

## **“The Schoenstatt Mystery”**

### **Talk from Fr. Kentenich to the boys on 10th December 1933**

It is already the second time in such a short period that you have planned a celebration. What you want to achieve has on the whole already been done. We can all sense that it is the strong bonds of community that bring us together. We also feel a very strong and deep sense of responsibility for our great and holy task, our great and holy mission.

The reason for our celebration is no doubt for our departing missionaries. This also explains your intentions. The celebration should be seen as an inheritance for our departing sisters as if you want to say to them: Carry our secret into the wide, wide world! Become bearers, representatives, messengers of our great Schoenstatt Mystery!

In the name of these sisters I would like to thank you for this inheritance. The future will show how far and in what way your petitions and wishes will be fulfilled.

If we very briefly compare with each other what our last celebration and this one uniquely offer, then we soon recognize a large difference. Our first celebration was organized by top officials, the second one by our youth, the middle section. Now you can understand why the first celebration contained a very strong movement of ideas and a concentration of strengths, whereas the one today speaks more to our heart. For me it almost seems as if the walls of our little shrine want to expand more and more, as if we have here a sacred space around us. It is like having shrine atmosphere around us with the picture of Our Lady before us. Do you not just want to hold your breath and kneel together in spirit before Our Lady's picture?

Someone, who has a strong influence today, once said: “My friend, hellish noise, I have lost all respect for great events that are surrounded by smoke and steam. The quietest moments are the most beautiful.” (Nietzsche)

In this sacred space we kneel in spirit before Our Lady. All around us the mental battle is in full swing. All around us the various trends and philosophies of life collide with each other. It is as if a new world is being born. And here we are, my dear young friends, preparing ourselves in silence to help create this world. Here, at this holy place, we struggle with our holy mission, with the Marian formation of the new time in Christ, struggle with the formation of our new world which is certainly arising on the new horizon.

It would certainly be wrong, a mistake, if I can speak in the name of our sisters, not to conform to this holy atmosphere and disturb this quiet mood.

My dear young friends let us remain kneeling in front of Our Lady's picture. What we have just imagined, spiritually experienced, what has touched our hearts should remain within our hearts until the end of the celebration. We do not want to disturb this holy mood. Therefore, we do not want to dwell deeper into our great movement of ideas with a storm wind. We do not want to unfold our basic strength but rather remain peacefully blessed. Our Lady should stay with us and watch over us. She should bless us, the light bearers, the messengers, the source of strength, seeds of wheat for the future.

It seems to me as if a threefold petition should arise from this atmosphere that touches us so deeply and be brought to the throne to the picture of Our Lady.

First Petition:

Mother Thrice Admirable, Lead me deeper into the meaning of the Schoenstatt Mystery.

Second Petition:

Mother Thrice Admirable, fully embody the Schoenstatt Mystery within me.

Third Petition:

Mother Thrice Admirable, Send me out from the upper room, from this sacred space, send me to my place of work, as a selfless and joyful messenger of your great Schoenstatt Mystery.

Should we not quietly think through this threefold petition? Should this not so be enwrapped in our emotions until it becomes more and more a part of our being?

*First Petition: Lead us deeper into the meaning of the Schoenstatt Mystery*

First Petition: Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, lead me deeper into the meaning of that great Schoenstatt Mystery. Unwillingly we would almost like to shake our heads, could it really be possible that people think we do not know what the Schoenstatt Mystery is all about, which our young men have just presented in such a heart rendering way? There is however, a great difference between knowing and understanding.

Just listen again to the word mystery. A mystery is something we do not really know and the more mysterious it is the harder it is to grasp the core. And even when we get older ten, twenty, fifty years from now, then we can still say: Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, lead me deeper into the meaning of that great Schoenstatt Mystery!

There are so many mysterious places today where Our Lady is active. Just think about the many places of pilgrimage that are popping up, some are new, others are being renewed where they had been forgotten about. It seems as if the Marian Morning Star wants to lighten up our dark world. It seems as if it will soon be Christmas. The light of the Blessed Mother is lighting up all over. As the Christ bearer, she is appearing so much more today.

What could be easier than that we research time and again the uniqueness of our Schoenstatt Mystery? My dear young friends, you have just presented to us very beautifully the Schoenstatt Mystery in its individual parts and then as an organic whole.

Schoenstatt Mystery! Whoever uses this word thinks automatically of our little shrine. They think about all that is Marian. They think about the capital of grace. They think about our hero sodalists. But do you know what is so original, so unique about our Schoenstatt Mystery?

It can be found in *the local attachment and universal fruitfulness of our Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt in such a way as is determined by the unique connection between Divine work of grace and free human co-operation.*

Do you agree with me? Or does the shaking of your head still say: What does that really mean? Let me deepen these thoughts a little further in peace. This is our Mother Thrice Admirable's sign of gratitude to you, her young squires, the bearers of a new state, and builders of a new dome.

#### I. *Local attachment*

##### *The local Schoenstatt attachment of our Mother Thrice Admirable*

This is nothing new for Our Lady to attach herself to a particular place. It is nothing new that her love and work can be attached to this place. And yet at the same time it is new that this local attachment shines from a new place. Did Our Lady not visit numerous places over the centuries where her love and work were able to unfold? Where is then the basis for our belief that she is locally attached to our shrine?

“Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.”<sup>1</sup>

If you want to know the substance for such a strong conviction then you must read Schoenstatt's Founding Document. You all know it. The senior section already presented it to us at the last celebration in such a heart rendering fashion.

The Founding Document from October 1914. There you can read the words: Blessed Mother take up your throne and from here draw all hearts to yourself in order to give them to your Son. We are all children of the family and that is why we are all convinced that this document, this Founding Document has been accepted and signed in heaven. This is the reason for our strong conviction that we have a holy place here. This is the reason why we are so convinced that whoever comes here, either in spirit or in person, is drawn into the unique stream of grace which flows from here, which flows into our German countryside.

Do you know what this means? If I am troubled and spiritually visit the shrine in faith, then I know that the graces flow more this way than if I were to kneel somewhere else without this faith. I know that when I am on holiday or even when our sisters down in Africa soon find their place of work and spiritually visit our little shrine in faith, then they receive the same rush of graces as if they were here in person.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Ex 3:5: Do not come any closer, God said. Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.

I do not know if you heard about the faith of the union priests and how they started a holy crusade in their home areas with about 26 to 30 parishes. It is their aim to bring old Marian places of pilgrimage back to life and then bring them into contact with the Schoenstatt Mystery, with our Schoenstatt source of grace. If you think about this strong, simple faith for a minute then it touches one very deeply. These are men who know life, men who have studied, and yet they bow down in childlikeness before our Schoenstatt Mystery.

It won't take long until they are asked how they could dare to unite Schoenstatt to other places and other people of the faithful in such a manner. What will their answer be? Credo! I believe in the great Schoenstatt Mystery. I believe that Our Lady is present here among us and from here attracts all hearts to herself to unite them with her Son. That is what the Founding Document is all about.

What I am now saying to you in a few short words needs to last for a long, long time and become the material for our thoughts and prayers.

Several days ago we celebrated the feast of the Immaculate Conception. Whoever is living in the signs of the times today also thinks about the aim to canonize little Bernadette (Soubirous - Lourdes) and the historical development of Lourdes. Do we really understand the difference?

I am the Immaculate Conception! This is what the Blessed Mother, dressed in an array of splendor called out to the simple, 14 year old shepherd girl. Go to where the spring is gushing forth. Wash yourself and drink from this water. The child obeyed.

Had she perhaps misunderstood? She wanted to go towards the little stream that was flowing but the good lady said no, not to go in that direction. Go down to where the spring is. There was no spring as such to be seen, but faithful to the motherly directives given, she started to dig into the sand. Suddenly it began to stream forth. First it was very faint, then more and more it rushed forth. There was a wonderful spring. The next day hundreds of people came to see and on the following days thousands. They draw from the water and drink it. Lourdes soon became a source of many miracles.

Do you see, we too, have a stream, a stream of grace which flows from the valley. This stream of grace developed in a much simpler and sober fashion. It is a stream of grace that does not have the same flowing water as in Lourdes. Can you sense what this all means? The Mystery of Schoenstatt is our Mother Thrice Admirable's attachment to the shrine.

Let me address the older courses. If from your secure vantage point you are able to think yourselves into the position of our modern times, then you will remember that the times gone by were just as sick and rotten as they are today. You will also recall how everything trembled, and sense through the lessons of history how such a movement, aimed at the renewal of the world, even when just looked at from an organizational point of view, needs a local attachment.

Whoever has read anything from Hitler knows just how great a master he is at recognizing and using the strengths of modern times and what reasons he has to locally attach his movement.

My dear young friends, this is what is so unique in the Schoenstatt Mystery. Everything that you find therein is an embodiment of the unique connection between nature and grace. When looked at from another point of view, the Schoenstatt Mystery is simply the use of modern psychological strength to the utmost. When looked at supernaturally, it is all grace upon grace.

Mother, Thrice Admirable, lead me deeper into the understanding of the Schoenstatt Mystery.

Let me remind you once again that an essential part of the Schoenstatt Mystery is the belief in the deep effect of grace which should evolve from here into the new times, the belief in the formation of the world, the Marian formation of the world from here.

Today's philosopher or psychologist will instinctively glance over the various streams of life from then and now. They will see on the one hand Mecca and on the other Rome. How should they see Schoenstatt as a place of local attachment? Maybe I could say it lies between Rome and Mecca as a centre of local attachment for an exceptionally spiritual movement with a moderate organization. If you can understand this then you will grasp the depths of our Schoenstatt Mystery and how our Blessed Mother wants to imprint her graces into our soul.

Schoenstatt Mystery, waken up! Unfold more and more before my eyes!

## II. *Spiritual Fruitfulness*

Then there is a second essential part to the Schoenstatt Mystery. We called it local attachment and universal, grace-filled fruitfulness of our MTA, the Mother Thrice Admirable.

What do I actually want to say? At the moment we are referring to the reality of grace within the soul, the grace-filled fruitfulness. You know what I am trying to say! We expect direct and indirect healing, not only for our body but also for our soul, a deeper spiritual transformation of the soul. We expect the formation of Christ within our lives.

The effect and effectiveness should be universal. What is this all embedded in? We believe that everything, either explicitly or implicitly, is embedded within the Founding Document. And if we want to explain that a movement of cultural and religious renewal develops from here, then this means that our aim was from the very beginning the organic, harmonic bond of nature and grace so that from here a new ideal church could be built.

Do you know what this means? What is an ideal church all about? It has a very large foundation – public masses. With time the masses need to believe in Schoenstatt. If we are to renew the world from here, then we need to touch the heart of the masses but they will become uniformed if they are not led by exceptional leaders.

Here is universal fruitfulness. Think about the co-operators of the league as the great masses, as the broad foundation of the dome. If this is the case then we need to consider where the leadership is among the masses. Where and how are they to be born? Where and how are they to be trained? We all know the structure of our movement. It is able to create an ideal church for today's world. We have league members, union members. This is Schoenstatt's Mystery. I believe! I believe in the Schoenstatt Mystery.

### III. *The Connection between Divine Work and Free Human Co-operation*

There is still a third essential part to this mystery. The local attachment of our Blessed Mother and her universal fruitfulness from here does not just rely on her acts of grace but also relies on our full co-operation, which is a central point of our uniqueness.

Think about Lourdes if you like. Think about Kevelaer<sup>2</sup> or wherever your thoughts may wander. You will find places of pilgrimage where only God's grace is at work and flows from there. But here? Think about the Founding Document. What do we find there? Our Blessed Mother should descend, but not without us. We want to work with her. Nothing without us! Do you sense how original we are? Once again it is always the binding of nature and grace. Did you hear it in the text you have just read about Joseph Engling? Our Lady should do everything but not without us. We want to play our part. The thought about playing our part brought about the birth of the capital of grace. You see, nothing without us!

Schoenstatt Mystery, please unfold more and more before my eyes! Nothing without us! We should not only feed off the capital of grace but feed into it.

Nothing without us! We can feel how a new time is being born. We can see it but we do not just want to be spectators in the arena of a new fight. No, we want to be participators in the arena itself. But how can we participate in this huge struggle? Nothing without us! This is where Our Lady will and should be at work but only at the cost of our own effectiveness. Nothing without us!

Am I not correct when I say that it is not all that simple to grasp and understand the Schoenstatt Mystery? Am I not correct in saying that in ten, twenty, fifty years from now how much more difficult it will be to recognize, grasp and understand the unique bond between God's grace and our human role! In Schoenstatt we have celebrated the marriage between the two, between God's grace and our own personal role, day for day.

We can then kneel down in spirit and peacefully and quietly ask our Mother Thrice Admirable, unveil more and more the great Schoenstatt Mystery.

Second Petition: Let us embody the Schoenstatt Mystery

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<sup>2</sup> Marian place of pilgrimage in north Germany, near the Dutch border

Second Petition: Let us immediately add another petition. Let me be able to embody the great Schoenstatt Mystery!

Whoever understands the signs of the times, the turmoil of our times where everything is thrown overboard, knows what it takes for a movement of renewal to survive. Three things are required: namely a great vision, secondly the incarnation of this vision among all representatives and thirdly exceptional leaders.

We immediately think about our movement. We believe that God called our movement through Our Lady, to play an important role in the Christian renewal of the world, the Marian formation of the world in Christ. This is also part of our Schoenstatt Mystery. Until now we poured all this into the brisk form: **In the shadow of this shrine the fate of the Church will be strongly influenced for centuries and millenniums to come.**

If our Schoenstatt faith is right and our Schoenstatt Mystery not a folly, then a huge movement of renewal should develop from here. What does this require?

*I. Submission to a great vision*

A great vision! We know what the vision is. It is the Marian formation of the world in Christ, the local attachment to a place, to a particular place. We do not need to warm up for this vision. You have just led us deeper into this world in your own way. But you must never forget that such an abstract vision, even when applied properly to life, is not enough.

*II. Embodiment of this idea in every representative*

If a movement is to have a secular meaning then its idea must be fully embodied. It needs to be ingrained, body and soul within the representatives of that movement. This is the most important thing.

If you glance at the other camp then you will remember how National Socialism used all means available to care that their followers incorporated their vision to the utmost.

This is what we say time and again in the family: Spiritual formation! It is not enough to have people who tag along, that we become drop outs. It needs to be that all representatives of Schoenstatt incorporate the basic vision of the family. Then we are on the right track. Spiritual formation is so important!

What do I need to incorporate? Let's not forget that if a secular movement is to fulfil its mission then it needs leaders. What qualities does such a leader need to have? He needs to incorporate the accrued will of his followers in a very intense and concentrated way. This is true leadership. Every follower should have the feeling that all the goodness in me, all the buds are concentrated within my leader in a very intense way.

Now let us pray: Mother Thrice Admirable embody the Schoenstatt Mystery within me.

I am not sure in what form I should place your petition. Should I pray and beg: Incorporate in me the vision of a follower or incorporate in me the great Schoenstatt Mystery as a leader. May the grace of God touch our souls! I will first pray in the name of those who do not want to put their hands out towards a leadership post: Mother Thrice Admirable embody within me the great Schoenstatt Mystery. Incarnation of a great vision! Do you know what this means?

Embody within me attachment to Our Lady,  
embody within me attachment to the task,  
embody within me attachment to the family,  
embody within me attachment to the organism.

Now you have your tasks. This is our gift to you for the wonderful celebration.

#### *Attachment to the Shrine*

Just think that if I am to be a true representative of the Schoenstatt realm then I have to embody the attachment to the shrine. It is a Schoenstatt heresy if the shrine is only regarded as a symbol. If I am to be a representative of this great movement then I should be attached to this place with all my heart.

Read what was proclaimed during the first conferences in our history in this line. “Whoever does not hang on to the shrine and only sees it as a symbol for ideas will never become a pillar of the family.” They may be interested in the movement, may be grateful to hear such great ideas, may even be able to speak enthusiastically about them, but this all needs to be seriously put into practice. Aut Caesar aut nihil!<sup>3</sup> We do not need hangers on, people who tag along!

Study the signs of the time. How do the other movements do it? Every representative, every follower needs to be full of the basic ideas, needs to embody the mystery. That is why I must embody the attachment to the shrine.

#### *Attachment to Our Lady*

I need to embody the attachment to Our Lady. Whoever does not achieve this in the run of his life, whoever is unable to have a childlike attachment to our Mother Thrice Admirable as she reigns in our shrine will not be used by God to bring salvation as in Israel, no matter how smart, how well organized or talented they are. These are the demands.

#### *Attachment to the Task*

Furthermore: Mother Thrice Admirable embody within me the attachment to the task. You all know the task, you know our great vision. The Marian formation of the world in Christ should develop from here. Now you have the Movement of ideas. If you like you can conclude that Schoenstatt symbolizes a vision. However, a task needs to be attached to such a great idea.

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<sup>3</sup> Either Caesar or nothing!



### *Attachment to the Family*

Now the attachment to the family. Together we need to fulfill this task. I am not alone. We are a holy phalanx, a holy city, a holy living dome. Together, shoulder on shoulder. Those are the ideas, the aim which everyone needs to embody.

Mother Thrice Admirable embody in me the Schoenstatt Mystery!

### *Attachment to the Organism*

I have one more word to explain: Embody within me the attachment to the organism. This means - form me into a person, a holy person who incorporates both at the same time, namely religious grace as well as human nobleness.

These are not just simply thoughts that I have produced, they are central to the movement and have accompanied the development from the beginning. This is what is so unique to our striving for holiness. This is part of what is so unique about Schoenstatt. We do not expect to form pious people. We want to help form the new type of person. We must form the new type of person who can deal with the times in which he lives. Our new type of person will embody the harmonic unity of nature and grace.

May I kneel down in spirit once again and pray: Mother Thrice Admirable, embody within me a leader of the great Schoenstatt Mystery!

You know what it is like today in the turmoil of our time which is so uprooted, unattached from things and places. Such times need real true leadership more than any other. The less we are attached to places and things, the more we need to be attached to people personally, the more we are driven by our times to regenerate, to bring everything forward that is embedded in true leadership.

You must not overlook that in such a time as we have now, where so many extremes are inflamed in people, how great the danger is for such people who are mentally ill to become leaders because such people, an overproduction of accumulated feelings, have certain warmth. And our rootless people of today easily run after such people.

You see once again that a true movement needs leaders, needs true leaders. The history of a movement is like the history of its people, the history of its leaders. Do I have the courage to pray: Mother Thrice Admirable embody with me as a leader the Schoenstatt Mystery!?

Do you know what this means? I need to repeat once again all that I have just said. This five part attachment needs to be incorporated within a true leader to the utmost; the will of the community needs to be incorporated within the leader. You might want to think this through for yourselves, step for step. I just want to point out one thing.

You are all still in the spring of life. And you think that our movement will have a world wide universal meaning. World wide according to its aim! World wide according to the basic strengths

that are already active. Do you know what this means? As a leader this means I need to embody the basic strengths of the time within me. This is true leadership. As a leader I must therefore incorporate the main efforts of my followers. I need to have a mixture of male and female qualities. This I just called attachment to the organism, and this organism needs to develop as much as possible for the average leader. Essentially, there should not be any basic strengths of the time that are not found in a true leader.

This is a universal position of what is demanded of a true leader. Whoever belongs to the leaders council, do you see what a great task you have? If Divine Providence called you to this position then do you know what it means? This is a gift but also a huge task. All the basic strengths of life and nature need to be brought together in harmony.

Let us kneel again and pray: Mother Thrice Admirable, form me into the embodiment of the great Schoenstatt Mystery.

*Third Petition: Form me into a messenger of your Schoenstatt Mystery*

Third Petition: This may sound simpler. Mother Thrice Admirable, form me into a messenger of your Schoenstatt Mystery.

If you have fully grasped the Schoenstatt Mystery than you know these words are engraved in Schoenstatt: Nothing without me!

Schoenstatt has not developed without grace, but it has certainly developed more than any other place of pilgrimage through the role of its representatives. Nothing without me! Oh, I know how I am trying to dwell more deeply into this world.

Nothing without me! I know that a huge stream of grace is gushing forth into the German countryside but also further a field. It still rings out in our ears what the call of our dead called out: We are not dead. We are still alive, alive in Russia, alive in the air, alive in the sea, alive in France, alive in Belgium.

Do you know what this means: Nothing without us? This is a task. We need to become messengers. Schoenstatt did not come about without the strong, selfless, heroic co-operation of its first representatives. And Schoenstatt cannot develop further without us. Therefore, Mother Thrice Admirable, form me into a messenger of your Schoenstatt Mystery. I want to proclaim you. I want to proclaim the Mystery through my being. Right through to the tips of my toes I want to embody the Schoenstatt Mystery. Then I can proclaim the great Mystery. Let me become a messenger of this great Mystery! My parents, my relatives should be able to notice. A Schoenstatt Movement should develop. I dare not rest. I must proclaim the Schoenstatt Mystery to my parents and relatives. Let me become a proclaimer. My friends next to me have not yet grasped this world. I can be a proclaimer and I must do this wisely not overbearingly. There needs to be one shepherd and one flock. And when I study somewhere else then it should be my

aim, even if do not manage it today or tomorrow, to become a messenger of the great Schoenstatt Mystery.

Let's kneel down, kneel down in spirit. I do not know which prayers are embedded the most by grace in your hearts. But this should only have one accord. Sooner or later it should ring out from all our hearts: Mother Thrice Admirable, let me understand more fully your and our great Schoenstatt Mystery.

Mother Thrice Admirable, form me fully into the embodiment of the great Schoenstatt Mystery either as a follower in true allegiance or as a leader of a great entourage.

Mother Thrice Admirable, form me into a universal proclaimer of the great Schoenstatt Mystery wherever and whenever my feet lead me.

### *Conclusion*

I think we now need to close this holy hour. It should be a holy atmosphere, shrine atmosphere which fills our little community. And I think we can hope, even expect that we experience something of the atmosphere at the end of our celebration, like the Pentecostal celebration of Our Lady. We can see poor people surrounding the most blessed among women. We can see how helpless they were, like butterflies, shallow people, subhuman creatures, inhuman! The spirit of God comes over them. Something breaks within their souls. They are transformed. They have the qualities I have just mentioned. A nova creatura<sup>4</sup> has been created in them. Now they go out to conquer a new world as leaders for Christ, for the Triune God.

Do we not want and expect for us a similarly, deeply grasping grace from this blessed hour? This grace may work three things in us:

It may form us into messengers of light for the new times,  
it may form us into a source of strength for the new times and  
it may form us into seeds of wheat for the new times.

It rings out so melancholic in our ears, "for us". For us! This is what our heroic sodalists call to us. They gave up everything: Possession and blood with fresh unbroken courage for us!

What can I say in the future? When I stand on the shoulders of the earlier generation then I too can say: For them! I can see future generations before me. I do not only glance to the past or remain in the present but look towards the future. For them! A heroic person does not think about himself. For them! Yes, for the coming generations!

Nothing without us! There may be in time to come a similar celebration, in the same place. The same should be able to be said and sung about our generation, just as we have done it for the previous generation. Nothing without you! Nothing should ever happen in Schoenstatt without

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<sup>4</sup> New Creation

us! We are the embodiment of the capital of grace. I am a light bearer. I am a source of strength in our new times.

Nothing without you! A movement cannot exist, at least a movement at the turning point of our times as we experience today, without exceptional leaders. We need to adjust accordingly. We need to be seeds of wheat for a new era. The seeds of wheat need to be sunk into the earth and die before they bring rich, mature fruit. Where are the seeds of corn among us? Where are those of whom we can say and sing: They gave their all for the movement? Today rests on your shoulders. This is what we need to become today. Grace must transform us. If it is only the one or the other who is touched by this grace then the celebration was worth it and has fulfilled its task.

Shall we give ourselves once again in spirit; reach out to each other, hand to hand in spirit. We are building a dome, a high dome, as far as the heavens are high, a dome for all people. All nations should be able to come here. They should all feel at home in this dome. And if we quietly kneel before the picture of Our Lady then we should be gripped and say again and again, pray and beg time and again: Bless all of them! Bless the individual stones. Bless the pillars. Bless the light. Bless the builders. And bless the architects.

Let me personally insert my own tone this evening: Bless the architects! Mother Thrice Admirable, bless our young generation who are trying to educate with such enthusiasm a new type of person in selfless love. Bless them all.

**Nos cum Prole pia benedicat Virgo Maria!**