

CENTENARY OF WOMEN IN SCHOENSTATT 1920 -2020



Photo of first Schoenstatt Woman's Conference 1921.

In the bottom left is Gertraud Von Bullion (see last week's sharing). Today as we continue celebrating our Centennial Year by sharing some of our history, this week we introduce another strong woman of faith Emilie Engel (1893 -1955) top middle of the photo.

Emilie was the 4th of 12 children, born into a Catholic farming family in the North of Germany. She inherited from her family a deep faith, integrity and a strength of Character. However, she suffered from fear and anxiety from childhood. She was a child of her time and the church of the early 20th Century saw God as a Judge and this was her image of God. She feared her inadequacies and worried that she would not be able to live a good life, like God expected, this was her internal struggle. However, outwardly she presented herself as calm, joyful and empathetic.

From 1915 until 1926 Emilie was a teacher in a poor industrial region of Germany. Her goal was **“to love the poorest, the warmest”** and alleviate their life's burdens.

In 1921, Emilie participated in the first Women's Conference in Schoenstatt. In her youth she visited many shrines of our Lady to pray that the Blessed Mother would free her from her inner anxieties. In 1921 Schoenstatt was a new and still unknown place of pilgrimage, this visit was to change her life. She met Fr. Joseph Kentenich and he introduced her to a new image of God; a loving Father. Through Schoenstatt's education on childlikeness, Emilie grew to trust God and she learnt to be a trusting child before God, gradually she overcame her inner anxieties. She learnt to co-operate with the plans of Divine Providence. A longing grew in her to dedicate her life to the Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt.

Emilie found security in a loving God and on October 1st, 1926 she left her teaching profession, this was a leap of great trust for her and a great economic risk. Emilie made herself totally available to Fr. Kentenich in the foundation of a new type of Community, the Schoenstatt Sister of Mary.



She offered her life to God, lovingly offering up her suffering and striving for holiness for the new community in the service of the World and Church.

God took her offering seriously and nine years later she fell ill with T.B. For three years she was hospitalised and in sanatoriums, six more years followed of rest and cures for hours on end. She was inactive and felt isolated, however, she saw this as a time of purification to be freed from self-will, abandoning herself totally to the will of her loving Father (God). In this time her faith, hope and love increased. She continued to radiate joy and kindness; she was certain her **“future lies safe and secure in the hands of the best Father and kindest Mother”**

She returned to selflessly serve the Community as leader of the first provinces established in Germany in 1946 although not in good health. Yet God demanded more of her, a few years later as a result of previous lung surgeries she developed a curvature of the Spine, paralysed and unable to speak – God demanded her final detachment. She continued to rest in His love and she radiated faith, hope and love to all who met her. Sr. Emilie died on Nov. 20th 1955. Sr. Emilie summarised her life this way: **Blessed be Divine Providence in my life. Glory be to the mercies of God and the Bl. Mother...For all eternity I want to sing the song of the merciful love of the Father and the Mother of God. I want to be a sacrifice of Mercy”.**

Fr. Kantenich stated “Her life is a testimony of God’s merciful love and proof of Schoenstatt’s Spirituality to be correct and useful to educate free and strong personalities”. On May 10th, 2012 Sr. Emilie was declared “Venerable” by Pope Benedict XVI. Prayer for her Canonisation:

God our Father, Sr.Emilie went through life like a Child trusting in your wise and kind providence. Even in suffering and uncertainty, she said her “YES FATHER” to your wish and will. In this way she developed a profound sense of security in your Father heart and was freed from fear and inner distress. In her life you have powerfully shown your love and mercy.

I ask you for the canonisation of Sr. Emilie to your glory, for the honour of our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, and as a blessing on Humankind.

On her intercession hear my request in keeping with your kind providence. AMEN



Sr. Emilie is an example for us today of striving to become a trusting child of a loving and merciful God and trusting in Divine Providence. Her fear and anxieties could be overcome by growing in a spirit of childlike trust. In Schoenstatt we believe we receive three graces from the Shrine 1. Grace of a Home 2. Grace of inner transformation 3. Grace of Apostolic Fruitfulness. Both Gertraud and Emilie found a spiritual home in the Shrine of Our Mother Thrice Admirable of Schoenstatt, their lives were transformed by prayer, striving and grace and both women led others to the Triune God by the love, peace and trust they radiated. There is a hymn “to get a touch from the Lord is so real”, these women were open to receive the graces from the Schoenstatt Shrine and by their lives they are examples that we too, in our modern world and lives can be transformed into everyday saints and lead others to the Triune God.

Many people throughout the world have prayed Sr. Emilie’s novena and felt she has interceded for them in their time of need. Novenas are available at the Schoenstatt Centres and in the Shrines at Mt. Schoenstatt Mulgoa NSW and Mt. Richon in W.A. (Information taken from 2020 revised edition of the Novena for Sr.M.Emilie Engel).