

THE COVENANT OF LOVE
Extracts from talks and training courses
by Father J. Kentenich

Taken from "Kirehe am neuen Ufer."

1952 The main motive for loving Mary is and remains her position in God's plan of salvation. This plan is first of all independent of life as a value, i.e. it is independent of the individual needs and wishes of mankind. It is independent of age and sex. It is not meant - at least not directly - to educate and save. Yet, in his wisdom and kindness, God saw to it that the order he had chosen not only gave man an opportunity to recognize his sovereignty and to prove his personal love in response to God's love, but this order is also a means for man to achieve his personal completion, enrichment and bliss. This latter point of view may, therefore, be seen as a secondary motive. It may not be improperly emphasized, for by so doing we over-turn the God-willed order and make religion, and in practice also God, the servant of man in the negative sense of the word. We dethrone him and put ourselves in his place: We make ourselves the center of the world.

Let me repeat. It is true to say that Our Lady is the ideal spiritual completion for the man, the unsurpassable example of womanhood for the woman, and the highest ideal of noble humanity for mankind in general. Therefore, one may show her to others from this point of view, one may proclaim and use love for her as a first class power in education, but one may not be content to stop at this point. In the final analysis, all this should result from devotion to Mary, but are not its means and aim. It should be an "ut consecutivum" and not an "ut finale". If we keep to this order we fulfill Christ's words: "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his justice, and everything else will be added to you." The "Kingdom of God" is in this case the wish of the Father, who has raised Mary in an unexampled way and drawn her near to himself. He has used her as a unique instrument in saving the world, and therefore wishes us to love her with genuine and warm love. For this reason he calls to us through our crucified Savior "Ecce Mater

tua!" We love Our Lady; therefore, because by doing so we please the Father and carry out the last will and testament of Our Lord. Then the growth and enrichment of our whole personality the strength end purity of the will, the richness and depth of the emotions, and much more, will be "added to us". This is the ideal state. Yet it does not mean one may not temporarily and for certain reasons shift the emphasis, to adapt oneself to the current values for which the educand is open. These values can be actualized and elevated by being brought into contact with the true greatness of Our Lady. This applies in particular to adolescents and the masses.

Mary - in union with Christ - God's instrument in saving the world.

1951. If we give everything to Our Lady - whoever is prepared to lose his life shall find it - we will be made exceedingly rich. But whoever wants to preserve his life, whoever wants to keep it for himself, will lose it; he will become a slave in the bad sense of the word. If we want to be free men of God, we must endeavor to renounce ourselves completely and offer ourselves to God. I think you should, and at the same time I beg you, to learn to discover this treasure hidden in a field. What is this treasure - Our Lady? She radiates the glory of divine fruitfulness and the glory of divine beauty and riches. Do our hearts and eyes long to see this wonderful treasure? The glory of divine fruitfulness. God wants to redeem the world, but he does not want to do so without human cooperation. The same can be said of Our Lord. He needs instruments. Next to Our Lord, Our Lady is God's great instrument in redeeming the world.

This is the conclusion according to which we have acted since Schoenstatt's beginning. We have regarded Our Lady as an instrument in God's hand, and ourselves as instruments in her hand. Our fundamental conviction was this: Our Lord wants to save the world through the co-operation of Our Lady. She is his permanent helpmate in the entire work of redemption - she is to be found at its beginning and climax. And on Calvary she stands beside the High Priest as his great deacon. She renounces her rights as a mother. (Sermon to Sch. Men 3-9-1951)

How free we can be when we return home! Fundamentally, our possessions are her possessions, and therefore also, our cares are her cares. From this, we can understand our Mater habebit curam. Our lady must see to it that I find work, that I have enough to eat. We find a total, mutual exchange of goods, but also of tasks.

1952

We are well acquainted with the meaning of the consecration. It is, as we know, a total, mutual covenant of love, i.e., a total mutual exchange of possessions and hearts, or a total union of hearts between the two partners in the covenant. In our case the two partners are Our Lady and the candidate for consecration. The attitude of both is: totum pro toto, all for all total - self-surrender for total self-surrender, love for love, loyalty for loyalty. The consecration includes a total, mutual detachment, self-giving and acceptance. In this way the two partners are united in life, work and aim such as exists between a master-workman and a rational instrument.

Such total surrender to a creature, in this case Our Lady, can never be absolute. It can only be carried out if related to God, i.e. because of God, in God and for God. It can only be understood by a person who can think soundly in an organic way. Those who think mechanically or separatistically are unable to grasp this truth, for such thinking tears the first cause from the secondary cause. It finds unsurmountable difficulties and contradictions in the order created by God. As we have seen, God intended certain things to come together to protect, to make visible, and to secure each other.

Since the consecration means, that both partners pursue the same aim, it also contains the duty to join Our Lady generously and for ever in spreading this ordered cosmos and destroying the opposing values. This union of life and activity with the covenant partner makes it possible for us to look away from our personal weaknesses, and courageously and victoriously wage to its end the battle for the God-willed social order, which is identical with the marian cosmic order and the organism of attachments, even if it requires the greatest sacrifices from us. Therefore, we are justified in calling the heart of Our Lady the example of the divine order.

We have called the heart, the symbol of a person. The consecration includes, if it is understood correctly, a sort of mutual exchange of persons. It overcomes the tendency to be impersonal, which is deeply rooted in the mass-man, and brings person to person in a most intimate, loving union, to the great advantage of both. We are, of course, dealing here with the unexplored mysteries of love, which for most modern people are a closed book.

Our consecration brings about not only our surrender to the symbolic meaning of the heart, but to its owner. It includes strong personal attachment, warm, mutual and personal love - a love of person for person. Our Lady, our covenant partner, is without doubt the example, but she should be seen far more as the Mother of the divine order, i.e. the one who creatively forms human hearts according to her own heart. In return for her personal surrender she expects her partner in the covenant to surrender himself in the same personal way, so that, as time goes by, one can repeat: two hearts with but one beat. Therefore, we like to say that the consecration includes total, mutual and personal detachment and attachment.

Training Course for Families 1950

Consecration means total surrender, but this total surrender is mutual. This total surrender includes three things:

- total detachment
- total self-giving
- total acceptance.

These words bring us immediately to the heart of the matter.

Total detachment - The consecration requires us to give ourselves to God. And when I have given myself totally, I am also totally detached from myself. I no longer belong to myself. This includes total detachment from all my possessions. To whom does my house belong? It no longer belongs to me. My intellect no longer belongs to me. Hands, eyes and ears no longer belong to me. They are now

Mary's hands, ears, eyes. You should take this seriously; these are not empty words, but the expression of serious and hidden striving. The greatest detachment occurs when we learn to be happy even about our faults and weaknesses. I have not kept my resolution, my nature was weak, I misused marriage, or whatever it may be. Instead of becoming worried, I now rejoice about my weakness, because through it I learn how small and weak I am before God. St. Paul expressed this truth in a classic form: I rejoice in my infirmities. This ability to rejoice at our weakness is total detachment. It is in this light that you should understand the prayer: "My Lord and my God, take from me all that keeps me from You; take me from myself and give me entirely to Yourself." This is an extremely high ideal, and we will always fall far short of it. As long as we are here on earth we will never become completely free from ourselves, but the meaning of the consecration is that we should strive for this ideal. I have said jokingly to our Sisters: Selfishness dies only ten hours after death has taken place.

Total self-giving - It is not possible to become detached if we do not give ourselves to someone. The great tragedy today is that most people have no one to whom they can give themselves. They are as helpless as a match on the ground, for it cannot prevent itself being trampled under foot. They have no one to whom they can give themselves, in whom they feel secure. We are in a more fortunate position. The meaning of our consecration is total self-giving. What do we give? Whatever belongs to us.

Total acceptance - I must also be accepted. If I am not accepted, a certain emptiness would be there. Love is the same. The two processes belong together: self-giving and being accepted. That is the meaning of the consecration. Total detachment and self-giving end in total acceptance. To whom do I belong after consecration?

Since the consecration is a mutual covenant of love, both partners bind themselves. Our Lady also gives herself to us. She answers my total donation of self with the total donation of herself. One cannot talk detachment in her regard, because she no longer possesses anything. What does she give me? She gives me the support of her suppliant omnipotence. She gives me the Child in her arms, the Ave in her ears, the magnificat on her lips and the

tongues of fire over her head. Of course she also gives me the sevenfold sword in her heart. This is spiritual self-giving. Why does Our Lady give me whatever she has? Because she take complete possession of me. "The partners of the Triune God and the Christ must possess four qualities:

1. The ability to enter into the covenant. This includes
 - (a) similarity
 - (b) dissimilarity, in the sense of mutual ability and need to complement the other (in regard to God we speak of willingness to be complemented)
 - (c) membership (God enters into the covenant first of all with the Church, and allows her members to share in it)
 - (d) fidelity.
2. Willingness to enter into a covenant: Openness for the open partner.
3. Consciousness of having entered into a covenant. The consciousness that one has given oneself to Another, that one is accepted, that one is enriched and made fruitful).
4. Loyalty to the covenant. (c.f.) the constant loyalty of the God and the Old Testament to the historic covenant with Israel).

For us, the covenant of love with Our Lady, as it has come about and become effective in our history, is a penetrating renewal, confirmation and consolidation of our baptismal covenant, i.e., our covenant with Christ and Triune God. Every consecration, and every covenant it expresses and renews, is, to our way of thinking and according to our intentions, a new, freely chosen and fully willed decision for Christ, for his person and his interests and kingdom. Such a consecration includes a new, clear and vigorous movement of the will from lower to higher values; it is a new decision for him, the King of the world and of all hearts. At the same time it is a movement of grace from Christ to us. It is equivalent to a deeper penetration into an intimate communion of love between us and himself and the Triune God.

The idea of the covenant has become so much part of our thinking and attitude to life that we do not hesitate to call it the fundamental form, meaning, power and norm of our lives, so similar is our way of thinking, feeling, willing and acting to that of the Old and New Testament. I do not know if there is any other modern religious community which can say the same of itself. Every page of our family's history bears witness to this deep and all-comprising similarity. The same applies to "Himmelwärts", which may be regarded as an authentic document of spirituality. The inner life of all our departed Schoenstatt members of both sexes is evidently marked with the same attitude. Finally, the consensus of opinion within the family takes it for granted that such a covenant in the form of a consecration is the only entrance into our realm. Just as baptism makes the Christian, so baptism and consecration makes us Schoenstatt members. The consecration is here, in the sense we commonly regard it, an original and concrete renewal of our baptismal covenant. It is possible to carry out every demand of the family: one may carefully fill in the spiritual daily order and control it daily, one may keep contact with one's confessor, one may engage in apostolic and charitable works, one may do this and much else.....but, if the original consecration as we have described it, is lacking, an essential element

is missing one is not a Schoenstatt member.

Taken from "Kirche am neuen Ufer".

Since, however, Our Lady is not the greatest nor the final person, but only his reflection, his speaking likeness, an essential feature of total mutual surrender is its perfect transference to God. Therefore, the person who consecrates himself to Mary can truly say: Three hearts with but one beat. Once again we are confronted with the spiritual union between three hearts of which we have already spoken in greater detail. The three hearts which are united are the heart of man, the heart of Our Lady and the heart of God. Seen from this point of view, another saying receives new meaning: "Let us be united in holy

Three-in-oneness, and so proceed in the Holy Spirit to the Father."

As a result of the multiple union in love founded and secured in the covenant of love, the fourth essential element of the consecration is easily understood. It is the mutual claims of love. Genuine love knows not only an exchange of hearts, but also an exchange of possessions. By virtue of our consecration we share in the power of our partners in the covenant, in the power of Our Lady, Our Lord and the Triune God. Through the consecration we have power over their hearts. We should be aware of this and often make use of it. If there is a marked awareness of the implications of the covenant, i.e., if a person is conscious of this mutual self-surrender and acceptance, and if it has penetrated and filled even the subconscious soul life, it is not difficult to follow the attitude and action of Our Lady at the wedding feast. Such a person will in every situation be able to repeat with great calmness and security, with faith and confidence, the words of Our Lady: They have no wine.

This strongly personal character of the consecration deals a death-blow to the widespread religious impersonality and collectivism of our age. It reveals the very personal character of Our Lady and her independent, personal co-operation in the order of salvation, particularly in overcoming the present day mass hysteria. Yet, it also demands the very personal decision of the partner to surrender himself personally to his loved partner, and to be united with her in a perfect union of aim, task and life.

All these truths are brought close to us in an extremely vivid and attractive way in Our Lady. They are deeply imprinted on our hearts by the consecration and are made our personal task in life. In this way we are deeply imbued with the idea of being Mary's instrument, and come to live these thoughts.

I do not know of any more effective way to overcome the influence of the masses, than through such a consecration undertaken and lived, in the right way. It is important because it places before us in theory the teaching of the personality of Our Lady, of God and man. This on its own is a constant protest against any form, of impersonal-

ity. But in addition, as an essential effect of the covenant of love, we find the mutual transference of life in practice, i.e., a fusion of hearts, an intimate connection between persons. Finally, let us not forget that Mary's being determines her action. In our case this means that the effect of her mediation of grace tends towards rescuing and completing the personality and overcoming mass-hysteria with its shocking symptoms. In short, this means the re-birth in the individual person and society, his incarnation from Mary, the Virgin, into a new, Christian cosmic order and manifold organism of attachments such as we expect in the Church and the family on the either shore.

If we interpret the current religious trends correctly, the cooperation of Our Lady in the event of salvation receives a more vigorous and dynamic mission, in contrast to the more static concept of the Middle Ages. It follows that the covenant of love with her must lead to much the same effect in us. The more deeply our union with her in aim, life and task is seen and accepted as a result of the consecration with her, the more vigorously and courageously must our rhythm of life correspond to her life and activity, and the more fully must our life be drawn into hers and placed at her service. In former times she was looked upon as the guardian of an existing order, hortus conclusus, but today she should above all be regarded as the savior of a disturbed order. From this comes a significant re-orientation of our image of Mary and mankind. In both instances the personal, free decision, the free and personal sharing of responsibility in rebuilding a damaged Christian order of society, must again be stressed. This applies to the basic cell of society, the family, as well as to other forms of community life.

This develops in us a marked awareness of our instrumentality, and awakens a sound humility, self-evaluation and victorious confidence, which effectively overcome the influence of the masses. The message of Fatima shows the extent to which an instrument can cooperate with the master workman in order to bring about the re-birth of the Christian cosmic order in the Church and family at the new shore. Our family history, too, is a weighty argument in this regard. From the beginning our family has striven in an organic development for total independence from every creature and total attachment to Our Lady and her task.

Starting with occasional contributions to the treasury of grace of the M.T.A., it developed towards the blank cheque, Inscriptio and Joseph Engling act. This is the depth at which the covenant of love with Our Lady must be seen and lived. As time goes by it expands to a consciously made covenant with the Triune God.

Taken from "Kirche am neuen Ufer".

THE COVENANT OF LOVE AS AN ORIGINAL FORM OF THE COVENANT WITH GOD REVEALED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT.

1952. It is possible to make many important statements about our covenant of love. We can call it the basic form, the basic aim and meaning, the basic power and norm of our family, and we can also say that our family's history is the historical development of the covenant; it is the triumph of mutual loyalty to the covenant.

Yet we can also place our covenant into the context of the universal event of salvation. Through comparing and contrasting the two, through learning to see the points of similarity and dissimilarity, we arrive at the conviction that our covenant of love is an original and concrete form of the covenant God made with man in paradise, which He wills to carry out through the history of salvation and world history.

God's covenant, the covenant of love between God and the chosen people, is the basic meaning and form, the fundamental power and norm of the whole history of salvation, starting with Adam and continuing till the day when the Lord will appear in the clouds of heaven with great power and majesty to judge the living and the dead. In the New Testament, the covenant with Christ, which is founded in baptism and the sacraments, and perfected by divine guidance and ordinance, and by personal striving, is the center of Christian life. It is the axis around which everything revolves, the norm which solves every question of salvation, and the factor which decides whether we are blessed or cursed in this world and the next.

With that we have the framework into which we may place our covenant of love.

We have said that our covenant of love is an original and concrete form of the covenant God entered into with man in paradise which He wills to effect through the history of salvation and the world. It is not difficult to define the points of similarity and dissimilarity. The point of similarity is that our covenant, as is that of all Christians, is founded in baptism. Many Christians sing or pray their permanent loyalty to their baptismal covenant, but they are unaware that their Christian existence is founded on this covenant. They do not realize that baptism is a real covenant between two partners, between Christ and the individual person. It is a covenant which includes certain serious duties, but which also gives certain rights to each partner. They do not really know the essence and the demands of the baptismal covenant they have made. The spirit of faith tells us there are three essential elements -detachment, surrender and acceptance. The Christian is separated from the world. He is dispossessed of himself, i.e., he is no longer his own master; he may no longer do whatever he wishes. He belongs to the Lord to whom he has been surrendered, and who has accepted and taken possession of him.

From this, many conclusions and demands result for the human partner in the covenant with Christ and the Triune God. The October Letter 1948 deals with this topic in detail. It tells of the four qualities of Christ's partner. The first concerns his being, the other three his attitude, action and life. We quote: 1941. Theological considerations lead us to conclude that Our Lord can never be separated from his Mother. Both were seen together in God's original idea, and also in the revelation and carrying out of this original idea. What God has joined together let no man put asunder. That means, therefore, that Our Lady must have a place in every central thought for a sermon. I cannot look at Christ without also looking at his Mother.

This has been our attitude from the beginning. The formal principle, which made us love our picture, was the two-in-oneness of Mother and Child. Our early prayers also express this truth. "Mother Thrice Admirable, Mother of Grace" and "Mother with thy Child divine...." It is

the mission of our family to proclaim this two-in-oneness
unflinchingly. (Priests Retreat 12-19.9.1941.)

Taken from "Kirche am neuen Ufer".