

*AN  
INTRODUCTION  
TO OUR MARIAN  
MISSION*

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**DEDICATED TO**

**MARY**

**Mother of God**

**Mother Thrice Admirable**

**Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt**

**AND**

**Peter Ejiofor Chukwuma**

**The First Nigerian to Be Ordained Deacon**

**In The Community of the Secular Institute of Schoenstatt**

**Fathers**

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## **Introduction**

The mere mention of the name Blessed Virgin Mary elicits different reactions among many people. While for some the feeling is one of joy and happiness, for many others she is not only a positive hindrance to the right relationship with God but also she adds complications to the invitation of Christ. Still for some others she is a myth. But the question is who is Mary and why do we need her? Do we really need to have an intermediary in our relationship with Jesus Christ? These and many other questions boil in the hearts of many at the hearing of the name of Mary.

Notwithstanding the responses we have to these questions, one thing is sure - Mary is a part of God's plan. Starting from the time when God spoke to the Devil and said that since it was by a woman that man fell, it would be through a woman that God would bring healing (Gen. 3: 15), it was clear that the Son will be born of a Mother whom He chose before He was born. ***The only instance in history where both the Son willed the Mother and the Mother willed the Son. As Eden was the Paradise of Creation, Mary is the Paradise of the Incarnation, and in her as a Garden was celebrated the first nuptials of God and man, as in the Paradise of Creation was celebrated the nuptials of man and woman.***

And thus did Mary receive her mission as not only the Mother of the Son of God but also as a "co-participant in the events of the history of salvation". This mission that our Heavenly Father gave to Mary did not end with the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. Mary's task in salvation history is continuous: she has the same mission in the early Church, in the middle ages, as she has today. This mission of Mary is really great, penetrating and all

encompassing. And she has continued to choose instruments for the success of her mission. One of such was Father Joseph Kentenich.

He in turn entrusted this conviction unto the Movement of Renewal, which he founded otherwise called the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt that at present comprises of people from approximately 32 nations of all continents. In the words of Pope John Paul II, Schoenstatt is a worldwide Movement “in the heart of the Church” with a spirituality for people of today’s world. The Secular Institute of the Schoenstatt Fathers, a branch of this Movement, came into Nigeria in the early 1990’s. It is on the occasion of the blessing of the Place of Grace and inauguration of the Formation house at Ijokodo, Ibadan, Oyo State, that this work is produced. It is the result of a study done by the members of the Course “Sion Anima” and is meant to be a brief introduction and presentation of Mary’s mission for our time, of Schoenstatt and its spirituality as a gift on the solemn dedication of the first Shrine in Nigeria, a striking event in our history in Nigeria.

The first chapter that discusses who Father Kentenich is and what Schoenstatt is serves as the background and as a major introduction into this work. Chapter two provides insights into the person of Mary from the scriptural, the Church and the point of view of Fr. Kentenich. The pedagogical means of education and apostolate is the hallmark of Schoenstatt. Hence in chapter three we will encounter the different ways that this means is realised. But first short notes are given about the experiences of Lourdes and Fatima in the last centuries. In chapter four we will find the mission of Mary in our time discussed in a more general way.

Schoenstatt is a way of life. Everyone, from all walks of life has a place. Thus in the appendix the organizational structure of the Schoenstatt Movement is given to provide a handy first information for all those who wish to identify with this mission and those who would ask, what can I do, after reading this pamphlet.

## **Chapter One**

## **FATHER JOSEPH KENTENICH AND SCHOENSTATT**

At one or the other time in history we encounter great personalities whose influence in the ship of the world is very decisive. Not infrequently their greatness does not arise from extraordinary inventions but entails leaving behind a precious legacy that most often is the result of very small and insignificant beginnings. This is no less the case with Father Joseph Kentenich, a simple German Catholic priest of the Pallotine Community who was guided by the Holy Spirit to found what was to be his life work, one that is already having great significance not only in the Church but in the lives of many people in the world transgressing the boundaries of religious affiliations, culture and language.

### **Father Joseph Kentenich: A Short Biography**

Father Joseph Kentenich was a German, Catholic priest who had deep love for Mary and the Supernatural realities. He is the founder of the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt, a movement of apostolic renewal in the church that is for all Christ faithful and all men of good will. He wanted to offer to the Church, through his work, a fountain of life, encompassing and bringing fruitfulness to all areas and levels of the Church. He was born on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1885 at Gymnich, near Cologne all in Germany.

In 1904, he joined the Pallotine Fathers as a novice and was ordained a priest of this community on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July 1910. In

1912, he was appointed a spiritual director of the Pallotine Minor Seminary in Schoenstatt, Germany. This was the first ring in the chain of events leading to the founding of Schoenstatt Movement as part of his work with young Seminarians. By 1919, the teachings of Father Kentenich were no longer confined to the minor seminary in Schoenstatt, but were beginning to spread to other parts of Germany. His works expanded rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s. He, however, was an unusually creative person who bore in himself a whole new world, which he had to bring forth and shape. Since he was often at odds with the prevailing opinion of the time he was persecuted by the Nazis in the time of Hitler controlled Germany. Father Kentenich was also a prisoner of the Nazis for three and half years, primarily in the Dachau concentration camp. His release from the prison initiated a new phase in the international expansion and growth of the Movement. The ways of education and religious formation of “new persons and new communities” was not understood by many. Therefore his works were tested by the Church leading to a time of exile from Europe for 14 years, which is seen in the Schoenstatt Family as his own stations of the cross in obedience to the authorities of the Church. He carried this cross in serenity and faith in Divine Providence; little wonder the inscription on his tomb DILEXIT ECCLESIAM – HE LOVED THE CHURCH. He was fully reinstated in his honour and rights as founder by Pope Paul VI on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1965. Father Kentenich died on the feast of our Lady of Sorrows, 15<sup>th</sup> of September 1968 in Schoenstatt, Germany, after the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. Since his life

and work has a tremendous impact in the life stream of the Church, the Church opened his cause for beatification in 1975.

A short biography as this may not bring out the heroic flavour of Father Kentenich's long, rich, eventful and fruitful life. Nonetheless there are some salient events, which would influence greatly his life and work that are worth singling out, like his consecration at the age of nine.

### **His Consecration**

The idea of dedication or even consecration is not strange to us even in our African traditional setting. Very evident in all such acts is the total trust and confidence being displayed in the action. There is an attitude of blind trust and total surrender in the process. This was also true with Father Kentenich.

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 1894, in the house chapel of the orphanage of St Vincent in Oberhausen, in front of the statue of our Lady, the mother of the 8 year old Joseph Kentenich performed a seemingly insignificant action, but one that left an indelible mark in his life. She consecrated her son to the protection of his spiritual mother, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. She wanted to entrust her child whom she could no longer keep with her to the care and wise education of Mary. She hung what must have been her most precious possession, a gold cross and a chain, a present from her godmother on her first Holy Communion around the neck of the statue, a token of how seriously she meant this to be. The depth of this singular act was only to be known as decades unrolled. Not only was he deeply impressed by his mother's honest religious act,

he himself made an act of consecration to the Mother of God, which he later put in the following form,

*Hail Mary, for the sake of your purity, keep me pure in body and soul. Open wide to me your heart and the heart of your Son. Give me souls and keep all else for yourself.*

In his old age, Father Kentenich could look back over his flourishing rich life and work and say that the seed of his whole life's work was contained in this consecration of April 12<sup>th</sup> 1894. It is without doubt as things turned out that the Blessed Mother of God accepted the consecration of mother and son so that from that day on his life was exclusively under the protection of Mary and therefore under the influence of Divine Providence. The Blessed Mother is for him a perfect educator. Father Kentenich's love for her, his longing to form himself and as many as possible according to her pure image were two of his strongest and most outstanding features. In principle, he never concerned himself with the question of how far one could go without committing sin. He taught instead that one should never aim at the lowest limit, but at the highest of heights, for all that was nobler, more generous, more like the attitude of the Most Pure Queen and more pleasing to God. This attitude became in a way the bedrock of the whole Schoenstatt Movement.

**What is Schoenstatt?**

The term Schoenstatt stands for three different but closely-knit aspects of the same reality, it is a Place, it is a Movement, and it is a Way of life. Father Kentenich saw his vocation as not just to be in the service of the Church but also to fulfil a divine commission in rendering a particular service to the Church. This service is to be seen in his foundation.

- **Schoenstatt - A Beautiful place**

Schoenstatt is the name of a place in Germany and means “A Beautiful Place”. It became a religious centre, a place of pilgrimage, a shrine dedicated to Mary, the “Mother Thrice Admirable”. The first Shrine, located in Germany near Koblenz on the Rhine River became our Lady’s place of grace in 1914. Through the years more than 170 Schoenstatt Shrines have been erected in the whole world, each of them an exact replica of the original Schoenstatt Shrine in Germany. They are visited by millions of people and are the spiritual centres of the International Movement of Schoenstatt. The new Shrine at Ijokodo in Ibadan, Oyo State of Nigeria is another feather added to this stream.

- **A Movement of Inner Renewal**

The Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt is an agglomeration of groups animated and united by the same spirit, offering a place to any person interested in intense spiritual striving to enable him/her to live his/her Christian vocation and mission in the world. It comprises all people from all walks of life, of all ages

and cultures, an almost baffling multiplicity of communities. It takes up the most important task facing the people of our time: the moral and religious renewal of the whole world in the spirit of Christ, according to the teaching of the Church. It seeks to reconnect faith with daily life, especially through a deep love for Mary, the Mother of God. It is a spiritual family whose many branches and communities join to form a single Schoenstatt Family.

### - **A Unique Spirituality in the Church**

All the Schoenstatt communities have their origin in the covenant of love with our Lady in her Shrine on October 18 1914. Its characteristic features have been testified as fitting for living the faith in our modern times. It is anchored in three dimensions: in covenant spirituality, instrument spirituality and everyday sanctity. As covenant spirituality, it fosters a personal relationship with God, Mary and fellow man. As instrument spirituality, it makes Christian discipleship more tangible and in tune with God's will, through being a fruitful and creative instrument in the hands of God. As an everyday spirituality, it seeks ways to form everyday life with practical steps in faith, hope and love. The key is learning how to work with Divine Providence in everyday life. We are going to see later in subsequent sections more elaborate explanations of these aspects of Schoenstatt spirituality and life.

As Schoenstatt continued to grow, its spirituality in the life stream of the church continued to influence millions of people. The person and vision of its founder became more remarkable both

within and outside the Catholic Church. The Methodist Minister, John Beebe had this to say of Father Kentenich,

**“Thinking about the life of Father Kentenich, I see a Christian priest and a father-figure. I do not see a man whose life was lived in a kind of delusion because of his dependence upon Mary, but one who was brought very close to the heart of the Christian faith by Mary, who was and is at the very heart of that faith herself. I cannot quite unravel the mystery of Father Kentenich’s life and thinking, but what I do understand accords with what I have always seen as authentic Christianity”.**



*Father Joseph Kentenich*

*(1885-1968)*

## **Chapter Two**

### **WHO IS MARY?**

Recently we conducted an interview about Mary. The interview took place at two strategic places here in Ibadan – Dugbe and University of Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria. It involved people from all walks of life; working class, businessmen and women, and students. It's really amazing to hear what people think and say about Mary. Some people did not mince words in pointing out that devotion to Mary is not Biblical. A contributor in the interview said that the 'Mary-thing' is a myth. It is superfluous. Some others said that they are indifferent about Mary, whether Mary exists or not, it's not their business. Many others are of the view that Mary gave birth to Jesus who is not God, but Son of God; hence she cannot be called Mother of God. She is the channel God used to bring Jesus to us, nothing more than that. We should pray to Jesus Christ and only him alone. However, we should also respect Mary, just like every other person, not to pray to or through her.

It is very interesting to notice also that there are people we may call 'silent admirers of Our Lady'. These are people who out of circumstance are not Catholics but believe in the role Mary played in our redemption. A middle-aged protestant woman working at one of the Telecommunication Companies here in Ibadan has this to say about Mary: "She is the Mother of Jesus; she brought Jesus into the world. God found her worthy and chose her for this special mission. God first honoured her through Angel

Gabriel; hence honour should be accorded to her. The Catholics are right in their devotion to Mary”. However, given her background as a protestant, she said that Mary has no further role to play in our world today. But then what has the scriptures to say?

### **Mary in the Scriptures:**

Apparently looking at the Bible, it does seem that it has just very little to say about Mary, however these few are insightful and quite revealing. In Gen 3:14 –15, we find God telling the snake, which had tempted Eve, that it would be punished. It would be the offspring of Eve who would crush the head of the snake. The idea of Mary as the ‘new Eve’ goes back to the Early Church Fathers, particularly Irenaeus and Tertullian. They developed the theme of Mary as the ‘new Eve’ who by her obedience to God’s word reversed the disobedience of the first Eve.

St. Luke tells us about the Annunciation and Visitation, in which Mary was the protagonist, in Chapter 1 of his gospel. In Chapter 2 he talks about the birth. Then we have another glimpse of glory with the angels and the shepherds before we have some very revealing words in verse 19 of Chapter 2: ‘Mary pondered all these things deeply in her heart.’ This is the picture of Mary we should always keep in mind. Later we hear about Jesus being taken to the temple for the rite of purification, where Joseph and Mary met Simeon who said to Mary: ‘... and sorrow like a sharp sword will break your own heart.’ (Lk. 2: 35) St. Matthew also has something to say about the Nativity. In chapter 1, he makes it clear

that Mary was a virgin and quotes Is. 7:14. It is in Luke and Matthew that this doctrine of the virginal conception is rooted.

In St. John's Gospel we find Jesus performing his very first miracle at the request of Mary, in Cana in Galilee. (Jn 2: 1-11) Two statements of Mary are very significant in this episode: first 'they have no wine' (Jn 2: 3) points to Mary's power of intercession. Secondly, 'do whatever he tells you' (2: 5) urges us to be faithful to Christ and His words and also as a good mother, she is always drawing us to her son. Furthermore, Jesus on the cross says to his mother, referring to John: 'This is your son'. (19: 26-27) Then he says to John: 'This is your mother.' John then takes her to his home. John is seen here as representing the Church; Jesus is giving his Mother to be the Mother of the Church.

We read of Mary 'the Mother of Jesus' and his 'brothers' in Acts 1:14. She is with the apostles after the Ascension of Jesus, praying as a group. We are not told that Mary was present at Pentecost [Acts chapter 2] nevertheless we are not given any names, simply that 'all the believers were gathered together in one place'. Since Mary was part of the group meeting for prayer preparing for this event, it is reasonable to suppose that she was there when the Holy Spirit came upon the believers.

Some people have argued that since Paul never mentioned Mary in his writings she cannot be important. There can be no doubt whatsoever that Jesus is absolutely central, pivotal, fundamental, for us as Christians. But Paul does mention the fact that 'Jesus was born of a woman' [Gal. 4:4], where he speaks about Sonship of all children of God.

“There was a woman, whose dress was the sun and who had the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.” [Rev. 12:1]. This is said to be Mary, now in an exalted position in heaven. However, since the Revelation is Apocalyptic, we should be cautious about putting too literal an interpretation on anything it says.

Above all, it is important to note that though Mary did not major everywhere in the scripture, she was present at the three key events in the life of Jesus and of Christians as a whole:

- Cana in Galilee when Jesus started his public ministry
- At the foot of the cross when Redemption proper took place
- At Pentecost, the birthday of the Church

The whole thrust of the biblical material about Mary, scant though it is, emphasises the fact that Jesus was really born into our world, as one of us. What we celebrate at Christmas is far more important than we actually realise; the message of the Incarnation gives dignity to our humanity, it reminds us that we, like Mary, can be God’s chosen instruments – God chose her, and that is a sign that he chooses each one of us, provided we are ready to do his will.

### **Mary in the Church:**

The Catholic notion of Mary stems from both the scriptures and traditions. The Church acknowledges and honours her as being truly the Mother of God and of the Redeemer. Redeemed, in a

more exalted fashion, by reason of the merits of her Son and united to Him by a close and indissoluble tie, she is endowed with the high office and dignity of the Mother of the Son of God, and therefore she is also the beloved daughter of the Father and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The Church honours her with filial affection and devotion as a most beloved mother. She is the Mother of God in whose protection the faithful take refuge together in prayer in all their perils and needs.

Accordingly, following the council of Ephesus, there was a remarkable growth in the cult of Mary by the people of God, in their veneration and love, in veneration and imitation, according to her own prophetic words: ‘all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is Mighty has done great things for me’ [Lk. 1:48].

The Church has pronounced some Marian dogmas. As a matter of fact, these dogmas may not be found literally in the scriptures but their roots stem from the scriptures. The dogmas include:

- Mother of God [theotokos] – Mary is truly the Mother of Christ who is both God and man.
- Mary Ever-virgin – Mary always remained a virgin: before, during and after Christ’s birth.
- Without sin – Mary never committed any personal sin
- Immaculate Conception – Mary was conceived without original sin.

- Assumption – At the end of her earthly life, Mary was assumed body and soul into heaven.

Mary's role in the Church is inseparable from her union with Christ and flows directly from it. Her role as our mother in no way obscures or diminishes the unique mediation of Christ, but rather shows the power. The Blessed Virgin's salutary influence on men flows forth from the superabundance of the merits of Christ, rests on his mediation, depends entirely on it, and draws all its power from it.

Just like in Yoruba culture, for instance where there is a proverb that “whenever a child is honoured, his/her mother is honoured also”, the various forms of piety and devotion towards the Mother of God ensures that while the Mother is honoured, the Son through whom all things have their being [Col. 1:15-16], and in whom it has pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell [Col. 1:19], is rightly known, loved and glorified and his commandments are observed. Mary by her radical participation in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption is intimately related to the whole of the history of salvation and thus occupies there a singular position. She is at the centre of Christianity and leads to the centre, Christ. This stands at the core of Fr. Joseph Kentenich's teaching on Mary.

### **Mary according to Father Joseph Kentenich:**

Father Joseph Kentenich, though aflame with love for Mary, did not fight to have a new Marian dogma promulgated. All he believed and taught about Mary stems from the Bible and from the Traditions of the Church or the teachings of the Church. In all he said he repeatedly referred to the teaching of the saints and the Papal Encyclicals of his time.

Kentenich tried to discover an intrinsic and convincing focal point or nexus for all the pronouncements about Mary and devotion to her. Again and again he came back to the union of Mother and Child, of Christ and Mary. In the end he expressed the fundamental, divine idea about Mary and her mission in a formula, thus:

***“Mary is the official and permanent helper and associate of the Lord in his entire work of redemption.”***

Everything that can be said about Mary’s unique dignity can be traced back to her ‘permanent’ and ‘official’ association with Christ. “Official” because it is given by God, “permanent” because it is forever, it cannot be changed. “By her whole being, so also with her life and all she did, Mary is completely orientated to Christ and his mission. She exists only for Him. There is no other reason for her existence”. Through and in Christ, Mary has been taken into the closest possible relationship with the Blessed Trinity. *She is the Child of the Father, Bride of the Son, and Vessel of the Holy Spirit.*

Mary is the first of the redeemed and helps us to open ourselves to the Redeemer and his redeeming grace. Her task to be

the permanent helper at the side of the Lord began when she accepted God's request at the hour of the Annunciation to become the Mother of God, and was solemnly proclaimed by the dying saviour when He said: 'woman, this is your son' [Jn 19: 26]. Mary's motherly task with regard to the beloved disciple also includes all the disciples of the Lord. She is the Mother of the Church; she educates and intercedes for all her children.

A constant orientation to Mary's life draws us into her vital relationship to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and gradually leads to the ideal of becoming an 'alter Maria' [another or second Mary]. This is the goal of the whole Schoenstatt Movement, men and women, priests and lay people. Its whole thrust is the creative application of Mary's life to the realities of everyday life today as an outflow of love for her and an inner connection with her. Hence Father Kentenich prays:

***“Let us become like you and go through life as you did with strength and dignity, simplicity and gentleness, spreading love, peace and joy. Go in us through our times and prepare them for Christ”.***

Father Kentenich's conviction that Mary's calling and mission as the Mother and Helper of the Lord in his work of redemption is important beyond her historical life is at the basis of the experience of Mary in Schoenstatt. This is in line with the teaching of the Council Fathers at the Second Vatican Council when they said that the motherhood of Mary in the order of grace

continues uninterruptedly from the consent she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross, until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. (Lumen Gentium, 62)



*The Unity Cross*

## **Chapter Three**

### **MARY IN SCHOENSTATT**

This mission, which the Heavenly Father has given to Mary, is really great, penetrating and all comprising, the mission of not just being the Mother of the Son of God but also a “co-participant in the history of salvation”. By her maternal charity she cares for the brethren of her Son with the same concern that she has for her divine Son. Her concern for us is very evident in the many places where she has come down to us with “tears”, the sign of her maternal presence and a mysterious expression of her deep maternal concern for humanity. The events that took place in the past and that has continued to take place until now at Lourdes, Fatima, and other pilgrimage places in the world exemplify in a most striking way this maternal concern of Mary for us.

#### **The experience of Lourdes:**

Between February 11<sup>th</sup> and July 16<sup>th</sup> in the year 1858 our Lady appeared 18 times to the fourteen year-old Marie Bernadette Soubirous in the cave of Massabielle near Lourdes, a city of southern France. This place has become since then one of the world’s most famous pilgrimage centres. In the words of our Holy Father, John Paul II, “Lourdes has become a genuine bastion of life and hope ... the Immaculate Conception of Mary is, in fact, the first fruit of the redemption accomplished by Christ and the pledge of his victory over evil. That spring of water gushing from the

earth, which the Virgin invited Bernadette to drink, brings to mind the power of the Spirit of Christ, which heals man completely and gives him eternal life”. As long as the apparition lasted Our Lady never ceased to tell Bernadette, **“Penance! Penance! Penance!** It is this same call that she made to the young visionaries of Fatima as she told them to “sacrifice themselves for sinners”. She asked them, **“are you willing to offer yourselves to God and bear all the sufferings He wills to send you, as an act of reparation for the conversion of sinners?”**

### **The experience of Fatima:**

The events of Fatima reveal Mary in a special way as the **“woman of the world”** This beautiful revelation of Our Blessed Mother at Fatima in Portugal from April to October, 1917, is a proof that as the world fights against the Saviour, He sends His Mother to save us. The Auxiliary Bishop of Braga, Portugal recently gave a theological reflection on the message of Fatima, an analysis of the social and cultural context in which the apparitions have been given and its effect and realisation in our time. A message, which he says, is destined in a special way for the people of our century that is characterized by war, hatred, violation of the fundamental rights of man, immeasurable suffering of peoples and nations, fighting against God and denying his existence. He concludes that, *“After the Holy Scripture, the message of Fatima may be the strongest and most striking accusation against the sin of the world, inviting the whole church and world to a serious examination of conscience”*.

The Fatima message is a Marian call to be a “co-worker” or “co-redeemer”, with Jesus. (Cf. I Corinthians 3: 9). This same call is what is taken up in Schoenstatt in a new, unique and vital manner. The difference, we may say, is that in the case of the apparitions our Mother took the initiative while in Schoenstatt providence guided Fr. Kentenich to extend the hands of invitation to our Lady. For one thing, however, God’s plan is at the beginning of both experiences, only the way of discovering this is different. For Fr. Joseph Kentenich it is so clear the mission he has received. He employed himself to its realisation.

### **The experience of Schoenstatt:**

Fr Joseph Kentenich began what was to be his life’s work in 1912. He had obtained permission to use the small cemetery chapel in the compound of the minor seminary where he was just appointed spiritual director, which until 1912 was used as a tool shed. He wanted to use it as a meeting place and a chapel for the group of young students of the Marian Sodality. He proposed to them: *would it not be possible for the little chapel where we meet to become a place where the glory of Mary would be experienced? What greater labour can we do than to labour for a place of pilgrimage?* Advancing the work on self-education, both at the level of the individual and the community, the boys strove to prove to the Mother of God that they really love her, that they take their resolution seriously. The Blessed Mother accepted their offer evident in the many experiences of the young students not only among those who remained in Schoenstatt but also of those who

were at the war front. This is what later came to be referred to as the covenant of love. That which started as a seemingly insignificant act in the little chapel on the River Rhine beside Koblenz, Germany, turned to be the beginning of a great work of grace - turning the little place into an international place of pilgrimage.

In Schoenstatt we do not pray in the first place for miracles in the physical order, but for the miracles that our own lives might be transformed. This transformation is mediated in Schoenstatt through the Schoenstatt Shrine.

### **The Schoenstatt Shrine:**

The Schoenstatt Shrine is the source of the whole Schoenstatt Family. The Schoenstatt Shrine is, in the words of Fr. Kentenich, central points, “capitals” of the new realm. To understand this better let us take a brief look at the historical development of the Shrine.

When Fr Kentenich and the young Sodalist members sealed the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother on October 18, 1914, it was their great wish that Mary would transform the small, newly renovated chapel at Schoenstatt into a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace for them, the province and perhaps the nation and even further a field. He wished that our Mother and Queen would “erect her throne here in a special way, distribute her treasures and work miracles of grace”. They in turn are to bring their contributions in the form of little sacrifices, gifts of love, strivings and apostolic initiatives and place them at Mary’s disposal. From then on, the

Schoenstatt Family learned to understand that the covenant with the Blessed Mother is an expression, means and significant safeguard for the covenant with God. She will take all who dedicate themselves to her there, all who make covenant of love with her, into a serious school of genuine, solid everyday sanctity such as our time needs. With the strong believe that the Mother of God is at work here in a special way, there has been an increasing growing attachment to the shrine. And this has proved to be the ‘secret’ behind Schoenstatt’s success around the world.

### **The Daughter Shrines:**

To differentiate between this Shrine and the other Schoenstatt Shrines in the whole world, the members of the Schoenstatt Family call the Shrine at Schoenstatt the “Mother Shrine” or the “Original Shrine”. In the course of the years Schoenstatt expanded rapidly in Germany as well as internationally, reaching into virtually every continent – first into South Africa and South America, and then later into North America, Australia and Asia. When World War II broke out, Schoenstatt in the foreign countries was cut off from its homeland and the Original shrine. The Schoenstatt Family was experiencing some difficulty in expanding the Movement because there is no possibility of going to the Shrine and experiencing this special place of grace. In 1943 the Sisters of Mary in South America, (precisely at Nueva Helvecia, Uruguay) made a daring step forward. They considered: “since we cannot go to Schoenstatt, Schoenstatt must come to the people of our country”. Hence, they

built an exact replica of the Shrine in Schoenstatt, Germany in Nueva Helvecia, Uruguay. Thus in order to draw the stream of grace and life to the new place and to urge Mary to work in the same way as she is doing in Schoenstatt's Original Shrine, they tried to fulfil the same conditions as at the beginning: "show me that you really love me, that you take your resolutions seriously"

Following this example, Schoenstatt Shrines, exact replicas of the Original Shrine, were erected throughout the world – wherever the Movement was established. The significance and fruitfulness of the covenant has continued to increase as it is sealed in childlike faith in the Shrine. For one thing the Daughter Shrines have taken over the fundamental principles, adapting them to the people of each particular nation. In and from the Shrine we gain three main graces: the grace of inner transformation, have an experience of being at home in God and in our Lady, in the heart so closely united with the heart of Christ, and also the grace for our mission, fruitfulness in our life endeavours. From the Shrine she wants to draw human hearts to herself and educate them to become perfect instruments in her hand. This is exactly what we expect to happen here in Nigeria as we bless the first Shrine in Nigeria at Ijokodo here in Ibadan today.

### **The Covenant of Love:**

The source and one of the pillars of the spirituality of Schoenstatt is the covenant of love with the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Covenant of Love is not another covenant, rather it is a renewal of God's covenant, which had been made in the Old

Testament by the fathers of faith and completed in the New Covenant in the Blood of Jesus Christ. Through baptism we are incorporated into this new covenant. We made promises (our parents made promises on our behalf in some cases) as we were baptised. How do we keep these promises alive in our hearts and lives? One of the ways is through the covenant of love. The covenant of love is one of the ways of realising our baptismal promises. “Woman, here is your son” (Jn 19: 26 f). Isn’t this the moment that the covenant is constituted? Is this not the great commission that the Blessed Mother should make a covenant of love with all of God’s children here on earth!

The Schoenstatt covenant of love refers first of all to the historical event of 18<sup>th</sup> October 1914, which one enters into through an expressed “consecration” to the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt. The earthly partners, that is, the first members of the Marian Sodality, declared their readiness to do their utmost by **prayer, self-education and the apostolate** to place themselves at the disposal of the Mother of God. Mary, on her part, should take the initiative and transform their little chapel into a place of grace. The consecration is *reciprocal*, “we give our Mother our eyes, ears, mouth, and heart, and she gives us her eyes, ears, mouth and heart. Fr Kentenich explained such a *reciprocal act of self-giving* as a type of contract which is also taken very seriously by the Mother of God. “*Nothing without You, Nothing without Us!*” Therefore, this covenant with her is meant to be an expression of the covenant of love with our Lord and the Triune God; at the same time it means to be a protection and a safeguard for it.

## **Why with Mary? The Trinitarian Dimension:**

In the first place it is with Mary because it is her task. We are attached to her because it is God's wish; it is her task to draw the hearts of people to herself and to lead them through her heart into the heart of the Triune God; she does not keep these hearts for herself. We go to the Blessed Mother with greatest simplicity and fervour, not to remain with her, but to ascend through her completely to our Lord and to the Triune God. She opens us to a dialogue; to an encounter with Christ, and in Christ we go to the Father. In the words of St. Louis Maria de Montfort "**... *the more a soul is consecrated to Mary, the more consecrated it will be to Jesus Christ***". Fr Kentenich made this experience and could say after that "love for Mary pulls me to Christ. I can't help it; she pulls me to the Father, to the Holy Spirit, to the Trinity". "***The Blessed Mother expanded the covenant of love which she made with us and we with her so that in time we could say: Caritas Christi, caritas Spiritus Sancti, caritas Patris, caritas Dei trini urget me***" (The love of Christ, the love of the Holy Spirit, the love of the Father, the love of Triune God, urges me on).

Through her radical participation in the mystery of the Incarnation and Redemption, Mary is intimately related to the whole of the history of salvation and thus occupies there a singular position. She is at the centre of Christianity and leads to the centre, Christ. In order to safely and permanently reach our goal, union with the Most Holy Trinity, the Final and Ultimate, we allow no one to surpass us in our attachment to Mary. In this way the love to

Mary becomes the fastest and the most secured means of living in a constant contact with the God of our life and history. He could say that the Blessed Mother is the point of entry through which the divine plenitude has broken into the Schoenstatt Family.

### **Mary, Our Educator:**

In the Shrine at Schoenstatt and in all Daughter Shrines throughout the world, Our Lady is venerated as **Mother Thrice Admirable**. The first young Sodalists took this name from the Marian Sodality that flourished in the 16<sup>th</sup> century at Ingolstadt, Germany. Mother Thrice Admirable refers to the Motherhood of Mary in three ways. The threefold task, generating, nourishing and educating our lives, which our natural mother has regarding our physical life, our spiritual Mother accomplishes in our supernatural, divine life. *She is admirable as the one who generates life*. She co-generated us at the very instant when she pronounced her fiat. She nourishes the divine life within us. She does this mainly *as Mediatrix by channelling to us the graces she merited for us under the cross from heaven*. As the mother of all the redeemed *She is admirable as educator of the divine life in our souls*. With time the title **Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt** came to be added to it, following the experiences of how she has worked in the history of the Schoenstatt Family. She is admirable as Victress over the power of evil for ***“the servant of Mary will never perish”***

One of Fr. Kentenich’s greatest and most durable experiences not only as a person but also in his work as a spiritual

formator was that Mary educates. He attributed to Mary's educational genius all that had grown and flourished in Schoenstatt in the long years of his work as founder and educator of men and community. Whenever he spoke on the subject he liked to describe Mary as the one who had been educated by God himself, and who "had grown up in the austere school of her Son". This is how he interpreted the episode of the finding of the twelve-year-old in the temple (Lk 2, 41-52), the marriage at Cana (Jn 2, 1-12) and the time when she joined family members in looking for Jesus (Mk 3, 31-35). As he saw it, Mary is the woman who is wholly "conformed to Christ", and who is therefore able to educate others to be *conformed* to Christ – which, according to St. Paul, is the actual goal of all Christians (Cf. Rom. 8, 29). In this context Fr Kentenich called Mary not just the "Christ formed," but also the "Christ forming" woman. She is the one who *forms the new person in Christ*. This is and remains Mary's great mission. Explaining this mission further he continued that the modern person, so interiorly torn and divided, so locked into spiritual distance from those around him or her, despite physical proximity, finds in Mary the ideal of a person wholly at peace: at peace with self, at peace with God, at peace with the surroundings. Mary's activity is aimed at this formation of the interior person, *a formation from within*, which enables the person, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to become *free from all* that is *un-divine* and *anti-divine*, in order to be *free for all* that is divine. The Mother of God does so through the ideal of her own personality, through her mediation of graces and through human instruments, which is aimed at the formation and education of great and firm personalities who have the courage

of not only following her example but also of being instruments in her hands.

### **Contributions to the Capital of Grace:**

This term is inseparably bound up with the understanding of the Schoenstatt's covenant of love. As the name suggests, we can imagine a "bank" of graces where capital (the spiritual "contributions") is gathered to make great projects possible. One could say that this is a variation on the more common idea of the "treasury of graces", which is often used to help illustrate the Church's teaching on indulgences, especially in connection with the vast sea of merits won by Christ and given to the trust of the Church, and in connection with Mary's role as Mediatrix of all graces. However, "capital" is already indicative of an important change of accent. It implies much more the idea of "depositors". This deposit is made through performing good works and placing the merits of these at the disposal of the Mother of God. Good works are of great value and the communicability of merits in the communion of saints is one of the most beautiful truths taught by the Church. In other words, both Mary and the young Sodalists were expected to play their part in the realisation of the great ideals. This was the covenant nature of the founding act of October 18, 1914. ***"Nothing without You, Nothing without Us!"***

The major purpose of this is to create for our Mother Thrice Admirable, as large as possible, a treasury of grace through our apostolic initiatives and endeavours, strivings and little sacrifices, and mortifications, so that she can distribute them from our little

Shrine. The motivation is how do I conquer the whole day for Mary?

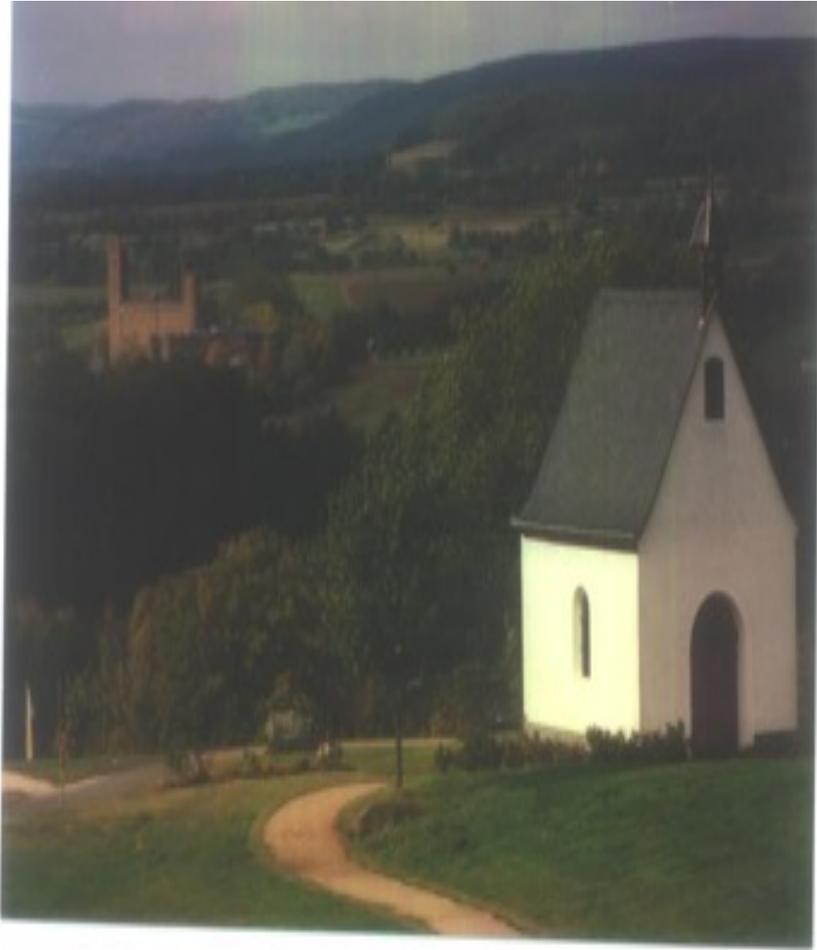
### **The Pilgrim MTA:**

The event of the holy year 1950 – the promulgation of the dogma of the Assumption of Blessed Virgin Mary – brought a new vista into the Schoenstatt Movement. In September, series of retreats were held in Santa Maria, Brazil in preparation for the promulgation. In the retreats the Parish Priest and the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary emphasized the importance of saying the rosary. In order to encourage and spur on a rosary crusade, they made three large pictures of the Mother Thrice Admirable (MTA) which were given to three young girls who were to carry them as they visit the families of the parish, and pray the rosary with them. John Pozzobon, a member of the Schoenstatt Movement in Santa Maria was among the hundreds that took part in the retreats. He was asked to accompany these young girls. But the wonderful experiences he made on how our Lady has worked in the families made him to embrace this apostolate, multiplying and dedicating his life to it.

For 35 years he took the MTA on pilgrimages. He walked a total of more than 85, 000 miles and brought the picture to families, schools, prisons, parishes, villages, saying the rosary as he journeys and with the people. He formed circles of 30 families and gave them a smaller MTA picture to visit all families of the circle within one month, each praying the rosary before the picture. All these pictures were blessed in the Schoenstatt Shrine from

where the Blessed Mother goes out to the families. Every pilgrim MTA picture is registered and entrusted to a “missionary” who coordinates the movement of the picture from one family to the other.

The Pilgrim Mother campaign is a wonder in the world. About two million people receive the MTA picture monthly. Using a typical instance that is close to us, the picture has got to more than 50 000 people in Johannesburg, South Africa, showering blessings and graces through conversion of souls and bringing people back to the church. Shall we rest until we bring our Mother to our people? What is our Mother’s longing? She wants to be part of our different families; she wishes to make her dwelling in our homes. When we have invited our Mother to dwell in our midst in the Shrine, she thereafter desires to visit our families and homes.



*The Sion Shrine, Vallender, Germany.*

## **Chapter Four**

### **THE MISSION OF MARY IN OUR TIME**

The Blessed Virgin Mary has been permanently given the task of helping her son in the work of redemption of the world. At the Annunciation (Lk 1, 26-38) she whole heartedly and with childlikeness accepted the difficult role of being the Mother of God. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your words*, she said to Angel Gabriel. At the crucifixion (Jn 19, 25-27) she stood and supported her Son till death. In a wholly singular way she cooperated by her obedience, faith, hope and burning charity in the work of restoring the life of grace in us. She is constantly distributing the fruits of the Calvary sacrifice. What could be her mission for our time?

#### **The Signs of Time:**

Many people today express genuine fears about the changes taking place in the society. The reality of change is known and accepted but what surprises most people are the rapid changes that characterise the present time. Despite the fruits of the world's creative energies and intelligence there are still many uncertainties

The hope in political leaders is wavering as some of them swiftly removed the carpet under the people's feet. Our own brothers and sisters that are vested with political positions, who shared our food and water, walked our streets, went to our schools, felt the hot and harsh weather, knew the diseases that afflicted us in

our ill-equipped hospitals, knew the level of unemployment, knew that we had no educational facilities, knew the poor conditions of the prisons and knew the history of conflicts and wars we have experienced, turned deaf ears and remained hard hearted in the manner they cheated us. Everywhere and in every aspect of our lives uncertainties await us; be it the legal system, the security system, the banking system and the health institutions. Even more disturbing however, is the fact that the family life, which is the nexus of the society, is at the danger of extinction. Many anti-family tendencies are now institutionalised.

### **Mary and the Family Life**

Our Holy Father, John Paul II could not have been more right in giving us the antidote to the source of the numerous problems today. According to him the way to defeat and prevent all forms of violence is to commit oneself to constructing the civilisation of love. And this is first done in the family. Anyone who is close to the happenings around the Vatican would have observed that John Paul II is outstanding in his defence of marriage and family. On January, 15<sup>th</sup> this year he told the Officials from Rome and Surrounding Region that the political and administrative options that support the family are a sine qua non now because it is the primary place “to realise the civilisation of love”. The family represents the human realm in which the person, from the beginning of his existence can experience the warmth of affection and grow in a harmonious way.

Fr. Kentenich had understood this quite long ago. From the beginning he had continued to stress that the “personality and the family are what counts” Fr Kentenich was convinced that to present the church in the midst of the world as the church of love means to build the foundation of the church in souls, in families. The individual and the family must become the sphere of active faith, love and grace, a church in miniature, a kind of seminary. This accounts for the reason why we need a Marian Shrine.

Why do we need a Marian Shrine in Nigeria? We find the answer to this question in the mission of the Blessed Mother for our time. Wherever our Blessed Mother has erected her throne in a special way, she lives and works among her people, listens to their needs. She proves herself completely as the Mother of the people in every situation, takes the education of her people into her hands and leads them victoriously through all the battles of our times. The mission of the Mother of God consists in saving the image of God, the image of Christ, of the human person and the Church. How does she do this? One of the ways is through the Movement of Education and Educators.

### **The Home Shrine:**

A part of this Movement of Education and Educators in Schoenstatt is the Family Movement. As the Schoenstatt members experienced the tremendous effects and fruitfulness of the graces coming forth from the Schoenstatt Shrines, their longing to make even greater use of this powerhouse of grace began to grow. Their thought was if only we could have such a powerful source of grace

right in our homes! How much help and guidance and grace would be given to us right there where the everyday battles of life take place, where the fate of the world and the church is basically decided, where life should grow, develop and become perfected.

This wish and longing became a reality. As a Shrine can become an authentic Schoenstatt Shrine and place of grace through the covenant of love, why couldn't the same covenant also establish an authentic place of grace in the home of each family? As part of their educative efforts they erected a Shrine in their homes and invited the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, to come to dwell there. They made the covenant of love with her and promised to be true to their commitment, begging her in return to do in their home what she does in every shrine: to come and dwell in their midst – right in their homes – and distribute gifts and graces in abundance, to draw youthful hearts to herself and educate them to be useful instruments in her hands. More and more home shrines are being erected, creating a whole network of shrines from which the Mother Thrice Admirable can fulfil her mission as mother and educator. Schoenstatt families testify to the abundant blessings, which emanate from these special places of grace in their home. With the home shrine Schoenstatt aims at meeting the demands of the post-conciliar times.

The Home Shrine is not just a matter of establishing a corner for God or Schoenstatt corner in our homes. On the contrary, it has to do with allowing the Blessed Mother to take care from this Home Shrine that a religious atmosphere permeates the whole house, that a religious atmosphere unites father and mother,

that a religious atmosphere also enters the heart of the children and grand children. But the greatest task which the Blessed Mother wants to fulfil in the home shrine is to see to it that slowly a Heart Shrine will develop in us and that this Heart Shrine will increasingly influence and permeate all of life. Mary longs deeply to bring Christ into our families, where the formation of great personalities who change the destiny of the world takes place.

### **Mary is the Answer:**

For sure, there are in our experiences both individually and collectively things we find very difficult to connect with the existence of Divine Providence. We find tragedies in the histories of nations and peoples, sufferings and grief in the life of families. But Mary offers us her life to emulate. She herself has asked similar questions: *Child, why have you done this to us? Your father and I have looked for you with great anxiety. (Lk. 2: 48)* Thus, she has worn the same pair of shoes some of us are wearing today and at this moment. At the foot of the cross, she was saddened with grief of heart and bloody sweat, but she bore all in silence, and heavenly patience.

In the *Magnificat*, she proclaimed an unusual supernatural faith: *The Almighty has done great things for me ... He has shown the Might of His arm! He has put down princes from their thrones and rose up the lowly. (Lk 1: 46-56)* What did Mary believe? Whom did she believe in? She did not believe in a God far removed from the world and the affairs of human beings. He is

here. He is present and active everywhere. He is powerful. He does great things. He is a God of Life.

We have experienced and witnessed in our own lives and in the world around us how things break down unexpectedly. Mary was also shaken to the core of her being, but she looked with great and active faith at the history of her people: *his mercy reached from one generation to the next.* (Lk 1: 50)

### **Mary's faith – a leap into the dark**

Mary held unwaveringly onto the truth that God loves her and the world in an all-embracing way. But can we say that she understood all that was happening? She experienced darkness and contradictions. In spite of all these, she kept her eyes with wonder on the God of life. Hers was a faith that did not exclude her trying to care for herself, but challenged her to co-operate heroically with God. Even before the family got started things were already marred by suspicion of matrimonial infidelity. Poverty dogged the formal presentation in the temple as they presented the least that was demanded by law (Lk 2: 24f).

Mary was not merely putting up with the situations. She did not say: well, there is nothing we can do about it, so we might as well put up with it. But she seems to have said: it looks as though things have gone wrong, everything has failed, but I believe that all

that has been promised will be carried out, even if in some other way. She believed that from these ashes a redeemer—a warrior will arise. She was aware that there is no easy out. It comes to those who believe it. And that’s the way it is. Like her we are not just expected to put up with the situation. The challenge demands a personal and vital relationship to Christ and to Mary in her attitude of faith and confidence that is most exemplified in the daily striving for sanctity.

### **Everyday Sanctity:**

Today the faith of Christians is seemingly not endangered by heresies about Christ in the first place. However, the demands of secular life today make it urgently important for this faith to lead to a personal and vital relationship to the Trinity that becomes an experienced reality. This is the goal of the covenant of love with the Blessed Mother as it concretises itself in the daily striving for sanctity. Everyday sanctity means following Christ in the midst of the world by doing the ordinary things extra-ordinarily well out of love, securing thereof the unity between faith and life. The saint is one who is attached to God with his understanding, will and emotions, whose whole nature is entwined with God. Put differently, everyday sanctity means the divinely willed harmony between a loving attachment to God, to work and to our fellowmen in every circumstance of life. “Do whatever he tells you”. The heart of the everyday saint is formed after the heart of Mary. “*Mary’s interests become my interests and my interests become hers*”. The qualities of a genuine Marian heart are purity, humility,

magnanimity and ardent love. The Marian heart is formed after the fashion of four elements: pure like water, humble like the earth, free and generous like the air and glowing like fire.

The Everyday saint is not sheltered from the darkness of daily living. There are experiences that really shake the foundation of his/her faith. The difference comes in the everyday saint's peculiar response. And so Fr. Kentenich speaks of the practical faith in divine providence.

### **The Practical Faith in Divine Providence: A responsible and active Faith**

The covenant of love also concretises itself in the practical faith in divine providence. For Fr. Kentenich, God is a God of life. He governs the world, He is the Lord of history: in some part he manifests himself in the gentle breeze of the wind, in other part in the roaring of a storm; here he may walk over the ruins of a decaying world, somewhere else he reveals himself in the dawn of a new world. Powerfully and victoriously he keeps the reigns in his hand. And nobody will be able to snatch them away. He was strongly convinced that all that is created has been from all eternity thought over in Jesus Christ the Eternal Word of the Father and loved in the Holy Spirit. We believe that God has drawn a plan from all eternity, precisely a plan of love, a plan of wisdom, a plan of omnipotence. We live in God's heart and plan since eternity. Whatever has happened, whatever joyful and precious events we experienced, whatever sorrowful moments we had to suffer, all that did not happen by chance: it is the outflow of a vast plan of

wisdom and love. However, our practical faith comes in our response to this love of the Eternal Father. True love of God implies joyful readiness to do and to suffer whatsoever God wills and in the way He wills it. This faith is practical because first, it guides us to search for the will of God in the concrete challenges of the great history as well as in our personal history, and secondly, because it influences the everyday life.

To believe is to share responsibility; it means co-operating with God's actions. Mary confessed this idea of faith. She was not passive. At Cana she took the initiative to make the request, 'they have no wine' (Jn 2: 3). She took it as her task to penetrate all happenings to their depths through a vital faith. She has the faith to count upon his intervention and courage to trust in what seems impossible. She had the patience to wait in order to experience the love of her beloved. When she did experience it, there was a transfer of life, her personality was strengthened and enriched in a way that is not possible by any other means.

## **Appendix**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE MOVEMENT**

The Schoenstatt Movement is a unique and many-faceted structure that probably is not paralleled in the Church. Its final form was developed by Fr. Kentenich and completed before his death; using clear perspectives and working under the guidance of the Divine providence. The structure runs down as follows:

- The Pilgrims Movement
- The Apostolic Leagues
- The Unions or Federations
- The Institutes

Thus, the Schoenstatt Movement is made up of four main sections; families, women, men and priests. These *pillars* are divided into institutes, unions and the league- according to the varying degrees of their spiritual integration in the whole Schoenstatt work and family and to the extent to which the members make themselves available for work in the movement, the Church and world. In other words though they differ in the degree of apostolic commitment and degree of community life, they share the same goal of making this commitment authentic and fruitful through the degree of their striving for sanctity and self education. The most general section that embraces every age group and works of life is the pilgrim movement.

### **The Pilgrims' Movement**

The Shrine is the centre of Schoenstatt's spirituality. The pilgrims' movement is made up of everyone that come to the Shrine either regularly or occasionally without a strong commitment to the apostolic activities in and around the Shrine. They, however, may participate in some offers of formation or

recollection. Though they have no obligation to make the Covenant of Love, they strive to live good Catholic life.

### **The Apostolic League**

Father Kentenich established the ‘Apostolic league of Schoenstatt’ in order to win and offer an opportunity to a broader base of Catholics. The *Apostolic league* is a community organized on the parish and diocesan level. From the beginning, the league was set up with autonomous formations organized according to sex and marital status. Thus, there are league communities or formations for priests, laymen, mothers’, families, single ladies, and the sick. Each of the communities (branches or formations) has its own leaders and animators: also each of the branch works with and on its *ideal* according to the members’ particular states in life. This is its mark of distinction from the pilgrim’s movement.

Put differently members of the *league* can form groups. They are apostolically active according to the possibilities of their social and professional position, in their families and parishes. They meet regularly in small groups; they want to form their lives by drawing from Schoenstatt’s spirituality and they exercise their apostolate at work in their surrounding or else through specific undertakings.

The *league* places greater emphasis on forming life out of the covenant of love. A life out of the covenant is safeguarded by means of a specific lifestyle worked out and accepted by the free choice of the members. One of the main tasks of the league is to make Schoenstatt visible and effective in the parishes and dioceses

and to help its members become responsible in the personal and professional spheres of their lives for the evangelization of the world. In addition, retreats, weekend training, courses and larger training congresses, as well as literatures and the exchange of experiences help to promote (generally in Schoenstatt center in the various dioceses or else at the international centre in Schoenstatt) their apostolic vitality, growth in depth of their spiritual life and most importantly an inner unity.

The branches of the league formation include - the family league, the women's league, the priests, the seminarians, the mothers, the sick, the girls' youth and the boys' youth.

### **The Apostolic Federation**

When the *Apostolic Federation* was established in August 1919, it initially consisted of a community of men only. Soon Father Kentenich added individual communities for priests, women and families. The various communities for the Federation, which are also called *Unions*, have the task to form Christians and Christian communities capable of leadership in the Schoenstatt work itself and in the Church as a whole, in order to join hands with the Church in fulfilling her mission in the world.

This leadership is exercised primarily through what Kentenich called the *apostolate of being*. In order to realize this task, the individual communities of the *Federation* live their lives in the spirit of the evangelical counsels, according to their state of life. The members of the Federation want to live more intensely in

Schoenstatt's spirit and strive for perfection according to variations in their life styles.

However, they cultivate definite ties with their respective communities and its life processes, freely submitting to their community's leadership according to their statutes. They take up the obligation of permanent apostolic activity in keeping with their position everywhere in the society. In contrast to the members of the *Institutes*, they do not have juridical ties. They differ from the league in that they are under obligation to belong to a group. They meet regularly in their groups for spiritual and apostolic formation using the pedagogical means of self education and striving.

### **The Institutes**

The founder and pathfinder of Schoenstatt movement Fr. Joseph Kentenich also founded what is known today as *Secular Institutes* in his movement and foundation. The *Institutes* were erected for the express purpose of providing the Movement throughout the world with a sound (core) doctrine in which the ideal of "the new person in the new community" is lived as intensely as possible. Six secular institutes are the supporting cores of Fr. Kentenich's whole work: two for priests (Institute of the Diocesan Priests and Secular Institute of Schoenstatt Fathers); two for women (Institute of the Ladies of Schoenstatt and Sisters of Mary of Schoenstatt); one for men (Institute of the Brothers of Mary); and lastly the Institute of the Families.

The *Institutes* like the *Federations* make the highest demands of their members with regard to self – sanctification and

the apostolate. They have the moral obligation in the spirit of the Covenant of Love to permanently live the apostolic life everywhere possible. Taking the “*risk of freedom*” according to the founder’s wish, they have a legal commitment and live the three evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience without taking vows, bound only by a contract. The community tie is that of a lifelong integration in a group. And in the spirit of openness and magnanimity the members of the Institutes responsibly account for their activities to those placed in charge of them. It is less important to say that the Secular Institutes are all international and all have their central houses in Schoenstatt.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOENSTATT FAMILY

	Families	Women	Men	Priests
<b>INSTITUTE</b>	[i] Family Institute	[i] Sisters of Mary [ii] Institute of the Ladies of Schoenstatt	[i] Brothers of Mary	[i] Schoenstatt Fathers [ii] Diocesan Priests
<b>UNION OR FEDERATION</b>	[i] Family Union	[i] Women's Union [ii] Mothers' Union [iii] Union for the sick and handicapped	[i] Men's Union [ii] Young Men's Union	[i] Priests Union

<b>LEAGUE</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[i] Family League</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[i] Women's League</li> <li>[ii] Mothers' League</li> <li>[iii] League for the sick</li> <li>[iv] Academics league</li> <li>[v] Young women's or Girls league</li> <li>[vi] Students league</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[i] Men's league</li> <li>[ii] Young Men's league.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>[i] Priests' league</li> <li>[ii] Deacon's league</li> <li>[iii] Seminarians' league</li> </ul>
<b>Pilgrims Movement</b>	<b>The pilgrims' Movement embraces all age level and states of life</b>			



*The Formation House and the Shrine at Ijokodo, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria.*

## **ABOUT THE BOOK**

***Schoenstatt: An Introduction to Our Marian Mission*** presents a first information about the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt founded by Father Joseph Kentenich at the beginning of last century. Schoenstatt is a worldwide Movement in the heart of the Church comprising people from all walks of life, with a spirituality for people of today's world. Using pedagogical means the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt aims at forming modern apostles who firmly and freely place themselves as instruments in the hands of Mary for the realisation of the Kingdom of God. To all who wish to know and be part of this great mission this book is invaluable.