

VISIT #10, THE FOURTH REQUEST OF THE COVENANT OF LOVE

“DILIGENTLY BRING ME CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CAPITAL OF GRACE”



IN THE SPIRIT OF COVENANT SPIRITUALITY:

(From THE THREE PILLARS pages 143-161):

Our Thrice Admirable Mother says to us in her Covenant of Love, “Diligently bring me contributions to the Capital of Grace.” This is the primary and all-comprising covenant demand which the Blessed Mother expressed in the founding hour of Schoenstatt.

It is **the hidden power** behind Schoenstatt which brought it into existence and sustains its continuous growth. It is also the **practical and definite means** to make our covenant of love a lived reality in everyday life. This particular covenant demand **acknowledges both the necessity of grace and the necessity of our human cooperation with grace**. An explanation of the concept of grace, the term “capital” used in this context and the explanation of contributions will lead us to an understanding of this very important demand.

1. GRACE, A GIFT OF GOD

Grace is a free gift from God gratuitously granted to us in different degrees and varieties by his love and mercy. Christ merited this grace for us by his death on the cross and thus we can become children of God, justified and made holy.

Sanctifying Grace sanctifies our present life and makes us sharers of the divine life. Through Baptism we receive this new life which raises us into the divine family of God. This sanctifying grace is **the perpetual outpouring of God’s divine benevolence** upon us. It is a manifestation of God’s love. If we activate it, it will increase and become a great blessing; but if we do not work with it, it becomes ineffective and will eventually die.

Actual Grace is a **special temporary help from the Holy Spirit** which enables us to know and do what God expects of us at a certain moment. It enlightens our mind, strengthens our will, and perfects our thoughts and actions. By this special assistance we are securely guided on our way to eternal glory. We must open ourselves for this grace and constantly beg for it; for without this grace we will not be able to master our life.

2. THE IMPORTANCE OF GRACE

Since original sin weakened our nature and we are thus subject to sin and failure, we cannot free ourselves from this bondage of sin by our own power and strength.

We need the redemptive grace of Christ to grow more into God’s image and likeness, into a union with him.

We need divine life in order to become perfect instruments in his hands, totally at his disposal for his plans.

We need this grace so that we may join God in his glory in heaven and partake in his everlasting happiness.

Grace is an invitation by divine love. It is not compelling, but it is simply there for us to use. If it is to become effective for our life and for those of others, it requires a loving response on our part.

3. HUMAN COOPERATION WITH GRACE

Necessity of Human Cooperation:

Objective and Subjective Redemption - Christ redeemed us all and gives everyone a chance to gain eternal glory with God in heaven. This is **objective redemption**. This objective redemption has to become a **subjective redemption**, a personal experience and reality for every person. Even though Christ merited divine life for us all, we must cooperate and make this grace available to ourselves. Just as we need to nourish and strengthen our physical life, we must likewise nourish and activate the divine life in us so that it can grow and mature, so it can become productive and fruitful for the kingdom of God. The initial step of our cooperation with the gift of grace is the desire for Baptism and the reception of the sacraments.

Divine and Human Activity - St. Augustine states that God created heaven and earth without our cooperation, but he will not redeem it without our cooperation.

Means to Increase Divine Life Within Us:

The Church offers us many means to secure this increase and activation of the divine life in us:

The Sacraments help our faith to become alive and strengthened. Our will becomes alert and firm in its resolutions to do better, to exert itself with greater effort. Our love of God grows and makes us more like unto God.

Prayer Life has a tremendous effect on the increase of divine life. Prayer keeps us in constant communication with God; it increases our love for him and deepens our longing to become one with him.

Good Works, the practice of virtue and charity also nourish the divine life within us. Our good works become effective only when we are in the state of grace and are motivated by the love of God. According to the teaching of the Church our good deeds have a threefold value:

-**Meritorious value** is granted to the one who actually performs the good work. It can merit a growth in sanctity for us, drawing us more deeply into the presence of God; it also grants us countless blessings for all our needs.

-**Intercessory value** of our good works can be directed to others and can help increase the life of grace in them.

-**Expiatory value** which becomes effective for the atonement of sins and failures. Christ's sacrifice for us was a perfect deed with an all-comprising and everlasting power of atonement and redemption. As limited human beings, we will never be able to make such a sublime offering as Christ did, but the little we can do and all our daily good deeds can have a great power of atonement for those who are unable to do it themselves. "In my own flesh I fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church" (Col. 1:24). In this way we become collaborators in Christ's continuous work of redemption.

What a tremendous opportunity is offered to us: Any deed that we do in the state of grace and with the love of God can increase and nourish our own life of grace and that of many others, whether by merit, intercession or in atonement. Only in eternity will we fully realize how valuable and powerful our simple deeds had been in the eyes of God and the effect they had on the salvation of others. We will also realize how much more we could have done had we only been more aware of the great effects of our good works.

Inspirations of Grace Fulfilled is a great means to activate and increase the divine life in us. Our own self-love and our preoccupation with numerous worries and concerns hinder us from receiving God's inspirations and from freely acting upon them. The more we respond to inspirations of grace, the more we will also mature in sanctity.

Responsibility for Others:

The teaching of the Mystical Body of Christ sheds bright light upon our responsibility for the life of grace, not only in ourselves, but also in others. In his encyclical, *The Mystical Body of Christ*, Pope Pius XII expressed it this way: "**The salvation of many depends on the prayers and voluntary penances which the members of the Mystical Body of Christ offer for this intention...**" (p26).

4. GRACE, A GREAT DYNAMIC EXCHANGE

Our every effort and offering will bear abundant fruit for the kingdom of God. **To live in grace is a vital process with a great dynamic exchange of life between the divine and the human partners.** God is free to confer his life upon us as he deems fit and as he pleases. And we are free to accept what he offers according to the generosity of our heart. The more eager we are to receive his gifts and the more we cooperate, the more God will unfold his activity and give in abundant measure.

5. CAPITAL OF GRACE

Capital is a term taken for the business world. A capital of money or property is an accumulated stock of wealth. It can be used to produce more wealth and to increase one's assets. The possession of such a capital can give security and hope for the future. The term 'capital of grace' is taken almost literally from the famous parable of the silver pieces (Mt. 25:14-30 & Lk. 19:12-27). Christ compares the grace of God to a capital which yields manifold fruit if we cooperate and work with it.

Treasure Merited by Christ – The capital of grace is the treasure which Christ merited once and for all by his redeeming death on the cross. This capital, unlike the capital in economic terms, can never be increased or diminished. But, as with any capital, we must work with this treasury of grace, use it and increase its effectiveness so that it will produce abundant fruit and can become available to countless many people.

Mary, The Mediatrix of Grace – The Church offers us still another most powerful means to receive grace and blessing: through the Mother of God. Throughout the centuries Mary is honored in her specific role in this life of grace. Popular devotion describes her role in prayers and songs as the one "through whom all graces flow." We invoke her as the Mediatrix of Graces (Vatican II, Church, #62) next to Christ, the one and most prominent Mediator. As the Mother of God and associate of Christ in his work of redemption, she has great power over the distribution and channeling of the graces merited for us by Christ. "by her manifold acts of intercession, she continues to win for us gifts of eternal salvation" (Vatican II, Church #62). See the Catechism of the Catholic Church #968-970.

The Shrine, a Place of Grace – We believe that on October 18, 1914, Mary took possession of the shrine in Schoenstatt and made it a place of her special activity, a holy spot where she wants to intercede the gifts of eternal salvation, grace, the divine life for us. At all pilgrimage places of Our Lady, especially at Schoenstatt, God placed into her hands, so to speak, a capital of grace to dispose over and to channel it in and from the shrine to all those who approach her in love, faith and confidence. However, in the covenant of love she makes the distribution of the graces dependent on our human cooperation. Our contributions and offerings will urge her to direct a special stream of grace into our world and Church, into our hearts.

6. THE CAPITAL OF GRACE, THE FOUNDATION OF SCHOENSTATT – The motto, 'Nothing without you, nothing without us,' has become the most essential principle and force in our Schoenstatt Family. In the mutuality of the covenant agreement the Blessed Mother does not want to do anything without us and we do not want to do anything without her – a very definite and real partnership relation.

Responsibility for the Stream of Grace

"The prosperity of a realm is determined by the faithfulness of its members to the basic forces which brought it into being... The existence and fruitfulness of the family depend on the contributions to the capital of grace." (Fr Kentenich, Schoenstatt, page 62). It is a perpetual imperative and a grave responsibility that all members of the Schoenstatt Family secure the flow of grace from the shrine for all times. Therefore, each person must make a serious effort: If more and more people seal the covenant of love and offer their contributions to the capital of grace, Mary can more extensively unfold her activity as our Mother of Grace. Without people who are willing to fulfill their covenant duties, Schoenstatt will cease to exist as a place of grace and movement of renewal.

7. “BRING ME CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CAPITAL OF GRACE” – In the mutual covenant agreement Mary asks us to offer her our contributions to the capital of grace so that she can do her work. **Why should we place our contributions into her hands?**

Perfection of our good works through Mary – By her own love and merits, by her powerful intercession she will raise the value of our merits and render our good works more perfect and worthy before God. Through Mary’s activity and love for us we have been given an extraordinary opportunity to make our own offerings more valuable and effective before God.

Activity of the saints on our behalf – The Church teaches that the more favored we are before God, the more value our deeds will have. Since Mary is the most highly favored daughter of the Father, her offering to God is more valuable than that of any other human being. The Church applies this same truth to all saints, but in a lesser degree. “Those in heaven are more closely united with Christ; they establish the whole Church more firmly in holiness, lend nobility to the worship which the Church offers on earth to God...they do not cease to intercede with the Father for us. Rather, they show forth the merits which they have won on earth through the Mediator...Thus by their brotherly interest, our weakness is very greatly strengthened” (Vatican II, the Church, #49).

8. IMPORTANCE OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE CAPITAL OF GRACE

Renewal of our time

Increase of self-esteem and self-worth – Through the covenant of love, the Blessed Mother offers each one a great chance and raises us up to the dignity and worthiness of an important instrument in her hand.

New meaning of life and happiness – In the light of contributions to the capital of grace every moment of our life becomes meaningful and purposeful, irrespective of a satisfactory or unsatisfactory job, of many or few talents, of riches or poverty, of sickness or health. The knowledge that we are needed and can become very useful, that our covenant partner counts on the fulfillment of our part of the covenant agreement, can and will determine the degree of our happiness in life and make it a true and lasting joy.

Striving for sanctity – The faithful offering of our contributions to the capital of grace will secure our striving for holiness.

Effective apostolate – Contributions to the capital of grace are the most important and effective, and at times even the only means for our apostolate. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ we are responsible for each other. The more we offer, the more they will receive. What a great opportunity and what a tremendous power the Blessed Mother offers us!

Theological truths – The Church teaches the importance and necessity of grace and of human cooperation with grace; the great meritorious, intercessory and expiatory value of good works; the communion of saints, the Blessed Mother as the Mediatrix of Grace; the Mystical Body of Christ.

THROUGH THIS ENCOUNTER, with thanksgiving and gratitude, let us pray to be open to our Blessed Mother’s request to, **“Diligently bring me contributions to the capital of grace”**. Let us pray to receive this grace which she is offering to us so that we can grow in **COVENANT SPIRITUALITY** with her and with the Triune God through her motherly education and intercession.

REFLECTION:

Daily life offers abundant opportunities to realize this covenant demand. Our covenant partner does not demand much of us – only that **we take one step at a time** and begin to offer occasional contributions. The choice and the amount of our contributions are dependent on each individual. In times of need or at certain liturgical times we might want to increase our effort; whereas during ordinary and quiet times we may wish to choose something a little easier. **Each person is free to decide according to the generosity of his heart** and according to his own needs and those for whom he feels responsible. Whatever we do out of love for God, for the Blessed Mother, for our mission, can become a contribution to the capital of grace.

COMMIT:

It is very important that **we place emphasis on the conscious offering of our contributions**, of at least one each day, so that we are constantly reminded of our covenant duties and the tremendous blessing emanating forth from them. **On your Spiritual Daily Order for the next month, record each day at least one Contribution to our Lady’s Capital of Grace from the following list:**

Free-will decisions:

- 1) Our whole being and acting;
- 2) Joy and success; 3) Prayer and suffering;
- 4) Self-education

Fulfillment of God’s will:

- 1) Demands of everyday living
- 2) Imperfections and failures – The acknowledgement of our own limitations, the confession of our failures, and the contrition of our humble heart will become a most effective contribution and will draw down God’s boundless love, mercy and forgiveness upon us.

PRAY:

Morning Offering – Heavenwards (pg. 16): “What I bear and endure, what I say and what I dare, what I think and what I cherish, all the merits that I gain, what I direct and what I conquer, all my joys and all my sorrows, what I am and what I have, I give to you as a gift of love. Use it so that the holy stream of graces flowing richly from the shrine may fill the souls of those who have given their hearts to Schoenstatt and gently lead there all those whom you wish to choose in kindness. Accept everything that our efforts may be fruitful which we dedicate to the Trinity.”