

Fr. Joseph Kentenich

October Week 1947 (October 14-18, 1947)
Published as *Strategie des Liebesbündnisses*,
edited by Fr. Heinrich Hug (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1997)

Excerpts from

Covenant Week 1947

October 14-18,1947

translated by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2010

Preliminary and incomplete translation for the private use of the reader. Subject to later revision.
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Introduction

After Fr. Kentenich's release from the concentration camp in April 1945, he concentrated much of the formation and direction of his work into the *October Week*, an annual convention of leaders and representatives from the diverse branches and communities of the Schoenstatt Movement in Germany. In the first three years – 1945, 1946, and 1947 – he was personally present and gave the lion's share of the talks. Once he began to travel more extensively in the world, he entrusted the October Week to others.

In 1945 the October Week was a "Thanksgiving Week" to give thanks for the protection of God and the Blessed Mother in the difficult years of Nazi peril and war. In 1946 it focused on the crowning lifestream in the movement and was called the "Crowning Week," culminating with a renewal of the crowning of the MTA as Queen of the World made in Dachau on October 18, 1944.

The October Week in 1947 came in the wake of Fr. Kentenich's first tour of Schoenstatt overseas. From March to September he had been in South America, and it was clear that he planned to focus his own time and energy on this part of the work in the years to come. This and Pius XII's promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* (dated February 2, but only published in March), played an important role in shaping the October Week. These and other signs of the times converged in his main theme: *the covenant of love*. It was a "Covenant Week," where the meaning both of covenant with God in general and with the MTA in Schoenstatt in particular would play a role. Very much on his mind was the acute danger of a new outbreak of war; the topic allowed him to delve into the sources of strength that had seen Schoenstatt through the past years of struggle. Now they would be needed in full strength, for deportation, dispersion, prison, and concentration camps were real possibilities in the immediate future. On it rode the chances of the faith to survive – and thrive – in times more and more vigorously turning away from God.

Tuesday, October 14 (evening), Opening Talk

I. Introduction to the Covenant Week

{52} Tonight you expect a short introduction to set the stage for the coming days. Because we feel the fatigue of body and soul, it will need to be short.

My task will probably be most effectively and quickly resolved if I say one sentence slowly and meditatively and then try to interpret it:

We have come together for the third great October Week.

The very fact that we could come together is not something we take for granted. I think not so much of the travel and the economic difficulties¹, or of the psychological burdens² which we all face today in superabundant measure, but rather the current constellation and situation of the world. Anyone who knows what is at stake today is surprised that the new conflagration³ which wants to destroy everything, has not yet broken out.

{53} We therefore rejoice at the chance to come together – perhaps for the last time! We know that the words we heard about 2 ½ years ago are true: in the foreseeable future, Europe, especially Germany, will become a concentration camp⁴. Year after year, month

¹ The economic and living conditions were extraordinarily difficult in post-war Germany until the Western occupying powers introduced a major change of course in 1948 (Marshall Plan, Berlin airlift). See J. Niehaus, *Visit to America* (Waukesha, 1999), p. 4-10.

² German: *seelische Belastungen*.

³ German: *Weltbrand*. In 1947 it became more and more clear that the Allied powers who had won World War II were forming two opposed camps: the Soviet Union with an increasingly aggressive stance toward controlling Eastern Europe, and Britain, France, and the United States, who were determined to establish Western democratic forms and to resist Soviet-style Communism. The danger of a new World War was very high, with the new fear that it would be a nuclear war. Defeated Germany, occupied and sitting precisely between the two opposing camps, had to expect that it would be at the heart of the new war.

⁴ Economically broken and caught in a military-political tug-of-war, Germany (and even Europe) had to fear that its existence would rise little above

after month, these words have come more and more true. Today we sense the helplessness which burns in our souls and on our fingertips. Today we sense that the most important, the most timely task is that all of us without exception, especially we as Schoenstatt children, prepare ourselves to live in such a concentration camp.

Thankfully, God has let a number of us recognize and experience in advance what the coming times are bringing, as well as the spirit by which these times may and must be measured.

So it is that we want to use these few days to prepare ourselves through prayer, thoughtful meditation, and deliberation for when the great war breaks out. This is also the meaning and purpose of the coming great week.

We designate this week as *great*, just as the Book of Revelation calls the Sign *great* which appears on the horizon of apocalyptic times (cf Rev 12,1). This sign, this Marian sign, is great, not only *because of its position* [in the overall plan of God], but also *because of its saturation with meaning*. What emanates is what this great Week wants to see and interpret – at least a little. (...)

Mary, the Great Sign of Light

{54} This week is called great, also *because of its saturation with meaning*. {55} We look once more to the great apocalyptic sign. It stands before us as a *great sign of light, as a great sign of battle and of victory*.

This is how we want to experience this week. Yes, we first want to experience it as a *great sign of light*.

In the background is the image of Our Lady in the Book of Revelation, enveloped by a singular and unprecedented fullness of light. She stands before us, surrounded by the sun, crowned with stars, the moon under her feet. Light, light, and again light.

that of a concentration camp. If the Soviet invasion would come to pass, one had to expect mass deportations to Siberia. But even in the West, powerful men on the world stage of 1947 were determined to turn Germany into a vast deindustrialized and demilitarized zone with heavy restrictions on personal freedom.

We, too, want to see this brightly radiant, warming light cast its rays on (a) the past, especially the past 12 months, (b) the present situation, and (c) powerfully point out our tasks to come.

The Past: How we Proclaimed the Threefold Message of Schoenstatt

{55} I think that the little program we just saw already shed some fitting light on and transmitted to us something of what we did in the past 12 months. It was the intent of the Crowning Week, as we like to call last year's convention, to urge us to proclaim the message of Schoenstatt to widest circles in the world. The extent to which this took place will be something I can address more precisely in the days ahead. Today I only want to mention a few things in passing. We think of our parish missions and our pilgrim movement here and elsewhere⁵. We think of our young people, especially the Schoenstatt Girls' Youth, of our publications, of the valuable books which Fr. Koester and Fr. {56} Kastner have edited⁶, but also of the magazine "At Schoenstatt's Source"⁷ and one which our Sisters publish for the Spanish-speaking world, courageously entitled "The Message of Schoenstatt"⁸. And this in places where Spanish language and culture where cannot even pronounce the word "Schoenstatt"!

In the past we consciously took a more reserved position, but last year's motto called on us to take the offensive on a variety of fronts.

Symbolic Meaning of the MTA Picture

We like to find the message of Schoenstatt "written" in our MTA

⁵ See the descriptions of the first such missions held in 1933-34 in J. Niehaus, *Brushstrokes of a Father*, Vol. 2 (Waukesha, 2010), p. 246-251.

⁶ Important books had been recently published by two of the Pallottine Fathers who worked closely with Fr. Kentenich in the development of Schoenstatt: Fr. Heinrich Köster (1911-1993) and Fr. Ferdinand Kastner (1896-1962).

⁷ The magazine *Am Schönstattquell*, first published in November 1934, but discontinued in 1939 because of the persecution. It was restarted in December 1945.

⁸ Spanish title: *Mensaje de Schoenstatt*. Sr. M. Christgundis took the initiative in starting this magazine which was printed in Argentina.

picture. There we have a symbolic portrayal of the Mother and Child showing how tenderly they love one another. Not only do the two hearts beat, so to speak, as one, with the heart of the Mother and the heart of the Child forming a bilateral unity, not only does the same cloth envelope both Mother and Child in tender closeness, no, their entire appearance points explicitly to their deep mutual union of love. It symbolizes what the Blessed Mother wants to proclaim through Schoenstatt.

Who is the child in the arms of our dear Lady? It is our Family, her favorite creation; it is our little Shrine, her favorite occupation. The covenant of love which the Blessed Mother has sealed with the Schoenstatt Family wants to be nothing less than a concrete original form of the covenant of love which the great God has sealed with his creation, especially with his children in the state of grace.

The First Message: the Covenant of Love

{57} We want to take up this last point and consider whether and to what extent we have proclaimed this first message of Schoenstatt, the *covenant of love*.

In Spirit we want to rejoice heartily and give thanks, especially to our parish missionaries and to all those – especially in our school of theology – who helped make our special Schoenstatt Mission a success⁹. It took courage to speak not only of the covenant of love of God with his creation, but also of the covenant of love of the Blessed Mother with Schoenstatt. It took courage to proclaim the Secret of Schoenstatt in this form to such far-flung circles. With deep gratitude I want to speak my own personal and sincere “May God reward you!”

⁹ In 1945 the Limburg Province of the Pallottines moved their School of Theology from the Provincial Center in Limburg to its current location in Schoenstatt. A new aspect of its mission was theological reflection to help clarify the content and spirituality of the Schoenstatt Movement and place its apostolic efforts, including parish missions, on well-thought-out foundations. See *Familienbrief* (Provincial Letter of the Limburg Province), 1947/No. 3 (April 3), p. 37, and No. 6 (October 16), p. 149ff.

I must Prepare the International

Nor can you imagine how much certainty and peace this gives me when I believe that I must bring up a totally different task. Now that Schoenstatt’s great mission rests in such reliable hands here in Germany, I think the Lord God is calling me to pave the way for the International¹⁰. The National¹¹ will continue, firmly carried on other shoulders.

We look to the picture of our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt and also want to read from its features and colors the second and third messages, and then examine our consciences to see whether and to what extent we have proclaimed them to widest circles.

The Second Message: Practical Faith in Divine Providence

{58} We know that this message encompasses a whole world. In our *practical faith in Divine Providence* we bow to the God of life. We see him everywhere on the pinnacle of everyday life and of current events, and try to respond to him through our actions in daily life, through our individual, social, and societal living; through our actions as individuals, in other words, through an outspoken everyday and instrument spirituality, through our actions of a social and societal nature, through the formation of a new community, a new society.

Do we really recognize all of these great tasks and messages in the picture of Our Lady? Have we tried to bring this kind of an interpretation to the masses? We will understand this view of Mary quite well if we take a glance at what the Bible tells us, that she, like us, tried to encounter the God of life everywhere and to bow to his plan. Family circumstances drove her, as was God’s wish and will,

¹⁰ For the spread of Schoenstatt into many countries overseas to form a great international movement. The first official act in this regard was made by Fr. Kentenich in the concentration camp in Dachau on October 18, 1944, when, surrounded by about 100 prisoners (mostly priests) from a half-dozen European countries participating in clandestine Schoenstatt groups, he officially founded “Schoenstatt International.”

¹¹ The Movement in Germany.

to Bethlehem. God sent her through [the circumstances of] life out into the desert of Egypt and then led her back again. The circumstances of a certain moment¹² urged her to exercise for the first time her great power of intercession. Throughout her life it is the God of life who carries, stirs, and inspires her, the God of life who speaks to her through life.

The MTA Picture Symbolizes the Originality of our Piety

And what is her response? We look at the features of the picture. It could be that in many ways this picture of Mary is not pleasing to our [German] taste. In many ways it seems {59} lacking in sacredness¹³. But if you pay attention and listen to the reaction from other places and other worlds, especially when you pay attention to the Oriental mentality, and over and above that [to the reaction] from the Slavic countries, then you may be able to understand what a Russian artist told me shortly after my release from the concentration camp¹⁴: He sang one song of praise after the other [about our MTA picture]. I asked him how this could be possible, since Russian icons are quite different. His answer: This is exactly what we Russian artists are looking for. We want to come back down from an overly stylized sacred art so that our saints connect with everyday life again.

And so you can see in our picture of Mary the embodiment of a good piece of *everyday sanctity*.

Moreover, if you pay close attention, you will see that the figures in the picture are partially above the clouds and partially in and under the clouds. Interpret that in our spirit as an espousal of nature and grace, not only beyond the clouds, but in the midst of life! And as Mary's *instrument piety*, which she proved in her practical life. Do you not sense how the picture really speaks to us? It is our task to

¹² The wedding at Cana (Jn 2).

¹³ The realism of the portrayal of Madonna and Child in the MTA picture (painted by Luigi Crosio in Turin in 1898) struck the taste of many Germans as too little "sacred," that is, too little set above the earthly reality.

¹⁴ An encounter which took place in Ennabeuren about 10 days after his release. See *Brushstrokes of a Father*, Volume 3.

help the Redeemer of the world in his task, especially as the MTA picture characterizes it.

Especially through [the work of] the two authors¹⁵, we cannot imagine Mary any other way than as the permanent helpmate of Christ in the entire work of redemption. Is this not the same as instrument piety? And we give the answer of life through the reform of the life of our society. The picture portrays the Family's ideal and with it the ideal of the new order of community.

The question on which I want to shed at least a little light tonight is {60} this one: *How have we proclaimed this kind of message? How have we proclaimed the God of life and practical faith in Divine Providence?*

During my travels I have often wondered how things were going here at home. And the more I heard and considered it, the more confident I was about my absence. God has given us someone from our ranks who has chosen the covenant of love as his life's task. I want to call him nothing less than a "covenant theologian¹⁶". How great it would be if God would also send us from our own ranks a Providence theologian and a mission theologian, that is, experts to proclaim in a scientific way for the scientific world the teachings of faith in Divine Providence and mission faith.

By the way, we have come well beyond where we were in our early years. It is crystal clear to anyone with even a little familiarity with the public atmosphere in Germany that we are currently taken very seriously, especially in the public forum of the Church. That is a great step forward from the past. We are taken seriously, people study what we have to say, and we too must confront ourselves with the discussions in the public forum.

I know that all of this is directly connected with the covenant of love. I will come back to discuss the extent the covenant of love gives an answer to the problems of our times today. In a certain sense this is the same as faith in Divine Providence, for through such a faith

¹⁵ Fr. Köster and Fr. Kastner.

¹⁶A Meant is Fr. Heinrich M. Köster.

I learn how the God of the covenant wants to form and shape his covenant partners.

Let me continue our examination: What has been my personal attitude to proclaiming instrument spirituality and the renewal of human society? The great {61} Sign of light wants to shed light on all of these questions in this great week. [It is] another central truth, without which it is impossible to correctly interpret life today.

*The Third Message: Faith in our Mission*¹⁷

But the great Sign of light does not only want to shed light on the past months. She does not only want us to interpret this week as a time of looking back. Which should be the attitude of our souls? What does it and should it look like? (...)

Yes, we have kept the spirit, the spirit of the past years, in spite of great difficulties. Nonetheless, we want to renew {62} this spirit because without this renewal we will not be able or ready to successfully fight the coming battle.

A great part of my task in the coming days will be to pull back the veil from the times a little as their pulse can be expected to develop in the West tomorrow and the day after. This is because relatively few, especially Catholics, have a clear vision of the terrible trend to disintegration in our times today¹⁸.

¹⁷ On other occasions, Fr. Kentenich spoke about this with the term mission consciousness or awareness of our divine mission. See, for instance, the Second Founding Document, October 18, 1939, No. 52-63.

¹⁸ Fr. Kentenich is especially speaking about how the inner connecting forces of Western society are breaking down. This involves the natural plane, such as the breakdown of marriage as a real communion of life, love, and solidarity, and family as a place where children receive the necessary interior foundations of a home and personal parental care and challenge. Some symptoms of the breakdown are the lack of inner discipline, the lack of natural sense for faith and the transcendent, fear of commitment, desperation for attention, etc. It also involves the supernatural plane in which God is no longer experienced as a person, but only an idea; supernatural experiences are lacking, as are supernatural attachments; indeed, God no longer plays a significant role because there is no practice of seeing him connected to modern life.

Please hold fast to this: We in Europe, yes in the entire West, must expect that tomorrow and the day after we will become one vast great concentration camp. It is therefore our task to make ourselves and those entrusted to our care *camp-ready*. The spirit which helped us a few years ago to overcome the camp [in Dachau] was the ladder that led up upwards. It is the *spirit of the covenant* in fullest effect for which we must wrestle in an effective and enlightened manner during these days. What we need is *covenant spirit*, perfect covenant spirit. This covenant spirit is the *spirit of the Inscriptio*. (...)

The situation today is significantly more dangerous than in 1939, 1940, and 1941. We must bear this in mind so that we clearly see the times today, interpret them correctly, and let ourselves be led by the times upward to the common goal which the loving God has given us.

The Setting: Disintegration of all Attachments

{63} Not only a renewal of the spirit, but above and beyond that also a *concentration of our efforts on a common goal!*

If you want to have one word which characterizes what is happening today, it is a *complete process of disintegration (or breakdown) of all life processes and all conditions!* You must not take this word as a rhetorical flourish. The Popes since Leo XIII have pointed this out more and more energetically, but have not been understood. To some extent we do not understand them either. Our currently reigning pope¹⁹ is always calling out in the same direction. Yes, even the conservative bishops of Switzerland are beginning to talk about this situation. Because they themselves, living in bourgeois conditions, have no direct knowledge of the conditions, they are honest enough to admit: experts and especially the Popes are warning us again and again that human society, especially in the West, is approaching a total revolution. It no longer knows any traditional attachments. It despises every harmony of laws and underestimates the value of a firmly established order.

Anyone familiar with the times knows how to weigh each of these

¹⁹ Pope Pius XII.

words. The current social order is riding the wave of a powerful revolutionary dynamism, radicalism, and satanism. Those who understand these words will understand our times today, and also gradually come to understand Schoenstatt. Everything is in a process of disintegration. We who move in a relatively small circle are still much too traditionally bound, making us too unfamiliar with the features of what the Holy Father is constantly trying to tell us. Because of this, we are unable to see how far along the process of disintegration already is in society today. We will want to discuss this in more detail on another occasion. Tonight's talk {64} is only meant to introduce us to all the questions and problems in a general way.

The Twofold Task

Please understand what this means: *Vox temporis vox Dei*²⁰. What is the task which we as a community – and as each institute, elite formation, and League formation does in its own way – may and must fulfill?

There are two tasks, but they ultimately flow into one. One is in the *Church* and the other is in the *world*.

Task in the World: The Struggle Against Collectivism

Our task in the *realm of the world* is strongly characterized by [the struggle with] collectivism²¹. Collectivism and collectivistic society have begun to destroy old Europe, and the process has made terrifying progress. With only a little more force, Western society will be shattered.

It is no longer right to say Bolshevism; instead we [should] say

²⁰ The voice of the times is the voice of God.

²¹ Mass-mindedness, the mass man, the herd mentality as a systematic foundation for shaping society. It has had fascist embodiments, including Hitler's Nazis, and communist embodiments, including Soviet-style Marxism, but also a viral embodiment in Western societies drive for mass-consumption and influence through mass communications, encouraging the person to take his or her primary orientation on what the "others" do or think. For more on Fr. Kentenich's view of collectivism, see *Visit to America*, Chapter 17.

collectivism. Please hear this: Our task, which becomes more and more clear, which will probably sooner or later mean we are burned at the stake, is clearly seen and embraced with all our hearts – to overcome the collectivistic social order and the collectivistic personality. Please allow me to make this brief point now; I will provide the full meaning in the days to come. This is our clearly perceived task in the realm of the world today. And, it seems to me that there is currently no lifestream in the Church which has pursued this goal as doggedly as ours. (...)

{66} ***Our task in the realm of the world and the task of the Church in the present century is to overcome this collectivistic world view***²².

We do this in a positive way by building our kingdom, our Schoenstatt kingdom. Seen in this light, the word "Schoenstatt" – please read it in the prayers in *Heavenwards*²³ – takes on a unique sound. Sooner or later, our picture, our symbols will probably become the lightning rod in a powerful persecution lashing out against anyone who has such symbols. In the [Nazi] years we experienced something of this. Their motto is: We already know who you are...

Restudy recent history and see if you find any other community which has so consciously and systematically opposed the negative side of the current spirit of the times, understanding how to overcome the collectivistic world view from within, and proclaiming this to the outside. People today hide their heads in the sand. They cannot nor do they want to know either where the enemy or what the task at hand is; in the battle the enemy will overcome and defeat them.

What do we need? To concentrate and focus all our strength on a clear, unmistakable goal, a clear task. We want to devote ourselves to this task even more in the future than we the past, and [during these days] to drink it in more deeply than ever.

²² German: *den bolschewistischen Menschen*.

²³ The prayer book composed by Fr. Kentenich in Dachau. See especially the Schoenstatt Office. *Heavenwards* (Waukesha, 1992), p. 45-56.

Task in the Church: A New Type of Christian Person

The second task is a task in the *realm of the Church*. I don't know if we all correctly grasp it. The Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* exists²⁴. Canonists see it as a juridical event of world-changing proportions. That is fine. But I think {67} very few people in the Church grasp this constitution with sufficient clarity and resolve, including from the legal-philosophical and the legal-psychological points of view.

This may help you understand why I say: In this constitution I see the official legitimization of both the type of personality and type of community that we have been striving for in positive, concrete forms from the very beginning!

You must therefore expect that we are heading toward a great, difficult battle inside the Church²⁵. It presupposes that we know our specific character, and that we courageously form the type of personality and community which God has shown us and given to us.

Think of the history of the religious life. The orders, as a movement, were able to create an ethos. Hence, the religious [in all the different orders] are a safeguard for one another, and in public Catholic opinion such communities enjoy great respect.

²⁴ In March 1947, Pope Pius XII released the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia*, dated February 2, 1947, providing for the secular institute as a new type of community of the consecrated life in the Church. This was a bold departure from the then predominant theology of the religious life as the "state of perfection" well sheltered from the world. In contrast, the new legislation allowed those living in the world to band together in forms of community living the evangelical councils in the regular workplaces and other settings of the world.

At exactly this time, Fr. Kentenich was seeking the proper place in canon law under which his own innovative communities could receive ecclesial approval. The new constitution was therefore both an answer to his question and a way for Schoenstatt to contribute to the Church's wish to define a new type of committed Christianity living in the world. See E. Monnerjahn, *Joseph Kentenich, A Life for the Church* (Cape Town, 2001), p. 200f.

²⁵ It is clear to Fr. Kentenich that such an innovative new type of person and community will stir up opposition from those who still place their complete trust in the tried and true forms of the Church's past experience.

You can sense that the idea of the *societas sine votis*²⁶ was not able to win a place in public opinion, and therefore has had no success, nor does it enjoy a great respect inside [the Church]. Often they are even perceived as a degeneration from the ideal.

Strategy: United Front, Magnanimity Lifestream

The constitution signals [the need for] a lifestream, a social order. Unless we are able to create a lifestream, a clear ethos in the public awareness of the Church, no community will be able to survive long by itself. These things are new in the feeling of the Church. It is therefore of interest to us all {68} that the Sisters of Mary, the Federation Priests²⁷, and the Ladies of Schoenstatt²⁸ succeed in personifying this type. We must form a united front, otherwise nothing will grow out of this lifestream that has real depth.

Have I spoken clearly enough tonight? You can sense that those who sees things in such great dimensions will have no rest, will always have tasks which challenge them to invest their life's strength.

Now add to this that the new type [of person and community] is not just an innovation in the life of the Church but also an essential demand of the times, then you will find how great and serious the task is which you must fulfill. Nor will you suffer or become uneasy when you notice that serious thinkers in the Church oppose us, either because [they think our way] invalidates their type which has been proven by the centuries, or out of the fear that the new type will water down the Christian life and make it too worldly. We will have to cross swords and place demands on ourselves. We have no vows. What does that mean? It makes all the more important our attach-

²⁶ Society without vows, that is, congregations and societies of the apostolic life which take no vows, such as the Pallottines.

²⁷ The Schoenstatt association of diocesan priests living in the world of parish life and other regular service to the Church. At about this time, Fr. Kentenich was also laying the foundations that there also be a Schoenstatt secular institute for diocesan priests.

²⁸ The Secular Institute of the Women of Our Lady of Schoenstatt, consecrated lay women living in the world.

ment to the ideal and the demands [we place on ourselves]. What I want to say is that our type must stay true to self.

The constitution must also be seen legal-philosophically²⁹. How many similar communities have been founded, only to vanish again overnight. They stood alone. Unless we create an overall lifestream, no one of our communities can effectively exist on its own.

In this context I think, for instance, of the lifestream of poverty in the Middle Ages. You could compare it to a tinderbox and a pile of kindling. It only needed a spark for a great blaze to begin³⁰. The public {69} opinion, the spirit of today's times is still far from ready for what God forcefully demands through the circumstances.

We will have to stitch one thread at a time. The time will come when public opinion will catch fire. United and as one [family], we must see our goal and courageously work to fulfill it. What name could we give to this lifestream? I think I should say

[our goal is to] create a magnanimity lifestream³¹

analogous to the lifestream of poverty in earlier times. One could call this different names; we must only understand their meaning in the overall context.

²⁹ That is, not only as an exercise in positive legislation (I hereby declare that there are secular institutes), but as a contribution to a broader philosophical understanding of the law and value of institutes of the consecrated life in the Church.

³⁰ Namely, the initiatives of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Dominic with the founding of their respective mendicant orders.

³¹ *Magnanimitas-Strömung*. At the center of this idea is Fr. Kentenich's insight that the new type of personality and community is rooted in sound attachments and yet not enslaved to forms, that is, flexible and able to respond to changing conditions from an inner greatness or universality of spirit (*magna*: great, *anima*: soul). Elements of this might include a pronounced spirit of solidarity and fraternity in a world dominated by self-interest, as well as the ability to see human beings as a gift and resource and not just as producers and consumers – or, worse, burdens on economy and ecology (see Pope Benedict XVI's social encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*); increased appreciation of self-giving (donation) as opposed to self-assertion (see Pope John Paul II's theology of the body); an ability to rejoice in the successes of others instead of interpreting them as rivals or someone who deprives me of the scarce resources of appreciation, etc.

What does the great Sign of light mean here? This week we want to shed light not only on covenant *spirit*, but also, if you will, on the great covenant *task* which the loving God has given us through the times. Just as the image of the Blessed Mother is not only a great Sign of light, but also a sign of battle and victory, we also want to see this week as a great sign of battle.

Let us read again the Twelfth Chapter of the Book of Revelation. There we find the sign of the adversary, the ancient Dragon. Wherever the image of Our Lady stands in the foreground there is battle.

If there is anything we have experienced, it is how we too, from the very beginning, became a sign of battle. And we sense that we are being drawn even more strongly into the battle today. If this week is also to become a great sign of battle, then {70} it means that we consciously want the battle for the fulfillment and realization of this great task in the realm of the Church and of the world. We do not want to flee from the battle, including within the Church.

Such a battle must be *vigorous*. If we do not fight vigorously, we will become tired.

Such a battle, however, must also be *enlightened*. We must be integrated and tactful to the other communities³².

But woe to us if in being tactful we lose the idea to be a kingdom among ourselves!

Unless we form an original, animated kingdom, we will be swept away not only by the lifestream of the world, but also by that of the Church! That is unfortunately the story of many new movements. Either they become [religious] orders, or they are dissolved.

³² Probably in this sense: Schoenstatt's communities must not remain isolated from what is going on in the Church, but be integrated into the new lifestream of secular institutes, and not simply push our particular ideals and ways on the other ecclesial communities (hence tactful), even while avoiding the danger of simply becoming a generic community with little identity or drive of its own.

Wednesday, October 15, 1947, First Talk

II. Gratitude in Difficult Times

{73} My dear Schoenstatt Family!

When the great and powerful of the modern world gather, they typically begin with a great banquet, a symbol for today's thoroughly secularized times.

As a covenant state – not as a league of nations¹ – we began our deliberations yesterday by turning our glance upward – humbly, gratefully, and longingly. This is fitting for a kingdom, for a covenant state which, even though its outlook is quite progressive, keeps classical continuity with and orientates itself on the past, acknowledging the best traditions of our predecessors and wanting to save them into a new and decisive time.

That we turn our glance upward is second nature to us not only because of our covenant with one another and not only because during these days, during this Covenant Week, we want to renew our covenant together as elite communities², but also because our unifying bond is the covenant with the supernatural world, with the Triune God.

(...)

Gratitude to the God of the Covenant

{75} It is fitting that today, when we officially begin, we turn our glance upward again. The sentiment which dominated our thoughts yesterday will continue to resonate today. It is the sentiment of *gratitude*. This obliges us because, as we were told two years ago in the Thanksgiving Week, our movement of thanks should be perpetual for

¹ Fr. Kentenich is using a metaphor to describe the October Week along the lines of a great congress of representatives from a diverse but unified state. The German (*als Bundesstaat, nicht als Staatenbund*) could also be rendered “as a federal state, not as a league of states.” He is probably alluding to the failed League of Nations which collapsed at the outbreak of World War II for want of a unifying force to hold it together.

² The Federations and the Institutes of the Schoenstatt Work.

the might deeds worked in the past years by the Eternal God. And every October Week, no matter what the dominant theme, must bear in some way the features of a movement of gratitude.

In this spirit we want to raise our eyes to heaven again and renew our covenant of love with the Triune God.

Which acts of love did the Blessed Mother lavish on us in the last years? I cannot begin now with all the gifts we received during the war years; we will speak about that later. I am only thinking of the gifts of love which we received in the past year. We want to give heartfelt thanks for that by choosing the Triune God now more than ever to be our favorite occupation.

{76} If you ask me what we should be thankful for, then I call out three things to you. We want to be grateful:

1. *for the grace of protection,*
2. *for the grace of adversity, and*
3. *for the grace of special gifts³.*

1. The Grace of Protection

From what have we been *protected* in the past year?

From the apocalyptic horse and rider, from the horse which is restlessly pawing and wants to burst into the European world. It is the horse and rider of a horrific new war. God has protected us from this horse and rider – an unexpected and very fruitful gift.

An unexpected gift: the whole world is in fearful expectation of a horrible renewed outbreak war.

Before I left Uruguay⁴ I spoke with a man who is well-known in finances and who is a friend of one of the ministers in Uruguay. This minister was at the Conferences of Ministers in the United States and in England. And he came back convinced that war can break out at any moment. All of America's industry is set for war. And that is how it really is.

South America, which is economically dependent – especially in

³ German: *die Gnade der Bewahrung, der Bewahrung, der Gewahrung.*

⁴ In August 1947.

terms of industry – on the United States, is just as poor {77} as we. There, too, nails are hard to get, and cars are scarce even though there are many, many cars in the harbors, all prepared for war. The North American economy is working constantly with atomic energy, and constantly with secret bacteriology. A new war will be fought with new weapons.

We must imagine the situation this way: two savage beasts – North America and Russia – constantly circling one another, looking for a weakness. The first atomic bomb can go off at any time. America does not yet attack because neither the Senate nor the people want war. It may take some time for them to be won over. Russia hesitates because it believes it still has too little materiel.

An unexpected gift, that the war has not yet broken out. But humanity is very restless. Some think, based on their analysis, that *by the first half of next year, at the latest*, one can and must certainly reckon that the great misfortune will break out over the world. Some think the place will be Germany again or the western regions. Others point to Eastern Asia, still others to the Balkans. In any case, we Germans must not think that we will be spared when the fire erupts.

The Irrational Attitude of the Times and God's Intent

What a fleeting examination of today's situation and the outlook of the nations show us and tell us, is confirmed by a short *consideration of the psychology of our times*. The psychology of the times points out that the attitude of humanity today is irrational to the core⁵. It is unfamiliar with a deeper-reaching enlightened orientation on reason; everything is irrationalistic. For God to {78} give Christ to the world again, he must therefore plunge it more and more deeply into the night, into the cesspool of life⁶.

⁵ That is, man today sets his compass primarily by visceral and not rational things: by what *feels* right (not what he *thinks* to be right), by the stimulus of the senses (impulses of modern marketing, etc.), by lessons of experience without much discursive reflection or scrutiny, by pleasure.

⁶ If modern man does not seek God through discursive reflection, God will have to adapt his "language" to the modern irrational orientation; he will have to

Even though the world has seen that the experiment of the past years has failed to produce the desired results⁷, it still has not learned its lesson. There are still nations hoping that the experiment in the East can solve the great problems of our time⁸. It seems nearly - impossible to lead the vast masses of today's world back to a different realization – the recognition of Christ and his teaching for an ordering of societal conditions.

As a result we can expect with a measure of certainty that the turmoil in Europe and Germany will continue to increase until the nations, all the way to the masses, change their outlook and find their way back to Christ and his Church through the experiences of life.

Let me repeat: We give thanks that we have been protected so far from this violent war. An unexpected gift. Based on everything we talked about yesterday, God apparently wants a new order of society and world to replace the current one. It is not only the devil who is at work in the events of our times, but also the living God. However, everything that is great must be born in the background through struggle and suffering. This is true for the individual and it is true for the masses, for the public forum, for the social order. A new world order can come about only through the thunderclap of apocalyptic confusion and catastrophes. Thanks be to God that we have been spared this terrible battle. (...)

2. The Grace of Adversity

{79} We also give thanks for the opportunity to prove ourselves in the face of adversity.

The second great task is to *prove ourselves*. Why does God require that we prove ourselves in the face of adversity? He requires

speaking through language which penetrates the subconscious life of the soul, such as through intense experiences of helplessness and suffering, so that man realizes that he must turn to God.

⁷ The experiment of a new world order based on the utopian proposals of fascism, including the Nazis.

⁸ The experiment of a new world order based on the utopian proposals of Marxism and the Soviet-style communism.

it in every age, but especially in apocalyptic times.

A short consideration from the *philosophy of history* may help us understand this. Think about the two words: Man makes history – and history makes the man. History should give clarity to our human thinking and motivate our will and heart. Historical events should interiorly transform us, first as we work to solve within ourselves the great problems of the times, and then as we go forth to shape history.

The philosophy of history also notes that today's humanity with its expectation of a new world order must first turn inward and shape itself. It must use the challenges to grow.

A consideration from the *theology of history* goes along the same lines. It speaks of this as the purpose of world history: God wants to lead us home in an accelerated fashion. A returning home to the Father – a victorious returning home to the Father, a victorious decision for Christ, and a victorious losing of self in the Holy Spirit. This is the purpose of world history in the light of God, seen from the human perspective. A victorious, accelerated returning home {80} to the Father. History, a God-penetrated history, wants to become more and more a wedding history, a bridal history. But, sad to say, for many, many people it becomes a history of divorce.

A bridal history, or if you will, times like the ones we are going through, are meant to be the exceptional *catalyst of a new birth*⁹. They should help Christ to be reborn in human souls in a perfect and accelerated way. Sad to say, however, such times often become catalysts of death¹⁰. Christ is murdered in the soul and buried. The theology of history points out that through such blows of fate God wants to attract and incite us more deeply and intimately, to take more seriously the covenant of love which he has sealed with man and to live it more vigorously. (...)

{81} God has apparently given us the grace of belonging to those for whom their family history becomes a wedding history and not a history of divorce. It is obvious that God, the God of the Covenant,

⁹ German: *Geburtshelfer*, literally the birth helper or midwife.

¹⁰ German: *Totengräber*, literally the grave digger.

gives us the grace of exploiting the difficulties of today as a catalyst for new birth. Everything in us urges us heavenwards. It is the same spirit which allowed us to overcome the concentration camps and which gives us our strength today. It is the spirit of the covenant in the form of Inscriptio spirit.

We only need to recall the dismal fact of how extraordinarily tired the European peoples have become today. They look to the future devoid of hope. They have lost their vigor; they stand there broken. (...)

Today's youth has also become very tired. But observe our Schoenstatt Youth against this background. They are not devoid of hope or energy. These young people sense: We live in *the* time for which the Founding Document was written, for which the ark of the Family was built. They have great hope. We have the great task to help see to it that, in the shadow of the Shrine, history is essentially co-determined in the sign and spirit of Christ and the Blessed Mother. Am I not right to say that we thank God for the grace that he tests us in adversity?

3. The Grace of Special Gifts

{82} But we also give thanks for *special gifts* granted to us. What has been granted? Our prayer has been heard for an *elemental breakthrough both nationally and internationally!*

I don't think I need to show you how great a breakthrough there has been for the Family in the public eye here in our home country.

In the course of these days I will still show you what the breakthrough for the Family looks like internationally in the different countries.

(...)

Wednesday, October 15, Second Talk

III. The Covenant of Love, Answer to the Needs of our Times

{94} My dear Schoenstatt Family!

(...)

{95} It is truly valuable and significant that we grow in awareness that we are a [united] covenant state in every area of life, a covenant state which is carried and held [together] by our original covenant of love.

A Community of Communities

At times we may feel like mountain climbers who may and must climb to the heights, with chasms gaping to our right and to our left. We know what method mountain climbers use on such occasions. They form a team tied together on one rope so that they can support and help each other. Such is our situation today. The face of culture today has many shadows, many gaping abysses. Woe to those who stand alone. And woe to the community, no matter how strong it is, that must walk alone. The revolution of our times today, the trends to disintegration simply drag everything down into the abyss. Hence, we may and must join together in a single rope-line. Elite community to elite community and mass movement to the elite communities. Of course this presupposes, as does mountain climbing, that the individual is well grounded. Here too we presuppose that the individual communities are able to pull their share.

This is the great plan which we dared last year. The elite communities withdrew for a kind of cloistered time, a novitiate. Thankfully we could take advantage of this time and opportunity. We will have to continue this for a while yet. Every community [must be] so self-reliant, so vigorously organized and animated that the neighboring communities can join its rope-line. Then the time will come when we carry and protect each other, and even when everything races into the abyss we will not be pulled into the chasm. So it is that during these days, too, we want to {96} foster, intensify, deepen the covenant of love with the neighboring communities, not only with the

community of the Pallottines, no, with each elite community. Not only cultivate an amiable good-neighborly friendship, but carry each other so deeply in our hearts that we form a community of fates – that the well-being of the one determines the well-being of the others. We stand and fall together.

The Magnanimity Lifestream and the Covenant of Love

You will understand this still better when I briefly portray for you the originality of our entire lifestream. I have already summed it up with the common denominator

magnanimity lifestream,

a word which is truly rich in content. But to consider it more closely, we want to ponder that the root of our covenant of love with one another is our original covenant of love with the MTA of Schoenstatt.

Perhaps you thought it strange at first when I sent word from overseas that the great October Week would be a Covenant Week. A Covenant Week – don't we live out of the covenant of love with our dear Lady every day? May and must we not speak of every day as a covenant day, of every week as a covenant week, of every month as a covenant month, of every year as a covenant year? Has not the covenant of love already exerted its full force of attraction and formation on our lives as individuals and communities?

I don't think it will be hard to answer this. By and large we live the words we just sang. Day after day, especially when we pray the Schoenstatt Office, we pray and {97} sing:

“We want to mirror ourselves in your image
and seal the covenant of love anew...”¹

Those of us who correctly grasp and interpret the core content and source from which the Family lives may experience difficult pastoral moments as I did in Dachau. When I pondered the abysses along which all of my followers had to pass, the great dangers from within

¹ *Heavenwards*, p. 47.

and from without to which they were all exposed, then it went without saying that I called on my *ceterum censeo*² again:

“They have made a covenant with you.
May it stand as firm as if cast in bronze...”³

This is what gives me great calm. It has therefore always been the great goal of my pastoral activity to bring those entrusted to my care into a covenant relationship with the Blessed Mother. Then I could go my way with great “frivolity.” There is a Marian frivolity⁴ which encompasses something quite powerful:

“Thrice Admirable Schoenstatt Lady,
look on those whom I entrust to you...”⁵

Is this not the situation in which almost all pastors are today? Today Germany has become one great concentration camp. As a result, each and every one must become in his and her own way “camp-ready.” All of us must let ourselves be formed to be able to overcome the [difficulties of living in such a] camp. Therefore the prayer:

“Command the turbulent storms of the times
so that their reckless fury does not increase unchecked...”⁶

{98} That is a simple, childlike plea. But what gives the interior calm is to recall the covenant of love:

² The Roman Senator Cato (234-149 B.C.) was so convinced that Rome’s archenemy Carthage must be destroyed that he closed every speech with the statement “*Ceterum censeo Carthaginem esse delendam*” (“Moreover, I petition that Carthage be destroyed”). A *ceterum censeo* is therefore the untiring advocacy of a particular idea or cause.

³ *Heavenwards*, p. 138.

⁴ See also the “supernatural naivety” which Fr. Kentenich promoted in Dachau – to overcome extraordinary difficulties one must place everything into God’s hands and leave the outcome to God. See J. Niehaus, *A Movement in Chains*, p. 60-62.

⁵ *Heavenwards*, p. 138, the opening lines of the “Shepherd’s Prayer.”

⁶ *Heavenwards*, p. 138.

“They have made a covenant with you.
May it stand as firm as if cast in bronze...”⁷

What does this imply? That our entire pedagogy become a covenant pedagogy. What must we say with regard to the great catastrophes that await us? The only sure way to be prepared is to grasp, deepen, and animate our covenant of love with the Blessed Mother.

(....)

Our Covenant Week as a Week of Recollection

{101} [This October Week should be] a *week of recollection*. We may and must recall that the covenant of love with our dear Blessed Mother is

1. *our source of life,*
2. *our source of strength, and*
3. *our source of blessings.*

In quiet reflection we want to confront ourselves with the meaning of these serious truths. Our spiritual and physical tiredness will not hold us back too much, for we sense that this is the world in which we live; this is the atmosphere in which we gladly move; this is simply our world!

A. The Covenant of Love as Source of Life

{102} Am I justified in calling our covenant of love a source of life?

Isn’t it superfluous to answer to this question? If I do so, I do not presume to say anything new. And still, it cannot hurt, because we have requested a week of recollection, when we can quietly reflect, taking drop by drop into our hearts these old and well-known truths. That the covenant of love is our source of life, that it is the source from which all life has flowed and continues to flow into the Family, is something which a short retrospective into the past history of the

⁷ *Heavenwards*, p. 138.

Family can demonstrate.

The Founding Covenant of 1914

We must begin with 1912 or at least with 1914, with the *Founding Document*. You will notice that each of the Founding Documents marks a new phase of growth⁸ in the life of the Family. At the same time, each Founding Document points in its own way to what is at the center – the covenant of love with our dear Blessed Mother – only showing different *degrees* of how it is prayed and lived. For the critical [modern] mind, which {103} in so many ways is cast out into the heavy seas of modern life, it is something truly comforting to know that, from the very beginning, the Family has held fast to a continuity so often absent in modern lifestreams today. That means a great deal to a community!

From the beginning we picked up on the old ideas which shaped and formed the Marian Sodality, and yet were not elevated to its central idea. It is the idea that the consecration to Our Lady is a covenant of love. *Contractus bilateralis gratuitus*⁹.

(...)

Growth in the Second and Third Founding Documents

{112} What else? Should I think of 1939? Should I think of the following years?¹⁰ How healthy is [the covenant of love]: Schoenstatt was in danger from all sides, one battle after the other. The regime

⁸ German: *bedeutet einen tiefen Einschnitt*, literally: has meant a deep cut (in the sense of the end of one era and the beginning of another).

⁹ A bilateral contract freely entered into. This was a definition which Fr. Kantenich developed in the 1930s to clarify a misunderstanding in the Church in Germany. Some leading Church authorities at that time accused Schoenstatt of making the Marian consecration into a *contractus bilateralis*, that is, as one binding under penalty. Such a consecration would, of course, be false. Instead, each partner is in the covenant relationship out of the desire to freely show mutual respect and *love* and in this way grow more and more towards the Christian ideal of love.

¹⁰ From the mid-1930s the Nazis were seeking ways to shut down the Movement and, starting in 1939, to take over the properties in Schoenstatt.

soon discovered who we were and ranked us among their greatest enemies. We responded not only by renewal [of the covenant of love], but by drilling the wells even deeper. From this grew the knowledge of the degrees of the covenant of love; from this we grew more deeply into the covenant of love in all its breadth, heights, and depths, perfected in the Blank Check and crowned in the Inscriptio.

(...)

Thursday, October 16, First Talk

{116}

My dear Schoenstatt Family!

From everything we discussed, savored, and experienced yesterday it becomes more and more eminently clear that the primary and deepest goal for which our Covenant Week is striving is a renewal of the covenant with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt. But there is a second goal which is equally important of which we do not want to lose sight: sealing an indissoluble covenant of love with one another. Each elite formation wants to find its way to the other elite formations. To find the way to a brotherly, sisterly, neighborly relationship. Alone the mutual community of fates urges us to this, quite apart from the common goal which something like this expects and requires.

(....)¹¹

The Covenant of Love as Source of Life (continued)

{125} Yesterday we spoke about the desire to renew our covenant of love with the MTA in a profound way. In order to structure our thoughts in some way, let me formulate two questions:

1. Why?
2. How?

Why?

When we ask “why,” we answer: It corresponds to our personal needs as they are expressed in the desire that the October Week be a *week of recollection* and as a *week of victory*.

As a week of recollection, a covenant week, it puts us in the mood to recall and trace everything back to the Family’s source of life, source of strength, and source of blessings. ***The covenant of love is***

¹¹ At this point Fr. Kentenich goes into great detail into the importance of the covenant of love of Schoenstatt with the Pallottines.

simply the source of life, strength, and blessings.

I have already brought together for you the essence of what can be said about the source of life.

The *consequences* to be drawn from this are: Wherever we as a Family we have found a way to constitute this unique covenant of love, vibrant life has followed. Wherever we have not been able to do this, we have always wrestled with non-existence.

You must not overlook the fact that the message of Schoenstatt – including the way it is formulated as the first message (that of the {126} covenant of love) – is in its form the message of the unique covenant of love which the Blessed Mother has sealed with us and we with her. In the background is, of course, the covenant of love with the Eternal God has sealed with spiritual creation¹².

Our Sisters have a magazine in the Spanish-speaking world which they have courageously entitled, “Message of Schoenstatt”¹³. The title is also a declaration of content: starting in a very general way in the spirit of Schoenstatt [it tells about] the message of the covenant of love, of practical faith in Divine Providence, and of mission faith.

But when the content is addressed to Schoenstatt circles, it is all made much more precise; it takes on a concrete form, taking both currents into consideration.

Observe the resolute determination connected with this. It may be so with our popular missions, too. It is something great when they proclaim God’s covenant of love with spiritual creation. But it only fully hits the mark when it progresses to the covenant of love with the MTA, with the Schoenstatt Family. How far one can stress this is a matter of prudence and tactics. But once we have set our goal as the complete breakthrough of Schoenstatt in our district, in cases of doubt one can dare more than usual. Prudence will otherwise advise greater reserve with our specific features. Prudence is a virtue; courage must be regulated by prudence. But the happy medium is difficult to find.

¹² German: *mit der geistigen Kreatur*, that is, with those creatures he has created with the gift of a spirit: man and the angels.

¹³ See note on page {56} above.

If we think soberly, we will let the following axiom guide us: So long as the time is not yet ripe, we keep silent and proclaim Schoenstatt generically. This is exactly how Fr. Kastner has always done it with the retreats for priests. He did not proclaim the message in its strictest sense, but only the general outlines. But here, too, we can do more and more to progress to the center of the target.

{127} Wherever we have sealed the covenant of love in concrete form, there is life. Yesterday I only mentioned the large communities. For me it is simply a matter of course that our elite institutes will always do their utmost and best in this direction. Otherwise they will not exist very long; otherwise it can happen to us as has happened to so many communities. How many have come about in the course of the centuries, and as quickly as they came about they vanished again or were transformed into orders, that is, religious orders of the usual stripe. I still want to come back to talk about this.

For me it is therefore a matter of course that all of the elite institutes find their way forward to the covenant of love, and with great fervor. There is no better option when we are helpless in the governance [of our communities] – for instance as a superior who is holding office – than to renew the covenant of love.

It is then similar to what St. Teresa once said about prayer: A gardener had a large garden to water. The source did not flow much, gave too little water, and so he took great pains to create a channel so that the water would reach the plants more easily. A difficult task according to St. Teresa. This is the way of those who strive much ethically, but without much spirit. But I can take a different path. I dig the well deeper, so that suddenly the water flows profusely, so that the source surges with much energy. Then I don't need the little channel any more – the water will find its way to the plants all by itself.

(....)

Friday, October 17, First Talk

{158}

My dear Schoenstatt Family!

So far we have considered the covenant of love as a source of life. I now want to examine it more as a source of strength and blessing.

B. The Covenant of Love as Source of Strength and Formative Power

A source of strength. It carries within it an incredible strength, a formative power, both for the personality and for the community.

Yesterday I already mentioned a few of the ways it is a power in personality formation. If you want to hear the one or the other recent example from practical life, then listen to what one of our men, a teacher, wrote:

From March 27 to October 1, 1946 I was in an interment camp in Blingen¹. I was torn away from my family in the middle of the night, hastily dressed. I managed to bring along *The Imitation of Christ*, two rosaries, and *Heavenwards*. After five months it was determined that I had been mistaken for my cousin with the same name. During the difficult time in the camp, Schoenstatt was my support and my help. In troubles of every kind – hunger, cold, sleepless nights, hard work – the MTA was my refuge and I placed all my suffering and worries on the altar of the Shrine. “Prayer and suffering” was my {159} motto. On the journey to my far-off work place I resolved the Inscriptio each day and prayed from *Heavenwards*. Again and again I experienced the help of the MTA. I never was sent to the feared bunker. Prayer and reparation became something I deeply understood. When I was released, I was paid 75 Marks for the work I did, at times very heavy labor – 6 cents an hour. I present this amount to

¹ In the years immediately after World War II, many German men were not allowed to return to their families, or were forcibly taken away from their families as a way to assure the subjugation of the German people. Many men were used as forced labor to dismantle German military and industrial capacity.

Schoenstatt – which by the grace of God I have known for 20 years – in thanksgiving for the MTA’s help. Please use the amount which cost so much sacrifice for ...”

Another letter is from a man who returned from Russian imprisonment. During his youth he spent several years in the minor seminary in Schoenstatt. The things he heard back then and made his own gave him the strength to bear his difficult fate as a prisoner, and to join his suffering and pain with the atoning suffering of Christ...

1. *The Covenant of Love Forms Perfected Personalities*

[The covenant of love] solves the problems at their root². You will realize this when you consider the entire wealth, fullness and depth which, in the long run, the personality gains through the covenant of love. As you know, *the covenant of love not only includes*

*a perfect giving up of self out of love,
a perfect giving of self out of love, and
a perfect transmission of love,*

but also includes

unlimited claims of love driven by heroic trust³.

Only those who are totally at home in the supernatural world and the supernatural reality can engage, savor, experience, and understand the perfect covenant of love.

{160} All problems are solved from above; our sole task is to entrust ourselves to Mary and the Triune God with [childlike] simplicity. This is the only thing which we can throw into the scales as a counterbalance to the rise of the atomic age, and we do it best through our *ceterum censeo*:

our Family in the light of the covenant of love;

² German: *grundsätzlich*.

³ German: *vollkommene Liebespreisgabe, Liebeshingabe, Liebesweitergabe, und Liebesansprüche*. Cf. J. Kentenich/J. Niehaus (ed.), *Schoenstatt’s Covenant Spirituality* (Waukesha, 1993), p. 28f.

a perfect covenant of love with the Blessed Mother
and the Triune God,
and a perfect covenant of love with, in, and for one another.

You see, it is clearly true: the covenant of love, correctly understood and seriously lived, consolidates the personality core like perhaps nothing else. Here we have before us another master stroke of Divine Providence, of Divine pedagogy and strategy. You must only keep working to discover, maintain, and proclaim the final principles through all the turmoil and confusion of the times.

Tensions

Of course you will understand that such a serious wrestling to form strong personalities will, sooner or later, result in some tensions between personality and community, [in the areas of] submission and readiness to follow and obey.

Take, for instance, the relationship between an energetic individual and his or her pastor of souls⁴. The entire problem of lay apostolate comes to the fore here. The tensions are not a product of bad will; that is just how it is. Unless my attitude is to do all things for the greater glory of God, then I will never understand a {161} lay person who really wants something. (....)

A Balanced Principle of Government

I personally think that the proper principle of government is *authoritarian in principle, democratic in application*. As pastors we must be conscious of this: The way [priesthood] has historically developed, there is a great danger that we overemphasize the authoritarian [side of the principle] – not out of bad will, but because of helplessness – and undervalue the democratic [side]. Take {162} this observation so that you are able to understand when conflicts develop between the [laity and clergy]. This is part of healthy life. Don’t respond by making it difficult for the laity. Instead, we should ask

⁴ In this paragraph Fr. Kentenich is speaking especially to the priests belonging to the Movement.

ourselves whether we have sufficiently understood how to awaken independent initiative and how to integrate self-motivated personalities into the organism of parish life.

This would be the place to consider how to come closer to a solution to the two problems which currently concern us [as a movement]: our juridical and pastoral integration into the existing [life of the Church] and into the hierarchy⁵. But I will postpone that for later, so that we can conclude our current train of thought.

2. *The Covenant of Love Forms Community*

To sum up, it is not difficult for us to accept that the covenant of love has a distinctive power to form personalities when correctly understood and applied. Moreover, it can form *community*, both under the aspect of

community spirit and
community forms.

Community Spirit

Fostering community spirit was our predominant concern from the very beginning. There are a number of prayers in *Heavenwards* which show the cultivation of this community spirit in drastic form, in a form many people today find exaggerated because they presuppose ideas which are functionally at work [in the Church], but are not taken seriously enough as a task⁶.

⁵ Two fundamental questions for any ecclesial movement: is it able to integrate into the existing life and the hierarchical constitution of the Church, even while bringing its unique contribution of life, initiative, and spirituality. The promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution *Provida Mater Ecclesia* in 1947 helped Schoenstatt by providing its leading communities a the recognized juridical place in the Church as secular institutes.

⁶ For instance, the image of the ideal community in the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2,42-47) is functionally at work in Catholic charities, but will degenerate into a mere mechanism for providing services if one does not continually work at seeing the task of Catholic charity as a process of forming relationships along the lines of the ideal portrayed in Acts and challenging the faithful to more than a functional appreciation of the responsibility to share God's gifts and to do so out of the love

History of our Community Spirit

Consider the first introductory workshops⁷ and you will find {163} how a strong accent on community spirit permeated everything we did from our earliest days. All of the responsibility which we carried for one another gradually took on specific forms.

Let me present the heartpiece⁸ of it all – *community spirit*, that is, a deep spirit of responsibility, of mutual responsibility and accountability before our dear Lady and before one another⁹. It would now be valuable for the philosophers and psychologists of history to look back on how clearly maintained principles formed and shaped everything we see before us, naturally always dependent on [God's action from] above. We had the grace to be able to see such things and hold fast to them.

Moreover, we know that the covenant of love is also a covenant of powerlessness with [God's] omnipotence.

The First World War

I don't know if the oldest among you still remember: the covenant of love, that is, the responsibility which we took on for one another in the Founding Document, gave us the strength to organize ourselves 1914-1918 into closer-knit communities. I remember how drastically I put it back then. You must remember: We were all still boys when we went off [to war], in any case the majority was not ready, was still

of Christ.

⁷ Starting in July 1919, Fr. Kentenich began to work full-time for the new Schoenstatt Movement. Much of his early work took place in the form of introductory workshops (*Einführungstagungen*) for prospective new members. One of the major goals of these workshops was to make it clear that the spirit of the Shrine is not only private piety, but one that forms a community spirit.

⁸ German: *Kernstück*.

⁹ German: *Verantwortungsbewusstsein füreinander und voreinander*. The word *voreinander* (literally: before or in the presence of one another) implies a strong spirit that what I do affects the others, for their welfare or woe, and the desire to do my part to also help them accomplish their God-giving ideal. From very early on in the Movement, this was expressed with the motto "I sanctify myself for them" (cf Jn 17,19). I will translate it here as "accountability before."

immature. Many other communities also tried to organize such groups during the war; but where else did it succeed to the extent it did with us, and why? Because in the Founding Document, in the presence of the Blessed Mother, we had taken on this serious responsibility for one another. The heartpiece of our community spirit is a naturally and supernaturally anchored sense of responsibility for and accountability before one another.

Hoerde

{164} This played a huge role in the inspiration of the founding conference in Hoerde. Which conditions [for membership] should we require? Those from Ingolstadt? Well, we were all convinced that we as a whole family – today we would say as a family of covenant partners – want to draw down on us Mary’s benevolent glance. Just as Ingolstadt stressed, the Blessed Mother must not see in our ranks anyone in the state of serious sin. Otherwise she will not look with benevolence on our family as a whole, or as individuals either. It is always the same – because of our accountability before our dear Lady we not only take vigorous responsibility for one another, but also know a spirit of mutual accountability.

Please recall how much this idea formed our life. Except it came under a different name that totally self-evident to us, and gave our Family a distinctive flavor. Out of responsibility for one another *we strive for sanctity*. It was not the condition [used in Ingolstadt]: out of responsibility for one another we will avoid all mortal sin. No it was put positively. You will understand how we wrote the words of Christ at the top of our daily order: ‘I sanctify myself for them’ (Jn 17,19). With that our striving for sanctity immediately gained a decidedly communitarian character, because it was based not only on each one’s responsibility before God, but on a responsibility that we have for one another¹⁰.

(...)

¹⁰ At this point Fr. Kentenich continues with relevant observations from the experiences connected with January 20, 1942.

The Covenant of Love Creates Community Forms

{167} If you look back, you will find that every healthy new community grows from such a serious sense of mutual responsibility, and that this is the basis for community forms.

What do these community forms look like which took shape out of our deep sense of mutual responsibility? Think of

(a) the *rich diversity* of community forms which have developed [in Schoenstatt], {168}

(b) the *originality* of the community forms, and

(c) their *resilience*¹¹.

a. Rich Diversity

Of what am I thinking?

[i. First: League, Federation, Institutes]

This development was already happening during the war, before the formal founding of the Federation [in 1919]. We formed groups which were along the lines of what we now call the Federation. Towards the end of the war the League took shape. Behind this is the awareness that there are many noble persons who want to be drawn into this relationship with Our Lady. Responsibility for the Kingdom of God moved us not just have the Federation, but also the League. Three community forms: League – Federation – Institute. And the League has two kinds of membership: associate members and members.

From a certain point of view, every imaginable community form has represented and developed from this community spirit, this sense of mutual responsibility.

[ii. Official and free communities]

Take another example. If you want to study the entire ideology of the Family and the its natural and supernatural appeal, you will probably have to devote the most study to the Sisters. Not because

¹¹ German: *tragfähig*.

they are the Sisters of Mary, {169} but because this is where the principle could develop in purest form from the very beginning. What developed was not only *obligatory* community, from the bottom to the top – filiation, province, entire community – but also that unique handiwork of Divine Providence, our *course communities*. If you would begin to imitate them without knowing their source of life, it would be a disaster. But I can say to you after my trip to South America that without the course communities the Sisters' community would be inconceivable. Without them the Family would have never been able to face the challenges which life has sent, finding its way through all the difficult years into the present time. There must be a secret behind it. It would therefore be worthwhile studying the relationship between the official and the free community.

Let me repeat: Such things, such forms cannot just be imitated unless the heartpiece is behind it – the sense of responsibility as an effect of a seriously lived and seriously appreciated covenant of love.

[iii. Adoration communities in the Sisters and Brothers of Mary]

Different kinds of forms. Think of the efforts to found an adoration community not only here [in Schoenstatt] but also in every province [of the Sisters of Mary]. Here, too, ask what the source is. It is the sense of responsibility for one another. If the Family is going to fulfill its mission, a Family which has to be so intensely apostolic, which cannot devote more than a certain amount of time to external forms of prayer, then it needs a counterbalance. These are our Adoration Sisters.

{170} And we take it for granted that our Brothers of Mary will later also develop in the same way, that they will also develop an adoration institute.

We need to mobilize all our strength in order to find the ultimate underlying connections as they exist in the Spirit of God and translate them into practical life

In our case, all of the community forms which developed over the centuries have their source in this deep feeling of mutual responsibility.

(....)

b. Originality

{172} [Our community forms are] not only a rich in diversity, but also in *originality*.

First of all, the originality of our communities, from the League to the Institutes, is found in their unique structure. This structure can be traced back to the principle: *perfect community based on perfect personalities, and both carried by the fundamental power of love*. Please examine how this principle of structure leaves its mark on the whole Family, be it the League or the striving for perfect community [in the elite communities], not with regard to the community form, but to the *community spirit*. Perfect community based on perfect personalities, both carried by the fundamental power of love. And what is the originality of this? The great common denominator is that both flow from the fundamental power of love.

The Magnanimity Lifestream Behind this Originality

The lifestream which we stand for in the Church must be a *magnanimity lifestream*.

This is a point which we must inscribe into our souls with blood and fire. Let me remind you again of our principle of government. The principle of government, as we know, is “authoritarian in principle, democratic in application.” Authoritarian in principle: We recognize the person that stands over us, recognize an authority in all the formations of the Family. But they must try to be democratic in the application. This is how the Eternal God, how the Holy Spirit govern.

{173} With this you can see a world which cannot be easily exhausted from one day to the next. But let me go into more detail on one point – a magnanimity movement so that a high degree of love is the source of all things in the Family.

I have already indicated from where I draw my courage to attempt making the entire Movement one with the Society of the Pallottines, to let it grow in its soil. The only point of connection which I saw

that gave me a clear line of sight was Vincent Pallotti's wish that his community not make vows, but only promises. At first glance this is nothing more than an external form. Looked at in a merely legal-positivistic way, it gives a free pass to do whatever one wants. But, as we have already seen, this is not how it is meant. Rather, one should see it legal-philosophically and legal-psychologically. It expresses to a totally original attitude, an original lifestyle.

The Danger of Weak Juridical Bonds

Let me mention another example – only to characterize the problem not only for the Movement, but also for the Society¹². It is a problem which must be taken quite seriously. You will not take it the wrong way if I say that, sooner or later, our Society could be weakened by the idea that we are secular clergy¹³. And we are. But you will see that, unless there is a clear, solid set of objectives behind the whole thing, it will not take long before the accent is on *secular*. We have only made promises; woe if anyone tries to tell me anything! Everyone can do what he likes! Instead, we must become secular *clergy*. Unless the weak exterior bonds are the expression of a powerful¹⁴ interior attitude, then the fears of those who opposed the promulgation of the Apostolic Constitution will be justified. What took place behind the scenes, right up to the last {174} moment, was an easily understandable fear which must be taken seriously. If such modern institutes are recognized with bonds as weak as ours, then it is all fine and well that they strive and work to Christianize the world, but in reality they will secularize Christianity and the religious life. Please do not overlook this serious concern; it is a concern which I share.

I have already mentioned that I told the Holy Father, “I want to do everything I can to see to it that the Institutes become a blessing for the Church.” This not some kind of a whim, but an expression of

¹² The Pallottines (Society of the Catholic Apostolate).

¹³ German: *Weltgeistliche*, literally, world-priests.

¹⁴ German: *urgewaltig*.

a very serious attitude, and I want to ask all of you to take this promise from me, to make this promise easy for me to fulfill, for the danger is doubtlessly great: weak bonds taken on weak shoulders mean frivolity and superficiality. It is so *essential* that the weak exterior bond be an expression of a *movement of big-heartedness!*

I only say this to make you aware of how cutting-edge this problem is. You should not think of it as child's play. Even if we only make promises, they must bind us firmly enough and be treated with the seriousness they deserve. The degree of obligation is small, but because it is small, it is necessary to create a movement of generous spirit, a *magnanimity movement*.

Magnanimity Movement and a Pedagogy of Ideals

Years ago we coined a different expression for this – the pedagogy {175} of ideals. Let me sum it up in a few words:

1. To start with, a pedagogy of ideals is a pedagogy of attitudes in contrast to a mere pedagogy of practices¹⁵.

2. A pedagogy of ideals is a pedagogy of magnanimity in contrast and even in opposition to a pedagogy based only on the fulfillment of duty. The point where duty ends is where ideals begin. This is so important for the existence of the Society. If, based on a clear recognition of how weak our bond is, we do not strive to exact the highest and most vigorous things of ourselves, then we will never become something great.

It was not without a reason that I spoke of the Movement's experiences overseas. In the places where great things are starting to happen, one finds vigorous persons who make high demands of themselves. You know, if our type of the human person does not require and live out high demands, we will become a community of superficial personalities and can close down. Then those who feared that

¹⁵ A “pedagogy of practices” relies on teaching certain practices (prayers, exercises, etc.) so that their execution shapes the person, as it were, from the outside. But unless there is a spirit behind it, the practices can quickly devolve into mere formalism, an empty practice devoid of meaning.

the introduction of the new Constitution will ultimately be a disadvantage to the Church will be proven right.

During these days I was in Trier and spoke about the community of priests, among other things. The vicar general sees the problems clearly and immediately understands when one talks about this. He thinks it has always been a burning problem in the Church. But it is worth noting how there have been other lifestreams [to form communities] among diocesan priests. But after a short time they either dissolved again or became an order – “degenerated” into an order, as he put it – even though their intent was to help priests in the world to master life.

{176} What causes this? In German-speaking Europe, including in Switzerland, we know that many similar institutes were started before and parallel to our Sisters. To the extent I can see, they have all either dissolved or already become like orders – because they did not see their weak bond as an expression of a type¹⁶.

If you will permit me to use a hard expression, then I may say: one of the specific originalities of our fundamental attitude ought to be – and even much more strongly than with the Jesuits – *obedience*, yes an *obedience* animated by love, a magnanimous obedience, but obedience! If someone says, moral theologically speaking I am not obligated to follow – he may be right when talking with his confessor, but not with me! And I say to him: *nos cum prole pia!*

¹⁶ A new type of person and community as described by Fr. Kentenich using the definition of the “new man in the new community”: “The ‘new man’ meant here *is the spiritually animated and attached-to-ideals person who avoids both form-enslavement and formlessness*. The ‘new community’ distances itself – without becoming formless – from all soulless formalism, from a mechanical, merely outward coexistence; it works to achieve a deep soul-anchored connection – an in-, with-, and for-one-anotherness of souls– [and to achieve] a God-anchored, constantly effective awareness of mutual responsibility, urging individual and community to a life of universal apostolate, and making it fruitful.” (J. Kentenich, *Key to Understanding Schoenstatt*, 1951, as published in *Texte zum Verständnis Schönstatts* (Vallendar-Schoenstatt, 1974), p. 149).

c. Resilience

There are [personality] types who are very good and holy, might even be canonizable in an order, but do not fit in with us. Why not? For us there needs to be a certain fundamental attitude: magnanimity. This is not something new. *We must use every means to bind ourselves to the ideal; this therefore also includes seeking to use organizationally safeguarded means of cultivating the spirit.*

Something which makes me very grateful [in this regard] is the revitalization of *tertianships* in the Society.

(....)

Friday, October 17, Second Talk

(....)

Source of Strength for Our Original Structure

{190} This morning we began our deliberation of the covenant of love as a source of strength.

We thank God that in the covenant of love we have found a means that is a truly unique force for *the formation of the person, as well as the community*.

It is impossible to overestimate the power of the covenant of love to form community.

– We speak of the forming and shaping of the *community spirit* which I think we have been able to sense to a singular degree.

– I have already pointed out the *community forms* which have come about, in both their diversity and originality, especially based on our principles of organization and government: perfect community built on perfect personalities and both carried by the fundamental power of love. Please do not forget that this ideal applies to all the branches and communities. The more that the {191} cathedral¹ returns to its youth, the more that these constitutive elements want to be realized.

From this perspective we could – and may and must – shed light on our pedagogy in all its originality. From there we should consider if all of us, especially those in leading positions in the Family, really know how to translate our pedagogy into practical life. A pedagogy of love is not a dictatorship, either towards the parish cook or the parish children. It takes a long time for words to translate into life. Nonetheless, we sense that what I said in the opening talk is justified: ***the originality of our structure is magnanimity***, but in the sense and spirit that we have tried to describe and illumine it using the examples of current lifestreams inside the Catholic Church.

It is indeed a beautiful task to invest our whole life's strength so

¹ German: *Dom* - does Fr. Kentenich mean the Church?

that this lifestream, now given a legitimate place by the Apostolic Constitution, gradually be perceived and acknowledged by the public opinion of the Church as on equal footing with other lifestreams of long-proven value, such as the lifestream of the orders. (....)

{194} We are entering into times in which the fate of humanity is more tightly interwoven with one another than ever before. Woe, if we are unsuccessful in leading this world, too, back to Christ. Woe, if we would only want to shape and form communities that withdraw completely from the world, that {195} only build hermitages. What should become of the world in times when human volatility² is beyond anything we can imagine?

What does God want? He wants world-people! He wants people who live in the world but who are totally imbued by Christ and carry him inside of them. This is the great problem of our times today. I think that I can say that our communities have the resilience to solve these problems. For me I not only say “I think,” but “I am convinced of it!”

(....)

C. The Covenant of Love as a Source of Blessings

{201} One more thought: We have not only spoken of the covenant of love as a source of life and strength, but also as a *source of blessings*.

What streams of blessings have been given to us from this source?

(....)

There are three streams of blessings:

1. Many children,
2. The “meadow of paradise,” and
3. The glories of Christ.

² German: *Entzündbarkeit*, ability to be enkindled, enthused. The word is basically positive in tone: one cannot imagine to how high a degree modern man can be enkindled for God and the divine.

(....)

1. *First Stream of Grace: Many Children*

{204} Has not the promise of many children come true? If only you could have accompanied me on my travels through South America and seen the [MTA's] march to victory!

2. *Second Stream of Grace: "Meadow of Paradise"*

You know what I mean when I speak of the "meadow of paradise" and the "promised land." It is what the Home Song³ describes. This is a promised land flowing with milk and honey; this is the ideal state, a state in which great stars shine out as we find them depicted in the Home Song.

The Home Song was composed in a most difficult time. It is the second poem that I smuggled out of the camp. Read its {205} victorious spirit in the midst of a swamp. All around us was mass-mindedness, disease, hunger. Against this dark background the ideal kingdom. This is the ideal state which we all can confidently expect, and which we may and must build and expand upon.

Not as if an ideal state of this kind would be possible here on earth. Since the order we live in is that of the cross, our way is always only a pilgrimage. But that suffices.

An ideal kingdom of love and justice, of joy and true freedom, of truth and of the courage to go to battle. (....)

The covenant of love is therefore an abundant source of blessings. Study it for yourselves: To what extent have we accomplished this paradise land? Favorite ideas that come back again and again.

Israel had to prove itself; Yahweh would then work miracles, tangibly intervene in order to reveal the Divine.

{206} Early Christianity also had to prove itself and make visible

³ J. Kentenich, Home Song (Hymn of Home) written in Dachau in 1943 as a portrait of the new community highlighting six main elements (love, joy, purity, freedom, etc.). Published in 1945 in *Heavenwards*. See English edition (Waukesha, 1992), p. 158-161.

the Divine. How? By handling serpents, healing the sick... (cf Mk 16,18). And you know how these things had their effect.

And today?

The possibility of a work that seeks and senses final realities is a way to overcome the great modern difficulties. The covenant [brings blessings] if tomorrow and the day after a person overcomes collectivism – especially in community life, a community spirit which is mass-minded, a community state which is collectivistic.

Do you see how this is all concentrated on a goal? Again and again we catch a glimpse of it, as through a crevice in the rock. It makes it worth returning again and again in order to gain our bearings, especially when one is alone and faces similar difficulties.

3. *Third Stream of Grace: New Birth of Christ in our Times*

Abraham was promised the birth of Isaac...

What we expect is Christ. The Blessed Mother shall give birth to Christ in the Family.

I don't want to go into how this fits into the great context of our times. Our times today are sick because they no longer know the ultimate foundation, Christ. What is therefore needed is that Christ be born again. And from here⁴ the Blessed Mother wants to give new birth to Christ. (....)

{207} We as a whole Family must see to it that the glories of Christ come more and more to the fore in our Family. But not at the cost of the glories of Mary, but to the increase of the glories of Mary, her work and activity, for all of Mary's glories emanate from the Sun, from Christ, the King of the World.

(....)

⁴ Schoenstatt.

Saturday, October 18, Concluding Talk

(...)

{231} It is easy to say, “The world cannot exist without Christianity,” pointing to current conditions to prove the point. While that is true, the words will only gain their full meaning in the future, when the newly discovered forces of nature¹ lack the counterbalance of man being in personal union with God. Then we will no longer be able to stop the catastrophe threatening mankind. Who alone can tame and bind the powers of human nature? Only Christianity, only Christ.

It is therefore already true that the world must either become Christian or become totally pagan, condemning itself to perdition. A totally new constellation of the world. Only Christ can tame the revolutionary forces in human nature.

But who can bring Christ to the world?

This places before us the big picture again: The only one who can effectively do this is Mary. She must give Christ again to today’s world. If she doesn’t, who can? What the Popes say and what we hear said at the great pilgrimage places all has the same direction: Christ must not only mean personal salvation, but also societal salvation. A Christian society must come about with an organic head and heart – with Christ as head and Mary as heart. (...)

¹ Probably an allusion to the recent dawning of the atomic age with the dropping of the first atomic bombs in Japan in 1945. This unleashing of power is also symbolic for the expanded access of man to many other forces in nature, allowing him to shape his destiny much more than in the past. The tapping of other forces of nature might also come to mind, especially through the opening of new fields of knowledge and technology such as clinical psychology and the means of mass communication.