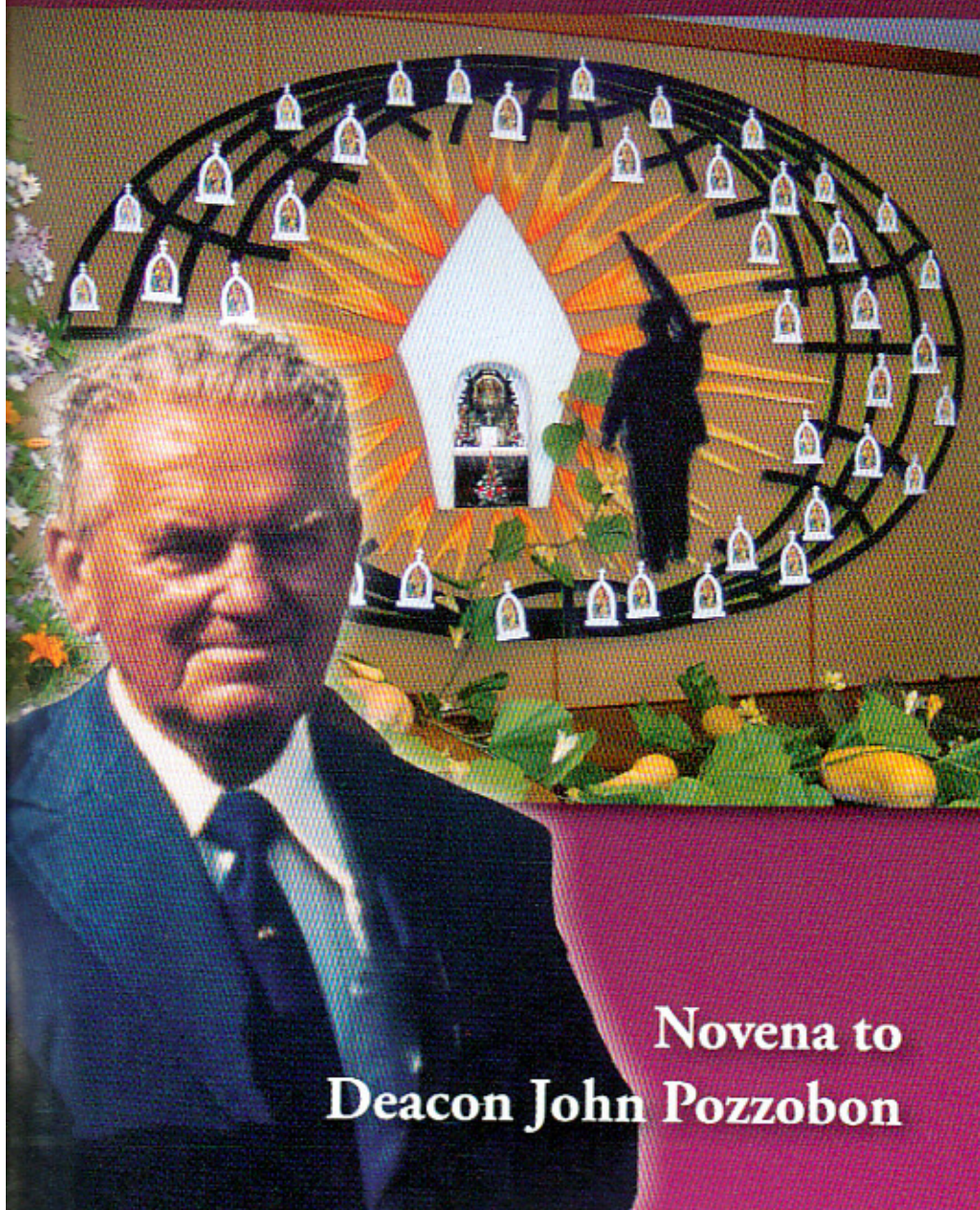


A HERO TODAY



Novena: A Hero Today
By Celina M. Garza

If in what follows it is stated directly or indirectly that John Pozzobon is a saint, it is in each instance merely the expression of a private opinion. The decision of the Church is in no way anticipated.

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PREFACE

The novena a "Hero Today" was written in honor of Our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt and to make the life and work of Deacon John Pozzobon better known. The inspiration to produce this novena was the result of a visit to Santa Maria, Brazil, with the purpose of participating in *Encounter of the Americas '92*. A group from Florida, Louisiana, and Texas represented the United States at the Encounter. While at Santa Maria we were fortunate to have Father Esteban Uriburu accompany us on our visit to Tabor Shrine, to John Pozzobon's home, and to his burial site. This experience provided the opportunity to get to know John Pozzobon in his homeland and the places where he lived, worked, and prayed. Father Uriburu shared details of John Pozzobon's life and his work in a warm, anecdotal manner which brought John Pozzobon to life for us and made us feel very close to him. This was truly a profound spiritually and emotionally enriching experience.

John Pozzobon's spiritual schedule included a daily consecration to Our Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt and a renewal of his commitment to his mission with the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign. He was also in deep communion with the founder of the International Schoenstatt Movement, and the founder generation heroes, especially Joseph Engling. He daily placed himself spiritually into the Original Shrine in Schoenstatt, Germany. He felt that it was very important to remain united to these sources of grace. He was so impressed with the heroism of Joseph Engling that he aspired to be the Engling of Brazil. His life, work, and spirituality radiated the image of a holy person, who was totally committed to help all people in their diverse needs especially the poor and the disenfranchised. John Pozzobon is a perfect role model for our time of great need. He was truly a hero to the people he lovingly served. The process for his canonization was opened on December 12, 1994, at Santa Maria, Brazil.

It is hoped that this novena will help many people who are afflicted with spiritual, physical, emotional, or material needs. May John Pozzobon's example be an inspiration for them and may praying this novena help them cope with their particular situation.

It is important to gratefully acknowledge that the information for this novena was taken from the book: *A Hero Today Not Tomorrow* by Father Esteban Uriburu (Cape Town, 1993). Thank you, Father Esteban, for giving us a vivid, inspiring, and heartwarming portrayal of John Louis Pozzobon.

Celina M. Garza

SCHOENSTATT

Schoenstatt is a religious center, a place of pilgrimage, a shrine dedicated to Mary. The first shrine, located in Germany, near Koblenz on the Rhine River, has become a Marian pilgrimage place, a special place of grace since 1914.

Throughout the years many such shrines have been erected in the entire world, each of them an exact replica of the Original Shrine. They are the spiritual centers of the International Schoenstatt Apostolic Movement.

Countless people come to the shrine to pray, to unburden themselves, and to entrust their special intentions to the Mother of God. In this holy place they experience Mary as a true mother and educator.

The Schoenstatt Shrine is a special place of grace and Mary's picture in the shrine is a picture of grace. When we pray in the shrine or before the picture of grace of the Mother Thrice Admirable, we receive special graces and favors. God will answer our petitions according to his will. We will experience Mary's motherly care, her guidance, and education.

Schoenstatt is a movement of religious and moral renewal and belongs to that stream of life awakened by the Holy Spirit within the Church of our century. Founded by Father Joseph Kentenich in 1914, the movement has expanded throughout the entire world. The members serve the universal apostolate of the Church in the world today and strive to fulfill the challenge of Vatican II to "consecrate the world."

Schoenstatt is a way of life that can affect and form every aspect of daily living. The Schoenstatt spirituality helps people to deepen their life of faith. We are invited to consecrate ourselves to the Blessed Mother, to enter into a covenant of love with her and thus receive help to live our baptismal covenant with the Triune God in a more perfect way. Schoenstatt offers a spiritual wealth to everyone; it is a great inspiration for our personal striving for sanctity and perseverance in the apostolate.

Schoenstatt has the task to form the new person in the new community imbued with great apostolic spirit. As an instrument of the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, we want to help imprint the countenance of Christ upon the nations of the entire world.

Father Kentenich

HISTORY OF THE PILGRIM MTA

During the holy year of 1950, John Pozzobon, a member of the Schoenstatt Movement in Santa Maria, Brazil, received a picture of the Mother Thrice Admirable (MTA). It was suggested to him that he take this MTA picture into the homes of many people. He accepted this request as a holy task and special mission.

For 35 years, Pozzobon took the MTA on pilgrimage. He traveled a total of more than 87,000 miles and took the picture to a different family each day. He carried this picture in a shrine-shaped frame that had been made specifically for this pilgrimage. He went from home to home, to schools, prisons, and hospitals. Pozzobon would gather people together to pray the rosary with them; together they begged for the renewal of families and individuals, for the special pilgrim graces from the shrine and the picture of grace and for Mary's intercession for all their needs.

Pozzobon's pilgrimage began each day with Holy Mass in the Schoenstatt Shrine in Santa Maria.

He renewed his covenant of love every day, and he received untiring zeal and the necessary strength to carry out his mission.

In June 1985, God called John Pozzobon to his eternal home. He was struck and killed by a truck as he walked to the shrine for Holy Mass. However, his mission continues. The PILGRIM MTA has reached beyond the borders of Brazil and has extended throughout the world.

TO BE SAID EACH DAY OF THE NOVENA

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, we come before you to pray this novena, *A Hero Today*, in your honor. We place our needs in the hands of John Pozzobon, your faithful and heroic son. We are in great need, and following the example of John, we trustingly place all our concerns before you. As we pray and meditate on this novena that depicts the life of the Servant of God, John Pozzobon, poor pilgrim and deacon, we will try to live each day in closer union with your Son, with you, and with our fellow man. Help us to see God's holy will in our present situation and give us the courage and strength to accept his will. Make us humble, childlike, and



aware that *Love conquers all!* Dear Blessed Mother, following John's example of a daily consecration to you we dare to say:

My Queen! My Mother!
I give myself entirely to you,
And to show my devotion to you,
I consecrate to you this day:
My eyes, my ears, my mouth, my heart,
My entire self without reserve.
As I am your own, my good mother,
Guard me and defend me
As your property and possession.
Amen.

FIRST DAY

Great Love and Surrender Heroism Is Required

1932 – 1950

Today we begin a novena in honor of John Louis Pozzobon. We ask him to intercede for us in our time of great need. We remember John's first encounter with Schoenstatt, and we meditate on his call to total heroism of complete self-surrender. The great love and total surrender of Joseph Engling and his companions to the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt made a deep impression on John. He always remained united to the original sources, never forgetting those heroes and their founder, Father Joseph Kentenich. He envisioned himself as Father Kentenich's pupil in his school in the Original Shrine in spite of the fact that he did not know the place.

Nevertheless, this unity with the sources is what gave him strength, courage, and security on his long road of heroism. Similarly, we must remain united with the Original Shrine, the founder, and the Schoenstatt heroes if we want to bear the fruits of a great work. In 1950, John said, "I am small but I want to do big things."

Perhaps today we feel weak, discouraged, and insecure because of the circumstances we face. Perhaps we feel small, but couldn't we reflect on John's example and ask him to intercede for us with our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt to help us in our time of need? However, just as we ask for help for ourselves, let us also reflect on how we can be a hero today for our family, our relatives, and our friends.

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, I ask you to teach me the path of self-surrender and heroism and, just as the Schoenstatt heroes have endured hardship and pain, I offer my sacrifices for the capital of grace.* Into your hands I entrust my intention through John Pozzobon's intercession.

* Schoenstatt uses this expression when speaking about the Church's teaching on the merits of good works and our ability to cooperate in Christ's work of salvation.

Exercise

Today find a way to help, love, or encourage others in your own way.

SECOND DAY

A Call to a Heroic Mission

1932 – 1950

In 1950, Pope Pius XII called for a Holy Year throughout the Church and proclaimed the dogma of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven. In September of that year, John Pozzobon participated in some spiritual exercises at the retreat house adjacent to the Tabor Shrine in Santa Maria, Brazil.

During the retreat, three large pictures of Our Lady of Schoenstatt were blessed in the shrine. Sister M. Teresinha Gobba invited John Pozzobon to pray the first rosary in the home of a family. Afterwards, Sister M. Teresinha entrusted the picture to John and asked him to see that it traveled from home to home and that the rosary could be prayed. John accepted the invitation and decided he would visit the families and pray the rosary daily. After a time of traveling with others, he asked for his own picture, and on his own initiative he traveled alone with the Pilgrim Mother.

This was the start of a long, fruitful, and heroic mission for John and our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt. Although the picture was large and awkward to carry, John wanted to accept any discomfort as his contribution to the capital of grace. What does this meditation say to us today? Is it possible that we could accept the pain, suffering, or discomfort that we are experiencing in our life as our contribution to the capital of grace?

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, I entrust my needs into your loving hands. With childlike confidence and through the intercession of John Pozzobon, I ask you to help me with my intention.

Exercise

Make a contribution to the capital of grace with the spirit of heroism.

THIRD DAY

A Hero Now

1950 – 1952

During the years 1950-1952, John Pozzobon conducted a true family apostolate. Night after night without fail, John went with the Pilgrim MTA from family to family. He also allowed time to visit with the family and to listen to their needs. He kept a record of the visits and of the people he met. In January 1950, John began a notebook that he called, *Joy of My Heart*. He recorded the following:

A hero now. I have only to say this word and I lose all fear. My Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen, I want always to remain attached to your shrine. I believe and feel as I never have before. For me, everything is a shrine; praying, working, traveling. Yes, everything. I'll bear this word "hero" till the end of my days. It is a weapon I use in time of temptation. Under the protection of the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt and together with her, I shall overcome my difficulties. The very word hero is for me like the raising of a flag as a sign of victory. I say this because occasions to sin have arisen in the past, and I have been able to overcome them with the firmness of a hero.

It was during these years that John began to use symbols and to offer spiritual bouquets. Although John met Father Kentenich only briefly, he maintained a close communion with him; and he kept him informed about his work with the Pilgrim MTA. Father Kentenich in turn blessed John's mission and stressed that the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign encompassed all the basic forces of Schoenstatt spirituality. He also encouraged the practice of adoration and the rosary as great spiritual weapons. The challenge for me is to ask myself whether I can be a hero in time of temptation, trials, and when I face the difficulties of life.

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, please help me to be brave and courageous when I am faced with the difficulties of life or with temptations. You know my needs; therefore, I entrust them into your hands. I will try to understand and to heroically accept your response.

Exercise

Consider praying the rosary or making a visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

FOURTH DAY

Sacrifice and Idealism Hero for the Poor

1952 – 1956

Since the beginning of the Rosary Campaign, John Pozzobon was very concerned with the plight of the poor. He tried to help them and to extend fatherly and friendly love to the families he visited. He also tried to make them aware of their dignity as sons and daughters of God and the Blessed Mother. He stressed that they had a great and glorious destiny for eternity. The people were open to receive the Pilgrim Mother in their small homes; and in one instance, a family slept outdoors to make room for her. This inspired John to suggest that a chapel be constructed. He was also concerned about the shortage of housing and after meeting with people, the Noble Village of Charity was begun. This was a settlement constructed with John's help. He encouraged the people to plant flowers and fruit trees and to be willing to help others build their

During these early years, John began to visit schools where he taught the children to love the Blessed Mother. The children sacrificed to obtain the jewels for a crown that would be used to crown the Blessed Mother. This was also the time that John began to develop mottos and to draw pictures that depicted the goals for the year. The Holy Spirit always appeared in the sketches. His contact with the Tabor Shrine was decisive and fruitful. He was constantly inspired to begin new projects and to find more ways to gather the people for prayer.

Another visible sign of John's dedication are the Stations of the Cross that were constructed as a sacrifice so the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign would flourish. John made many contributions to the capital of grace and lived by the axiom: *Give in order to receive, because if you don't give how can you receive?* This meditation provides a wealth of food for thought. What does it say to me at this time? What is my attitude towards the homeless, poor, and the hungry in my community? What can I do to help?

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, I come before you in great need. You know my concerns and worries, but inspired by the life and work of John Pozzobon I offer them as my contribution to the capital of grace.

Exercise

Perform an act of charity for the needy in your midst.

FIFTH DAY

Trials and Testing **Heroic Contributions to the Capital of Grace**

1956 – 1970

During the years between 1956-1970, John Pozzobon encountered many trials and difficulties. This period of time was marked with misunderstandings, humiliations, accusations, and ridicule. John suffered immensely because at times his mission of the Rosary Campaign was not understood by clergy, religious, and even by some within the Schoenstatt ranks. He had to fight very hard against the opposition he met in order to accomplish his mission, but he never gave up. He prayed, "With your help, dear Mother, I can go forward. Even if everyone is against me I shall go on and still want to learn to take Jesus, your Son, to everybody."

His perseverance and indomitable determination illustrate the criterion by which a work of God is discerned: the smallness of the instruments and the magnitude of both the difficulties and the success. the achievement. John was the embodiment of heroic childlikeness. He said, "After the crosses we were talking about started coming, I was transformed into a spiritual child. When the Campaign was growing, I changed into a little donkey that went along carrying Our Lady."

It was during this time of trial that John organized the family apostolate. A leader was entrusted with an MTA picture that would visit the families on a monthly basis. The visits were so fruitful that Pozzobon had more Pilgrim MTA Shrines made.

Shortly before Father Kentenich's death, John received a written greeting from him on the back of a Joseph Engling card. The message read: Love for love, loyalty for loyalty, until death. This blessing was a precious legacy for John, because he wanted to be the Joseph Engling for Brazil. He also saw this blessing as a confirmation of his attachment to Father Joseph Kentenich, the founder of Schoenstatt. How do I react to the trials and tribulations I face? Do I lament and wonder "why me?" Do I try to run away and hide in times of adversity? Perhaps we should meditate on the life and work of John and try to understand that our trials can provide spiritual growth if they are understood and accepted as a greeting from God.

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, please help me accept the trials and adversities that I encounter daily with heroic childlikeness. Help me to grow and to deepen my spirituality as I entrust everything into your hands through John Pozzobon's intercession.

Exercise

Practice childlike confidence in your time of trial and adversity.

SIXTH DAY

Love Conquers All **Heroic Love for the Blessed Mother**

1970 – 1979

Twenty years into the Rosary Campaign, thousands of people had become acquainted with the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt. John Pozzobon realized that many sacrifices were necessary in order for the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign to become a great apostolic movement. It was also a time for John to begin another important mission, that of preparation to become a deacon. He agreed to begin the training only if he could continue with the Rosary Campaign in the evenings. He did not want to interrupt his communication with the people or his service to the Pilgrim Mother. As a deacon he was able to administer communion to the sick and to meet people who helped him to spread the Schoenstatt mission.

Deacon John continued to make yearly reports to the bishop, which gave an account of the number of visits he made to the schools, families, and prisons. He also renewed his consecration annually. On December 8, 1971, he wrote,

I wore a badge on my suit to symbolize my ideal; it depicted a little sword with a cross. The sword is a symbol of a fighter, as a worthy guard of the shrine to fight for Christ's cause. The cross is the symbol of renunciation of the world, of dying to the world, and of living for all eternity.

During this time Deacon John met Ubaldo, the man who would become his helper; together they continued with their sacred mission. After his wife died, Deacon John had the opportunity to visit the Original Shrine and other important Schoenstatt places in Germany and France. He visited Rome, and the Pilgrim Mother Shrine was blessed by Pope John Paul II. He visited Fatima, and the Pilgrim Mother was taken to Sister Lucia's cloister. When we meditate on Deacon John's long and tedious pilgrimage, we may wonder how he was able to accomplish so many great things; but we remember the motto *Love conquers all*. When we feel tired and discouraged, let us remember this motto and try to live it!

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, please allow me to show my love for you by accepting the burdens, trials, and hardships I face today. I entrust all my concerns into your hands through Deacon John's intercession.

Exercise

Show your love to someone in need or in distress.

SEVENTH DAY

Madly in Love – Heroic Love

1979 – 1983

After Deacon John Pozzobon's return from Europe, he started something new in Brazil. He began to erect wayside shrines in areas where it was difficult for a priest to visit. These wayside shrines became a place for the community to gather for devotions. The rosary was prayed on Saturdays, the Stations of the Cross were prayed on First Fridays, 18th Devotions were held each month, and Holy Mass was celebrated once a year. Deacon John felt that this was a way of attracting people to pray and to begin pilgrimages to the shrine.

On April 24, 1980, Deacon John wrote to Pope John Paul II to explain how the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign had started and how it had developed. He also mentioned that he was ordained as a deacon. In his letter Deacon John told the Holy Father that he owed all his accomplishments to God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, as well as our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt. He also explained that he had followed the Schoenstatt spirituality developed by Father Joseph Kentenich and he asked the Holy Father to consider the beatification of Father Kentenich.

At a solemn and profound ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the Rosary Campaign, Deacon John entrusted the Pilgrim Mother to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. He stated that Father Kentenich's blessing of 1951 had been the strength of the Rosary Campaign. He also began the use of "auxiliaries" which have to come from the Schoenstatt Tabor Shrine in Santa Maria, Brazil, where the Rosary Campaign began. These "auxiliaries" were to go out on pilgrimage with the purpose of drawing people to our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt. These "auxiliaries" are an extension of the blessing given by Father Kentenich from the Original Shrine on August 4, 1951.

Deacon John also designed a special shrine for the youth that was marked with an Engling cross. These new endeavors and the great success of the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign were accomplished because of Deacon John's great love for the Blessed Mother. As a result of the presentation of a Pilgrim MTA to Guillermo and Ana Echevarría, this couple

requested twenty-five more so that the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign could spread throughout the continent. This was a great boost for the campaign! As we reflect on all of these events and new initiatives of the Rosary Campaign, isn't it a challenge for us to do something for the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign?

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, thank you for loving us and for forming Deacon John as a model we should strive to imitate. Increase our love for you and your Son.

Exercise

Initiate a way to spread the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign in your area.



EIGHTH DAY

Worldwide – A Heroic Mission

1984 – 1985

After Deacon John Pozzobon received the request from Buenos Aires for twenty-five Pilgrim MTA Shrines, it was decided that a group of people would come to Santa Maria, Brazil, to receive them. The pilgrims got to know the sources of the Rosary Campaign: the Tabor Shrine and Deacon John Pozzobon. They gathered for prayer and to share their love for our Blessed Mother, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt. After the Mass, Deacon John addressed the group with these words:

I would like to share with you a thought that has just come into my mind this moment. It is this: **FOR LOVE OF THE CAMPAIGN, BE A HERO TODAY.** It is not enough simply to do our duty. It is clear that we have to do our duty. More than once I have been told (he said this with a smile) that I am mad. But there are two kinds of madmen in the world: those who end up in an asylum and those who are madly in love. His concluding words were: **ACTION AND CONTEMPLATION!**

The meeting was a turning point for the internationality of the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign when the Pilgrim MTA Shrines were sent to Argentina. Deacon John reminded the MTA coordinators that they would encounter difficulties, but the Blessed Mother of Schoenstatt would help them overcome them so that she could visit the families who were waiting for her. Shortly afterwards, Father Esteban Uriburu visited South Africa. He took one of the Pilgrim MTA Shrines with him. He had told Deacon John that if no one asked to keep it he would bring it back. Deacon John responded that the Pilgrim MTA would not return.

Not only did the Pilgrim MTA remain in South Africa, but more were requested. Not long afterward a family traveled to Milwaukee, taking along a Pilgrim MTA Shrine. The Rosary Campaign gradually extended to many countries, truly becoming international.

By this time, Deacon John was eighty. Although he continued his apostolate, he was thinking of

his final pilgrimage. He completed his last will and testament which he had begun earlier. He pondered over the great moments of his life, but he also remembered the sacrifices and humiliations. Perhaps today, we should think about our life and evaluate it. Are we truly trying to know, to love, and to serve God? Or are we overly concerned about material things?

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, as I approach you today I ask for your blessing as I try to live my life in the spirit of Deacon John. Help me to focus on the important things of life which lead to Jesus Christ, your Son and to our Heavenly Father.

Exercise

Perform an apostolic deed today.



NINTH DAY

I Give My Life . . . I Am With You

A Heroic End – 1985

In June of 1985, Deacon John Pozzobon visited Argentina. He greeted the people who were waiting for him with the words, "Hail Mary! Much peace and joy to you with Jesus and Mary. Hail." While Deacon John was in Argentina, he spoke to many groups of people. He spoke about the beginnings of the Schoenstatt Rosary Campaign in Santa Maria, Brazil, and about the talks the Sisters of Mary had given about Father Kentenich and Joseph Engling. Deacon John confessed:

I felt the heroism of Joseph Engling in surrendering his life totally for that mission. The spirit of heroism and the inspiration to imitate Joseph Engling remained ingrained in me; and I gave my life over to our Mother and Queen, to her work and that of our founder. Each day I continue to renew this spirit from the depths of my soul. Every day I offer myself anew to Our Lady and I say, "I am ready to die for you." I believe I hear her reply, "Carry on working." So I rejoice that I can carry on working because I want to take her message to all people. . . . Heroism consists in going a little further than is strictly our duty as Christians.

Deacon John told the people that he daily placed himself in the Original Shrine, and he explained that the Rosary Campaign was a new branch of the tree that signifies the shrine. He described this communion as a river of grace, this sea of spiritual grace that flows from the Original Shrine. He also repeated the words which he had spoken to the pilgrims from Buenos Aires when they went to receive the Pilgrim Shrines, "I am with you and I give my life for the sake of this Campaign so that, from its powerful beginning here it may become a worldwide campaign. And I do not in any way take back these words now. I am with you. Thank you." These are powerful words stated by a simple man who was madly in love with Our Blessed Mother of Schoenstatt, her Son, and the Heavenly Father. As he left Argentina, he remarked that Schoenstatt must move fast.

Deacon John died on June 27, 1985, when he was struck by a truck on his way to Holy Mass at the Tabor Shrine. Even at the time of death, Deacon John was carrying out his apostolate. What a beautiful example of total dedication, loyalty, and love! Today let us meditate on the life and work of Deacon John and let us be open to the inspiration that we receive.

Prayer

Dear Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, help us to follow Deacon John's example of love, loyalty, and dedication. We want to pray for his prompt canonization.

Exercise

Make a contribution to the capital of grace for the canonization of Deacon John.



Concluding Word

Now you have completed the novena, *A Hero Today*. If your petition has not been resolved, do not be discouraged. Continue to pray, and try to see God's will in your situation. If your prayer was answered, please make a sincere act of thanksgiving. You are encouraged to notify www.schoenstattrosarycampaign.org in writing.

Thank you for praying this novena. May our Blessed Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt continue to bless you and your loved ones.