



Nine-Week Novena

September 16, 2007 - November 17, 2007

in preparation for
the Dedication of the

Cor Mariae Schoenstatt Shrine

on

November 17, 2007

Introduction to the Novena

In June of 2003, we, as Schoenstatt family, offered this nine week novena in preparation for the blessing of our new shrine altar here at Cor Mariae and in thanksgiving for 10 years of Schoenstatt in Nebraska. With grateful hearts, we again offer this novena in preparation for the dedication of our new shrine on November 17, 2007. In this novena, we will again trace our history and, with gratitude, search out the streams of grace flowing from far and near which have formed the movement in Nebraska. We will see how we can trace our roots to such places as Dachau, Wisconsin, Minnesota, South America, New York and Nevada. We will see how Schoenstatt in Nebraska is not merely a work of our hands, but of the Blessed Mother's heart. Nebraska's history is deep and rich. What love the father has for us to draw so many things together to bring Schoenstatt here!

With heads bowed and hearts filled with humble gratitude, we praise our Heavenly Father for the gift of Schoenstatt and ask abundant blessings on those instruments who have brought Schoenstatt to Nebraska. With this nine week novena we prepare for our celebration in November.

Novena notes

Texts used in the novena include the following

- > Schoenstatt Founding Documents
- > A Movement in Chains: Sketches of Schoenstatt and Fr. Kentenich in Dachau
- > Visit to America
- > A History of Schoenstatt in the United States
- > A Father to Many - The Life and Work of Father Kentenich
- > The 31st of May - The Third Milestone

NOVENA PRAYER

(to be prayed each day of the novena)

Hymn of the Instruments

(from *Heavenwards*)

Mother Thrice Admirable,
let us always be your instruments,
lovingly giving ourselves in your service
today and forever.

Use us as it pleases God,
entirely for your Schoenstatt world.

Take possession of our hearts and wills--
they are undividedly yours.
They will blindly follow
your every sign and word.

It is your instrument's honor and glory
to belong entirely to you.

We are ready without reserve
to serve your Schoenstatt work
Send us suffering, lead us into battle;
let us win the complete victory.

Give us light and strengthen our courage
against the guile and rage of the devil.

Let us reflect your image
and walk through life entirely like you;
strong and noble, simple and kind,
spreading love and peace and joy.

In us go through our times
and make them ready for Christ.

Whether we are threatened by the world or
the devil or caught in the swirl of the
tempest, you will victoriously overcome
every need and grant us your unlimited
power.

Your heart, our gateway to heaven,
will always remain our safe harbor.

We will never perish as long as we
faithfully remain your instruments.
You will help us at all times to effectively
bring forth abundant fruit.

With our hand in yours let us joyfully
enter the eternal Schoenstatt Land.

Amen.

-Fr. J. Kentenich

Week One: The Germany Connection

We pray and meditate during the week of September 16 - 22

The MTA begins her victory march. . .

Of course, we can trace our roots all the way back to the founding of Schoenstatt on October 18, 1914. We are all included in that founding document when Father Kentenich says from the small chapel of St. Michael that would become the Original Shrine: "I would like to make this place a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace for our house and for the whole German province, and perhaps even further afield"¹

We are among these *further afield* and are included in this original covenant. It is well worth our time to acknowledge this and meditate on the significance of it. In this one statement, our father and founder opened the way for the Blessed Mother to do her work throughout the world. Through this invitation, Schoenstatt in Nebraska was made possible. Let us never forget our deepest and strongest roots: to the Original Shrine, to our father and founder, and to our MTA.

We can also trace our connection to Germany through Dachau. From here we can trace two contact points of Nebraska Schoenstatt history.

On March 13, 1942, Father Kentenich arrived at the Dachau Concentration Camp after freely choosing to do so for the sake of the Schoenstatt family. As we know, our father and founder was not idle in the camp, but immediately set about teaching and encouraging those with whom he came into contact. During his first weeks he had made the acquaintance of Dr. Fritz Kuehr and the beginnings of a new community of the Schoenstatt Work was laid: the Family Work.

"After a first introduction lasting several weeks,. . . Dr. Kuehr declared himself ready and willing to be trained by Father Kentenich in the spirit of this new community as far as this could be done under the unusual circumstances of a concentration camp. A modest and secret celebration would mark the beginning of this training period on July 16, 1942. On the work table Father had built a little altar hidden between bolster pads from the beds. There was a little box containing the sacred host which rested on his best white handkerchief as well as a picture of the MTA and two burning candles. . .In his talk Father Kentenich pointed out the importance of this catacomb-like hour for the life of Dr. Kuehr, for the Schoenstatt Movement and with confidence in the Blessed Mother, for the Church and the world: that by means of his consecration, Dr. Kuehr was taking on a new task in the service of the Christian family; that the Schoenstatt Movement was receiving a new community as member, a community which would render an extremely necessary service to the Church and world"²

Also in Dachau during this time was a young Polish priest named Fr. Henry Denis.

¹ Schoenstatt The Founding Documents, pg. 30

² A Movement in Chains: Sketches of Schoenstatt and Fr. Kentenich in Dachau, pg. 64-65

He had spent all but the first 2 weeks of WWII as a prisoner of war. He was witness to and victim of horrendous atrocities at the hands of the Nazis. Fr. Denis' consolation was the rosary, and he learned to immerse himself in this prayer to flee the horrors of the camp. Fr. Denis promised Mary that if he ever came out of Dachau alive, he would build her some visible gift, perhaps a little shrine. A few months later the war was almost over and rumors said the camp would soon be liberated - by the Americans or perhaps the Russians. Now Fr. Denis worried - if the Russians came it would mean more of the same. He felt like giving up on life. At this crucial moment he met Father Kentenich. Father Kentenich encouraged him and said: "You will live. The Americans will liberate us. Christ will save a number of priests to give witness to the world. You will be among them. Pray the Rosary. There will be peace. Remember Our Lady of Fatima. Spread her Message of Peace. To preserve freedom we must pray, do penance, we must sacrifice." And because of Father Kentenich's words he knew that the shrine he hoped to build would be to Our Lady of Fatima.

After WWII, Fr. Denis came to the U.S. and was assigned a parish in Arapahoe, Nebraska, in the Diocese of Lincoln, in the 1950's. There he built a beautiful shrine to Our Lady of Fatima next to St. Germanus' Church in gratitude for his life.³ This shrine remains beautifully intact and is a profound connection to our father and founder here in our diocese.

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our connection to Germany. We praise our Heavenly Father for turning the hell of Dachau into a fountain of grace which continues to flow through our Schoenstatt Movement here in Nebraska. May the lives of Dr. Kuehr and Fr. Denis and their great love for Mary inspire us to make great sacrifices for the sake of the Movement.

We thank God for this first contact point between our father and founder and Nebraska. May Father Kentenich continue to comfort, console and encourage us through his written words and his presence in our movement and our lives.

Resolution:

This week, as a witness to our Dachau heritage, let us make a brave sacrifice to lay at the feet of our MTA for our Schoenstatt movement in Nebraska, freely chosen and freely given.

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer*

³ E-mail from Fr. Jonathan Niehaus

Week Two: The Boys Town Connection

We pray and meditate during the week of September 23-29

When Fr. Kentenich was released from Dachau in 1945 he felt the strong urge to proclaim the message of Schoenstatt everywhere. Over the next five years he traveled extensively through South Africa and South America where the movement was already started. He also traveled throughout the United States. No movement work had begun here yet, but Father saw America's growing influence on the rest of the world and its leading position in world affairs. Of America, he stated, "If we succeed in establishing Schoenstatt there, the MTA with her great mission for our time, the MTA as educator of nations, her hands filled with riches, will more easily and surely set out on a march to victory through the world."⁴

In August of 1948 his travels led him to Boys' Town in Omaha, Nebraska. The visit was made in response to an urgent invitation to come and discuss the possibility of sending Schoenstatt Sisters to Boys Town. The visit is very thoroughly documented by Father Kentenich himself and one may read about it in Fr. Niehaus' book *Visit to America*. Although he ultimately decided that he would not send sisters to Boys Town, he was impressed and prayed often at the tomb of Fr. Flanagan, founder of Boys Town. Yes, Fr. Kentenich himself stepped on Nebraska soil! One may still walk in his footsteps and pray where he prayed, as these places are still intact. During a Lenten sermon he wrote in 1954, Father Kentenich made reference to the American character:

"Cardinal Strich once said: "The American has within himself the timber from which to carve saints for our altars - all that is missing are the masterly hands to carve that wood." We are the material which the Cardinal had in mind. We are the wood from which something great can be created. And whose hand should carve these statues from this rough wood, saints such as the Church and the world today need in order to overcome that deadly enemy of Christendom and the whole of civilization? The answer was given by our Lord from the cross: *Ecce Mater tua* - Behold your Mother! Behold the one who co-generated you, the one who nourished you, who trains you as a child of God! Behold your Mother Thrice Admirable who is the educator of the children of God and of the great saints and apostles in the kingdom of God!"⁵

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our Boys Town connection. We thank God for the gift of Father Kentenich's presence here in our state.

Resolution:

This week let us renew our striving to be American - Nebraskan - Schoenstatt saints!
United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.

⁴ A History of Schoenstatt in the United States, pg 12

⁵ Ibid, pg 213-214

Week Three: The South American Connection

We meditate and pray during the week of Sept 30 - Oct 6

After his visit to the United States, Father Kentenich returned to South America. He spent over a year in Chile, Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil. From here, the Schoenstatt community reached its Third Milestone on May 31, 1949.

After the Dachau experience, Father Kentenich had made a strategic decision: he wanted to do all in his power to have Schoenstatt recognized and sanctioned by the Church. It was his belief and conviction that he had to offer the spirituality and structures that had developed in the Schoenstatt family to the Church for its way into the future. During his world travels, he noticed that a widespread and growing mechanistic way of thinking within the Church presented an increasing obstacle to it carrying out its mission, and felt called to make those in responsibility within the Church clearly aware of this fact.⁶

Father Kentenich's experience that the source and fullness of life and fruitfulness of his spiritual family was the outflow and expression of an "organic way of thinking, loving and living." He characterized "mechanistic" thinking and diagnosed it as a dangerous bacillus infecting the future life of Christianity. This way of thinking, loving and living makes us inwardly unable to see and understand nature and supernature, ideas, and life as one.⁷

Because he sensed this crisis of the Western World, felt this weakness of the Church, and saw before him Mary as Schoenstatt's gift, Father felt compelled to hasten the march. . . He wanted the Church to receive Schoenstatt's charism, the gift which God had given it, and to profit from it. Father knew Schoenstatt was not just something that came from him, but was an initiative of the Blessed Mother and of the God of History.⁸

At the same time the German Bishops Conference was becoming very uneasy about Schoenstatt's rapid growth in the German dioceses and had gnawing questions about its 'peculiar ideas'.⁹ A formal episcopal visitation was carried out focusing on the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. The resulting report expressed certain reservations regarding some of the specific elements of Schoenstatt spirituality, and of Father Kentenich's role in the Schoenstatt Family.

After all he had learned in Dachau, Father Kentenich could not now remain silent: His mission and concept of Fatherly authority belonged to the very core of his prophetic message--that his great contribution towards the renewal of Church and society lay in helping conquer the mechanistic 'bacillus' which was obstructing the formation of true

⁶ Celebration of May 31, pg. 3-4

⁷ Ibid, pg 4

⁸ The 31st of May The Third Milestone, pg 34

⁹ Ibid, pg. 39

family spirit.¹⁰ He saw the visitator's report as a clear call of Divine Providence to place all his cards on the table by denouncing the corrosive effects of mechanistic thinking within the Church herself.¹¹

During a night of adoration alone in the shrine, he decided to write his famous 'letter of response'. On the 31st of May, before he sent off the first part of his answer, he placed what he had written on the altar of the shrine at Bellavista. By this act, father was entrusting an endangered Church and Western World to the hands of the Blessed Mother, while placing in the balance the very future and existence of the Schoenstatt Movement.

Father Kentenich's answer awakened a powerful wave of opposition to him and to Schoenstatt. An Apostolic Visitation was conducted by the Holy See which placed before him the alternative to either separate himself from his work of his own accord or be separated from it by an authoritative decree, in which case he could count upon never returning from exile. He sent the following answer: Out of faithfulness to his work he would not consider separating himself from it of his own accord; should, however, the Church authorities command it, he would obey immediately.¹² With that, Father's fate was sealed and he received his orders for exile.

He was to spend the next 14 years in the United States. During the fourteen years of exile until his reinstatement, our founder showed his great love for the Church by his perfect obedience, and his joyful acceptance of the cross laid on his shoulders by the Church he loved. Divine Providence dictated that Father's momentous act of laying all at the feet of our MTA at the shrine altar occurred within the Schoenstatt family of South America. Is it not a blessed turn of Providence that our shrine altar was lovingly made for us in South America?

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our connection to the South America Schoenstatt family. Let our shrine altar be a symbol of our love for the Church.

Resolution:

This week let us visit our shrine altar, and lay our all at the feet of the Blessed Mother.

United as a Schoenstatt Family, we pray our novena prayer.

¹⁰ Ibid, pg 42

¹¹ Ibid, pg 48

¹² A Father to Many, pg 140

Week Four: The Madison and the New York Connection - Sharing Jubilee!

We pray and meditate during the week of Oct 7 - 13

On the very day that we at Cor Mariae celebrated our 10 year anniversary of Schoenstatt in Nebraska and blessed our shrine altar, Madison, Wisconsin celebrated their 50th jubilee of the dedication of the first Schoenstatt Shrine in the United States. Built as the National MTA Shrine, it is the forbearer of all that followed on this continent. We feel a deep connection with the Madison shrine because of its historical significance and we could see the hand of Divine Providence as we shared their jubilee day. We can learn much from the example set forth by the Schoenstatt community of Madison, and their love and striving for this shrine.

The first Sisters that came to Madison from Germany in 1949 knew that when they left, they most likely would not return. they were true pioneers, leaving home and family, forging ahead into so many unknowns. How they must have longed for the shrine!

Following the principle so often advocated by the founder, that every Schoenstatt building be built spiritually first, the Sisters had begun the spiritual building of a shrine already in Germany. This continued in Madison, and each month the Sisters selected one part of the shrine to build spiritually with contributions of all the work and difficulties with the language in that month. In that way the foundation, the walls, the altar, and everything else were built spiritually.¹³ In the summer of 1952, the formal decision was made to erect a national shrine to the MTA.

As Bishop O'Connor dedicated the shrine he ended his sermon saying: "I carry the conviction that Mary will bless all who aid in the growth of this movement, that it may bring forth apostolic leaders not only for Madison and the diocese but also for the whole United States." In the prayer of dedication is stated: "Make this shrine the Mother Shrine of countless branch shrines in the United States of America and far beyond its borders, thus to reveal your motherly care and your queenly might for the infinite glory of God, for the destruction of sin, for the salvation of souls."¹⁴

We are also honored to share a jubilee day with the Candelaria shrine in New York City. This year is the 30th Jubilee of the dedication of the Candelaria Shrine, the most recent Schoenstatt Shrine to be erected in the United States. We join our hearts to theirs in thanksgiving for the gift of the Shrine. Although Nebraska and New York City are extremely different in culture and geography, we feel a deep connection to our New York family and many similarities are noted here:

Just as we in Nebraska have waited and longed for the Shrine for 14 years, so did they from 1963 until the dedication of their shrine in 1977. We can see Nebraska reflected

¹³ A History of Schoenstatt in the United States, pg. 24

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 28

in Fr. Niehaus' statement regarding New York: "With regard to a shrine the Blessed Mother seemed to ask for an extra effort from the members of the New York Schoenstatt family. Although their enthusiasm was deep, the longing for the shrine did not find its fulfillment until 1977."¹⁵

- The New York movement grew 'long distance' through pilgrimages to the shrines in Wisconsin and visits by the sisters to New York. The Nebraska movement grew the same way through visits by Sr. Marie and pilgrimages to Minnesota and Wisconsin.

- The Nebraska family offered the Blessed Mother a crown for a shrine in 1995. Fr. Kentenich offered the Blessed Mother a crown for a New York shrine in 1965. Both families waited 12 years for their shrine!

- The New York Candelaria Shrine began as a home shrine as they awaited a true shrine. "With the various meetings and visits of the sisters the need was felt to have one place to meet in order to simplify the communications and avoid confusion. . . a suggestion was made: why not rent an apartment and erect a home shrine for the Schoenstatt family of New York? We have to build the Colony of the Candelaria, a colony of heaven in the great city. A colony of house shrines where the highest ideals are the aim of our striving; an ideal Family, a little paradise in NY which will convince the Blessed Mother to settle in a Shrine for her children."¹⁶ In Nebraska, Cor Mariae started as a center, a home shrine for the Nebraska Family.

-September 16th is a special day of grace for the Schoenstatt Family in New York. It is the day in 1965 that Fr Kentenich visited them and offered the Blessed Mother her crown, and the day in 1977 on which the Schoenstatt family crowned her in her new shrine. It is also a special day of grace in Nebraska, as we lay the cornerstone for our Cor Mariae Shrine on September 16, 2007 .

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our connection to Madison, our MTA's first throne of grace in the United States, and New York, her most recent! Through these shrines may the stream of graces flow to Nebraska! Let us take up the example set forth to us and strive with our entire hearts and souls and give generously of our time, talent, and treasure for our shrine here in Nebraska.

Resolution:

This week, let us spiritually build the Shrine with our sacrifices and strivings.

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.*

¹⁵ Ibid, pg 140

¹⁶ Ibid, pg 134-135

Week Five: The Milwaukee Connection
We meditate and pray during the week of Oct.14 - 20

Milwaukee - - the Land of the Exile! It was here that Father Kentenich resided during his fourteen years of exile. The Milwaukee area is also the home of two Schoenstatt shrines: the shrine at Holy Cross, where our father and founder resided, and the shrine at our International Center. Our connection here is extremely important to Schoenstatt in Nebraska, not only because it was home to our father and founder for so many years, but also because one Fr. Fabian Bruskwitz was pastor of St. Bernard's Church in Milwaukee before moving to Lincoln, Nebraska and being ordained Bishop of the Diocese of Lincoln. Schoenstatt came to Nebraska at the request and urging of Bishop Bruskwitz. We are forever grateful to him for this!

The United States Schoenstatt Family had the great privilege of having our father and founder present among us for over 13 years. In Milwaukee, we as family experienced Father Kentenich as a true father. Over these years he left us with what is referred to as the "Exile Legacy". Our legacy is three-fold:

- *Dilexit Ecclesiam* -- love for the Church. This is engraved on the tombstone of our father and founder. He loved the Church through deep suffering and great joy. He was obedient to the Church and placed himself totally at her service. We too are called by God to love and serve the Church as he did.
- The new image of the Father, child, and community - Father Kentenich was a spiritual father to many and was a true reflection of our Heavenly Father. Through our father and founder we gain a new understanding of our merciful Father in Heaven. The response to this fatherhood is childlikeness. We become a child before God our Father. The Blessed Mother educates and forms this new child. Together we form a new community; one family, whose members strive to live in, with, and for one another.
- The home and heart shrines -- The first home shrines in the entire Schoenstatt Family were erected in Milwaukee and blessed by Father Kentenich. This extension of the Original Shrine has proven to be a great gift to the Schoenstatt Family, the Church, and the world. Father Kentenich himself stated: "I like to compare these shrines to 'floating islands'. The image does not suggest a compact mass, but rather small islands where the spirit of Christ, or the spirit of Schoenstatt takes root."¹⁷ He also encouraged making ourselves living shrines through our heart shrine dedication.

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our connection to Milwaukee. We are grateful that our father and founder, a saint and prophet for our time, lived in our midst. He has left

¹⁷ The Exile Legacy Book, pg 40

us a holy legacy, a gift and a task. May we in Nebraska become a blessing through this legacy for the entire Schoenstatt family. We are also extremely grateful to Bishop Bruskewitz for inviting Sisters to come and start the movement here.

Resolution:

This week, as we strive to live Father's Exile Legacy, let us offer special prayers for all priests and bishops throughout the world, but especially for Bishop Bruskewitz that he may be richly blessed in his ministry here.

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.*



Week Six: The Minnesota Connection

We meditate and pray during the week of Oct. 21 - 27

Our connection to Minnesota is warm and vibrant, as the Jubilee Family Shrine in Sleepy Eye has been our mother shrine for our movement in Nebraska. The title of this shrine is *Jubilee* because in 1976, the United States celebrated its 200th birthday, the Parish of St. Mary in Sleepy eye its 100th Jubilee, and the Secular Institute of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary its 50th Jubilee.¹⁸ The mission of this shrine is as follows"

"After long consideration of all angles, the Schoenstatt Family gradually comprehends the plans of Divine Providence for this shrine in this place. The comprehension is this -- the jewel and treasure of our rural America still remains. It is our strong, faithful, faith-filled family life. Good healthy families!! Families built according to God's design!! From good and holy families comes the strength of a nation, leadership in all areas: political, social, and religious. Good families are America's backbone. It is not by accident that the Blessed Mother indicates that her shrine is to be built in this great 1976 Jubilee Year, our national Bicentennial Year. Our nation was built upon the faith in strong family life. Two hundred years later, at a time when our nation actually experiences a great deal of decay and corruption in family life, the Blessed Mother chooses in a special way her beloved rural Midwest. The sickness of the time gnaws at family life here too, without a doubt. Family life could as well be in danger here. Unless there is renewal and re-enforcement. That is what should happen from Our Lady's special place of grace, her Shrine."¹⁹

It is easy to see how the Schoenstatt Movement in Nebraska is a direct fruit of the graces from the Jubilee Family Shrine. We owe an immense debt of gratitude to the Schoenstatt family in Minnesota. We thank them for Sr. Marie Day, whose missionary spirit led her to start many groups here in Nebraska as well as Kansas, Iowa, and Wyoming. How many miles she traveled including late nights and wee hours of the morning to make sure all of her group meetings were held! Sr. Marie, we are truly grateful!!

We are grateful also to the Minnesota family for their spiritual strivings and encouragement and example. In a remarkable and moving act of generosity they gave us their shrine picture which they had purchased in hopes for their own shrine in the Twin Cities to be used in our own shrine strivings. A family from Minnesota donated the altar and statues for our Cor Mariae Shrine.

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our Minnesota connection. We are thankful to be a part of the Jubilee Family Shrine and to receive from its richly flowing stream of grace.

¹⁸ History of Schoenstatt in the United States, pg. 123

¹⁹ Ibid, pg. 124

Resolution:

This week, let us pray especially for the Minnesota Family and for the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. Let us ask for abundant blessings on them for their generosity to us.

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.*



Week Seven: Schoenstatt in Nebraska - 1993 to 1998

We meditate and pray during the week of Oct 28 - Nov 3

From Sleepy Eye, the MTA continued her victory march to Nebraska. In August of 1993, Sr. Marie Day visited the Diocese of Lincoln at the request of Fabian Bruskewitz, Bishop of Lincoln. In September of 1993, the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary agreed to come to Nebraska to begin to develop a few groups. In February of 1994, Sr. Marie Day visited three pilot parishes to introduce Schoenstatt to the parishioners of St. Teresa Church in Lincoln, St. Vincent de Paul Church in Seward, and Sacred Heart Church in Crete. The first groups were formed from this original introduction at St. Teresa Church and St. Vincent de Paul Church and began meeting in March 1994. Almost every month new groups were added and numbers grew quickly.

As these new groups learned more about Schoenstatt the founder and the shrine, the desire grew to have a shrine of our own here in Nebraska. A report from a member of the St. Vincent group follows:

"In our naivety, we thought it was very simple - we wanted one, we needed one, we kept reading about it and learning about it, so we should therefore have one! To placate us, Sr. Marie gave us a small framed picture of the MTA. Up until this time we had only seen the MTA on prayer cards. When we saw the framed picture, our collective breath was literally taken away. We fell in love with the MTA. We had this picture blessed and began passing it around among our group. We began saying many Memorare's for the spread of the movement and for Schoenstatt vocations. At Sr. Marie's suggestion, on the feast of the Assumption, August 15, 1995, we crowned this picture with a simple crown made of beads and wire and promised our Blessed Mother a real, more beautiful crown when she graced us with her shrine."

In October, 1995, the first pilgrimage from Nebraska took place as the five families of the St. Vincent group traveled to Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, to seal the Covenant of Love in the Jubilee Family Shrine. The love and longing for the shrine was irreversibly planted in the hearts of those families from that moment on.

In November, 1996, a newsletter was sent out by the St. Vincent group asking others to take part in sharing our special picture of grace. Outlined in it were several ways to strive for the shrine based on our covenant demands including prayer, sacrifice, perseverance -- 'even if it takes years for the shrine to come we must not grown weary of desiring it' -- growth in Schoenstatt spirituality of everyday sanctity, prayer for vocations to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, and the spiritual building of the shrine. In June 1996, the first Nebraska home shrines were erected and blessed by Fr. Dieter Haas. The numbers of groups, adults as well as youth continued to grow. In June, 1997, the first Nebraska Blank Check dedications were sealed at the International Shrine in Waukesha, Wisconsin.

In the summer of 1998 the Nebraska Schoenstatt family made a pilgrimage to Boys Town

to see the places where our father and founder walked. We were able to actually see the register where he signed his name as a visiting priest celebrating Mass and touched his signature.

Also in 1998, the Minnesota Schoenstatt Family donated their shrine-size picture to the Lincoln diocese. Our new MTA started making her pilgrimage to every parish to which a Schoenstatt member belonged. The MTA had begun her march in earnest. Everywhere she went, she was loved and welcomed. Everywhere she went, she poured out gifts and graces in abundance.

Our Mother was calling even the youth during this time of striving. Several high school and college age young women made an international pilgrimage to Germany, where they sealed their Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother in the original shrine in Schoenstatt.

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for our Mother Thrice Admirable's victory march in Nebraska.

Resolution:

This week, let us double our sacrifices and strivings with grateful hearts for the work of our MTA.

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.*

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 heart,
my entire self without reserve.
As I am your own my good Mother,
guard me and defend me
as your property and possession.

Week Eight: Schoenstatt in Nebraska - 1999 - 2003: Cor Mariae

We meditate and pray during the week of Nov 4 - 10

In 1999, our striving became very serious. Following the rich Schoenstatt tradition of crowning, we decided to crown the Blessed Mother with the petition: "Queen of our Heartland, show us where and when you wish to build your shrine in Nebraska". We believed that Divine Providence had guided us to this step. In childlike confidence we were open to God's will if and when the shrine would be built here in the "Heart of the USA."

On October 18, 1999, the Schoenstatt Family in Nebraska began praying a seven-week striving in preparation for the crowning of the shrine picture of our MTA that we had received from the Twin Cities Minnesota family. After a nine-day novena, in a beautiful ceremony at St. Teresa Church in Lincoln, Bishop Bruskewitz crowned our MTA on December 10, 1999. This coincided with the 60th anniversary of the crowning in the Original Shrine and the 25th anniversary of the first crowning of the MTA in Minnesota.

We began looking for land for our shrine. Doors opened, they closed. A year had passed and nothing had clearly presented itself. Our first anniversary of the crowning was drawing close. We felt we should celebrate, renew our crowning and petition, and give the Blessed Mother many gifts. But what should we offer her as a sign of our gratitude and love? The words of our father and founder gave us our answer:

"When we offer our hearts to the Blessed Mother, then we offer her our most valuable good, the most precious gift which we could give her. . . What does God want? What does our Blessed Mother want? Child, give me your heart."

On December 10, 2000, after a nine-day novena as preparation, the Schoenstatt Family of Nebraska renewed the crowning with the gift to our Mother Thrice Admirable of the Heart Shrine dedications of all present, as well as seventeen members making their original Covenant of Love. In our Heart Shrine Dedication prayer, we expressed:

"We want to rededicate this crown to you as Queen of Our Heartland and ourselves to you with our continued petition - 'Mother Thrice Admirable show us where and when you wish to build your shrine.' as our gift to you, Blessed Mother, we honor you as Queen of our hearts and ask you to make your home in our hearts, that we may go forth from here as a reflection of you carrying the Triune God into the world. We truly believe that this gesture of the gift of our hearts given in love, humility, and gratitude will move your tender heart so much that you will quickly arrange for your shrine to come to Nebraska! We also offer our prayers today as a contribution to the capital of grace for the canonization of Father Kentenich."

Meanwhile, in Las Vegas, Nevada, Fr. Leo Slattery, a Cistercian priest, planned to start a new monastery in Nebraska on ninety-three acres near Crete and had arranged for a house

and a chapel to be built there. These buildings were constructed and moved on to the property in *December, 2000*, and Fr. Leo moved in to start his new community. However, the winter of 2000/2001 was particularly harsh, and Fr. Leo came to the conclusion that Nebraska was not the ideal place for him. In the spring of 2001, he turned the land over to the Diocese of Lincoln, who, in turn offered it to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary.

On July 29, 2001, Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, Sr. Marie Day, Sr. Angela Macari, and members of the Nebraska Schoenstatt Family marked a momentous occasion with a pilgrimage to the ninety-three acres of land near Crete following a family day held at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Seward. Seventeen vehicles drove for Seward making the pilgrimage to the plot of land. Fr. Niehaus blessed the chapel building and installed the crowned picture of our Mother Thrice Admirable in the chapel. On August 24, Mark and Mary Hardesty and their daughter Monica, moved from their home in Seward to the house to begin their duties as caretakers for the land.

On September 8, 2001, the first leader's meeting was held at the chapel. After prayer and discernment, the name for the land and future shrine was found: Cor Mariae Schoenstatt Center (Latin for Heart of Mary). It seemed all things came together as we crowned her Queen of our Heartland, we offered her our heart shrines, and the name the Cistercians had given it was the Monastery of the Hearts of Jesus and Mary. We were led to express this in Latin to show our love for the Church, which we feel is one aspect of our father and founder's exile legacy which is central to our mission here in Nebraska.

Also in the fall of 2001, money was donated by a generous benefactor from Minnesota for the shrine altar. After researching different options, it was found that the amount donated would cover the cost of construction and another generous donation from a Nebraska family covered the shipping of the altar from Brazil. And so our altar would be lovingly made by the Schoenstatt Brothers of Mary in Santa Maria, Brazil.

On November 1, 2002, All Saints Day, word came that the altar had been completed for several weeks. However, it was not being released for shipment by the Brazilian government. Many members began praying and offering special sacrifices to Father Kentenich and all the Schoenstatt saints in heaven and the Holy Souls in Purgatory for their intercession with the Blessed Mother for its release and quick shipment.

On November 9 - a novena later - word was received that the altar was sent to the loading dock to be loaded on board a ship and would leave port in a few days. On November 17, after several weeks of communication between Br. Manfred Worlitschek in Santa Maria, Brazil, and Dominic Pynes in Lincoln, Nebraska, arranging the details of the shipment of the altar, Br. Manfred notified Dominic that the altar was on board ship and would leave port on November 18, 2002 - Fr. Kentenich's birthday! On December 10, 2002, the third anniversary of our crowning, the altar was released from customs to the ABF Shipping company. The altar arrived in Lincoln on December 18th, Covenant Day, and on December 19, the altar was delivered to Cor Mariae, Crete, Nebraska.

Twelve seminarians from St. Gregory the Great Seminary and several members of the Nebraska Schoenstatt family greeted the altar as it arrived. The men unpacked and unloaded the altar piece by piece and even the women and the children were able to help carry in the smaller pieces of the altar into the chapel. When all the pieces were in the chapel, several of the seminarians, as well as the other men, did not want to leave until it was put together. No assembly instructions were included with the altar, so a postcard picture of the altar was used as the example. In less than two hours after arriving, the altar stood completed with the picture of our Mother Thrice Admirable beaming brightly in her place of honor.

On June 29, 2003, on the feast of St. Peter and Paul, in a beautiful celebration on the grounds of Cor Mariae, our new altar was blessed by Bishop Bruskewitz.

We bow our heads in humble gratitude for the gifts of our MTA. How quickly and perfectly she works! How wonderfully she brings all things together in perfect time!

Resolution:

This week let us make or renew our heart shrine dedication, offering the Blessed Mother the shrine of our hearts in gratitude for the Shrine of Her Heart - Cor Mariae.

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.*

O Mother, in your holy heart
Deeply inscribe each name
And as a sign that we are yours
Write it with blood and flame.
In love and childlike gratitude
Your name shall also be
Deeply inscribed within my heart
For all eternity.
Amen

Week Nine: Schoenstatt in Nebraska - 2003 to present

We meditate and pray during the week of Nov 11 - 17

With the establishment of Cor Mariae, activities began to take place to clean up and beautify the grounds which include a stream, hills and a small pond. We held girls' camps, boys' camps, family days, women's advent day, and monthly rosary on the 18th in the chapel.

In August, 2003, Sisters moved to Crete, living in a rented duplex in town. They continued to develop the movement in Crete, Lincoln and surrounding areas.

For four years the Hardesty's lived at Cor Mariae, caring for the land and property and preparing it for the time when the Sisters would be able to move in. That day came in the summer of 2005, when the Sisters moved in and took up permanent residence at Cor Mariae. We thank Mark, Mary, and Monica for their many untold sacrifices, hard work and dedication to Schoenstatt.

On October 18, 2005, Covenant Day, after celebration of Holy Mass, the Blessed Sacrament was reserved in the Shrine Tabernacle and will remain there forevermore. We praise God and thank the Blessed Mother for bringing her Son to us.

Striving for the shrine continued on all levels. After fourteen years of striving and longing, many prayers and sacrifices, in the spring of 2007, it was announced that plans were being made to build the shrine at Cor Mariae. On May 28, 2007, the groundbreaking took place. We celebrated with Holy Mass and a Groundbreaking ceremony, followed by lunch, a talk by Sr. Marie, and a work day to clean up the grounds. Many adults and children took turns 'turning the spade' as we all wanted a part in this first effort of actually building the shrine.

Both boys' and girls' groups increased their striving for the shrine. The girls took up spiritually building the foundation, walls and roof, while the boys took up the bell as their focus. The girls youth made many sacrifices for the shrine and symbolized these with tiny hearts which they placed in a treasure box to be placed in the foundation of the shrine. Their sacrifices have been many, for the box is full! The boys youth chose to place an inscription on the bell of the future shrine.

Meanwhile the adult leaders met to find the motto for Cor Mariae which will be inscribed on the cornerstone. After discussing all aspects, it was agreed: In Corde Mariae, Diligimus Ecclesiae (Through the Heart of Mary, we love the Church). This describes our mission, incorporating Cor Mariae (Heart of Mary) and our father and founder's gravestone inscription 'Dilixit Ecclesium' (He loved the Church). It beautifully ties together the three touchpoints of Schoenstatt and expresses our deep attachment to them: Mary, the heart, Father Kentenich, the head, and the Shrine, the home.

Schoenstatt in Nebraska continues to grow. More groups have been added in both adult

and youth. Vocations to the priesthood and religious life have already arisen from our Schoenstatt youth, including our own Angie Kenkel of Lincoln who was received into the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary in 1999 as Sr. Emily. Marriages and family life has flourished and priests have been strengthened through our movement. Many have sealed their Covenants of Love and many home shrines have been erected. Many have been called to make their Blank Check dedications and some have answered the call even to the Inscriptio dedication.

We bow our heads in humble gratitude and awe at all that our Mother Thrice Admirable has accomplished in us here in Nebraska.

We are ready, Mother!

Use us as your instruments!

Come, make your home at Cor Mariae and in the hearts of your children!

Resolution:

This week let us join our hearts in gratitude for the Cor Mariae Schoenstatt Shrine and pray that the stream of grace flowing from our shrine will be deep and wide and rich, bringing about the transformation of many more hearts and souls. Let us offer ourselves for all that the Blessed Mother wishes to accomplish through us for Schoenstatt, for the Church, and for the world for all ages to come!

*United as a Schoenstatt Family,
we pray our novena prayer.*

