

VISIT #7, THE FIRST REQUEST OF THE COVENANT OF LOVE

“PROVE FIRST BY YOUR DEEDS THAT YOU REALLY LOVE ME”



IN THE SPIRIT OF COVENANT SPIRITUALITY:

(From THE THREE PILLARS pages 90-120):

In the Covenant of Love with our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, the promises and demands reciprocate each other. The promises will be granted to us according to the degree that we fulfill the demands of the covenant. A daily, sincere effort toward the fulfillment of at least one of the covenant demands is all it takes to make the covenant promises a reality in our life.

“Prove first by your deeds that you really love me.” Our covenant partner places a much greater value on our **deeds of love** than on statements of love. **Christ demands the same when he exhorts his followers:** “None of those who cry out, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of God, but only the one who **does the will** of my Father in Heaven.” (Mt. 7:21). **When the words of St. Paul become a reality in our lives** “...yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me...” (Gal. 2:20) then doing the will of the Father will be our only concern for “Christ knows only one thing and that is the Father’s loving will. It is His only guideline... “His quiet, hidden life and His public life were just as great as His suffering because everything was always the answer to the Father’s wish.” (God My Father – Fr. Joseph Kentenich)

Schoenstatt’s teaching on the **PRACTICAL FAITH IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE** unfolds before us the treasures needed to unite our will with the will of the Father so that in our daily lives we do **prove by our deeds** that we truly love the Blessed Mother and the Triune God. **Divine Providence** is God’s wise and fatherly care for his creation. In the literal sense of the word providence means to see in advance. In this capacity of foresight, the infinite, loving God has designed a plan of the world for us.

God’s fatherly care for us is manifested in what we call his master plan. Since God is love, his master plan for us must be a plan of love, designed completely and exclusively for the personal well-being of his creatures, directing each one to his proper destiny, the glory of heaven. **God’s master plan** is like the blueprint of a great architectural work, laying out the events of the world and of our own life right down to the smallest detail. This plan is like a rug which God is weaving for all of us throughout our life. God knows the pattern and the color of each individual thread. During our life on earth we can perceive only the back of the rug with its entangled threads and can hardly make out the pattern. But we must believe that the great master weaver knows his trade and has created the most perfect design for us. God is the all-perfect and all-powerful Creator of heaven and earth. He can never error. **His plan is universal, infallible, unchangeable and loving.**

God’s providence is an answer to theological heresies that state that God created the world but has no further interest in its development. The teaching on Divine Providence clarifies the ambiguity of the term predestination. We are all predestined for heaven provided we cooperate with God’s plan. If we fail to cooperate and reject God’s plan, making ourselves the masters of our own fate, we might not reach our final destiny – eternal happiness with God in heaven.

In his providence God anticipates and counts on **our cooperation and free decisions**. In his infinite knowledge he already made them a part of his plan long before our action would ever take place. Our free decisions and cooperation determine, to a great extent, which course our life and all related events will take. St. Augustine tells us that God who has created the world without us does not wish to redeem it without our cooperation.

God wants to use us as mediators between himself and his creation. He wants to dialogue with us and enter into a partnership with us. He “needs” us to rule over his creation and bring it to perfection according to his design. **God’s invitation to cooperate with his plan is his gift to us;** we are free to accept or reject it, but it is up to us to bear the consequences at the end of our life.

Recognition of God’s plan – God speaks to us in ordinary and extraordinary ways: through his words and through his deeds. We must learn to decipher his will and to discern his voice from the many other alluring sounds around us.

1. God’s message through his words:

Sacred Scripture, The Magisterium of the Catholic Church, Our Conscience,

Prayer - Steps in prayer: The basic attitude: God I want to do your will / Talk to God, Listen, Wait, Trust, Decide how to act

2. God’s message through his deeds - We also recognize God’s providence in every event and happening in the world. The founder of Schoenstatt, Father Joseph Kentenich, spoke of the ‘voice of the time’ the ‘voice of the soul’ and the ‘voice of the order of being’, the nature of things.

Voice of time – God clearly speaks to us through all the positive and negative trends of our time. All world events as well as the ordinary details of our everyday life convey God’s message to us. Each event, every moment of our life then becomes a sacramental, pointing to God.

Voice of the soul – God also speaks to us through the inspirations of individual people. Their deep insights into life, their heroic deeds, their Success and failures, their uniqueness and concerns convey God’s message to us.

Voice of the order of being – God reveals his plan to us by the laws he placed into every being. He wants everything to grow and develop according to this finality. St. Thomas Aquinas advocated the maxim that the order of being determines the order of acting. We should recognize what and who we are and what we should become; this knowledge should then determine our every action.

3. The open door in God’s providence

St. Paul proclaims that God reveals his plan to us through the law of the ‘open door’. “A door has been opened wide for my work, but at the same time there are many opposed” (1 Cor. 16:9). We must try to discover the open doors with a believing, supernatural sense of perception, and then go through them and act with courageous and childlike trust.

4. God’s message through extraordinary ways

God usually speaks to us in ordinary ways, but at times he also chooses to communicate his will in extraordinary ways. In visions and apparitions, through voices and other means he impresses his message upon specially chosen people.

Our response to God’s will – We owe recognition, respect and obedience to God who created us out of love. We must surrender ourselves in complete dependence on him if we wish to fulfill the purpose of our life and make it fruitful. We must strive to become a more perfect partner of God, helping

him to form and shape human history according to his design, not our own, even if his design does not suit us in the moment and we might think we have a better one.

1. Surrender of mind, heart, and will – Our life of faith in Divine Providence demands a deathleap of mind, heart, and will. Many situations in life, humanly speaking, seem totally senseless and incomprehensible, and leave our inquiries for their why and how unanswered. We must become free from our own human calculations and surrender our thinking, willing, and loving totally to God and trust in him unconditionally.

2. Firm trust – We must also firmly trust that whatever we need we will receive. We could therefore conclude that whatever we do not receive, we probably will not need either. “My grace is enough for you” (2 Cor. 12:9). This is the assurance that Christ gave to St. Paul.

3. No worries – We should not fearfully worry about everything. “Stop worrying then” (Mt. 6:31). “Seek first his kingship over you, his way of holiness, and all these things will be given you besides” (Mt. 6:33)

4. Childlikeness before God – Our unlimited trust and dependency on God gives rise to a childlike attitude before God. Our childlike surrender to God includes a fineness of hearing, a loyal endeavor to recognize the divine will, and a continuous, unconditional, simple yes to the slightest wish and will of God.

Blessings of a life of Divine Providence

1. Total security – A life of faith in Divine Providence gives us total security. We do not need to be surprised by chance or coincidence in life. God in his perfect knowledge knows everything, the past, present and future. Every event occurs according to his plan of love which includes the absolute, unchangeable elements of life as well as each person’s free decisions that God allows us to make.

2. Divine power, our firm anchor – This divine power becomes our firm anchor because we believe that everything comes from God and leads back to him. Our life becomes meaningful, exciting and worthwhile. It will be filled with tremendous joy and in time all anxious worries will cease, for we know that God chose us to be his partners. God needs us, we are important to him despite our smallness and our many failures.

3. Farsightedness and courage – We become farsighted persons who are able to see beyond the material world what others might not see or appreciate... When we constantly search for God’s message and signs of his love, and try to apply them to practical life, we will remain forever youthful at heart and adaptable to any situation in life. We become the courageous person who does not shun away from difficulties. “In him who is the source of my strength I have strength for everything” (Phil. 4:13).

4. Spirit of victory – A great spirit of victory will awaken in us because at the end God will rise and triumph as the victor, no matter how entangled and difficult a situation might become. Crosses and trials, hardships and sufferings of any kind will always lead to victory; Christ gives testimony to this fact through his own life.

Our answer of love – We will never be able to fully understand God’s master plan, nor will we always be able to comprehend his messages. However, we should gradually learn to recognize the will and love of the heavenly Father who wants only our good, in joy and in sorrow, in all the happenings of daily life. We should learn to freely give God our answer of love. The founder of Schoenstatt, Father Joseph Kentenich, was once asked how he managed to found such a great movement encompassing all walks of life and all nations. His simple answer was: “*During my whole life I have said ‘yes’ to God at every moment.*” He lived out of the practical belief in Divine Providence in a perfect way. He can be our example.

THROUGH THIS ENCOUNTER, with thanksgiving and gratitude, let us pray to be open to our Blessed Mother’s request that we “**prove first by our deeds that we really love her**”. Let us pray to receive this grace which she is offering us so that we can grow in **COVENANT SPIRITUALITY** through her motherly education and intercession.

REFLECTION:

The Blessed Mother wants for us to be **great believers**, to give our yes to the Father’s holy will for our lives. She requests generous deeds of love for God, for her, for others done in the fulfillment of the Father’s holy will and with a spirit of openness and hospitality. To serve the Father’s holy will, we need to love Him. To love the Father, we need to know about Him, His Attributes, His Master Plan of Love for us, His Divine Providence and Provision for our lives. As we gain a better understanding of God, we too can respond to Him as the Blessed Mother did with unconditional faith, love, trust, and childlike surrender of mind, heart, and will. May God grant us the grace to be **great believers** through the intercession of our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt and Queen of the Three Graces on the Move!

COMMIT:

1. Schoenstatt’s mission is to help in the moral and religious renewal of the world. Therefore, we should be able to identify the problems in our world today and then to see how Schoenstatt gives an answer which is the topic of this Visit Note – **PRACTICAL FAITH IN DIVINE PROVIDENCE**. We will begin by looking at one problem out of which many other arise. This problem is the **DISEASE OF GODLESSNESS**.

Read pages 92-95 in THE THREE PILLARS book which discusses causes of and various ways the disease of godlessness manifests itself today.

2. Our belief in Divine Providence gives security and new meaning to our life and guarantees God’s presence in our midst as a living reality. And yet many questions, apparent paradoxes, still occupy our mind and demand an answer. Most of these questions concern the relationship of **freedom, prayer, evil and suffering** to Divine Providence. **Read pages 101-114 in THE THREE PILLARS book which discusses HUMAN FREEDOM, PRAYER, EVIL, AND SUFFERING in light of Divine Providence.**

PRAY:

Divine Providence

You know the way for me, you know the time. Into your hands I trustingly place mine. Your plan is perfect, born of perfect love; You know the way for me, that is enough.

God Our Father

I know you are my Father! I feel secure in your protection. I do not ask the way you lead, I blindly follow your direction. And if you placed into my hands my life that I myself direct it, I then would say: O, take it back, your trusting child is well protected.

I know, you are my Father! You gave your Son for our salvation, the Sole-Begotten, Light from Light, Who by His death brought us redemption. Your love, O Father, has no end. How could I doubt since you go with me! And as You lead through thorn-filled ways, I trust you, Father, without worry.

I know, you are my Father! Your love gave me a caring Mother, The Mother Three Times Wonderful, that she may lead me to you, Father. Like Mary, I pray trustingly: Your faithful love cannot deceive me. I want to do your holy will, for I am Yours, and You are MERCY.