



THE COVENANT OF LOVE IN TIMES OF CORONA VIRUS

Dear Schoenstatt Family,

We're going through a serious crisis of the corona-virus pandemic. The epicentre is in Europe at the moment, although it already affects the whole world, and all governments and institutions have taken drastic measures to slow down the progress of the epidemic as much as possible. In Italy before, now in Germany too, and many countries, all schools and universities have been closed. Churches have suspended masses and all meetings and activities. It is a serious situation, not so much because of the seriousness of the virus - which affects especially those who are already sick or weak due to age, but is not so serious in others if it is detected in time - but because of the accelerated expansion of the virus that leads to the collapse of the health system, which is not prepared for such a massive and rapid phenomenon.

We have to live this in the time of Lent, in the time of conversion through prayer, penance, voluntary sacrifice in the form of fasting or other renunciations. Above all, it is a time of prayer, a time of God.

Dear brothers and sisters, I would like to propose that we take this time as a spiritual challenge in our covenant life:

A time of prayer for one another and for the world

1. Many activities are suspended. Let us use this to pray more and to cultivate our inner life. God uses everything and even the hardest realities for our own good and the good of all. Fr. Kentenich courageously interpreted the war as a great retreat that God conducted for Europe. Could we not see in this international emergency because of the pandemic of Covid-19 also an invitation from God to a great retreat in the paschal penitential time? Growing in spirit, in calm and responsible trust in the plans of the provident God - for this we have now an opportunity to make good use of the time when we cannot carry out external activities. Everywhere the Church offers services via Internet and invites us to get involved spiritually (daily readings, spiritual communion, meditation, rosary). The Pope himself and many bishops have prepared various prayers for these times of need. The Original Shrine in Schoenstatt offers daily Masses in different languages, which can be followed online (www.urheiligtum.de). The motto from several countries: "Stay at home" - #IStayAtHome# - is a challenge to cultivate family life in a stronger and more creative way, to revive dialogue, care for our loved ones, play with our children, call our friends, but also to revive the Home Shrine. The churches should remain open during the day for all who pray. Let us use this time of imposed Eucharistic fasting to pray before the Eucharistic Lord in the tabernacle of our churches.

A time of solidarity and contacts

2. it is also a time of solidarity, with those who are close to us and with those who are

far away, especially with those who, in one way or another, are more directly affected by the virus, those who have become infected, and the many people who are permanently at their service as doctors, nurses and helpers. Let us not stop praying for them. Even if we are locked up at home, nothing prevents us from praying, loving and sacrificing. We have more opportunities for this than ever before! Let us remember that there is no greater "apostolic deed" than bringing our contributions to the Capital of Grace. We know that the Blessed Mother multiplies these gifts from the Shrine (Original Shrine, Daughter Shrines, Home Shrines) and distributes them in the form of graces to all those who need them. Although we must maintain a physical distance, we are called to a greater interior closeness and solidarity. And, of course, when our direct help for the sick and those directly affected is called for, such as in the health service or as priests, we should be fully available and help according to our possibilities.

A time of trust: "Take care, but don't be afraid" (JK)

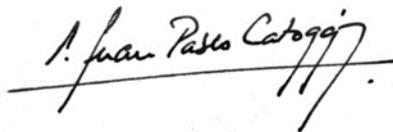
3. we must take seriously and responsibly the measures that each government and each local Church decides on, without dramatic, but with great seriousness and responsibility. Father Kentenich taught us many times: "Take care, but do not be afraid!" Trust must go hand in hand with intelligence and prudence. It is better that we can say later: "Perhaps it was a little exaggerated!" and not that we regret it: "If we had known!" Today we know: Let's take security measures. And we can help many to take these measures seriously and prevent further infections, at the same time we can accompany many and help them to maintain serenity and calm. This is also an apostolate at this time.

During these days we celebrate our Covenant Day, then the feast of St. Joseph and a short time later the feast of the Annunciation. We have several opportunities to be united in prayer. The Church proposes other possibilities in different places. Let us take advantage of these opportunities.

We pray with Fr. Kentenich to Mary: *"Just as your Son healed, stilled hunger and comforted the sick while here on earth, go with him quietly through our midst, giving your blessing and helping us with the arm of your unlimited motherly power"* (HW p. 133).

Dear sisters and brothers, this is the Passion of Jesus that we have to accompany particularly this year. Like Mary, we accompany him at the foot of the Cross.

In the name of the International Presidency of Schoenstatt,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Fr. Juan Pablo Catoggio". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Fr. Juan Pablo Catoggio
Schoenstatt, March 16, 2020