

United in Mary—on fire, we go forward!



2019-2020 COVENANT RENEWAL REFLECTIONS

Being and Living On Fire!

If we want to learn and understand what it means to be *on fire* for our Schoenstatt mission, we only need to open Heavenwards and pray the morning consecration. It is filled with Schoenstatt sparks. Here and there we find expressions such as “rekindle our love,” “let us glow like brands of fire,” and so on.

The second paragraph best captures the meaning of our year’s motto, *United in Mary—on fire we go forward*. It reads:

We are united in the shrine
where the flames of our hearts
beat for our Mother Thrice Admirable
who, through us, wants to build your kingdom.

- What brings us together in the shrine, if we do not live close to any shrine? Is it our faith, our commitment, our loyalty, or a combination of all of them?
- What could Father Kentenich have meant by “flames of our hearts”? Does he mean our prayer life or something else?
- Take some time to read through other paragraphs and identify the places where the expressions refer to fire. Discuss the meaning of these expressions.

The true Schoenstatt fire in us

The morning consecration guides our thoughts and leads us from our deep love for the Blessed Mother and our covenant with her to the idea of going forward and reaching out to the rest of the world around us. Silent as this process is, it has a powerful transforming power. It transforms the soul, because it is connected to grace. As soon as we come in contact with the vigorous action of grace in the stubborn yet highly aspiring nature of the human person, we are talking about fire—God’s fire: the Holy Spirit!

The point where both nature and grace come together is what we capture in a short, secret phrase called *personal ideal*. The following verses from the morning consecration take us to the heart of this reality.

Our ideal shall shine before us
and form our entire lives.
For this you have created us in love (P.I.);
for this we strive with all our strength (P.E.).
(*Renewal of personal ideal and particular examination*¹)

¹ [Particular examination = special or daily resolution.]

Let us glow like brands of fire
and joyfully go forth to the nations,
giving witness to redemption
and jubilantly leading all people to the Triune God.

How can we know that God has actually thought of us to be something in particular? From where do we receive this security? The covenant of love with the Blessed Mother is actually *the* source of security for us. In her, the fire of God's love brought about the miracle of harmony between nature and grace. Father Kentenich helps us to understand the process of striving for sanctity by means of our personal ideal, by remaining deeply anchored in our love for Mary.

Suppose we burn with a warm love for the Blessed Mother. That would be our fundamental attitude. In as far as this love extends itself to other areas of life slowly the [love for] ¹ Christ comes to the foreground as well. It might not be a fundamental attitude as of yet, but there is something that urges us in that direction. The [love] should be reinforced until it becomes a fundamental attitude. Now..., the definition of the personal ideal not only encompasses the attitude, it also touches upon the fundamental impulse... The urge toward Christ is already a personal ideal.²

The following questions are for our reflection. They actually are the exact formulation from Father Kentenich (to Catholic educators.)

- Ask yourselves about your favorite occupation...
- Do you have a favorite motto that spontaneously comes to your mind, a word that sets you aflame? Thousands may hear it, but only the one who perceives a response to his fundamental attitude is set on fire by it...
- Ask yourselves about your favorite prayer! If it comes from the depth of my soul, the entire person is committed... If I do not have a favorite prayer, we have turned into the religious mass-person...
- Do you have a favorite devotion, even if it seems superficial to the critical modern eye?

God's fire in us

Father Kentenich rejected the education toward the personal ideal when "it excluded the dimension of solidarity of the person... For those who correctly understand the relationship between education through ideals, through attachments, and through the covenant, our position does not admit any doubt."³

Father Menningen clarified in a talk to other priests, in 1948:

The ideal does not entail a mere mental construction, but rather a spiritual goal... When the ideal is formulated, the person comes forth from the structure of what already exists and sees to it that the ideal expresses that structure. On account of its goal-character the personal ideal is a security for the core of the personality, for its inner unity and coherence...

- What things do we need to watch for in order that our striving with the personal ideal does not become a one-sided cultivation of the individual character?
- What verses of the morning prayer from Heavenwards draw our attention to the inner coherence between our aspirations and how we relate to the rest of the world around us?
- When does our ideal demand that we share the fire that burns in us? Give examples.

¹ "Fundamental impulse toward" was the actual expression which Father Kentenich used.

² Father J. Ketenich, *Allgemeine Prinzipienlehre...*, as quoted by Paul Siegel, p. 164.

³ Father J. Kentenich, *Amerika Bericht*, as quoted by Paul Siegel, p. 191.