

Schoenstatt Movement Australia

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1. Covenant Day Greeting

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

Family, be what you are: Domestic Church

Welcome to our first Covenant Day for 2021 – the 18th January. I wish you and your family many blessings and graces from the Shrine today. I hope that you have all had a good start to 2021.

As we look back over the past 12 months, it has been for many of us a challenging year, for others it may have been a time of inner growth and quiet achievements. For many of us it has been a time when we have come to appreciate what is important to us and particularly realise the importance of our family and close friends. Whatever 2020 has meant to us, I think it has certainly been a year we will never forget.

And now, as we look to the future, we want to explore during this year what has been one of Schoenstatt's gifts to the church – the lived home shrine, the church of the home, the "Domestic Church". As we focus on the importance of our families, we want to deepen our understanding of the Domestic Church and develop a deeper sense of community.

This month I would like to focus on the **20th January, 1942** which is referred to as **Schoenstatt's Second Milestone**. Such is its importance that Father Kentenich often spoke of it as "the axis of Schoenstatt's history" and the "interwovenness" of fates between himself and his Schoenstatt Family.

How does this relate to our striving this year to be the "Domestic Church"? The 20th January demands of us a decision to look at what the Covenant of Love means for each one of us in our life. We can ask ourselves what responsibility I take to continue the work of our Father even in the midst of difficulties and frustrating experiences that may come our way during these challenging times. One way we can do this is through living our daily lives in the "shadow" of our Home Shrines where we gain the graces and strength we need to live each day in covenant unity with the members of our family (whether it be our immediate natural family, extended family or Schoenstatt family).



On one occasion in reference to the 20th January, 1942, Father Kentenich said:

“Seen in a supernatural light, we are a real family: I and my followers – my followers and I. If we are a real family in God’s plans, then our destiny is interwoven, our destiny is interconnected in the supernatural sense. Practically speaking, the sacrifices my followers make on my behalf are really for my person; I count on this reality, and it has proven effective. By the same token, the sacrifices I offer on behalf of the Family are a means to save the Family. This offers a much greater security than if I had the whole Gestapo on my side.... Do you understand the extraordinarily deep supernatural attitude? I did not want to be liberated by natural means; I did not want to be liberated by the doctors or the Gestapo....



We have made a covenant with the Blessed Mother, and this is a reality. We were earnest about the covenant of love... Seen within the framework of the whole Founding Document and the covenant of love, it had to be taken for granted that the condition of my freedom was the inscriptio made by the whole family.”

My inscriptio protected Schoenstatt, and the inscriptio of the Family gave me back my freedom. This is a classic example of spiritual interconnectedness, of mutual interwovenness. Here you see the new person in the new community, not only talked about but exemplified and lived.”

(From: “In Union with the Father” – JK Brazil, 1952)

In the spirit of the 20th January, 1942, with faith in our Covenant of Love, and the loving Providence of God, I wish each of you many blessings and graces from the Shrine for this Covenant Day and throughout the coming month.

United in our covenant,

Shirley Hall





2. Living the Spirit of the 20th January

Living the spirit of the 20th January 1942 means walking towards the darkness of obscurity, but with faith in the Covenant of Love and the loving Providence of God.

The 20th January 1942 was the day that Fr. Kentenich, a prisoner of the Nazis in the Gestapo prison in Koblenz, Germany, freely chose not to use a legitimate opportunity to avoid transport to the concentration camp. That opportunity (arranged with great difficulty by his followers) was to request a re-examination of his health. A doctor had been arranged who knew that Fr. Kentenich lacked the use of one lung, meaning he could be easily declared “unfit for the camp.”

The cut off time for Father Kentenich to request a re-examination by the doctor was needed by 5pm on 20th January. The letters and notes of 20th January testify to how hard and uncompromisingly Father Kentenich wrestled with himself to arrive at a decision. He admitted that these were difficult days and hours and it was not easy for him to battle through to his decision. He knew that to go to Dachau could mean going to certain death and separating himself from the whole Family. Father Kentenich was given no inner clarity on what God wanted of him, and the decision he had to make was a momentous one. Should he take the step that led to the concentration camp? Was he allowed to jeopardize his whole work and the Family? And if the separation was forever through his death – was he allowed, in view of this possibility, to take this step of his own accord? Was that really God’s will?

“My restlessness over this matter gave me no peace,” he related some years later. “Those were a few terribly hard days. Inwardly I battled and prayed. “The decisive question was: What did God want? I had no vision, no dream, nor even a special enlightenment. All that was left to me in this battle was simple faith in Divine Providence.”

He spent the night between the 19th and 20th January in prayer struggling inwardly to recognise God’s will. He admitted that during this time he did not close his eyes. On the 20th, during Holy Mass, he received an answer. He felt inwardly certain about what he should do. He concluded that God’s will for him and Schoenstatt was to turn down the offer and freely embrace the concentration camp. He wanted to use no human means for his liberation, but only the Schoenstatt Family’s self-surrender to God through the heroic striving to live the Inscriptio.

It was in this spirit that he wrote a few lines to Fr. Menningen, his faithful follower: “Please understand this answer through faith in the reality of supernature and the interweaving of the destinies of the members of the family.”



At first the Family did not understand his decision. All begged him to make use of the opportunity that had been offered and fill in the application. But Father Kentenich had come to a decision. He never departed from what he had recognised as God's will.

"I know what is at stake, and I think of the Family, the Work...But this is precisely the reason why I must act this way."

The final time of 5pm passed. Father Kentenich did not use the application form. He did not report sick.

Finally on the morning of 11th March, Father Kentenich and other prisoners were taken to Koblenz station and put on a train. On 13th March, 1942, the train carrying Father Kentenich and the other prisoners, arrived in the concentration camp of Dachau.

Father Kentenich's heroic decision to freely choose not to use this legitimate opportunity to avoid transport to the concentration camp had a deep impact on Schoenstatt and its spirituality. It was for Father Kentenich a deepening of his Covenant of Love with our MTA, the deepening of the first milestone of 18th October 1914. It raised this Covenant of Love to a new and decisive level of heroic maturity expressed in the Blank Check (total conformity to God's will) and Inscriptio (love of the cross). Because January 20th was not a hidden act, but one that placed the whole Movement in a life-and-death situation, it also placed this level of covenant heroism at the centre of the Family's awareness.

Fr. Kentenich characterized the inner meaning of January 20 as "*standing in divine confidence*" or an act of heroic hope or trust. He spent much of the rest of his life actively challenging the members and communities of his movement to "get up onto the stage of January 20" and make this milestone their own so as to reach the interior freedom so needed for our times.

The profound effect of this milestone can be seen in Fr. Kentenich's characterization of January 20 as "the axis of the entire history of the family." The importance of inner freedom, total self-giving and radical trust in God, always important to Schoenstatt, were now sealed in a way that made them inseparable from Schoenstatt's identity. The role of Fr. Kentenich also began a new phase of development: whereas he was previously more in the background of the public awareness of the movement, he was now thrust more into the foreground because of a heightened public appreciation for his role as founder. Moreover, January 20 marked a new stage of growth for Schoenstatt's experience as a family. The realization of the "interwovenness of fates" of founder and followers enhanced the sense of belonging together.

(Includes extracts from: "A Father to Many", Fr. Esteban Uriburu)

Some questions for Personal Reflection:

- ◆ On the 20th January 1942 Fr. Kentenich challenged the Schoenstatt Family to raise their Covenant of Love to a higher degree of heroic love. How does my Covenant of Love challenge me each day to live in greater trust and confidence in the Blessed Mother?
- ◆ How does my Home Shrine help me to live my Covenant of Love in greater trust and confidence so that I can share these blessings with others?
- ◆ Through the 20th January 1942, Father Kentenich challenges us to continue the work of Schoenstatt with trust in our covenant and the loving providence of God.
Do I believe that I have a mission for Schoenstatt? Am I able to articulate what this mission means for me so that I can share it with others?

*Father, our heart in your heart, our thinking in your thinking,
our hand in your hand, our life in your life!
Father, we go with you - we stay true to you.*

*Your Mission is our Mission.
Loyalty for loyalty. Heroic loyalty for heroic loyalty.*



3. Home Shrine Blessings

Amidst pandemic restrictions our Sydney family group (made up of five families) was – thanks be to God – finally able to consecrate our Home Shrines on 1 January 2021. We had been working toward consecrating the Home Shrines in early 2020 but, like so many things, Coronavirus put it on hold. In preparing for the consecrations, we made use of the book *My Home, A Shrine* which was written in 1986 by Sr Thomasine. We were additionally helped by Sr Mary Agnes and Sr Elizabeth along the way.

The initial plan was that all our families would pilgrimage to one another's houses for the blessings, but the tighter restrictions changed that. We were thankful to still begin the day together with Mass at Mt Schoenstatt with most of the sisters in attendance. Following that Fr Paul and Sr Elizabeth travelling home-to-home to bless and witness the consecrations and the rest of us attended it virtually via *Zoom*. As part of the preparation each family named their Home Shrine and adopted symbols as tangible signs for each member of the family.

The Home Shrine preparation experience has been powerful, and it has gifted to us one of the great gifts of the Schoenstatt spirituality. The consecration of the Home Shrines is a lasting gift for the whole family which invites the Mother Thrice Admirable to take up her throne in a way that just as tangible as the invitation of the founding generation inviting Mary to dwell in the original Shrine. This is just one of the gifts of our movement and we are grateful to God that we have finally been able to add our homes to the list of Home Shrines in Australia. If you are reading this and never consecrated your Home Shrine, we encourage you to prepare!

Bernard Toutounji





4. Vale Rita Tobin RIP.

On December 30th, a very faithful member of the NSW Mothers' Branch was called home to eternity. Rita Tobin, 95 years of age, lived an active apostolic life till the end. Not only was she engaged in Schoenstatt, drawing strength from her Covenant of Love at the level of the Blank Cheque, but she was also highly involved in her parish, Holy Family, Mount Druitt. In early days she was active as a Catechist. Later, after her husband died, she took on further studies, gaining a Bachelor's Degree in Arts at the age of 72, and then, while continuing to gain further knowledge through online courses, she became an inaugural member of the "Reconciliation" Group in the Parish. She continued to be active in this group over several years and was the Chairperson in the last 4 to 5 years. This involvement was significantly marked at her funeral by the presence of members of the group as well as Elders of the local Aboriginal Community, who granted her the privilege of a 'smoking' ceremony before the funeral procession left for the cemetery.

Representatives of the Mothers' Branch were able to attend the funeral and together, standing close to the coffin, renewed the Covenant of Love with her. It had been such a joy that Rita was able to attend the 100 Year Celebration of Women in Schoenstatt at Mount Schoenstatt on 12 December, and so soon afterwards our heavenly Father had called her home. At the centennial celebration – very limited because of COVID – Rita gave the following testimony about her involvement in Schoenstatt.

"My Experience of Schoenstatt"

I came in contact with Schoenstatt when my family moved to Willmot in 1972. It was 1973 that I first became involved with the Mothers' branch of the Schoenstatt Movement as a member of a specific group. This group was St. Monica's and meetings were held at the home of Maureen and Kevin Williams in Willmot. My understanding of the role of Mary in the work of our redemption at that stage was limited to the meditations of the Rosary, the Birth of Jesus, the Crucifixion, the reading from the scriptures and various apparitions and manifestations of Mary through the lives of the saints.

After joining the group, through the information days and contact with Father Kentenich's mission, my knowledge of the significance of Mary's Fiat was deepened. The superficial knowledge I understood before was enough to develop a devotion to Mary as Mother of Jesus, Help of Christians, and Patroness of Australia. Schoenstatt took me into a much deeper understanding of the role of Mary in ways I could never have imagined without the ideals of Father Kentenich's mission. Learning of his life and his teaching and trying to accept this teaching into my life and participating in the Mothers' group activities was a turning point in my life, which previously was a bit superficial.

It is my hope to continue to live and grow more and more into that "Little Mary" as understood in the Schoenstatt way.

Rita Tobin, 12 – 12 – 20.

Our heavenly Father allowed Rita less than three more weeks to grow "more into the "little Mary" – He obviously knew she was ready to meet the "great Mary" in person. We will sadly miss Rita, as will all those with whom she was actively involved. She was a person who offered unconditional love to everyone, as testified in the Eulogy at the funeral. Let us pray for her and her family at this time of loss. May she rest in peace.



5. Information and Links

➤ Shrine Opening Hours:

Please check the websites for updated opening times of the Shrine.

Mulgoa Shrine, NSW - Opening times have changed. <https://schoenstatt.org.au>

Mt Richon / Armadale Shrine, WA <https://schoenstattwa.org.au>

The Kew Shrine, Melbourne, VIC is open for individual visits from 7am – 5pm daily.

➤ Covenant days in 2021

To enable as many people as possible to participate in the renewal of the Covenant each month, a video (**see link below**) will be made for each Covenant Sunday covering a theme connected with our motto for the year: **Family, be what you are – Domestic Church**. Questions for reflection (if you are unable to attend in person) or for discussion (if you can join the Covenant Sunday renewal at one of our Shrines) will be included. In this way we are hoping to foster a unified Australian Schoenstatt Family, according to our mission: One Heart in the Father for the Family of God.

➤ Links:

Official Schoenstatt Website

<http://www.schoenstatt.com>

Schoenstatt Australian Website

<http://www.schoenstatt.org.au>

[The celebration of 100 Years of Women in Schoenstatt.](#)

Schoenstatt Australia YouTube Channel

www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia

Video for January Covenant Sunday - The Family- Church in Miniature

Recent videos on this Channel

Christmas Carols with the Sisters at Mount Schoenstatt:

https://youtu.be/cNgdKrr_tCo

International Christmas concert:

<https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattinternational>

The Sisters singing the consecration prayer may be viewed at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29tXet2DQQ>

➤ Ash Wednesday 17th February

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