great today that our children, but also we ourselves, become gypsies – what has the Mother Thrice Admirable to see to now? That we fathers and mothers, that our children, can also repeat those words, "It is good for us to be here. Here we want to build tents." This has to become the focal point of our entire lives. Not on the streets, the family is here, not in the car, but here!

Those who have really tried to stay at home and build a little world, will have sensed with inner joy how much a feeling of being at home is connected with it.

Wouldn't it be lovely if I got into the habit of taking a certain time every day to visit the Blessed Mother in my home shrine? I do some spiritual reading for about ten minutes every day. As I do so I concentrate once again on the covenant of love that the Blessed Mother has entered into with my home.

I consider: the Blessed Mother said, "I will gladly take up my abode with you, this is my home, it isn't just yours! From here I will distribute plentiful graces."

What we have said before about the shrine, when we pointed out that the sun shines everywhere, but it is particularly effective at certain places, is also true of the educational work of our Blessed Mother, "I will gladly distribute graces here; I will distribute plentiful graces and gifts!" The Blessed Mother is now the main educator. We are told so beautifully, "I will draw youthful hearts to myself!"

I want to give the hearts of my children to the Blessed Mother, and through the Blessed Mother, to God. The same applies to husband and wife. Since we have entered into a Christian marriage, it is also our duty to lead each other, not just the children, to heaven. That offers us a very clear answer to our worries about the education of our children.

What does the Mother Thrice Admirable say to me? What did she say when she first came into my house? I will now do what you can't manage; I will draw youthful hearts to myself. My heart is also a youthful heart, because it is still open and receptive. I will educate them all. Isn't that a great consolation when we are so helpless in the education of our children?

Listen once again: to be useful instruments – in my hand – in order to carry out our great goal.

I don't think I should continue now, but ask you to reflect on these few thoughts for yourselves. Accept these few hints as my gift in return for your congratulations on my birthday.