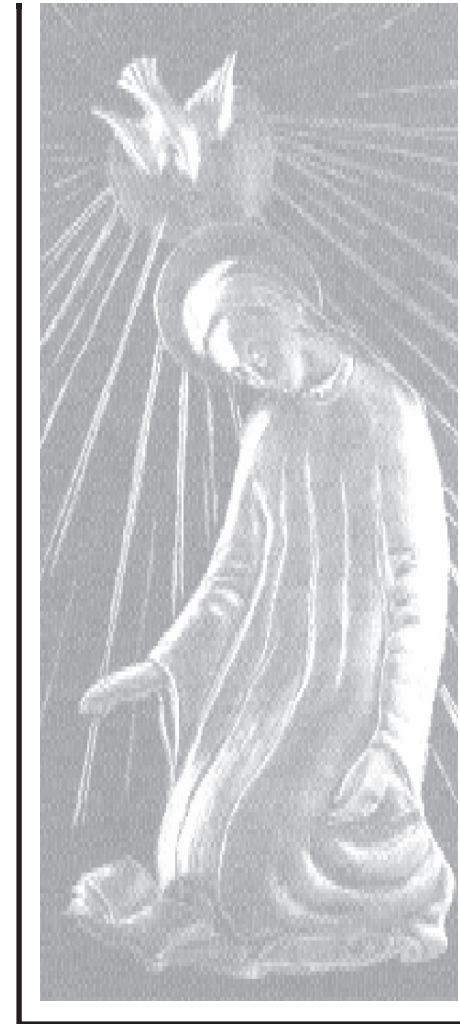


MARY,
in the midst of the apostles you powerfully interceded
the coming of the promised Spirit,
who transformed weak men and women
and guides the Church on the road to victory.
Open our hearts for the Spirit of God
that he may change the course of the world.

HOLY SPIRIT,
you are the soul of my soul.
I humbly adore you.
Enlighten me, strengthen me,
guide me comfort me.
Reveal your wishes to me
as far as this is in accordance
with the will of the Eternal Father.
Show me what Eternal Love wants of me.
Show me what I should do.
Show me what I should suffer.
Show me what I should humbly and
thoughtfully accept, bear and endure.
Holy Spirit, show me your will
and the will of the Father,
for I want my whole life to be nothing else
than a continuous, an everlasting yes
to the wishes,
to the will of God
the Eternal Father.
Amen.

(Father J. Kentenich based on the Prayer of Cardinal Mercier "Secret of Life")

**Schoenstatt Movement
United Kingdom**



**WHEN GOD BREAKS
THROUGH...**

*The Founding Document in Schoenstatt
Meditation on the "Six Promises"*

Painting a Picture...

Imagine a priest, 28 years of age, standing in a tiny chapel in a beautiful valley, and giving a Talk to a group of young people on a Sunday afternoon. The priest was **Father Joseph Kentenich** (1885-1968), Founder of the Schoenstatt Movement, the chapel was to become the Shrine of Our Mother Thrice Admirable, the Talk came to be known as the **Founding Document of Schoenstatt** and the young people were students at the Pallottine Seminary. The date was 18th October, 1914.



The students had just returned from the holidays, and the First World War had broken out a month beforehand. Their school had totally changed since they were last there with over two hundred wounded soldiers occupying most of the rooms. There were no beds for the students, and the dormitories were unheated and crawling with mice. Indeed, a great deal had changed.

A few years beforehand, Father Kentenich had built up a great friendship with these young people since he had been appointed their Chaplain. He presented them with a **vision of freedom, trust in their own individual initiatives and faith in Christian ideals**. He simply won their respect through his openness and authenticity. When we addressed the students for the first time, he said this:

"I now place myself completely at your disposal with all that I am and have: My knowledge and ignorance, my ability and inability, but above all, my heart... I hope we will get along well with each other; I hope that we will do everything to achieve our common aim as perfectly as possible. What is our aim, then?.. Under the protection of Mary we want to learn to educate ourselves to become firm, free, priestly personalities... As priests we must have a deep

we expect much more from God than we could ever give in return. Covenant means, even when we fail we can start again because God is at our side each step of the way. One small step of faith, one promise kept, will lead us closer to our purpose - ***to be like Jesus and to live in a deep union with him.***

By striving to live out the Covenant we take part in the original moment of grace in 1914: We become part of the activity of the Holy Spirit and of the original charismatic mission from the Shrine, which started on that day. ***Through living a life of union with Jesus we believe that he wants to raise up ordinary men and women, who will keep their promises.***

***“Your Shrine -
Our Home”***



3. I will draw youthful hearts to myself. You can't live a Covenant of Love with Mary if you don't have a youthful heart. Youthful hearts firstly apply to ourselves: A heart that is open, a heart that can listen, a heart that is enthusiastic, a heart that is willing to raise the standards. Our Lady also will care for our young people too. The first Covenant of Love was made with a group of young people. They will always have a priority place in Schoenstatt. [*"From here I will draw youthful hearts to myself"*]

4. I will educate you. Our Lady's greatest "charism" is the formation of human hearts. She is a Mother who educates us to be "another Christ". Witnesses of his Gospel, wherever God asks us to be. [*"I will educate them"*]

5. I will help you become the Lord's instruments. Mary's "Magnificat" is a call to evangelisation and to imprint the features of Christ on our world. As Christians we are called to be the Lord's instruments, so that we can become more and more the "soul of the world". We have to strive to "live the answer". Through the Covenant of Love we take part in Mary's mission: To win every human heart for Jesus Christ! To help people know Christ, follow Christ, experience Christ! [*"To become useful instruments"*]

6. I will hold you tight. The Blessed Mother holds on to us. Whatever happens, she will never let us fall, she will never stop being our Mother. In her hands, we can trust and feel secure. We will always find comfort, courage and peace in her hands. [*"In my hands"*]

We don't become perfect overnight. Change takes time, it needs to grow. Sometimes we may take one step backward for every two steps forward. But no positive step is too small or worthless. If we commit our hearts to the Lord, he will work miracles of grace in us.

However, experience tells us that we will have ups and downs. Sometimes we fail altogether. The Covenant of Love means that

and lasting influence on our surroundings. And we will ultimately do that not through the brilliance of our learning, but through the power, through the inner richness of our personality... We must be free personalities. God does not want any galley slaves in his boat. He wants free rowers. Others can crawl before their superiors, lick their boots and be grateful when they are trodden upon. We are fully aware of our dignity and rights... For all this may God give us his blessing!"

This was fighting talk and it inspired the young people to want more - much more. Together with Father Kentenich they founded in April, 1914 a "Marian Congregation" (sometimes called Sodality), where they could meet regularly together and support each other in Christian discipleship and religious spirit. The Group concentrated on prayer, spirituality and evangelisation. The aim of the Congregation was to lead the youth to self-reliance so that they could live their faith to the full as teenagers and that the image of Christ could be imprinted on their lives and future:

"Christ must increase, but I must decrease (John 3,30)... I must put on Christ, I must become 'another Christ'. The principles of Our Lord have become our most inner possession... Through Mary to Jesus - to his character, and to the deepest union with him!"

The Lord's Providence had guided them through these days and months and prepared them for **the break-through of his Spirit** on 18th October, 1914.



Understanding the Voice of the Lord...

Our image of God is a Father who loves and cares, but also who speaks to us. Just as God spoke to Jesus and spoke through Jesus, he also speaks to us today. In the Old Testament God called **Samuel**, spoke to him and gave him a special mission. Another example is the story of **Carlo Carretto** who heard the voice of God in his heart - a voice that encouraged him to change his life and take his faith more seriously. A further example is **St Augustine** who couldn't make the final decision to become a Christian, until he heard the voice of a child, who told him to "*take and read*". He read the Holy Scriptures, found his personal mission and his life changed forever. When God speaks and ordinary people listen, things start to happen, things start to change.



Father Kentenich was open for the voice of God, because he was so completely at the service of the youth people in the Congregation Groups - he couldn't think of any other task. Where was Divine Providence leading him? He happened to read an article in a weekly Catholic periodical, called the *Allgemeine Rundschau* in July 1914. It reported an amazing story about an Italian Lawyer called **Bartolo Longo**, who discovered that his life was going nowhere. He called himself a "*stubborn materialist and a sinner*". As we was walking through the ruins of Pompeii he suddenly heard an inner voice that changed his life forever.

He turned to God and "*upon a city of death*" in the Valley of Pompeii, where the volcano Vesuvius hundreds of years previously had devastated everything, he built a "*city of life*", dedicated to the Mother of God. A pilgrimage place and a "*city*" for poor and homeless children came into existence - a Christian place of grace on the ruins of a pagan city.

greatest gift we can give to each other is ourselves - our time and energy, our prayers and care. We'll also notice that when we do just that, we find our own needs being met as well (*see Gal 6:7-10*). Prayer is finding some time for God. [*"Pray fervently"*]

Our simple six Promises take a lifetime to live out. In the Covenant we begin every day anew of make these Promises a reality. It is a process, a slow process, and at times a struggle. But each time we come closer to Jesus. In Holy Scripture it says: "*For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him... should become like his Son...*" (*Romans 8:29*). In other words, in the Covenant and because of our Covenant we are supposed to become more and more like Jesus - "*another Christ*" in our own homes and families. What an amazing challenge!

Our Blessed Mother also makes six promises to us. Even when we struggle to keep our promises she will always be faithful to us in the Covenant of Love. She promises in the Shrine:

1. I will dwell in your midst. Our Lady becomes a member of our family. She brings with her an original way of discipleship, her love for Jesus, her trust in the Father. The woman who "was overshadowed by the Spirit" makes our home a "holy ground" where we can experience the presence and activity of the Lord. We are never alone. She is the "faithful Virgin" who commits herself to us. The Home Shrine is a special means of growing in our own faith and of bringing our experience of faith to others. [*"It will please me to dwell in your midst"*]

2. I will give you all the grace you need and more. Sometimes we need grace and God's strength in our own lives and sometimes we ask it for others. Mary is our Mother, she understands our needs and our troubles. however, she is also the Mother of the Saviour and can help us with her powerful intercession. We will always receive more in the Covenant of Love than we can give. [*"I want to distribute gifts and graces in abundance"*]

centuries old gravestones. There are humorous epitaphs (apparently written by less than-generous spouses), and also sad and moving words telling of the death of a child or other loved one, and serious messages with a profound meaning. Have we ever wondered what will be placed on our tomb stone? What words will record how we have spent the one life that the Good Lord has entrusted to us? Instead of living "me-centred" lives, we're called by God to a "God-centred" and "other-centred" living. Bringing daily our contributions to the Capital of Grace is our sign of love in action. We can bring our efforts, our time, our loyalty, our efforts and our sacrifices. We can also bring our failures, our worries and troubles. We can bring our dreams and our longings and hopes. Nothing needs to be excluded from the Capital of Grace. When we bring our contributions, it's amazing how the Lord uses the efforts of our love to reach out to a hurting world. [*"Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace"*]

5. Mother Mary, I will fulfill my duties faithfully. As husbands and wives, and fathers and mothers, as priests and Christians, as citizens and members of a community, we have lots of rights and obligations. Here we promise to fulfill our duties as a human being, our duties according to our vocation in life and as a disciple of the Lord. [*"Fulfill your duties faithfully"*]

6. Mother Mary, I will lead a life of prayer. Prayer is a great power. Prayer brings us closer to the Lord. There is no prayer that is a waste of time. When we pray, we remind ourselves that the



After reading the article a question gripped Father Kentenich and he struggled to understand God's will: Could it be that God wanted such a place of grace, a place of pilgrimage to rise up out of the little Schoenstatt Chapel? If Bartolo Longo could make the experience that they could truly draw Our Lady down to a Holy Place, why should the young people in Schoenstatt not be able to do the same? This leap of faith was the most difficult decision of his life - in fact no other decision would demand more faith than this "*leap in the dark*" for God. And he leaped...

In a little Chapel...

The Talk that Father Kentenich gave to the young people came to be known later as the **Founding Moment of Schoenstatt**. He held the Talk in the little Chapel in the Schoenstatt valley at five o'clock in the evening. The chapel had gone through a dramatic history: Built in the 12th century, it had been a cloister cemetery, then destroyed during the Thirty Years' War by the Swedes when they pillaged Schoenstatt, then rebuilt again only to be used as a storeroom by the soldiers of Napoleon in the 19th century.

At the time of Father Kentenich and the youth groups, the chapel was used as nothing less than a tool shed. Then the Lord's Providence guided them again. The young people needed a meeting place, somewhere that belonged to them alone; a place that they could attach themselves to. They received permission to use the chapel in July 1914 and in the course of the summer the basic repairs were completed.

On the **18th October, 1914** Father Kentenich met with the young people in the chapel. It was basically empty apart from a rickety altar rail and a simple white statue of St Michael Archangel. This is the Talk he gave to the youth. It speaks for itself...



The Founding Document...

Our Programme: *Acceleration of the development of our self sanctification as a means of transforming our chapel into a place of pilgrimage.*

1. First of all, I greet you again after quite some time with the beautiful greeting: *Nos cum prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria. (Mother with your loving Son, bless us each and everyone).* It is the first time that these Congregation words sound in this place. May they also echo and resound for all time to come!

2. It gives joy to a father, mother and children to move into a home of their own, even if it is plain and poor in comparison with the magnificent quarters which they previously rented. The thought: *"This house belongs to us,"* more than compensates for the loss of all other advantages. We, too, may experience such family joy today.

This little chapel belongs to our small Congregation family which is guided by our heavenly Mother. It belongs completely to us and only to us. Without envy we leave to others the more beautiful house chapel, our previous lodging. We rejoice and will let no one take this joy from us.

Besides joy, a feeling of rightful pride makes our hearts beat faster. ***For this sanctuary, which has stood more or less neglected, desolate and bare for as long as we can remember, has been - because of us and our initiative - restored and given to the Mother of God.*** At least since the time it has been in the possession of the Pallottine Fathers, these walls have never been more beautifully decorated than today. May we see in this joyful fact a good omen for the future development of our young Congregation?

3. ***Surely! It would be a sublime task, worthy of the diligence and labour of the noblest, if we could succeed in instilling a***

tenich together with his young students. The Promises expressed are a "dialogue of love" between us and Mary and are at the heart of Schoenstatt's Spirituality. There are six Promises from us and six Promises from Our Lady. Let's start with what we promise:

1. *Mother Mary, I will show you that I really love you.* The Covenant of Love is perfect for people who have a lot to do, a lot of commitments. Every day we wrestle with our priorities. We need to balance the demands of marriage, children, work and career. It is a challenge. We can prove our love in the ordinary things of life: In the way we work, live, think and love; through our example, our honesty, by being good parents, loyal friends. Love proves itself in many ways. [*"Prove first by your deeds that you really love me"*]

2. *Mother Mary, I will give my all.* All our daily striving we can offer to the Mother of God. All our efforts to improve our personality, our striving to be better and more loving people. Our striving shouldn't be half-hearted - there is no such thing as a "half-way Covenant". We will strive for greatness; we'll strive for holiness. [*"Increase your striving to the highest degree"*]

3. *Mother Mary, I will strive for holiness.* It's easy for what we believe to influence what we do on a Sunday. The real issue is what difference our faith makes on Monday morning. Holiness means to do everything in union with the Lord - from the simplest to the most important tasks and choices. Today's society is walking down a deadly path of moral relativism. Values seem at best negotiable and at worst non-existent. Often we don't realize the small, subtle changes taking place in our own lives. Striving for holiness is allowing the Spirit of God to work in us and be in us. It means that we believe that we can be saints if we really want to be. [*"This sanctification I demand of you"*]

4. *Mother Mary, I will bring my contributions to the Shrine.* In some small New England town in the USA, the most popular tourist attraction is the local cemetery. People walk along and read the

This sanctification I demand of you. It is the armour that you shall put on, the sword with which you shall do battle to realise your plans. Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace. By fulfilling your duties faithfully and conscientiously and by praying fervently, earn many merits and place them at my disposal.

Then it will please me to dwell in your midst and dispense gifts and graces in abundance. Then I will draw youthful hearts to myself from here, and I will educate them to become useful instruments in my hand.



The Power of Promises Kept...

The Covenant of Love is our way to love the Lord and love each other. Together with Mary, the Mother of the Lord, we strive to put Christ and his Gospel at the centre of our lives.

We know that our lives aren't perfect. We know that we fail and that our spiritual poverty is sometimes great. Nevertheless, the Covenant is all about love and that's why we can reach out for it with confidence - anytime, anywhere.

Living out the Covenant means that we don't want to stay where we are. We want to be better people for God and for our neighbour. We want to be known as people of faith and integrity. We want to grow in our ability to cope with the daily pressures of life and grow in our ability to meet the needs of those who are important to us. We want to make a difference - a lasting difference.

But where do we start to live out the Covenant of Love? We begin with some basic Promises. These Promises were included in the Founding Document of Schoenstatt. The 18th October, 1914 has been considered since then to be the beginning of Schoenstatt, when a Covenant of Love was made between Mary and Father Ken-

burning love of Mary and an ideal striving for virtue in our college such as it has never seen.

4. Why do I express myself so hesitatingly, so reservedly? Have I lost confidence in you? It is true, only the remnants of our flourishing Congregation are present, but new life will soon spring forth from the ruins. My confidence for that comes from last year's faithful cooperation on your part, and the genuine Marian spirit which you have acquired.

During the holidays, many ideals may well have crumbled under the distractions of everyday life; some of the principles which we adopted during the course of the year and which we thought were unshakable may not have stood the test of daily life.

But one thing remains - of that I'm certain: it is the conviction that to be a genuine member of our Group is inseparable from striving for moral and religious greatness according to one's state of life. And we are just as animated today by the will for victory and the attainment of our Congregation ideal as we were at the end of the last school year. No, my dear members, I have not lost my trust in you. I know that we, by building on what we have already attained, shall make great progress in this year just as we set out to do in the last.

5. The slow development of the grace of our vocation and the consequent higher degree of our religious apostolic spirit is not, however, the aim which I want to present to you. *My challenge goes incomparably higher.*

Each one of us must achieve the highest conceivable degree of perfection and sanctity according to his state of life. Not simply the great and the greater, but the greatest heights ought to be the object of our increased efforts. You will understand that I express such an extraordinary challenge only in the form of a humble wish.

6. But if you want to know the reason for the wish, ***I must tell you of a favourite and - up to now - secret idea of mine.***

7. When St. Peter saw the Glory of God on Tabor, he called out with delight: *"It is good for us to be here. Let us build three tents here"* (Mt 17,4). These words come to my mind again and again. And I have often asked myself: ***Would it then not be possible for our little Congregation Chapel to likewise become for us the Tabor on which the glory of Mary would be revealed?***

Undoubtedly, we could not accomplish a greater apostolic deed nor leave our successors a more precious legacy than ***to urge our Lady and Queen to erect her throne here in a special way, to distribute her treasures, and to work miracles of grace.***

You gather what I am aiming at: I would like to make this place a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace for our house and for the whole German Province, and perhaps even further afield. All those who come here to pray shall experience the glory of Mary and confess: *"It is good for us to be here. Here we want to build our tents, here shall be our favourite place."* ***A bold thought, nearly too bold for the public, but not too bold for you.***

How often in world history have not small and insignificant beginnings been the source of great and greatest accomplishments? Why could that not also hold true in our case? Whoever knows the history of our Congregation will have no trouble believing that Divine Providence has something special in store for it.

8. ***Even as I speak, my dear young people, I feel that I have struck the right note. Your hearts have been inspired. You have made my plan your own.*** With confidence I place it and its fulfilment into your hands and will not hesitate to enter it into our chronicle. Future generations may pass their judgment upon us. But, will we reach our goal? As far as it depends on us - and I no longer pronounce that with uncertainty and doubt, but with complete

confidence - none of us, my dear young people, will allow anything to be lacking. This Congregation chapel will become for us ***the cradle of our sanctity***, just as the chapel of Our Lady in Florence was for our second patron, St. Aloysius. This sanctity will apply gentle force on our heavenly Mother and draw her down to us.

9. It was more than five centuries ago. In a bloody war the English and the French were tearing each other to pieces. France was already at the point of being annihilated. At the same time, a simple French village girl was wrapped in ardent prayer to the Blessed Mother for the deliverance of her king. Suddenly the Archangel Michael appeared to her and told her: "She whom the great God acknowledges as His Mother has commanded me to come to you and tell you to take up the sword, clothe yourself in armour, and defend the cause of justice. You will deliver the city of Orleans from its enemies and lead the king to Reims for his coronation. A sword is hidden in the ground behind the altar in St Catherine's Church at Fierbois; let it be brought forth and gird yourself with it."

10. The girl's name was **Joan of Arc**, known to history as the *"Maid of Orleans."* Pius X beatified her in May 1909. To me it is as if at this moment, here in the old chapel of St Michael, Our Lady were speaking to us through the mouth of the holy archangel.

11. ***"Do not worry about the fulfilment of your desires. Ego diligentes me diligo. I love those who love me (Prv. 8,17). Prove to me first that you really love me, and that you take your resolution seriously"***.

12. Just now you have the best opportunity to do so. Do not think that in times like these, when momentous decisions are being made, that it is something extraordinary if you increase your striving beyond that of previous generations, indeed to the highest degree. According to the Plan of Divine Providence, this World War with its mighty challenges is meant to be an extraordinary help for you in the work of your self-sanctification.