



# PROGRAM FOR THE FOURTH YEAR OF BASIC FORMATION



## YEAR OF MARITAL IDEAL

Family Branch  
SCHOENSTATT APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT  
2014



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## UNIT ONE: WHO ARE WE? WHAT ARE WE MADE FOR?



### MEETING 1 – OUR IMPRINT

**Objective:** Discover and understand that God, in His infinite love, has inscribed His Imprint on us, as a marriage.

As discussed in our first meeting (“First Encounter”), this year will be dedicated to discovering the MATRIMONIAL IDEAL AND MISSION, that unique and original contribution, the gift and task given to us, that each marriage is called by God to carry out in their family, in the Church, and in the world.

At the moment in which we choose the Sacrament of Marriage, God takes us seriously, and graces us with a Mission, an ideal, that we discover throughout our married life, and which we enrich and bring to life more and more each day. This year, we wish to immerse ourselves even more into this gift. We will therefore immerse ourselves into the God of life, of my life, of our married life, of our history, and into the faith that He, in His provident love, has written as a blueprint of love and kindness between ourselves and between our own. He has elected us to be His collaborators, and, in Mary, has called us to be His instruments, with whom He will continue to carry out his project of redeeming love with all mankind.



God created us with a very special mission, a task that nobody can carry out for us. In this journey we shall discover the answers to many questions in our lives, its sense, situations we have lived through, the lacks or gifts that we have had – all related to our aptitudes and desires, our way of being, etc. All of this has been anticipated by God's infinite love, and is part of our "sacred story," and is thus fundamental to the development of our Marital Ideal.

God and the Mater need us to carry out their great work, from our Sanctuaries. Our Father needs us, so that Schoenstatt can be an Ark of salvation in the midst of our stormy times for innumerable people and families. With the confidence we derive from having a clear Mission, we can be collaborators in forging this culture of Covenant that impregnates everything. We shall thus be, with our Mother Church, that Ark of Covenant that saves and redeems, the soul of a new world.

Our founder, Father Kentenich, invites us to discover the imprint of God in ourselves – those unique characteristics of ours that God chose to give us as a marriage, in order to give to the world. God needs us to manifest Himself to the world.

To discover the gifts that we have been given, to find our Ideal, our "Name," is also a way to feel God's great love for us.

An "Ideal" fills us, and moves us on the inside, and changes our way of confronting life.

Father Kentenich wrote this prayer in the concentration camp at Dachau. It is one of the "morning prayers" from the book "HEAVENWARDS" (page 14).

*"Our ideal shall shine before us  
and form our entire lives.  
For this you have created us in love  
for this we strive with all our strength."*

Think of how many mornings he prayed this prayer, how many times he must have recalled his Ideal and thus was able to face the enormous difficulties and pains of day to day living in Dachau. Think of how much sacrifice, how much suffering, how much generosity, care, counsel and comfort etc. he offered others.

We can discern how, having an Ideal (in our case, a "Marital Ideal") in the forefront of our existence, can guide our days, orient us and move us, and finally help us to find **our own** path to sanctity.



**We advise that this year all should have a notebook or journal in which to record what was worked on during the year, given that this is a year of much “workshop” type activity. People should record any and all information, memories, discoveries, thoughts, dialogue, etc., which will be important in the formulation of their Marital Ideal.**

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

How can we confirm that we each have an original and unique imprint?

To begin to discover this imprint that makes us who we are, we propose a simple activity:

1. Individual sheets of paper are prepared with the name of each couple in the group.
2. These sheets are distributed to the rest of the group's couples.
3. Each couple records the positive characteristics they see in the couple mentioned on their paper.

The purpose of this activity is to bring to mind and heart what we like about them, what attracts us to them, what they bring to us, what their natural gifts are.

After completing the lists, they are given to the named couple, and can be read aloud to the group, followed by comments.

It is important that the list be copied into, or attached in their journals.

**If desired, the following attachment “Foundation of the Marital Ideal” may be read.**

### **COMMITMENT**

**We recommend reading the attachment and doing the Marital Work.**



## **ATTACHMENT 1**

### **FOUNDATION OF THE MARITAL IDEAL**

We shall describe, in the first place, the content of the Marital Ideal from a threefold perspective: philosophical, Christological, and psychological. It is always about the same reality, but seen from different points of view.

Father Kentenich was preaching about this topic in the 1930s, and we can see that today it remains relevant and can be perfectly applied to our current lives.

#### **The Marital Ideal from the Philosophical Perspective**

From the philosophical perspective, we understand the Marital Ideal to be God's own concrete idea of a matrimony, by creating them one for the other in His plan of love. When God conceived each partner, He conceived them in His mind, through all eternity, for each other. This was the reality that both partners intuitively understood when we met each other, and that later, progressively, unraveled and ratified during our courtship. When we decided to marry, we consciously and solemnly assumed God's plan that united us throughout our lives. God's conceiving thought of one of us already included the call to fulfillment in union and complementation with that other person that He conceived of as our lifetime companion. Our beings are mutually complementary. This also implies that the sanctity of one closely depends on that of the other, and resoundingly affects the other. We are both called to establish one same community of life, love and mission. To accomplish this, God graces each of us with personal qualities that complement those of the other. We must also carry our charges and crosses together. God conceived of us, in a matter of speaking, as an ellipse, in which both poles come together in one figure. He had an idea, a "dream," about us. As a couple, we are called to discover and carry out this original plan of love that God planned for us, and to carry it out, creating it throughout our lives.

#### **The Marital Ideal from the psychological perspective**

From the psychological perspective, the Marital Ideal is the fundamental impulse, desired by God, which deeply imbues couples with life. It is the impulse or longing, faithfully developed with the help of God's grace, which drives the couple to marital sanctity. The Marital Ideal, in this sense, is not merely an "objective" thing, imposed on



us from without, but something which lives in our deepest core. It does, however, need to be assumed and cultivated purposefully.

In short, God conceived us as spouses in a singular plan of love; God created us with a vocation, and gave to us a common task in His plan. God called us to incarnate, in a unique way, the ineffable bi-unity of Christ and His Church; for this, He placed in our souls the abilities, seeds of life and inner longings that enable us, from within, to develop and to accomplish what He expects of us.

### **COUPLE EXERCISE**

Approach family members (parents, children, and siblings), friends, colleagues, etc... and ask them to write 3 or 4 positive characteristics that they see in your marriage. It should not be complicated: they should simply note what they feel jumps out about you. What special memories do they have of you as a couple, or what special moments shaped their attachment to you.

Remember to keep their responses in your notebook. We rarely have opportunities to receive the loving opinion of those closest to us. It is a gift to know what they admire in us.





## **MEETING 2: GOD'S IMPRINT IN OUR HISTORY**

### **Objective: Discover God's Imprint in our Personal History**

One of the benefits we receive from our Movement, which enables us to undertake and progress along the path to sanctity, is the **Doctrine and Experience of the Ideal**. This truth, valid for the individual, applies equally to the matrimonial and family reality. We must remake our marital identity also, and the **Marital Ideal is precisely that unifying factor by which we organize and lend coherence to our lives**. The Marital Ideal, besides lending coherence to our life, lifts up our life: it reminds us that, as a marriage, "we were born for greater things," to become Christ-like, to become saints.

**In these days, the call to sanctity is directed in the first place to the lay people, to the family.** Without this commitment to sanctity and this influence in temporal reality, a Christian culture in the third millennium is unthinkable. **It is we and our children who are called to claim the new millennium for Christ.** We therefore seriously undertake the task to **forge a holy matrimony**. The Sacrament of Matrimony contains in itself the vocation to sanctity, and it confers on us the graces needed to achieve it. Schoenstatt seeks to help us in this task. The Shrine of our Thrice Admirable Mother and Queen must become, as our Founding Document states, the "**cradle of our sanctity**." It is where Mary wishes to give us, as a marriage, the graces of abiding in God, of interior transformation, and of apostolic fertility. It is up to us to cooperate with the proffered graces, as God does not wish to carry out His works on His own: "Nothing without you, nothing without us," is our motto.

As we ponder the Marital Ideal from this perspective, it acquires its strength. What did God think of us as he called us to unite our lives forever, and to be fruitful through our children? How does He wish us to incarnate the sign of sacramental love that He imprinted on our hearts when we sealed our matrimonial alliance before the altar? What seed of life and sanctity must we faithfully cultivate as a marriage?

These are the questions that we must answer as we attempt to define our Marital Ideal.

If we were to live in a Christian environment, where Christian values could be assimilated "by osmosis," we would perhaps not need to make a special effort to consciously assimilate the Marital Ideal. It would somehow be given to us in some spontaneous or functional way. However, as mentioned previously, in these days we are not living in that reality. We must **freely and deliberately accept and assume the ideal of creating**



**profoundly Christian marriages and families**, and to constantly achieve this while **"swimming upstream."** If, as a couple and as a family, we do not undertake the task of self-formation, we will soon find ourselves being swept up by the current and we will simply be caught up in the materialistic environment in which we are immersed. Therefore, it is important for us to dedicate ourselves to seek the Matrimonial Ideal.

It seems wise to undertake this quest before seeking the Personal Ideal. As we discover the Matrimonial Ideal, we shall each indirectly discover, in the context of the common ideal, our own Personal Ideal. In fact, **we come to know ourselves better through the mirror of the other than through individual introspection.** Think, for example, of how our individual selves awoke when we encountered our other and felt loved by her or him.

**Discovering the Marital Ideal is a gift from God**, since it is the work of His grace in us. Therefore, **every search** in this sense must be **preceded by prayer.** Before anything, we implore the Holy Spirit to illuminate us, and to help us to see our lives and mission in the light of faith: that His grace allow us to uncover the seeds of life and the urges that God has placed in our souls. We pray for God's grace, yet at the same time **we formally commit to work on our Matrimonial Ideal**, which means to **dedicate our time to our search:** the time needed for prayer, for reflection, and for matrimonial communication. Otherwise, we would have only good wishes, but would practically accomplish very little.

### **GROUP DISCUSSION**

Allow 20 minutes so that each couple in the group can speak of how and when they met, and what attracted one to the other. Comments should be brief to allow time for each couple to speak.

### **EXERCISE 1**

As the first step in our search for the Matrimonial Ideal, we should **recall "our dreams."** Recall how we met, and what longings resided in our hearts during those times.

### **EXERCISE 2**

We have heard the opinions of others about the characteristics that they see in us. Are these characteristics found in our history? How have they manifested themselves? How and when have we noticed them most clearly?

Comments and thoughts may be shared with the group.



**RECOMMENDED COMMITMENT**

1. **Set a time and date for the couple to have a peaceful meeting, preferably in the Shrine.**
  - Find the prayers we have spoken as a couple; for example, our prayer from the Day of the Matrimony, our Prayer of Covenant, a prayer for renewal of marital vows, etc.
  - Contemplate the dreams and longings reflected in the prayers
  - Re-read and reflect on the work done on our Initiation Day.

**CONCLUSION**

What is most significant in these dreams, prayers and plans, and what do we find repeatedly in them?

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**To delve deeper into our story, the following attachment, consisting of two marital tasks, is recommended. They correspond to the marital task carried out during the first meeting of the year.**



The following work is important. Remind couples that all of their marital work should be saved, as it will be used to formulate their Matrimonial Ideal

**ATTACHMENT: Meeting 2**

**GROUP RETREAT**

**COUPLE EXERCISE (MORNING)**

Our purpose is to immerse ourselves into our history through eyes of faith, with a respectful and grateful attitude, since our marriage is a sign of God's merciful love and of His fondness for us. Our common story is born from what each spouse brings: their personal story, their way of being, their longings and worries, etc. As these are God's thoughts and wishes incarnate in us, we wish to make His will into the norm and work of our actions.

**EXERCISE GUIDELINE**

Reflect upon and answer individually; afterwards, exchange thoughts with the spouse and arrive at a synthesis.

**a) What have I brought to our matrimonial life: gifts and needs of my personal history?**

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**b) *Dating and engagement***

1. The most important events that formed us in this stage of life:

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***c. Wedding and the first years:***

1. The most important events that formed us in this stage of life:

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2. What gifts did we have, and what difficulties did we face?

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3. What are we grateful for from this period? (To God, to our other, or in general?)

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4. What was God telling us during this time of our lives?

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**Synthesis:**


**COUPLES EXERCISE (AFTERNOON)**

***d. Present time:***

1. The most important events forming us in this stage of life:

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2. What gifts do we have, and what difficulties do we face?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
**Meeting 2: "God's Imprint in our History"**  
**Attachment Meeting 2**

3. What are we grateful for at this time? (To God, to our other, or in general?)

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4. What is God telling us during this time of our lives?

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**Synthesis:**


**How did we arrive at our present search for the Marital Ideal as a couple, as a family, and personally?**

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## **MEETING 3: HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE WITH GOD?**

**Objective: Recognize what our communication with God is like**



What do we mean by prayer? What is prayer? It is a **personal conversation with God**. God is not an idea, He is a **PERSON**, a person who loves me, who knows me, and who waits for me to also love Him, to know Him, and to encounter Him.

**The experience of love is essential for growth in prayer.** God loves me, and manifests His love through my spouse.

It is possibly hard for me to believe in the love of predilection that God has for every one of us, including me. If this is the case, it might be due to three causes:

**FIRST:** In the human experience, **we may be lacking the experience of authentic natural love** – especially during childhood – and this experience is transferred to God. This lack can be healed by practicing authentic parenthood in our human experience. In this manner our children and many others can understand and experience, through us, that God is a good father who loves us. There is a deep connection between interpersonal love and the love for God. I cannot claim to love a God that I cannot see if I do not love the people that I do see. **Love for God is expressed in my love for others, in the depth of my love for others, in my acceptance of people just as they are.**

**SECOND:** We do not allow ourselves time to reflect on life. **We are unaware of the events that mark our lives as united to God.** We focus on events, circumstances, joys or pains, without seeing God's hand in them. He wishes to speak to us, shows us how to grow in love, and calls us to His side as His children so that we may experience His care and His faithful love.

**THIRD:** **We too seldom implore God to set our hearts on fire with an authentic love for him.** It is easier for us to ask for healing from illness, to ask for a higher paying job, to ask for the love of this person or that, and we forget to ask God for lively and deep love. Therefore, our prayer is at times impersonal. It is not an expression of a faith-filled relationship with the Lord and our Mater. **What we pray does not resonate in our inner selves;** we simply repeat empty words, because our prayer does not relate to our lives.



**God is our personal participant in dialogue. We can speak with Him about what truly interests us in a simple and natural way.** For example, we may speak about our worries, about our relationship with our spouse, about our jobs, about life events, about our fears, about our dreams, about what tempts us, etc. **When our relationship with God is personal, all of our concerns will flow in our conversation with Him.** My prayer should resemble a conversation of a child with a parent. We should contemplate how our own children interact with us. We have much to learn from them!

Do we now understand what it means to pray in a personal manner? Do I speak with God about everything that I feel inside of me?

**GROUP DISCUSSION**

What “disturbances” rob our hearts of peace? What disturbs our matrimonial life?

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Have we mastered Morning Prayer? In other words, do we greet God at the start of the day? Do we greet the Mater? Do we offer them all that we are going to do?

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How do we practice Evening Prayer? How do we end our day? Do we pray at bedtime? Do we review our day and make note of what God gave us today?

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Do we pray as a couple every night? What is our style of prayer?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
**Meeting 3: How do we communicate with God?**

Prayer has an apostolic dimension. Do we pray for the world? Do we pray for the church? Do we pray for our children and others in our care, for our friends, acquaintances and family?

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What needs to improve in our prayer life?

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What will we do about that?

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Conclude by writing a joint prayer, expressing what has most touched us about the work done so far. Bring the prayer to the next meeting.

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**COMMITMENT**

Reflect on:

What was our prayer life like before (at school, in the family, etc.)?

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What elements are still present in our prayer?

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What is our prayer like today?

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What readings did we choose for our wedding?

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What Biblical images speak to us?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
**Meeting 3: How do we communicate with God?**

In the natural world, what images do we enjoy and make us aware of God's love?

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When or how do we feel truly close to God?

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Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

## **MEETING 4: GOD ALSO MAKES AN IMPRINT IN OUR LIVES THROUGH PAIN**

**Objective: Discover that God also speaks to us through pain and in how we confront the pain**



God communicates with us, speaking to us in a thousand ways. We have all had hard, difficult and sad times in our lives, moments of much pain. One of the ways God speaks to us is through that pain.

In Schoenstatt we refer to the “practical faith in Divine Providence,” meaning that God has a plan since all eternity which orders everything to the fulfillment of His ends. The word **providence** stems from “provide,” “provider,” “provisions.” In order for God to execute His plan of love, He must send us the precise “provisions” of joy, pain, illness, success or problems that we need, in the adequate quantity, form and time.

When the Lord visits us through pain, there are different ways to confront that pain.

### **NEGATIVE ATTITUDES CONFRONTING PAIN:**

So many things weigh us down! Isn't it true that it is hard for us to accept the limits and weaknesses of our own character? Have we, for example, assimilated the small and great offenses we have suffered? Are there not, at times, stains in our personal and family histories that we would prefer to forget? Why do we get so upset when things don't turn out well for us? Why are we so preoccupied with defending our images? Why are we so frail? What is the origin of our tendency to compare ourselves to others, or of our affinity to be critical?

### **We repress, evade, and compensate for “unresolved experiences”**

Negative life experiences can play tricks on us. Many experiences dwell in the depths of our souls, and, from there, signal our consciousness. They would seem to be forgotten, but, in fact, they continue to affect us and to condition our reactions and behavior in a disproportionate way. “Unresolved experiences” are a destructive factor on our personality that disrupt our relationships and interfere with our “spiritual flight,” hampering



our “takeoff” to the heights of spiritual life. Whenever something has become negative and disturbing, we unconsciously attempt to repress it and discount its importance, yet “it proceeds to the interior.” And our reactions show that we are “bleeding out through the wound.”

Such are the “unresolved experiences.” Some situation or concrete event has unsettled us. Negative unresolved experiences, or psychological repressions, produced when we do not assimilate negative experiences, produce an inner state of tension that causes us to compensate in innumerable ways.

### **Evasion, and the search for compensatory strategies**

In order to “forget everything,” we turn to evasion; for example, we bury ourselves in work. We may seek refuge in sports, in television, by avoiding our homes, or by spending time with certain people. We may seek to ease tension, resorting to compensation of another sort, such as alcohol, sex, drugs, or other palliative experiences. However, we do not achieve peace. We become tense, grumpy, and bitter. We turn inward, become unmotivated, we react violently, we criticize everything, etc. The fact is that we have not “digested” or resolved an issue; therefore, we cannot handle the pressure it produces inside of us and we seek –consciously or unconsciously – an escape.

Why are we unable to handle the pressure? Because we have not accepted the realities that are problematic for us, because we have not looked at them in the light of Divine Providence.

### **POSITIVE ATTITUDES IN THE FACE OF PAIN:**

- **Confront the problems**
- **Be honest**

The process of healing the psyche by the light of faith, which aims to overcome psychological repression, implies, before anything, a decision to confront the problems, to overcome evasive tendencies or the self-deceit that pretends to diminish their importance. In other words, it is necessary to be honest with ourselves, and recognize that we may be nervous, tense, tired, or bitter. We must admit that we harbor resentments in our hearts, that our propensity to criticize everything is not normal, that we are fooling ourselves, that we are depressed, etc. We must dare to confront our reality face to face. Nobody can solve a problem by burying it or repressing it. In order to free ourselves and to be at peace, it is necessary to unmask, clarify and illuminate these dark areas that have been generated by our psychological repression.

- **Have the necessary “backup” to confront the problems**

In the core of our being, we feel invalid, and often anguished (evasion is a sign of insecurity). What, then, can provide the peace and the courage to confront our problem?



We need something, or better yet, someone who can infuse us with confidence. That person, ultimately, is God. We can enjoy the certitude that God is with me, that our Lord and Mary are with me, that if God has permitted or placed adversity in my path, it is so that I may somehow benefit from it, since we know *that “God works with those who love him, those who have been called in accordance with his purpose, and turns everything to their good.”* (Rom 8, 28)

- **Become objective**

- **Examine your problems from another angle**

This means that whatever moves in the instinctive and emotive realm should be now seen from a higher perspective. It should be seen by the light of reason illuminated by faith. It is necessary to clarify the problem by regarding it objectively. If we have suffered through a negative experience, our inclinations become perturbed, and the “wound” clouds our judgment, and we thus find ourselves “drowning in a drop of water.” Therefore, we must learn to objectively determine the magnitude of the problem. We must not needlessly magnify it.

- **The unavoidable necessity of giving one’s self time**

The healing process requires giving one’s self enough time to confront the problem. Otherwise, we would always remain tense, and these “unresolved experiences” will continue to be painful. These days, it is not easy to give one’s self time. It is very hard to find the time to be alone (and to be with God); this is one of the major causes of our inner lack of adjustment.

We must learn to deal with our problems through communication with God. After all, if we find ourselves needing to ask for help, we will need the ideal intercessor. When we are married, it is normal to first ask our spouse for help. And why shouldn’t we dare to ask our spouse? This is the person who knows us best and who is most willing to help. We can also turn to our Confessor, Spiritual Director, or another trusted person who is capable of helping and who can keep our confidences. In each of these cases, verbalizing what affects us clarifies our thinking, provides a “venting,” and relaxes and pacifies our inner feelings.

The process of healing from our “traumas” results, concretely, when we project them into the supernatural realm. It is then that we ask ourselves, in the light of Divine Providence, what is the sense of whatever is weighing on us or wounding our souls. In other words, we seek whatever it is that God is telling us in that which we instinctively would prefer to forget, or which is simply difficult to face. With God, we can examine that reality with new eyes, and say, “Yes Father, I accept it. I am at peace with it because You willed it, and now I can see the sense of it: that You, by allowing it, sought this response from me. I will try to go where you send me, because I believe that if this happened to me, it is because You are requiring something of me.” It is possible that the Lord wishes





from us a certain change of attitude, that we venture into humility or fraternal love, or that He wants us to make an effort to accomplish something particular. However, it is also possible that He has allowed us a cross to thus embrace the cross of Christ and unite with Him and Mary in our redemption. This is all a discernment process that take place through prayer. In prayer we will discover what God desires from us, and we will be able to make peace with it

- **Accept our smallness**

Each one of us, at some point in life, has become painfully aware of our limits. We don't speak here so much of sin, but rather of those things which, in one way or another, diminish us, limit us, which seem to us to be a lack of possibilities, of gifts, means, physical abilities, spiritual capacity, etc.

What is the Lord's purpose in giving us these crosses? Why must we struggle with faults or character weaknesses that so many problems, which are so hard to overcome, cause us? Why didn't the Lord, through our redemption and baptism, remove these "thorns?" Why are we so plagued by these contradictions and aggressions?

It is because in these struggles, in this experience of our limitations, in our weakness, He seeks to deeply engage us, and to have us experience the power of His grace. If we were "perfect," spotless, we would most probably tend to leave God by the wayside. This weakness, on the other hand, keeps us from remaining closed in our selves, from feeling self-sufficient, from turning, as His children, to our Father.

A common thread runs throughout our salvation history: God loves the humble: God shows a special fondness to those who recognize their own weakness. We are far too accustomed to being accepted insofar as we present ourselves well. We are valued according to our merits, our qualities, our name, or our possessions. It is hard for us to understand that God "looks to the interior of our hearts," and that He "cannot resist lowliness and weakness." Fr. Kentenich stated, over and over, that "God loves us not because we are good, but because He is good." He loves us because He is our Father. God chooses, loves, and uses our lowliness to do great things with us.

Shall we say "yes" to all those things that, as previously stated, we might prefer to forget? As we offer them up to God, the "thorn" loses its sting. Beyond that, we recognize in them a path to salvation and a way to encounter the grace and love of God.

- **Inner healing through repentance and confession**

And now we come, while remaining in this context, to moral misery, which results directly from sin. We no longer speak of our limitations, nor of obstacles that make our way hard. We speak now of our moral weakness, of our grievous faults and unfaithfulness.



**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

It is hard for us to apply the biblical and theological truth of God's preference for the repentant sinner to our lives. We therefore tend to "excuse" ourselves, and we have a hard time confessing that we have sinned; we prefer to speak of committing an "error," or of having a psychological problem, or even to blame others. It is hard for us to recognize that we have acted poorly, by our own fault and negligence – that we did something wrong when we should have done the right thing, or that we failed to act when we should have done something.

Much of our trauma, tension, bitterness, bad moods and compensatory behaviors do not only stem from negative, unresolved experiences, but also from our own unrecognized and unconfessed guilt.

Nothing moves the heart of our Father God more than our recognized and confessed guilt. *"A broken, contrite heart you never scorn."* (Ps 51:17) God is "disarmed" by a child who confesses his or her sin. The Lord attempted to instill this in His own in every possible way. However, we do not believe Him; we do not trust the Father to be so merciful to throw a feast for us when we return to Him the prodigal son. Rather, we expect him to scold us, to throw our sin into our faces instead of welcoming us back to the paternal home, hugging us and returning our lost dignity.

The Sacrament of Reconciliation allows us to recover our "best self," bringing us anew to decide for the ideal, and, above all, returns luster to our filial relationship with the Father.

**COUPLE EXERCISE:**

What, from what we've read, has illuminated my life the most? What hit home?

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**Continuing our search for our Marital Ideal:**

Remembering moments of difficulty or pain, or other tests: When and how has God strongly spoken to us?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

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Where did we feel God’s presence? What was He trying to tell us?

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How did we manage to persevere? What did we do to confront the moments?

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**To delve deeper in the topic, the following PERSONAL and/or MARITAL TASK should be quite useful.**

**Task Guideline**

This topic can inspire many reflections. Calmly review our “painful mysteries.”

**What life events or circumstances have been hard, or would I prefer to forget?**

List the most significant of these events (if we wish to be healed of them, we must confront them).

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain

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Looking at them objectively, ask ourselves: What were they about? Why did they hurt?  
How did they affect us?

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Verbalizing them, speak about them with someone you trust (remember that you can  
approach anyone that you trust, including Spiritual Directors, confessors, etc.).

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“Project” them (look at them from the perspective of the God of love).

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

**In this context, it is important to reflect on our attitude when confronted by our personal limitations.**

List those that most affect me.

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Do I recognize and accept them, or do I avoid responsibility?

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Do I accept them with humility and ask for help with what is hardest for me? Do I allow others to complement me?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

Do I know how to be strengthened by my weakness? Can I use them as a “trampoline” to get closer to God?

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What strengths has God placed in conjunction with my limitations?

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**Let us also examine our attitudes toward repentance and confession as paths to inner liberation**

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What is my attitude about my faults and sinfulness?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

How well do I prepare myself for confession, thinking of my lack of attentiveness to the love that I receive from God and others?

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**COUPLE EXERCISE (to be done at home)**

**Use the following questions to help in self-examination:**

Is it hard for us to speak to each other about our struggles, problems, feelings and pain?

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Do we take time during the week to calmly speak (alone) about what is happening to us, about our feelings?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

When we face struggles, alienation, arguments, discussions, etc.:

Am I respectful enough to wait my turn to speak about what I'm feeling?

How well am I disposed to listening?

Do we try to find appropriate times and places to talk?

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How do we react? Can we improve the way we communicate?

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What helps us to communicate? What hinders us?

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

When I'm feeling sad, overwhelmed, hopeless....

What do I want from my spouse? What can I offer?

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When have I felt supported by you? (Recall particular situations)

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**Prayer and Couple Exercise**

Begin by praying the following prayer, and then answer the following questions as a couple.



MORNING OFFERING

*What I bear and endure,  
what I say and what I dare,  
what I think and what I cherish,  
all the merits that I gain,  
what I direct and what I conquer,  
all my joys and all my sorrows:  
what I am and what I have,  
I give to you as a gift of love.  
Use it so that the holy stream of graces  
flowing richly from the Shrine  
may fill the souls of those  
who have given their hearts to Schoenstatt  
and gently lead there  
all those whom you wish to chose in kindness.  
Accept everything that our efforts may be fruitful  
which we dedicate to the Trinity.*

(Fr. J. Kentenich "Heavenwards" page 16)

In our family and matrimonial life today, what are

Our joys:

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Our sorrows:

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Our hopes:

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**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 4: God also makes an imprint in our lives through pain.

What has become routine, and is difficult to do with joy?

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What are our successes and failures?

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What must we be grateful for?

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Name those we love unconditionally and who bring joy to our lives:

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....
- 6 .....
- 7 .....
- 8 .....





## **MEETING 5 – OUR ORIGINALITY**

**Objective: Discover, in our originality, the essential features of our Marital Ideal**

If we stop for a second and look back, we can see that we have already journeyed on the path to seek our Marital Ideal. We have discovered what others see in us, and we have reviewed our own history, together. We also looked at how we draw closer to God, how we communicate with Him and how our pain is another manifestation of the Lord, who wants us to examine ourselves more deeply.

There is no doubt that each person and each couple is different, that we all have a seal of our own, **our originality**, in which we can find essential features of our Marital ideal. We will examine two aspects of our originality. In the first place, we will discuss our characteristics as man and woman, and how these differences complement us, each bringing something unique to the table. In the second place, we shall examine our attitude as a couple in the face of “values.”

### **Recognizing, in our originality, the essential features of our Marital Ideal**

**It is recommended to cover this “5<sup>th</sup> Meeting” in two separate meetings:**

- 1: “We are different; we complement each other”
- 2: “Our values”

### **PART 1. WE ARE DIFFERENT; WE COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER**

We must first recognize that men and women are made in the image of God, and in our differences we are called to complement each other. The Lord calls us to live, in this way, a love that is fuller, holier, more human and more divine.

Human beings require complementation. Due to this same originality of man and women, they are attracted to each other. That which constitutes us as people is our capacity to love. We are made in the image of the Triune God, and He is love, a community of perfect love. God created us with equal dignity, but with distinct ways of being. This difference forms our psychology, our way of looking at things, our perception of reality. **God created us this way so that we could complement each other in the corporal and spiritual realms.** When men and women are able to recognize, respect and accept their differences, love has the opportunity to flourish.



We must learn to recognize our spouse’s way of loving, so that we may thus complement each other and support each other better. We generally suppose that our spouse loves us, and will behave and react in the same way that we behave and react when we love someone. We expect the other to be like ourselves, to feel as we do, to love as we do, but this is not usually the case.

Relationships become easier when we understand the fundamental needs of our spouse. In order to understand this, it is so important to give ourselves time to pray and reflect on our spouse, about the other’s originality, about what the spouse needs and expects of me in order to feel loved, supported, and complemented by my love. We must also request, daily, the graces that are bestowed on us through the Sacrament of Matrimony to understand and accept the changes that our spouse undergoes (irritation, mood swings, demands, etc.) in such a way that they do not inhibit our relationship, so that we may continue to mutually support each other. We must not forget that friction and disagreement are natural in any human relationship. They actually spur us to grow, to renew our love, and to cultivate this love in an original and creative way. “Difficulties are tasks,” says Fr. Kentenich, and love matures and becomes stronger when together, with respect communication and prayer, a couple can turn struggles into a pedestal to rise toward a fuller, holier, more human and divine love.

Our great task is to discover what our spouse needs to feel loved.

Helpful videos:

1. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-SOsmeuAk0>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29JPnJSmDs0>

**2. GROUP MEETING:**

a) Each person answers the following questions on their own:

Which of my spouse’s features have enriched my life during our marriage?

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What do I admire in my spouse?

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Which of my own personal features have complemented my spouse?

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What typical characteristics of my male or female psychology do I need to polish and develop to enable more fruitful communication with my spouse? Commit to a specific improvement that you will make.

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b) After individual reflections, divide into groups of men and women, and reflect upon the following questions:

- How have we been enriched by the other gender?
- Which positive qualities of my spouse have helped me, made me feel better, made me feel loved (think of attitudes, words, moments, etc.)?
- What positive experience have we had in which masculine or feminine features have helped us to engage in better communication with our spouses?

c) Follow the group discussion by joining both groups and sharing an experience chosen beforehand.

**The following is suggested as a “Family Task” to discuss the topic at home:**



**FAMILY MEETING**

Meet with your children in a relaxed environment and speak about the following:  
(it may be advisable to divide by gender first to have the father talk with the sons and the mother talk with the daughters, and then gather to share))

**Considering the environment in which we live:**

What does it mean to “be a good man” to my friends at school?

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What does it mean to “be a good woman” to my friends at school

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**I think that:**

“be a good man” means:

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**I think that:**

“be a good woman” means:

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**For the children:**

What do we admire, thinking about the above, in our father and in our mother?

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**For the parents:**

What do we admire, thinking about the above, in our sons and in our daughters?

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**Conclusion**

**A. As a family, we feel:**

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**B. As a couple, we feel:**

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## PART 2 - OUR VALUES

It is critical for us to be able to define our matrimonial and family values. Recognizing “our values” is the next step in the discovery of our Marital Ideal.

### VALUES AND THE MARITAL IDEAL

These days, God speaks clearly through the signs of the times: He underscores the need to **strengthen the family as the basic cell of our society and of the Church**. We cannot overlook the fact that today’s families are threatened in our culture, and that divorce laws in the most economically and technically developed countries are just one of many signs of the growing disintegration of our families. The customs and way of life of these days do not jibe with what should be an **authentically Christian family**. What should be worrying us the most is that we frequently fail to fully comprehend the following: **we adapt to our environment without considering that it does not reflect the values of our faith**.

Our children can no longer count on a protective environment. As the Lord told His apostles, they must “**live in the midst of this world without being of this world**.” Will they be able to do it? How can we be reassured that their faith and Christian convictions will remain unshaken, and that they will not be swept up in the wake of consumerism, greed and the ideal of human “success” that influence our society? Not only that, but will our children become the “yeast” in the midst of the dough? Will they be able to plant the seeds of Christian values in our society?

Christian marriages face a great challenge these days: **we must create a new season of holy matrimones, of holy families built on the rock of holy marriages. We invite you to search for the values that every marriage wishes to embody and radiate.**

This journey of searching for the Marital Ideal complements our previous journeys. It consists of both spouses asking themselves what are the values that most attract us, and for which we are willing to risk all, both personally and as a couple. They are established in the present, and look toward the future. This is the end of all that we have talked about previously, and which points directly to our present and future.

### Helpful Videos

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPF796eFds0>
2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7d4gmdl3zNQ>



**COUPLE EXERCISE**

Use some silent time for each couple to reflect before answering the following questions, first in a personal way and then by sharing with spouses:

**Values that define our marriage and family**

Examining our marital and family life, what things have we focused on: what are the values that we spontaneously defend?

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1. What values do we believe that we, as a marriage, embody?

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2. On which of these values do we place the most importance?

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3. What would we like people to say about our family?

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4. What are our hopes for our family's future?

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5. What marital and family traditions and habits do we think are most important to maintain forever

- in the religious realm:

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- in the way we interact:

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- in our development of family unity?

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- other:

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**We attempt to synthesize, seeking what is appropriately *ours*, what we have built together as a couple with regards to values.**



**FAMILY EXERCISE: FAMILY MEETING**

Once again, meet with your children in a relaxed environment and speak about the following:

1. What are the family characteristics that are clearly our own? Can you think of 5?

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2. What values are clearly important to us?

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3. What are our most common faults?

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4. What are our hopes for the future of this family?

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### **COUPLE EXERCISE**

Take a moment for group or matrimonial prayer with this poem by our Father Kentenich, written in the Dachau Concentration Camp.

-You may read it, pray it slowly. Have a moment of silence.

-You may pray it taking turns between husband and

- Ponder (and underline if you choose) the phrases or passages that touch you the most, as they are the parts that speak the most to who we are in our originality, to our reason for being.

### **Home Song**

*“Do you know the land so warm and dear  
which Eternal Love has built itself:  
and bear with each other in the joy of sacrifice;  
were they glow and shelter one another  
and flow as one into the heart of God;  
were streams of love well forth with might  
to quench the thirst of the world for love?*

***This wonderful is known to me-  
it is the meadow radiantly lit by Tabor’s sun,  
were our Three times Admirable Lady reigns  
in the midst of her favorite children,  
loyally rewarding each gift of love  
with the manifestation of her glory  
and immeasurably abundant fruitfulness:  
it is my home, my Schoenstatt Land!***

*Do you know the land so rich and pure,  
the reflection of Eternal Beauty:  
where noble, stalwart souls  
spouse themselves to the Lamb of God;  
where bright eyes radiate warmth  
and kind hands ease hurt and pain;  
where they, untainted are always folded in prayer  
to vanish the power of Satan?*

***This wonderful is known to me...***

***Fr. Joseph Kentenich, Heavenwards p.158***



## **MEETING 6 – DISCOVERING “OUR NAME”** **WORKSHOP for Formulating our Marital Ideal**



**Objective: Review the work done to this point, and formulate our Marital Ideal**

For the following task, we propose the following:

**Keeping in mind the progress of each couple** and the available time, determine if this workshop should be done in a longer meeting, in two meetings, or during a mini-re-treat.

If any couples should require individual help in the formulation of their Ideal, you may resort to circle leaders, or request guides and/or moderators.

Let us take a look back...

We have done much work, reflecting, communicating, and we have come so far! It is wonderful to be able to discover who we are and what God wishes for us as a married couple. In order to discover “our name,” we invite you to reflect and review what we have done this year, and to write a short summary about each of the following aspects:

- **Our Sacred History:** (2 or 3 elements from our previously formulated syntheses)

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• **Our characteristics** as a couple and as a family (no more than 2 or 3 of those that most identify us)

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• **The values** or attitudes that we feel called to embody or radiate (no more than 2 or 3)

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• **The most important tasks** that we feel we are called to undertake as a couple, as a family, and in the milieu of the Movement, of the Church, at work, etc. These should be tasks that reinforce the values or attitudes that characterize the couple.

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**After reviewing the work done during the year, and with the summary we have just created, we are now prepared to begin to formulate our desired “Marital Ideal.”**





**The Marital Ideal can be formulated in different ways. For example:**

• As a **name**:

For example: “Home of Nazareth”, “Bethany”, “Cenacle”, “Cana”

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• As a **motto**:

For example:

- “A Home Open to the World”
- “May They Not Lack Wine”
- “We Shall Do as You Say”
- “May Nobody be Homeless”
- “Keepers of Your Peace”

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• We may also select a **symbol** that expresses who we are, and add an adjective that represents us.

For example: symbols like fire, fountain, rock, eagle, light, tower...  
Could become “joyful light,” “fountain of joy,” “light for the world.”

To use symbolic language, consider using the prompt that follows (The Language of Symbols)

At the conclusion of this stage of searching, we write a small marital poem that reflects our joint ideals and longings. We offer the prayer to the Father and to our Mater, asking them for the grace to make them real. It is suggested that everyone write a personal prayer, and then



share it to condense it into one for the group. It should not be longer than the Our Father or the Consecration Prayer, so that it may be used often.

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**The following prompts may be used as guides in the search for the Marital Ideal:**

**The Language of Symbols**  
(Prompt for Groups or Couples)

- Cards on which the names of different substantive symbols (for example: fire, water, wind, etc.) have been written are placed face up on a table for all to see.
- Distribute cards on which different adjectives (for example: warm, strong, happy, etc.) have been written to the group members so that each one has 3 or 4 cards.
- Taking turns from left to right, people place their adjective cards (one per turn) on top of the symbol cards already on the table, according to the sense they find in joining the two words. For example, you could place "hot," "luminous," or "red" on top of the symbol card "fire."
- Once all cards have been placed on the table, read the adjectives combined with each symbol. Group comments are welcome, including suggesting others.
- Once this first phase is over, the cards are sorted, and the substantive symbols are once again placed face up on the table.
- Take a moment for each couple to examine and silently choose a symbol to represent them.
- Once again, deal the adjective cards out to all group members. Each couple will choose one of the adjectives that goes best with their symbol to represent the couple.



- Each couple shares their symbol and adjective with the group, explaining why they chose the symbol, and the meaning of why they paired the adjective with the symbol.

## Designing a "Family Crest" (Family Exercise)

Reviewing the history and life of the Church, we are struck by a fact: our ideals have always been expressed symbolically on flags, standards or crests. This is observed in both the profane life as well as in the Church life. Remember, for example, the Papal Crest of Saint John Paul II with the letter "M" of Mary, along with a cross, and his motto "Totus Tuus". Based on this experience, we propose developing a family crest.

We suggest dividing the crest into **five fields**:

**The first** is dedicated to **history**: a symbol that reminds us of two or three fundamental highlights.

**The second field** is dedicated to **the relationship between the spouses**: what best represents their mutual relationship?

**The third field** is for expressing our ideal **relating to the family** to our children: what is the atmosphere we want to reign in our household?

**In the fourth field**, we express what is most characteristic of our **apostolic spirit**.

Finally, in the **fifth field** we use a symbol that most appropriately represents our relationship to the **supernatural world**.

The following design may be used as a guide:





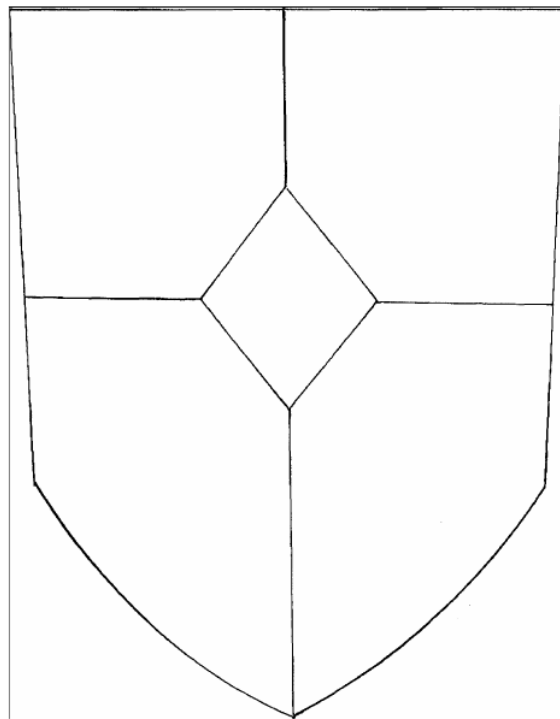
**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 6: Discovering "Our Name".

While designing our Family Crest, we may, if necessary, **simplify it**, and perhaps use only one or two symbols that express all five dimensions of the ideal. For example, for one family, a simple flame in the Shrine may represent a summary of all of their ideals. By itself, this symbol is more powerfully moving, and suggests much more than mere words could

**COUPLE EXERCISE**

a)

***Family Crest***

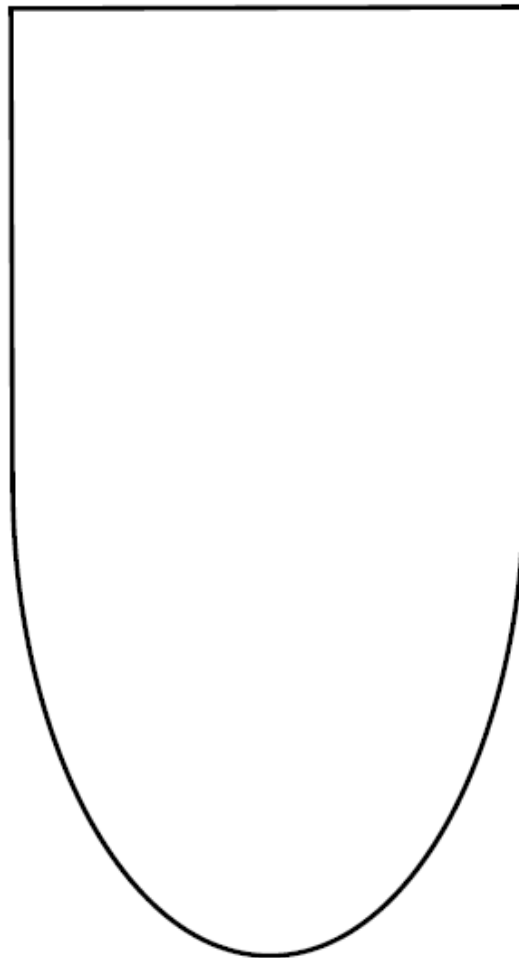




**Unit 1: Who Are We? What Are We Made For?**  
Meeting 6: Discovering "Our Name".

**b)**

***Final Design of our Family Crest***





**Unit 2:** Submerging Ourselves into our Marital Ideal  
Meeting 1: How Do We Submerge Ourselves into God?

## **UNIT 2:**

### **Submerging Ourselves into our Marital Ideal**

#### **MEETING 1 – HOW DO WE SUBMERGE OURSELVES INTO GOD?**

**Objective: Learn and practice a reflection on life, in order to savor the paternal and free love of God in our marital history, in our Marital Ideal.**

Within each of us there is a **powerful longing for a home** where we are loved and respected, we are valued and understood, where finding myself means finding ourselves, and that encounter is a time of happiness and joy. This longing is a need that exists in both the natural and supernatural realms. As we grow in our attachment to God, we will notice that we are finding this home, in the heart of our Father. It is there that we will always experience closeness, encounter, abiding, peace and freedom.

Saint Augustine described this longing in a beautiful phrase: “My heart is restless, O God, until I rest in you!”

**Our hearts have so much need of rest and tranquility!** A need to speak simply without fearing how our words will be interpreted; a need to feel loved for who we are and not what we have; a need to be seen as someone of value and not as a nuisance here to be used, changed and discarded if we don't rise up to the expectations that others have of us...

To feel valued and called by our name (our Marital Ideal), to be special and different from others – this is how God conceived of us and in this way He loves us deeply. To feel loved by Him makes us happier, and enables us to face life with more strength and peace. Only God can provide us with **the fullness of love**, because He is Love. He is always present, He remains, He waits for us, and He knows even the most hidden crevice of our souls. He loves us freely and unconditionally. **God is the beginning and the end.** Everything originated in His triune heart, both the creation of the entire world as well as each one of us. Everything has been His work. He created everything with and infinite love conceived through His Son Jesus Christ, and He desires that everything returns to the home where it was born: **His Heart.**



**God is an authentic Father**, a daddy: this is the great revelation delivered to us by Christ. The face, the heart and hands of God are those of a Father, of a good, merciful Father.

As we've already discussed, God is not an idea, not an abstraction; He is a Person. He is my Father, and **I am the fruit of His love.**

This is the experience we must have of God. Our reflection on life helps us to acquire this experience. We must create opportunities for ourselves that allow us to encounter ourselves which will bring us to confront the true meaning of our existence, and which, ultimately, are opportunities that bring us to a deeper friendship with God. **The God we seek and who we encounter in our reflection on life is the God of Love.**

**Why do we often find that this meditation and reflection does not work for us?**

1. One reason might be that we still **do not experience an authentic prayer life.** Many think of prayer as a task of intellectual reflection, or as mere repetition of words. This is not true. The most important facet of prayer is for **our will and our hearts to be given to God.** Prayer is a dialogue of hearts between God and His creation; in other words, **between God and me.**

It is a conversation with Him, closely and naturally. God awaits us, and wants us to tell Him how our day has been, about the things we did, about our work, about our experiences with others, about our pain, our bad times, our peeves, and our sorrows. He wants to hear about our family, our joys, our accomplishments, our hopes, etc.

It is IMPORTANT to understand that it is by praying that we learn to pray.
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## A Story for the Soul: An Empty Chair

A daughter asked the priest to go to her house to pray over her father, who was very sick. When the priest arrived at the sick man's room, he found the man in bed with his head propped up on a couple of pillows. There was a chair next to the bed, which caused the priest to assume that the man had known that he was coming to see him.



"I suppose you've been waiting for me," he told him.

"No, who are you?" asked the man.

"I am the priest that your daughter called to pray with you. When I saw the empty chair next to the bed, I supposed that you knew that I was coming to see you."

"Oh yes, the chair," said the sick man. "Would you mind closing the door?"

Surprised, the priest closed it.

"I've never told this to anyone, but... I've spent my whole life not knowing how to pray. Whenever I've been in church, I've always heard a about prayer, what should be prayed, and the benefits of prayer, and so on. But this business about prayer has always gone in one ear and out the other, since I have no idea how to do it. So a long time ago, I gave up completely on prayer. It's been like that for me until about four years ago, when I was talking to my best friend, who told me, 'Joseph, this business of prayer is simply having a conversation with Jesus. I suggest that's how you should do it... sit in a chair, put an empty chair in front of you, and then, with faith, picture Jesus sitting in front of you. This isn't crazy, because He said *I am always with you*. So, you talk to him and you listen to him, just like you're doing with me now.' So I did it like that once, and I liked it so much, I've been doing it like that for about two hours a day since then. I try to make sure my daughter doesn't see me like this, because she'd immediately put me in the nut house."

The priest was greatly moved upon hearing this, and told Joseph that what he was doing was very good, and that he should not stop. He prayed with him, blessed him, anointed him and left.

Two days later, Joseph's daughter called the priest to tell him that her father had died.

The priest asked "Did he die in peace?"

"Yes, when I left home around two in the afternoon he called me. I went to his bed, he told me how much he loved me, and kissed me. When I returned from shopping an hour later, I found him dead. But there's something strange about his death, because





just before he died he must have moved to the seat next to his bed and laid his head on it, because that's how I found him. What do you think this could mean?"

The priest wiped away the tears from his eyes and told her, "if only we could all go that way."

2. Another cause of imperfect prayer is that we **do not give enough importance to preparing for it**. The grace of an intimate encounter with the God of our life is a gift from the Holy Spirit. Along with **asking for the gift** of a deeper inner life, what is required is the firm **decision and determination** on our part, an adequate method, and much **patience and perseverance**. It would be a fantasy to attempt to move, directly, from full activity into a moment of intimacy with God in which we immediately established a dialogue of love with Him.

### **3. Reading that deeply touches my Soul: *The Little Prince*, Chapter XXI**

It was then that the fox appeared.

"Good morning,"  
said the fox.

"Good morning," the  
little prince respon-  
ded politely, alt-  
hough when he tur-  
ned around he saw  
nothing.

"I am right here,"  
the voice said, "un-  
der the apple tree."

"Who are you?" as-  
ked the little prince,  
and added, "You are  
very pretty to look  
at."

"I am a fox," the fox  
said.

"Come and play  
with me," proposed  
the little prince. "I am so unhappy."

"I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed."

"Ah! Please excuse me," said the little prince.





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But, after some thought, he added:

"What does that mean--'tame'?"

"You do not live here," said the fox. "What is it that you are looking for?"

"I am looking for men," said the little prince. "What does that mean--'tame'?"

"Men," said the fox. "They have guns, and they hunt. It is very disturbing. They also raise chickens. These are their only interests. Are you looking for chickens?"

"No," said the little prince. "I am looking for friends. What does that mean--'tame'?"

"It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. It means to establish ties."

"To establish ties'?"

"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . ."

"I am beginning to understand," said the little prince. "There is a flower . . . I think that she has tamed me . . ."

"It is possible," said the fox. "On the Earth one sees all sorts of things."

"Oh, but this is not on the Earth!" said the little prince.

The fox seemed perplexed, and very curious.

"On another planet?"

"Yes."

"Are there hunters on that planet?"

"No."

"Ah, that is interesting! Are there chickens?"

"No."

"Nothing is perfect," sighed the fox.





But he came back to his idea.

"My life is very monotonous," the fox said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all the men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the color of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat . . ."

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.

"Please--tame me!" he said.

"I want to, very much," the little prince replied. "But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand."

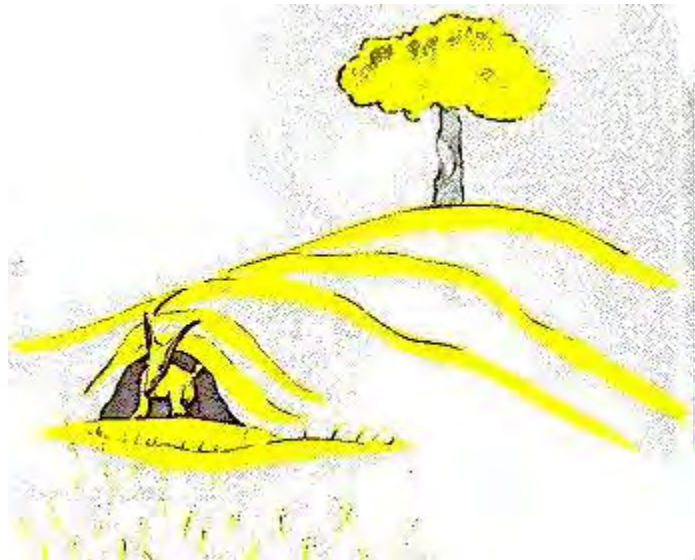
"One only understands the things that one tames," said the fox. "Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things already made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more. If you want a friend, tame me . . ."

"What must I do, to tame you?" asked the little prince.

"You must be very patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me--like that--in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day . . ."

The next day the little prince came back.

"It would have been better to come back at the same hour," said the fox. "If, for example, you come at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never





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know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you; one must observe the proper rites . . ."

"What is a rite?" asked the little prince.

"Those also are actions too often neglected," said the fox. "They are what make one day different from other days, one hour from other hours. There is a rite, for example, among my hunters. Every Thursday they dance with the village girls. So Thursday is a wonderful day for me! I can take a walk as far as the vineyards. But if the hunters danced at just any time, every day would be like every other day, and I should never have any vacation at all."

So the little prince tamed the fox. And when the hour of his departure drew near--

"Ah," said the fox, "I shall cry."

"It is your own fault," said the little prince. "I never wished you any sort of harm; but you wanted me to tame you . . ."

"Yes, that is so," said the fox.

"But now you are going to cry!" said the little prince.

"Yes, that is so," said the fox.

"Then it has done you no good at all!"

"It has done me good," said the fox, "because of the color of the wheat fields." And then he added:

"Go and look again at the roses. You will understand now that yours is unique in all the world. Then come back to say goodbye to me, and I will make you a present of a secret."

The little prince went away, to look again at the roses.

"You are not at all like my rose," he said. "As yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world."

And the roses were very much embarrassed.



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"You are beautiful, but you are empty," he went on. "One could not die for you. To be sure, an ordinary passerby would think that my rose looked just like you--the rose that belongs to me. But in herself alone she is more important than all the hundreds of you other roses: because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have put under the glass globe; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or ever sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is *my* rose.

And he went back to meet the fox.

"Goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

"It is the time I have wasted for my rose--" said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember.

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."

"I am responsible for my rose," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.



**4 - COUPLE EXERCISE**

**In what ways have we been moved or influenced by the discovery of our Marital Ideal?**

**What religious habits or customs have helped us to draw closer to God our Father, have made a mark on our married and family life, and could now help us to “savor” our Marital Ideal?**

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**Which of these customs do we want to continue to develop, or do we think are needed for us, as we are, to live in God’s paternal love (Marital Ideal)?**

In our marriage:

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In our family:

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At work:

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**What do we commit to, and how will we do it?**

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**To go deeper...**

**Find a passage from the Bible that attracts us, that we love most, or perhaps a poem, special song, or even a poem, painting, image, etc...**

**Think of how it is reflected in our life, how it applies to our reality, and relate it to our Marital Ideal. Does it confirm our Marital Ideal?**

Some examples to motivate us:

1. We like the verse of the flowers: Luke 12:27,  
and our Marital Ideal was **Fount of Joy, Bearers of the Warm Love of God.**  
Think for a moment how this verse is related with what we are (Fount of Joy) and with our mission (Bearers of the Warm Love of God). How does the verse affirm our Marital Ideal?

2. Another couple was always moved by song, based on the poetry of Saint Teresa of Avila:

Let nothing disturb you,  
Let nothing frighten you,  
All things are passing away:  
God never changes.  
Patience obtains all things  
Whoever has God lacks nothing;  
God alone suffices.



-- *St. Teresa of Avila*

This couple's Ideal revolves around the surrender to DIVINE PROVIDENCE.  
They clearly saw that their Marital Ideal was confirmed by the song, and these days, the song always makes them remember and renew their Marital Ideal.



**PERSONAL EXERCISE**

**An Exercise in Meditation about the Spouse**

If I am a married person, who is closer to me than my spouse? It is through that person that God tells me that He loves me in a very personal, unique, and faithful way, with a love that is willing to give itself entirely, that extends beyond time itself: a love that proves itself “in illness or in health,” as is prayed in the Sacrament.

Have I ever meditated upon my spouse? What does God tell me through him or her? God has made me feel His kindness, His care, His interest in me through my spouse. Not only that, He has also shown me His wishes, what He requires of me – all of that is perceptible through my Spouse. However, many times my daily life leads me to lose sight of the admiration that I had for that person, that admiration that initially captivated me. It is imperative to “dust off” that image, to refresh and rediscover just how much God has given to me in this unique person created just for me. I must, therefore, try to rediscover this, and I ask God to open my eyes.

What is God telling me through him or her? How does this relate to our Marital Ideal?

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And so arrives the moment to move into the second phase of my meditation. What shall I tell myself? Have I become so used to my spouse that I no longer admire him or her as I used to? Do I perceive the comprehension of God in his or her comprehension? Do I see in her or his faithfulness and service a love and the help of God? Do I find, in his or her forgiveness, God’s forgiveness? Do I listen to her or him, or do I fail to give what is said enough importance? What is she or he saying to me now? What do I perceive in his or her words, gestures and attitude?







## **UNIT 2:**

### **Submerging Ourselves into our Marital Ideal**

#### **MEETING 2: DISCOVERING THE LOVE OF GOD THE FATHER**

**Objective: Experience the great love that God has for us, to know him as a true father of infinite love and mercy.**

What an amazing gift it is to discover the GREAT LOVE OF GOD for each and every one of us, and for us as a special, unique and original married couple! How wonderful to see how, this year, we have been able to feel His presence in how far we've journeyed so far in our discovery of our Marital Ideal, as He has conceived of us, with infinite love since the beginning of time.

Many times we only turn to God when we need something urgently, or in the face of pain or struggles. On the other hand, when we pass through times that are calmer, happier, or, for example, while on vacation, how we forget about Him – we “store” him in our hearts.

However, the truth is that we have a God, not to “put in storage,” not for “certain times,” but as a LIVING GOD, close and warm, who is truly FATHER, who accompanies us, loves us infinitely (without limits!), who cares for us, who demands of us, who visits us, who waits for us, who speaks to us, who forgives us...

The Lord moves to meet each person all the time, but sometimes finds that they do not hear Him, do not want to hear Him, and, even worse, reject Him!  
We journey through life distractedly, consumed by things and responsibilities, but without time to notice the steps of God in our lives!

In order to experience this greatness, we must be open, attentive, with willing hearts, and permeable to God's love.

What follows is a short story that illustrates the love of God in a very simple way.



## **My Child, Give Me Your Heart**

A little girl had heard at school the Bible verse, “The son gives his heart to the Father.” At home, she asked her father what it meant. He thought about it and said, after a while, “I can’t answer that yet, I have to think about it for a bit – but can you lend me your change purse for a few days?”

The daughter thought it strange, wondering what reason her father could have to ask for her purse, since he had so much money, while, on the other hand, there were only a few cents in her change purse. But, full of confidence, the girl pulled out her purse and placed it in her father’s hands.

A couple of days later, the father called his daughter and asked if she had an idea about why he wanted her purse. The girl answered that she thought that perhaps he wanted to put something in it.

“Yes, you are right. You see, the same thing happens with our good God, with our Father in Heaven. **He wants our heart, in which, usually, there is not much, but He wants it so he can deposit some of His divine love and kindness into it.**”

When one experiences the PATERNAL LOVE of God, one feels immense joy, is at peace, and is happy.

We must keep our hearts ready, willing and open so that God may enter them. So that He may manifest himself there, and so we may recognize Him there.

It may be through people, events, a Saint who attracts us, music, a stunning landscape, a family member, a priest, a nun, our husband, our wife, our children, etc.

God shows Himself everywhere, but we must be attentive.

As Pope Benedict XVI said, “We must stop and notice more,” of what is happening, what is happening to others, of everything.

If we allow the Lord in, we will be fully happy, in spite of oncoming storms, challenges and crosses, because on the inside we will always be joyful in THE LOVE OF GOD. He shall thus be able to manifest Himself to others through us.

Think for a moment...

If we look backwards and review our lives, these last few months, the work we have done here, how we have grown!

How much have we already received from our beloved Lord?



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At times we take for granted everything that has been given to us (family, friends, children, education, health, home, joys, etc.).

We believe that this is the norm, that it obviously should be this way!

In order to abide more deeply in these gifts of God, and to experience the “Love of God the Father,” we must learn to BE GRATEFUL.

**It is important to be grateful so that love may grow.**

**WITH HEARTFELT LOVE**

*With heartfelt love, I thank you Mother dear,  
with you to guide me I need have no fear.  
When all around seemed dark and drear and gray,  
you stood as beacon for a brighter day.  
Your smile illumined every wakeful hour,  
you did uphold me with your gentle power.  
Thanks, a thousand thanks to you, to God shall be  
now and for all eternity.*

Fr. Joseph Kenterich, Heavenwards p. 170



### **COUPLE EXERCISE**

Let us discover how joy and cross have been the voice of God by looking at it from a distance. For that, we will complete the following exercise to “find the imprints” of God in our lives:

#### **"The Search for Imprints"**

... was born in the circles and groups of the Schoenstatt Movement. This method is founded on the conviction of being able to discover the imprint of God everywhere: in what lives inside of us, in our encounters with other people, in all of creation, in the events of big and small stories, in the processes of science and technology.

What is our methodology for finding these imprints?

#### **Introductory Prayer**

Lord, we ask you to make us attentive to your presence in our midst.  
Send us the light of the Holy Spirit to guide our thought, and so that our hearts will see and listen.

#### **1. Remember**

What has moved me, impressed me, and especially touched me in these last few days?  
In silence, I relive these experiences again in my heart.

#### **2. Tell**

What do I want to tell others?  
I speak of what is important to me.  
I attentively listen to what the others contribute.



### 3. Discover

What especially catches my attention in these memories?

In what I've heard, where can I discern the imprint of God, His proximity, His beauty, His guidance, His desires, His demands, His mystery?

I can begin my dialogue with the others about all this.

### 4. A Reading from the Word of God

### 5. Response

What am I being moved to? To gratitude, to ask, to complain, to ask, to give, to change something in me or in my circumstances

I meditate in silence about what I can do.

We may also decide together what we want to undertake together.

### 6. Thanksgiving

Lord, we thank you for the gift of your closeness. We ask you to give us the strength to do what needs to be done, and for patience to withstand that which we do not understand.

With Mary we pray: "My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord, and my Spirit rejoices in God my Savior."

### The Search for Imprints

Is a way to discover "the God of Life."

We speak of what moves us: inner inspirations, experiences, and events.

We try, in faith, to interpret it as a call from God.

For this, we rely on the Biblical tradition that testifies that the Spirit of God faithfully accompanies mankind, and is in and acts on everything.

"They were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were walking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came up and walked by their side; but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. He said to them, 'What are all these things that you are discussing as you walk along'" (Luke 24: 14-17)



**To go a bit deeper, we suggest reading the following Biblical passages:**

### **1. Treasure and the Pearl (Matthew 13: 44-46)**

#### **Meditation:**

In this passage we encounter two realities, fairly similar yet subtly different. In both cases, upon encountering the true LOVE that is God, they leave everything else and do whatever they can to get it.

In the first instance, the “treasure” is the casual encounter with the Kingdom of God. On the other hand, with the “pearl” we are in the presence of someone who is searching for the Kingdom. That is where we are, in a profound search for the Love of God the Father, who makes us feel good, fulfilled.

What is it we are doing to attain that “treasure” or that “pearl,” that love that is reflected in a profound way in our Marital Ideal?

God will always be there, and will show Himself, so we must attentively keep our eyes, ears and hearts extremely attentive, yet it is also important to step out to seek Him. We must not lose the opportunity to work, with all our effort, to arrive at the Kingdom, to that joy that will be eternal, true and forever!

### **2. The Ten Lepers (Luke 17: 11-19)**

Read and comment on this passage from the Gospel of Luke.

Luego si deseas ve este video <http://https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=06QJO-QBVpQ>

#### **Meditation:**

Of the ten lepers, only one was told “your faith has saved you,” as his faith brought him to Jesus. He returned to give thanks, prostrating himself at His feet. This was an act of faith, and God saved him.

Nowadays, we often receive small miracles due to God’s mercy, but to attain salvation, we must place ourselves at the feet of Jesus.

God our Father is infinitely merciful, constantly awaiting our heart’s repentance in order to forgive us. We may fall a thousand times, but our Lord will always be there to shelter us and hug us, granting us true peace. It is to Him that we surrender in order to garner strength and begin anew, picking ourselves up and continuing on our way.

In order to keep growing and advancing along our journey, we must stop ourselves. The teachings of Schoenstatt offers us certain aids for this.



## COUPLE EXERCISE

### The “Rs”

We have arrived at a transcendental point in which and from which we can grow much as a marriage. To put these “Rs” in action, we must buckle down and want to do it. At the beginning, we should not aspire to perfection, remembering what it was like when we were learning to ride a bicycle: we did not give up because we fell.

To accomplish the 3 “Rs,” it is essential to doggedly perform the “2ndR,” which is **Reignite** our marital love; it means to return to dating once a week. During this dating period of our courtship, there were no children, nor issues of home or work. This is why we do this under the banner of “sometimes I treat, sometimes you do.” The question is About what we are treating each other to: to dance, to eat, to work out or play a sport, to go to the movies, to take a walk, etc. What matters is that the activity should be an excuse to cultivate our love, that from every “treat” you emerge strengthened and more in love than before.

(The “1<sup>st</sup> R” is **Remember to pray**, together, every day)

The “3<sup>rd</sup> R” is Review, to give yourself time to

Review the previous month:



#### 1. Most important events

Events from the last month

External events: international and national

Internal events: incidents from personal and family life

It is best to first name them, and then evaluate them in relation to how these events resonated in my soul.

In relation to

- a. God
- b. My marriage
- c. My family
- d. My friends
- e. Myself
- f. My work





**Unit 2: Submerging Ourselves into our Marital Ideal**  
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## 2. Received gifts

There are certain “gifts” that we receive.  
It is important, in the first place, to develop our senses to detect these “gifts,” meaning that we must not “take things at face value.”  
In the second place, it is necessary to receive them as gifts.  
In the third place, we must dare to unwrap and open them.

In relation to

- a. God
- b. My marriage
- c. My family
- d. My friends
- e. Myself
- f. My work



## 2. In what areas have I grown?

During the past month, we have grown in certain ways. It is important to notice this growth. Our areas of growth are characterized, in the majority of cases, by slow growth, so it is important not to be alarmed that they are not happening as fast as we desire. Determine in what areas we grew. Determine whether this growth was proposed by us at the beginning of the month, or whether it occurred due to circumstances.

In relation to

- a. God
- b. My marriage
- c. My family
- d. My friends
- e. Myself
- f. My work



### 3. What have my struggles been?

During the past month, we have had struggles. It is necessary to examine them, verify them and evaluate them.

Examine them: how did they occur?

Verify them: how did they affect me?

Evaluate them: how do I integrate them into my life next month, follow the Lord by picking up my cross?

How do I pick it up? How do I follow Him?



In relation to

- a. God
- b. My marriage
- c. My family
- d. My friends
- e. Myself
- f. My work



### 4. Monthly Summary

Examining the above, try to summarize in one paragraph what I have experienced in this month. Now, in a wider context, I will prioritize certain things above others. It is useful here to find the deeper roots and differentiate them from the branches. To detect those roots it is critical to examine these verified realities through the prism of the Marital Ideal.

### 5. Points of Reconciliation

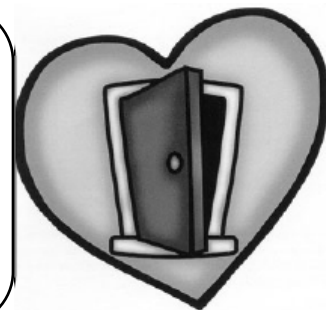
After a final look at the month, it is necessary to reconcile.

Reconcile with people

Reconcile with God

The point is not to go looking for fault where it does not exist.

The objective is to once again stand tall, to be at peace with our brothers and with God.





**Unit 2:** Submerging Ourselves into our Marital Ideal  
Meeting 2: Discovering the Love of God the Father



**Planning the next month**  
Do not only look at the past, but look at what will come, the future.  
We seek not to live through the month, but to live the month.

Attitude I will work on next month  
(reinforce or correct) of my Marital Ideal

Reasons:



**Our motto for the month**  
One phrase that will remind me every day of the attitude that I am fostering.

**Our commitment for the month**  
To cement the attitude that we want to reinforce or correct in my Marital Ideal, we make a “commitment” that we can objectively evaluate and measure, and can be done daily.



Other items to work on

In relation to God  
In relation to people  
In relation to myself  
In relation to work  
What seeds do I wish to plant in regards to these points?



**Intentions of the Month**



## **MEETING 3: DEEPENING OUR PILLARS**

**Objective: Rewrite the Marital Ideal into a maximum of 4 attitudes that express it concretely, defining what you understand by each attitude regarding your Marital Ideal.**

After all the good work of this year, we have discovered our Marital Ideal. Perhaps more than one of you is wondering if all of this work makes sense, if it is “applicable” and workable. In this crazy life that we live, is it possible to live according to ideals? Is it realistic to swim against the current in THESE TIMES?

On the other hand, if we are honest with ourselves, who are the true “teachers” of life, those whom we have admired and admire today? Who are those who effectively run their lives, or those whom we see as happy and whose life is “in order?”

There are not many things in life these days that help us to be truly sensible, to put things in their proper place, to live life based on our deepest convictions. This means that many times we are “out of sorts,” uncentered, with all of the consequences that this implies for us, for our families, and for all those around us.

During this meeting, we invite you to more deeply examine the importance that ideals have in our spirituality.

### **I) The Sense of Ideals in Schoenstatt**

Our spirituality is a powerful response to what we live in TODAY: it calls us to live from the inside, from what we are, from what GOD conceived of us. All of the struggles that we experience these days on all fronts seem to scream at us: Be yourself! Be free! Do what YOU want to do, fulfill yourself! And so on, and so on. However:

- These day, almost everything seems to say “grab it all, you can do it...” And in the end, we have nothing. We are not supermen or superwomen!

We do want EVERYTHING, but in a realistic manner. We know that what truly matters in life does not come “cheap.” To be happy is something truly great, as it is what we are called to for all eternity. God wants us to collaborate with him in this task. To become what we truly are **requires time**; this “self-construction” follows rules and comes in stages.



**Unit 2:** Submerging Ourselves into our Marital Ideal  
**Meeting 3:** Deepening Our Pillars

- Couples that dedicate their time to this establish solid foundations for their entire lives. Sometimes we overlook that fact that the life of a family has stages. For example, it takes time for the “new unity” that we form as a couple to become stronger than that of our families of origin; for the problems of one of us to become those of both of us, meaning that we have to help each other to resolve them to avoid confrontation, etc.
- Many times we do not include what each brings to this “new construction” of “us.” For example, the wounds that each brings to the marriage “come to light” and can hinder our relationship. However, they could also be a source for increased mutual knowledge, unity, etc.

This construction of “us” implies **making choices**: so much depends on this: our happiness, MANY PEOPLE, not only our children, depend on these choices. What does this all mean? We must, for example:

- Seriously consider all of the help that is offered to us. Become aware that we are very privileged to be offered so much in our formation. But we must put in the time “for real” with our all of our hearts. This requires work, and doesn’t happen by itself.
- Dedicate time to reflection, to speaking about things more deeply. Review our goals, the state of our marriage. Take time to enjoy things together, to share, etc.
- Be aware that making choices means to do one thing and not the other. It does not mean to fill your time with more things. It means to make decisions about the space that things will occupy in your own life. So many times we say that we don’t have time to talk, yet we do have time to watch TV, to be “tweeting,” to play a sport, etc. We’re not talking about never doing those things, BUT about examining our priorities. What does our ranking of concrete values look like?
- Schoenstatt and our Covenant of Love, our spirituality, seek to help you to become the protagonist of your life; that you take yourself seriously in the same way that God takes you seriously. We want you to be absolutely convinced that you are the one who is writing your story, and that doesn’t happen by “spontaneous combustion”



Working with ideals is a way of living, of confronting all of life, starting from what we are, from the project of love that God has for each and every one of us as a marriage.

- What is behind every teaching offered by Schoenstatt is a concept of what life is. It is the belief that we are not something “casual or accidental,” but that God created us for an infinite and special love, and He has given us a mission in life. He conceived of us in love, the same way you did with your children.
- In order for this to remain undiluted and unclouded, we must seek concrete ways for this, which is most important and primary, to continue to remain most important and primary in our lives.

## II) Our Common “Watchtower,” or Vantage Point

The deepest meaning of our **Marital Ideal** is that it is the platform on which we live, our “operations center.” We are not an accident...

That God Himself has a plan for us is the greatest thing in the world! In the end, this is what most unites us, brings complicity and joy.

If we take it seriously, this is our greatest help in hard times, in crises, which are also parts of life. To achieve this, however, we must constantly feed this faith, renew our wonder in how God and our Mater have guided us and continue to guide us. This way of living, this FAITH give us an existential sense of security far greater and more lasting than, for example, monetary things. But it is something that must be cultivated and practiced. We must not be so naïve as to think that it happens by itself. Whatever is purely spontaneous does not last, nor does it withstand the test of fire. The commitment to live our ideals requires discipline, as does EVERYTHING worthwhile in life.

Our children become united into this deep vantage point. This is the greatest gift that we have for all those who are involved in our lives, including family, friends, etc.

## III) How do we Feed our Ideals?

- The “Rs” we have been told about since the beginning are a very concrete help for us. Behind them is the “Schoenstatt Principle of Construction.”
  - Freedom, as far as possible
  - Obligations, the necessary minimum, **BUT**



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- Above all, an intensive cultivation of the Spirit
- Concretely, savor the Marital Ideal, be creative, find ingenious ways to keep it present, make it more valuable through study, related readings, etc.
  - When working the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> “R”, above all, fill yourself with this truth
  - Find ways to remain “connected” to the Marital Ideal, constantly seeking new ways, highlighting different facets, etc.
- Each month, commit to something concrete
  - Work each of the attitudes that are the pillars of our Marital Ideal

#### **IV) Group Exercise**

- 1) Discuss your experiences with the “Rs”: have they been useful?
- 2) What has helped us to remain connected to our Marital Ideal?

#### **V) Couple Exercise**

- 1) If not already done, **write down the 3 or 4 pillars**, or fundamental attitudes that are the foundation of our Marital Ideal.
- 2) **Describe** each of these attitudes, basing the description on the work done in discovering our Marital Ideal, and reach agreement on what we each understand the meaning of these attitudes (Write a short definition on what these attitudes or pillars mean to us).
- 3) Ask yourselves: Which of these pillars do we think we need to work the most on at this time of our lives?  
How, concretely, will we do this?



## **UNIT 3: BRINGING OUR MARITAL IDEAL TO LIFE**

### **MEETING 1: OUR PEDAGOGY AND THE MARITAL IDEAL**

**Objective: Understand our Marital Ideal in light of our particular pedagogy, in all its fullness, as an aid to shaping our daily lives in conformity with the Ideal**

We have developed our Marital Ideal, and the question that comes to mind is:

#### **So, NOW WHAT?**

Does this have any real implications in our daily lives? Is this a real help, or is it simply another “toolbox” for us to carry around?

On top of everything else, we are living in very unique times on the national and international fronts, times of great unrest, of discontent, of searching for new ways, and everything feels and seems very turbulent.

In the midst of such a complex setting, there is a lack of people who truly see things clearly and who can make truly decisive contributions.

In addition, each one of us has his own personal story, problems, challenges, etc.

However, we also deeply long for something greater, for a life that answers so many questions, and which a safer framework to our own families, so that they may grow in a healthier environment. On top of that, we also long to make a valuable contribution to society, at work and at Church.

Is our Marital Ideal helpful to us in this sense? How?

It would certainly seem so. It seems to be able to provide us with a valid answer, since so many of our members are well entrenched in public life and society, in the life of the Church, and making important contributions. Schoenstatt apostles are everywhere... we are present on all 5 continents. We also count beatified people among our membership: our Founder is currently in the process of beatification, and other beatification processes are underway.

So what, explicitly, do we do? How do we carry on?





### **A) Behind everything there is “someone” and SOMEONE**

- Behind the entire journey that you have made, there is something more, something much deeper, essential and decisive for the lives of each of you and of your families, for society, for the Church.
- There is an incredible person, who allowed God to use him radically, in order to offer a valid response TODAY, to show the way TODAY.
- Our Father and Founder was a person who, more than 100 years ago, saw where the train of history was headed, with all of the manifestations that we see today. We know his story, how his own father never wanted to see him or acknowledge him, how his mother, due to life's adversities, had to leave him at an orphanage so that she could work and support him. He had a bad time there, and underwent an enormous crisis as an adolescent. His dream of becoming a priest was almost trumped. Later on, he was in a concentration camp. The church exiled him. These are but a few brush strokes of his life.
- Where, then, did he find all the beauty and positivity that we find in Schoensatt?  
This beauty of our Marital Ideal?

### **B) What is the mystery behind all of this?**

- The mystery has a name, and is linked to a place: Mary and her Shrine. We already know that this story began previously: with the Covenant that he sealed with Mary, when his mother entrusted him to her upon leaving him at the orphanage on December 4, 1894.
- Mary taught him, bit by bit, that God is truly ALIVE, that He approaches us. She teaches him that of the Covenant that God has sealed, throughout our Salvation history, with mankind, with the people of Israel, is not dead, but is LIFE. She shows that He gives His Creation, His children, TO EACH OF HIS CHILDREN.
- She teaches him that God “inhabits” his children, just as He inhabited her, and so Christ is incarnate in each of us. He is a God who wishes to be close to His children, to love them, to embrace them, to help them, to become ONE with each one of them.



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- She teaches, by her life, that being Christian means to be attentive to the voice of the Father, and how to, like Jesus, BELIEVE in all things in the infinite LOVE OF THE FATHER, to offer Him a response of love, that LOVE that HE gives to us. She teaches that this response is not easy, that it encompasses all that we are, our entire story, but that HE never leaves us alone, that HE wants to heal in the deepest way, in order for us to become another Christ, another Mary.
- The mystery is that this man lived this call to be like Jesus and Mary radically, ALL for God the Father and for everyone. Instead of keeping this treasure that God was working in him to himself, the only thing he wanted and wants is to share it with responsible love with all those that God placed in his path throughout time.
- He attentively awaited a sign to offer this treasure to others. He knew what loneliness, abandonment, hopelessness and homelessness were. He does not want anyone to feel that they do not have a home.
- This sign was revealed slowly at first. Working as a teacher with young boys, he realized that in him there was something quite great, which came from “beyond.” He became aware that God Himself had placed something “sacred” in him.
- Mary “whispered” to him that she wanted to establish a concrete home in our midst, in order to bring us to that deepness of faith to which she brought him.
- So he, still young, accepted the challenge and gave himself, without reservations, to the Salvation plans that God has for us TODAY, in which Mary, as Spouse and as Jesus’ Collaborator, wishes to collaborate. And so, Schoenstatt was born when the Covenant of Love was sealed in a small abandoned chapel in a small valley in Germany.

**C) Our pedagogy: a gift that requires and still requires our collaboration**

- Our pedagogy of Schoenstatt is a gift, but one that requires our collaboration. Fr. Kentenich knew this from his own experience, and in his educational labors he allowed himself to be guided, remained attentive to the ways in which God speaks to the souls of those who trust Him. With impressive respect, he listened, learning from everyone, guiding them.
- He later began to systematize all that he lived throughout the years. We can almost say that this is a “divine pedagogy,” since, as he always said, he learned



from how God does it... **It is a pedagogy that seeks to help us to unite faith and life.** It is intended to be a link that helps us to live from our faith, that configures our daily life according to this faith, and that is down deep where the roots of all of our problems exist today.

We shall attempt to summarize what we have already lived in our movement:

**One way to do this is to systematize our pedagogy into different “STARS of the pedagogy of the Ideals” that light our way:**

(Pedagogy of the Ideal, dynamic, confidence, freedom, attachments, Covenant)

**D) A jump into FAITH is required: We are marked with HIS imprint!**

\* **Pedagogy of the Ideal:** He is a God who marked each us with His imprint, and he also marked the love that He gave us as a married couple. He gave us an original and unique face, because this love for me, this love for us is unique. I am His image, just as our children are images of the love we have for each other. This is truth! This is the source of my dignity, my joy in life, the consciousness of my responsibility in my life and in those of others. This is what gives me strength to surrender it all for a mission, for my Father who is God.

\* **Pedagogy of the dynamic:** In this, the “Star of the Show” is God as principal actor, our God who invites us to collaborate with Him as Mary did, who does not censor us, but who rather begins with where we are in life, with how we are, with our history and reality.

**E) The Father and Mother who love and have confidence in their children**

\* **Pedagogy of confidence:** They believe in me, know that what is inside of me was given by God and is therefore good. From this belief a deep respect for each person is born, an admiration of this “work of God,” and will do everything so that this marvelous work shall develop in me and in others (spouse, children, family, work, etc.)

\* **Pedagogy of freedom:** This means to allow each other to follow our own paths, displaying the Ideal. What is important is for each person to understand that they must do something to respond, from within, to the love of God, according to how each person is.

**F) The “nest” that we require for growth**

\* **Pedagogy of attachments:** We all need a nest to grow in, an appropriate environment where love rules. We therefore speak of an entire net of attachments:

+ Natural attachments (family, friends, etc.) and supernatural attachments (God, our Mater, the saints, etc.)



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+ Attachments to places (home, school, the Shrine, etc.)

+ Attachments to ideas (our faith, philosophy, Schoenstatt and its doctrine, etc.)

\* **Pedagogy of Covenant:** knowing that the easiest way to arrive at our goal is love, we accept the entire human being, from his or her core. To this extent, with the collaboration of our Mater and Teacher who feeds us, we “mow” and fertilize the soil, etc. These dormant capabilities begin to develop in us, as we become a leafy tree that offers shade, shelter and food to all those that gather near it.

### **MARITAL AND GROUP EXERCISE**

- As a couple, speak about what has most moved us regarding the pedagogy of Schoenstatt. Where have we seen the teaching manifested in the way we have grown in the movement?

- Discuss in the larger group, and talk about how this can be applied to our marriages, the raising of our children, at work, in the group, etc.

### **COMMITMENT**

Select the “star” (\*) that most attracted us and apply it to a concrete action in the family, with the children, or between spouses.

### **Bibliography**

“200 Questions about Schoenstatt”, Fr. Jonathan Niehaus (p.66-100)

“The Family at the Service of Life”, Fr. Joseph Kentenich (p. 119 - 169)



## **MEETING 2: AIDS FOR ACHIEVING OUR MARITAL IDEAL**

**Objective: Come to know and begin the use the Spiritual Daily Order as a concrete way of bringing our Marital Ideal to life**

**The following story is suggested for use as a prompt:**

I awoke one cool spring morning. From inside, I could hear the clickety-clack of the gardener's shears trimming the garden's trees. John, the gardener, was working hard. I watched him stop at each branch, examining them from their base at the trunk all the way to their fine points. Each time he trimmed something, I had the strange sensation that he was helping the tree, even if I did not understand exactly why he would trim that exact spot.

I told him to cut down the small apple tree. Winter had attacked it so fiercely that it seemed dead to me. In the middle of the morning, I took a cup of tea to John. I found him facing the apple tree, of which he had only cut a pair of branches. I asked him, intrigued, why he did it that way.

John told me, "It is not dead ma'am, it just needs a little effort. Look, the inside of the trunk is green and fresh. I only trimmed some branches that were only offering some protection but are no longer needed."

He could tell that I didn't understand a thing he was saying. He added, "You saw it as dry, and lifeless; but if you look carefully, you'll see some signs of buds that nature will germinate. Even if it seems like very few to you, there are thousands of others that we can't see, but they are there, ready to grow. Ma'am, every fruit tree holds something in reserve, and when it seems like it has nothing left, it moves forward and shows its little buds. We call them "dormant sprouts."

I took my leave of John, taking the teacup that he had emptied, and he told me that he was going to be fertilizing it to help Mother Nature. He told me, "You'll see, ma'am, how it will flourish." As I walked away, I watched him take up his shovel to help nature and those "dormant sprouts."



## The “dormant sprouts” and “Ascetic Means”

Throughout the history of the Church, different paths for following Christ and for living the faith, hope and charity (for examples, the Benedictine, Carmelite, St. Ignatius, etc.). Our modality for following Christ comes from our Schoenstatt spirituality. Our Ideals, our Marital Ideal, reflect how we see God, our images of God and of the human being. These ideals try to speak to us daily about how God sees us. They speak of His infinite love, and of the trust that he places in us. However, we all know from personal experience that, if we fail to “work our soil,” we will not bear fruit, we will not come to develop all that God has placed in each of us.

Since the beginnings of Schoenstatt, this was a concern of Father Kentenich, who in the Pre-founding document of October 27, 1912 highlighted the need for self-formation. When we seal the Covenant with Mary, this is exactly what we offer as our contribution to the Capital of Grace (“Nothing without You, **Nothing without us**”).

Self-formation:

- Helps us to incorporate our spirituality into our daily lives, so that every event of our life becomes impregnated with Christ. Nothing is separate from He who loved us so much.
- Life’s most important battle occurs in our daily life, and is that which ultimately decides how we live, knowing that the lives of MANY (family, colleagues, etc.) depend on it.
- This requires certain means and special practices that promote and assure the growth and strengthening of our being, and our actions as Christians. This dimension of spirituality is called *ascetic*, and it takes shape as our **ascetical means**. The word ascetic comes from the Greek, and it means “a methodical effort to achieve something” (such as the clarity of our goals and their consequence in life).
- It is nothing more than our cooperation with grace. It is the “Nothing without Us” that we observe in the Shrine, but brought into our daily life. It is “helping” God and Mary to “trim” us and use us as their instruments.
- The Spirit requires forms in which to take shape. “We wish to learn,” wrote Father Kentenich in the Pre-founding document. “We wish to learn from each other, because we never stop learning, especially in the art of self-education, which represents the work and responsibility of our entire life.”
- “We must learn, not only theoretically, which in reality is not very useful. No, we must learn practically. We must put this work into effect every day, every hour.”



### **The “Stroke of Genius”: Joining the Marital Ideal with the Spiritual Daily Order**

- Discovering your formulation of the Marital Ideal is not the end of the adventure, but, in reality, the beginning. We need our Marital Ideal to take root in our daily lives, and to slowly awaken all of our “dormant sprouts,” pulling the best out of us, taking advantage of all of our strengths so that they may help us overcome our weaknesses.
- For this, we must keep certain aspects in mind as we craft our Spiritual Daily order, which must be:
  - a. Personal: it must speak to my identity, my matrimonial life; it must move me, ignite me, and enthuse me.
  - b. Realistic: it must be possible to do. Otherwise, our will never stands a chance to get going.
  - c. Challenging: it must drive to make changes and improvements, which are reached with great effort and wisdom. “I must know how to drive myself.”
  - d. Concrete: it must be observable, measurable, and lend itself to evaluation.
- The following aspects will help me to avoid its diffusion. I therefore need:
  - a. Order: in other words, discipline
  - b. Constancy: I must seriously work on my Marital Ideal and persevere.
  - c. Confidence: enthusiasm and excitement that I can change certain realities of my life in order to live my Marital Ideal and flourish as a person.
- Always keep in mind that the Ideal that we have formulated is an Ideal that will only reach its fullness and realization in eternity. Nevertheless, in our journey her on Earth we receive help from Heaven to realize ourselves as people. It is this self-realization that causes us to seriously aspire to Sainthood.



### **The Spiritual Daily Order in General**

Every day of our lives we eat, shower, etc. In our spiritual life we also need to have a Spiritual Daily Order to help us to safely navigate our daily life, regardless of our mood.

What aspects of our lives should the Spiritual Daily Order target?

Over time, it should aid me to consider all of our basic life dimensions:

- a. Our relationship with God
- b. Our relationship with our brothers
- c. Our relationship with our work
- d. Our relationship with ourselves

The points noted in our Spiritual Daily Order could be:

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly

In fact, the Church tells us that a basic Spiritual Daily Order already exists:

- a. Attend Mass every Sunday
- b. Confess your sins once a year

At the matrimonial level, there is also a basic Spiritual Daily Order: the **4Rs**

- a. **Reflection and Prayer:** daily as spouses. For example, the Our Father, Hail Mary, Consecration, etc.
- b. **Re-enchantment:** the spousal union weekly. In other words, find a day and time for spouses to once again have fun together, to date (without children or friends).
- c. **Review:** your life every month, discovering God's footsteps in our lives.
- d. **Renew:** your Marital Ideal Matrimonial once per year. Examine what has happened and predict what will come.





## **How does one build or “fill in” a Spiritual Daily Order?**

**Specifically...**

### **From what attitude should we start?**

Our Marital Ideal has fundamental attitudes that shore it up. These attitudes became clear to us when we attended the workshop to formulate it during the second meeting, and during other meetings.

What are these attitudes? (Take some time to refresh our memories)

Now we can ask ourselves:

1. Which of these attitudes of our Marital Ideal seem necessary or urgent to us? What does our Mater ask of us?

Examples:      JOY      COMMITMENT

2. What do we wish to accomplish with this particular item?

Ex: OVERCOME SADNESS, ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE, BE MORE APOSTOLIC

3. What can we do specifically? This concretion is necessary in order to achieve our goal.

DETERMINE THE AREA WE NEED TO WORK ON  
With the children, the group, etc.

Do not forget that the concrete formation of each (husband and wife) can be different, since they stem from different origins that complement each other in love.



### **Record the Marital Ideal on the Spiritual Daily Order (SDO)**

It is absolutely necessary, especially at first, to record it in order to remember it, to be sure that it is present to and in me. That way, every time that I must confront something in my daily life, I will learn to relate it to my Marital Ideal. Remembering it will be a framework for decision making for me.

#### **A) Personal Examination (PE)**

This should be summarized as one phrase or short prayer to be prayed many times per day, and should remind me of the attitude I wish to overcome through my special or daily resolution. Some examples:

“LIKE THE FATHER, I ENJOY SEEING MY FRIENDS”

“FATHER, I ENTRUST MY STRUGGLES TO YOU”

“WITH YOU, MOTHER, I SEE THE GOOD IN EVERYTHING”

#### **B) Special or Daily Resolution**

A concrete thing that I do twice per day:

Example: greet people when I arrive at work or home

#### **C) Written Control**

Review the Personal Commitment: write down each night, during Evening Prayer, how you did.

In addition, you may add other points that you think are important: Perform Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, pray together, family meal, activities with the children, etc.

**LET’S GET TO WORK!!!**




**Unit 3:** Bringing our Marital Ideal to Life  
Meeting 2: Aids for Achieving our Marital Ideal

**DISCUSSION**

- \* Each couple chooses and comments together about the attitude they will work on this month.
- \* What will be the motto, prayer, etc. that will motivate us and help us to reflect on what we wish to work on this month? (**Personal Examination = PE**)
- \* **According to the PE** of each member, with the help of the spouse, seek a **concrete commitment** to carry out each morning and afternoon.
- \* Fill out the SDP with the PE and PC, and add, as needed, any other commitment. For example: master Morning Prayer, share an activity with a certain child twice per week, etc.

**COMMITMENT**

Practice using the SDO, filling it out every night. Here is a suggested SDO. You can do your own SDO if you wish.

	<b>SPIRITUAL DAILY ORDER</b> Contributions to the Capital of Graces	"Nothing without You, Nothing without Us" (Fr. Joseph Kenterich)
	"I consecrate myself for them." (John 17:19)	
<b>Month:</b>	1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31	
Renewal of PI and PC		
Personal Commitment AM		
Personal Commitment PM		
Weekly Visit to Sanctuary		
Weekly Marital Dialogue		
Monthly Renewal		
Monthly Confession		
Group Meeting		
<b>WEEKLY</b>		
Visit to Sanctuary		
Marital Dialogue		
<b>Monthly</b>		
Monthly Renewal		
Confession		
<b>Group Commitment</b>		
Meeting		

It is suggested that, at the start, it may be easier and more motivating to have a special place for this "Capital of Grace," or use some sort of symbol to note when we achieve what we proposed to do.



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Meeting 2: Aids for Achieving our Marital Ideal

Some examples:



7.- Bibliography

“200 Questions about Schoenstatt”, Fr. Jonathan Niehaus (p. 51; 95; 97)

“New Vision and Life”, Fr. Jonathan Niehaus (p.14-18)



### **MEETING 3: CONSECRATING OURSELVES ACCORDING TO OUR IDEAL**

**Objective: Formulate our Prayer of Consecration according to our Marital Ideal**

We are reaching the end of this year's work, and, looking back, we can say that it has been a long journey.

Our work has been intense and profound, examining our history together, recalling (at times with joy and at times with sorrow and pain), always seeking, meditating, praying, discovering...

Discovering our name, our Marital Ideal, that which God conceived of us, how He sees us and what He has planned for us as mission, together as a couple and as a family. How wonderful to know how much God loves us, how He conceived of us, and how much He needs us to reach others, to continue His creation and to build His Kingdom. Our life makes more sense...

At this time, the majority of us have already discovered our Marital Ideal; some of us have formulated it, others have a symbol, and we have clearly defined the fundamental pillars that sustain and feed our Ideal. During these weeks we have gone deeper, saving the task.

**We now wish to give the fruit of our labors this year, our achievement, to the Lord and to the Mater; we wish to consecrate ourselves to them, but with our own seal: Consecration according to our Marital Ideal.**

In order to do this, we invite you to take some time alone as a couple (one morning or afternoon), calmly reviewing our work of this year. After that, formulate a marital prayer that expresses your ideals and longings. We shall offer it to the Lord and our Mater, asking them for the grace to be able to live them.

We shall read and deliver our prayer at the Shrine, during a special Mass, the day of the Ceremony of **Consecration according to our Marital Ideal.**



### How shall we write our prayer?

The purpose of this prayer is to help us keep our **Marital Ideal** clearly in our consciousness: who we are, remembering the plan that God has for us, to feel GOD'S GREAT LOVE for us, as we are.

It should help us to renew ourselves and to refocus, to return to the path if we should feel, at times, weak or removed.

It should help us to clearly and strongly see our mission in the world, our task according to who we are; it should illuminate our decisions.

As we have noted this year, each marriage is unique and original. Therefore, we offer the following aids for the formulation of your prayer. We wish to be clear that these are merely suggestions: each couple must feel free to create their own prayer with total freedom, as best suits them, always keeping their Marital Ideal in mind.

The following suggestions have been made by couples that have already written their own prayer:

\* Some couples recommend writing a longer prayer (containing the elements described on the next page), to be prayed when there is an opportunity for time and calm, for special moments and occasions, or perhaps once per week.

In addition, they recommend having a shorter, simpler prayer, which may be a summary or even part of the longer prayer. This can be prayed more often, during the day, and help us to remember and renew our Ideal continuously, further uniting us as a couple.

\* There are couples whose prayer contains a part for them as a married couple, and another part that includes their children. In other words, it is also family centered. This way, they can pray it as a family with their children participating also.

\* We must write our prayer on a piece of paper that will not be lost, that will not deteriorate. It should always be near at hand, not in the middle of a pile of things that we are working on.

One couple's testimony: "Our prayer was missing, and, after some time, we somehow found it. Reading our prayer again, we clearly saw how God and the Mater have been close to us, how they had given us adequate tasks for our Ideal, and they had given us the strength to face life, according to who we are!!

But perhaps we would have been better able to hear the voice of God, and seen His will more clearly, if we had only been reading our prayer."



**Important notes that may help you to write your prayer:**

It is suggested that each person write it personally, and then share them and combine them into one.

- 1. State your Marital Ideal.**
- 2. Thank God for choosing us according to who we are (God made us like this for a reason).**
- 3. State and describe your Marital Ideal: what are its characteristics or fundamental pillars? What is its essence and mission?**
- 4. Offer yourselves to God and to the Mater, asking for help, etc. Place yourself at their disposal...**  
(For example: "and so we give ourselves to You. We need your help in....")

**It is important that our prayer help us to always return to a recognition of who we are, of what moves us, of what excites us, and that every time we read and pray it, it reminds us, it renews us, it makes us fall in love again, and it makes us return to the path and restart our journey...**

**Do not forget to ask the Holy Spirit for help, to illuminate you so that your prayer truly reflects what God wants and needs from His beloved married couples.**

This year 20\_\_, our Ceremony of Consecration According our Marital Ideal will be held \_\_\_\_\_ in the Shrine.

We invite you to attend with your children, as this will be an hour of special graces for the entire family.