



Living Monstrance

Based on: Marian Woman—Outlines for the Schoenstatt Mothers League, South Africa, 1984

Edited for the group meetings for the Schoenstatt Mothers League, USA, 2019

Group Outline One: **The Eternal Woman**

We know that the covenant of love with Our Lady is the foundation of Schoenstatt. She has made Schoenstatt her dwelling place so that here we may experience her love in a special way.

It is also here that she confronts us anew with God's appeal to mankind:

Prove first by your deeds that you really love me!

God is concerned about our love, our hearts, our *yes* to his plan, the fulfillment of which is the only way to our happiness. Our Lady reveals this to us by saying in the words of our founder: Prove first by your deeds that you really love me:

1. Through striving for holiness (self-education)
2. Through faithful and most faithful fulfillment of your duties
3. Through a life of ardent prayer,

and place all these efforts at my disposal as contributions to the capital of grace.

Thought question: Why are our contributions to the capital of grace important? Give examples of contributions you have made.

Since Schoenstatt has been founded on a covenant of love, the fruitfulness of this place of grace depends on whether and to what degree these requests of love are fulfilled. An embroidered altar frontal which we see in the shrine, usually on the 18th of each month (to commemorate the 18th October 1914), bears the words:

Nothing without you – (MTA) – Nothing without us!

Thus, this law is expressed very simply and clearly. The very fact that the promises of the covenant have been fulfilled in Schoenstatt in a striking way (as seen in the examples of people who have lived their covenant) is proof to us that the claims of the covenant have been met. Surely, our founder is the greatest witness to this. His whole life was one great proof of his love for Our Lady. Together with him, in loving unity of destiny, the whole

Schoenstatt Family has made it their holy duty to fulfill these requests of love so that the stream of grace may continue to flow from the shrine. We have to study these requests in detail. Our Lady said to the boys of the founding generation through the words of their spiritual director:

I love those who love me. Prove first by your deeds that you really love me and that you take your resolution to strive after holiness, seriously.

I shall then make my dwelling among you with delight. I shall bestow gifts and grace abundantly.

Thought question: Why is it important in Schoenstatt that we *prove first by our deeds*?

Our idea of holiness often includes: Ignorance of the world and detachment from the world, unnaturalness, and eccentric attitudes and behavior. Exactly the opposite is the case. Our founder was for us a living example of the fact that the most supernatural person is the most natural one. To be a perfect person is to be what the Creator meant his creature to be, and that is holy. Our Lady is our best example in this regard. Her life in intimate union with Our Lord was a unique game of love between the Father in heaven and his child here on earth. Hers was a harmonious life because it had a center.

She is the fairest of all creatures because all facets of her life were developed most fully. This development was not marked by extraordinary events, but by the happenings of everyday life as we too experience them – call to mind the visit to Elizabeth, the wedding feast at Cana, the way to Calvary. Holiness is to follow in her footsteps and thus to become like her.

It's not out of date to become like Our Lady. That is to say: to love, to serve, to go through life strong and noble, childlike true. We live at a time when woman is conquering a place for herself in the public sphere, where her opinion counts, and her unique type of leadership is appreciated.

Thought question: What type of holiness does Mary, from Schoenstatt, want to help us to exemplify?

Our founder said in this context:

Truly, we have much for which we have to thank the emancipation of women, since many false teachings, many injustices, many practices which hindered women have been overcome. But the aim can never be ... to consider man and woman as ontologically¹ the same. If such efforts continue, we will be faced with an

¹ Ontological: definition is a branch of metaphysics that studies the nature of existence or being as such. Dictionary.com

ontological revolution. Such an ontological revolution means a form of destruction for the whole human society...

The truth is ... both sexes are of equal value, but they do not have the same nature. Hence, everything depends on whether we as Schoenstatt women exemplify the ideal of womanhood. Let me add, everything depends on whether we really become little Marys.²

On another occasion he said:

In Our Lady the eternally valid features of womanhood are personified in a classical way! We must take time to reclaim these truths and realities. If we fail to do so we will be swept away by the current trends.

Thought question: How is Mary the classical image of woman?

Our founder has given positive direction to the search for a timeless image of woman. At a conference for teachers in 1931 he said:

I will only give a tentative solution which elaborates and plainly distinguishes your womanly nature. What is frequently rejected among you is in fact the greatest and fairest which God has implanted in you as a reflection of his own nature. Indeed, you may be sure that God has personified in woman one of the most wonderful features of the Triune God.

The eternal in woman leads us upwards.' You know that these words of Goethe (a famous German poet) are often misinterpreted. The 'eternal' in woman is seen as the sensual... This is an incorrect interpretation. What is meant is the eternal in woman, which always leads upwards.

Thought question: What is the eternal woman meant to do for those around her?

Father Kntenich continues:

You find the eternal in woman perfectly personified in Our Lady, the greatest of our sex. In her the demon has no sway; the eternal alone took effect... You know the way Our Lady gave expression to the eternal values which she personified. Her words of rejoicing re-echo through the centuries: *Ecce ancilla Domini! Fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum!* (Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Let it be done unto me according to your word.) These words indicate the structural line of womanhood!

The Women's Liberation Movement is in danger of gradually undermining the most essential, the eternal in woman... To deny this powerful though quiet readiness to

² J. Kntenich, *The Great Mary – The Little Mary*, 5-6.

serve in the nature of woman is surely to render woman unfruitful. These are efforts to bring about an ontological revolution.

Let us bow in deep reverence before Our Lady who perfectly personified the eternal in woman. There is no better means of cultivating the eternal in ourselves than an intimate personal attachment to the Blessed among women.

Thought question: What are some dangers that can undermine the eternal in woman?

With these explanations our father and founder has taken us by the hand and introduced us to his teachings on the image of woman. He leads us to the Women whom we long to see, MARY. “Prove first by your deeds that you really love me!” through your serious striving to become reflections of Mary.

We pray with our founder:

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.³

Thought question: How is Our Lady the God-willed model for every woman?

FOR DISCUSSION

1. Our Lady’s words “Prove first by your deeds that you really love me” present us with a serious task. What is this task and how can we fulfill our part of the covenant?
2. Our Lady stands before us as a model of holiness. What are her main characteristics? How can we imitate these qualities and practice them in our daily lives?
3. Fashion, advertising and the media present us with a distorted image of women. In what practical ways can we take our bearings from Our Lady so as to counteract the strong negative trends?
4. Father Kentenich said: “What is frequently rejected among you is in fact the greatest and fairest which God implanted in you as a reflection of his own nature.” What is being rejected?

³ J. Kentenich, Heavenwards, Verse 609.