



“You are here – I build with you”
International Congress
Schoenstatt Women’s League
20-24 September 1995

The journey to this Congress commenced for Anne Rewhorn, Michelle Davis and I through much correspondence with Sr Jessica organising our arrival times, what we would be doing during and after the Congress. She patiently answered our many questions. Finally, we arrived at Sydney Airport and boarded our Lufthansa flight to Germany, I think it was almost the last flight from Sydney to Germany at the time. Unfortunately we were seated close to the “smoking” section. Yes, at that time smoking was still allowed on planes.

Smokers were not meant to light up until the craft left the ground – this did not apply to everyone! Soon we were trying to avoid the smell of smoke.

However this did not dampen our spirits as we sped on our way to the Congress.

We arrived at Schoenstatt, tired and looking forward to a good sleep.

Breakfast was a different experience. The food was not what I, at least, was expecting, however there was toast and tea! I was not game to taste the quark. Anne and Michelle tried it.

It was interesting to see and meet the many representatives from other nations who were to join us. When the American representatives arrived whilst we were having breakfast the morning after our arrival, they all said how “tired” they were after their “long journey”. They sat near us, and after realising we were Aussies, asked how long our journey had taken.



They were totally gobsmacked when we said “about 22 hours”.

The Sisters and all those from Germany and the other delegates who had already arrived, were very welcoming and made us feel very much at home. We do not know how many hours were put in to preparing the Congress booklet, the gifts and mementos left for each delegate. Our appreciation was sincere, but could never really repay their efforts. The Congress began and we were treated to many interesting and varied talks. Sr Jessica was our “contact” throughout these seminars, as she cheerfully translated for us. Soon, however, so much talking took its toll and she lost her voice. The next time we saw her sitting in her booth, she had a large flask beside her, from which she constantly drank. We found out later it contained a tea with honey and lemon to help her get through. She was a real trooper.



The singing and praying in many languages was wonderful to hear and be part of. Meeting so many people with the same values and on the same faith journey was wonderful.

There was much laughter and everyone was included, regardless of how much or how little we understood each other.

One night I particularly remember was an impromptu "concert". A few women had brought guitars and were singing local songs from their country. We

were asked to sing "something from Australia". Well, I wouldn't call any of the three of us brilliant at singing (at least that is how I remember it – correct me if I am wrong!). We decided to sing Waltzing Matilda "a cappella". It was received very well.

Each of the representatives were asked to give a brief taste of culture from their country. Being Aussies, and as you know we love a raffle, we decided to put a lucky ticket under everyone's seat in the auditorium. When it came to our turn, we drew out four winners and presented them with some small items we had purchased, eg koala bears, kangaroos, something with a picture of Australia. We then presented our video presentation. The part which gained the largest response was naturally the video of the kangaroos around the Shrine. Everyone absolutely loved it, and gave it the largest applause.

We had also prepared some information to be placed on the board for everyone to see where Shrines were located in their country. We had a map of Australia on which we also placed the distance and time taken by car, rail and air, between Sydney and Perth.



Visiting the Original Shrine and being in Schoenstatt was a wonderful experience.

All too soon our Congress was over.

However this was not the end of our time in Germany with our confreres. Sr Jessica had organised a bus trip. The bus was luxurious compared to those here in Australia. It was a wonderful time. The Sisters prepared meals for us to take on our journey at each of the places we stayed. I must admit the visit to Dachau made a deep impression on me. Visiting the convent near the site and seeing the statute of "Our Lady of the Bread", and the faith the inmates had during their time of trial was very touching.

We visited many places and had a lot of fun on the journey. At one time, unfortunately, the large thermos which contained our soup was spilled. Poor Sr Jessica was worried about the mess and what the driver would say. We set too and told her not to worry. It was cleaned in no time, and I don't think the driver was any the wiser.

Soon it was time to leave. Our journey was ended. However, it was the continuation of the path which Fr Kentenich had asked us to walk.