

# Schoenstatt Movement Australia

February 18 2021 | Volume 2, Number 2

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### 1. Covenant Day Message

#### Family, be what you are: Domestic Church

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

I wish you many blessings for this Covenant Day- the 18th February. Although it doesn't seem so long since we were celebrating the season of Christmas, yesterday we commemorated Ash Wednesday and began our time of preparation for the great feast of Easter. During Lent we are asked to give special attention to our prayer life, fasting and good deeds.

Today when we celebrate and renew our Covenant of Love, we are reminded that Father Kentenich saw the Covenant of Love as not only a covenant of **love**, but also a covenant of **sacrifice**.

He said:

*"We have often heard it said that the Blessed Mother had to pay a high price to become our Mother. We also should pay a high price to become her children. We should pray very much to become every-day saints. We have often talked about Sister M. Emilie. One of her favourite prayers was:*

*Almighty and eternal God, through the intercession of our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt, make me a great saint and do not spare my weak nature. And help me that I will not spare my poor, weak nature.*



This is the connecting bridge between Lent and our covenant of love. There can be no love without sacrifices. Love is nourished by sacrifice, just as the flame is nourished by the wax of the candle. Sacrifice nourishes love. On the other hand, sacrifices are also the fruit of love. Lent wants to strengthen us through our sacrifices. It should cost us something. We should also pray with Sister Emilie:

*Almighty God, do not spare me and help me that I will not spare my poor, weak nature.*

..... Lent means to let God rule over our nature. We want to pray more during this holy time. To pray means to surrender ourselves to the heavenly Father. We bring our sacrifices in order to approach the Father in the right manner, not with empty hands." (J. Kentenich, 13.2.1956 "On Monday Evenings")

Again on the following Monday evening (20.2.1956), he re-emphasised:

"Our covenant is not only a covenant of love, but also a covenant of sacrifice.

We renew the covenant of love and of sacrifice on each 18th. I say, the Blessed Mother loves me, and I also love her.....We want to bring our sacrifices to the shrine each month on the 18th. Why should we do that? The Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen needs our contributions to the capital of grace."

(JK 20.2.1956 "On Monday Evenings")

### **Some questions for reflection**

1. If I believe that our Covenant of Love, is also a covenant of sacrifice, how do I respond when God sends me crosses and hardships?
2. Can I offer these sacrifices joyfully to our Blessed Mother as contributions to the Capital of Grace?
3. Just looking pious is not enough for God. We have to translate faith into action. How can I make this a "season of active mercy?"

I couldn't think of a better way to conclude this spiritual input than to share with you the words that Father Kentenich used at the end of his talk to the couples on 13th February, 1956:

*"I wish you all many blessings and graces from the Shrine during this Lenten season. May Our Blessed Mother be with us all and help us to prepare worthily for the great blessings of Easter."*

United in our covenant,

Shirley Hall





## 2. Covenant Sunday Zoom Initiative



*The following are some **Echoes** from our first Covenant Sunday celebration of 2021 via Zoom. Participants from the Eastern States were very grateful for the initiative as the following indicate:*

**From Julie Daly – Sydney Mothers’ Branch, Chair of the NSW Coordinating Team.**

As COVID 19 restrictions during 2020 had prevented members of the Schoenstatt Movement groups in NSW, Victoria and Queensland from renewing their Covenant each month, in person, at their Shrines, a new approach to our Schoenstatt Family Covenant Sunday Renewal was initiated via, an almost National (WA members were able to attend their Shrine in person on that day) Zoom meeting, held on 17th January 2021. This initiative hoped to enable a unified Australian Schoenstatt Family, according to our mission: One Heart in the Father for the Family of God.

The Zoom meeting began at 3pm (2pm in Queensland) when members, randomly selected from each of the States, were moved into “Chat Rooms.” Each was asked to introduce herself/himself to the others in their “Room.” This proved to be a reunion of sorts, especially as it enabled us to catch up with those, whom we had not seen in person for some time.

With introductions completed, we were all transferred from our “Chat Rooms” to one large group where we were invited to view Bernard and Jane Toutounji’s video, via the Schoenstatt Australia YouTube Channel, “The Family – Church in Miniature”, a theme connected with our motto for the year:

**Family, be what you are – Domestic Church.**

Bernard and Jane encouraged us to deepen our understanding of the Domestic Church - an Image of Love, experienced and practised; to share Schoenstatt’s riches and to try new initiatives:

**To go where we are needed**

**To take Our Blessed Mother with us**

**To trust blindly in Divine Providence.**



They separated their Presentation into 6 sections:

- Defining Church
- Defining Domestic Church
- Interdependency
- Reality of our natural Family
- Reality of our Schoenstatt Family
- "Living in the Mess"

After viewing this inspiring Presentation, we were transferred into "breakout groups", surprisingly, not the "Chat Rooms" into which we had been introduced - for those not familiar with the Zoom meeting process - where we were invited to reflect and discuss:

1. *Look at our own Domestic Church and consider what is going well? What needs to improve? What can I bring? What can I receive? Is it Forgiveness? Charity? Hope? And to take time to think small i.e. "Do ordinary things, extraordinarily well!"*
2. *How does the reality of your Domestic Church position you to serve the wider Church, specifically in the context of our Schoenstatt Movement?*

Following the "breakout groups" reflections, Sr Elizabeth invited us to share these with the larger group.

The Zoom meeting concluded with the National Renewal of our Covenant, just before 4pm.

We are most grateful to Bernard and Jane for their inspiring Presentation "The Family – Church in Miniature" and to Sr. Elizabeth and Bernard for their skills with Infrastructure and Technology, so that we could achieve this new initiative.

To all who met the challenge of taking part –  
**We are the Family of Mary!**

### **From Zenny Custodio – Sydney Mothers' Branch and PMA Regional Coordinator**

Covid-19 in the Year 2020 to the present time, has changed the way we live, learn and work into a restrictive manner. However, with modern technology like Zoom, meetings, conferences, meet and greet friends, family members, etc became possible and we remain connected. A good example was our Schoenstatt Covenant Sunday celebration last January 2021 which was opened to everyone interested to attend to learn more about Schoenstatt, for existing Schoenstatt family members to re-connect and, for those who joined in for the first time to know, or at least have a preview due to limited time, of what Schoenstatt is about.

As a result, the Covenant Sunday celebration was well attended by different levels of representatives from Schoenstatt Sisters, different Schoenstatt Branches and/or Schoenstatt Family Members and newcomers alike. The atmosphere, though just on the Screen, was very welcoming and it was exciting to see and have the opportunity to say hello to some - but not all due to time constraint - especially to the long-time Schoenstatt Family Members from intra and inter States which we don't usually see often before Covid. The beauty of Covid – it keeps people connected!!

For me, the highlight of this Zoom Meeting apart from it being a Covenant Sunday and the opportunity to renew our Covenant with other Schoenstatt Members, was the generosity of Bernard and his wife Jane Toutounji for sharing their experiences in the preparation for the Consecration of their Home Shrine despite current difficulties, restriction wise. This to me is a fulfilment of one of the many wishes of our Father and Founder for us to live our daily lives in the shadow of our Home Shrine, in the midst of difficulties and challenges that come our way – in one way or the other we become the Domestic Church. Overall, Bernard and Jane's presentation as a family, was very encouraging and worthy of emulation to members of other Schoenstatt Branches to do the same.





**From Florida Nugara – Melbourne Mothers’ Branch, State Coordinating Team and PMA Regional Coordinator:**

COVID-19 has taught us much. Like so many things in our lives, we had to find innovative (and hopefully temporary) ways to join in regular Schoenstatt events, but *“in a virtual world”*. As in all challenges, there are also hidden opportunities and possibilities not dreamed of before, till experienced.

The last Covenant Day Zoom meeting I thought was one such product. Covenant Days are usually celebrated by each State in various ways, most often taking on the same format for years gone by. The Zoom meeting was refreshing, in its well-planned format and also in the rich content in the reflections presented. Meeting so many Schoenstatters virtually was a great experience, some whom we had not seen for a very long time, hearing their voices and being able to converse was great. I guess the spirit of Covenant Day celebrations is coming together as a community to give praise and thanks for the month gone by, offer our contributions and pray for grace and blessings for the coming month. Well, we were able to cover that not only by State but together as a nation. Imagine an “International Covenant Day” celebration!

With time and practice, the technology can improve, hopefully more members would join and more experiences shared. It is reminiscent of the time when Father Kentenich was in Dachau Concentration Camp and was restricted in his communication with any of the Schoenstatt members – he had to *dictate* rather than write, so that it could honestly claim he had not written anything. An innovative, yet obedient way, to spread the mission of Schoenstatt.

I guess the zoom meetings are somewhat similar, we are restricted in visiting the Shrine – yet we meet virtually, still communicating and sharing in the Schoenstatt mission.

Father Kentenich’s words spoken at the annual conference of German Catholics in 1967 also comes to mind: *“We are living in apocalyptic times... Heavenly and devilish powers clash in this earth... This confrontation is to challenge the domination of the world; today this is clearly visible.” The solution is to appeal to the Virgin Mary, “favourite weapon in the hands of the living God”*. We should not let *‘this confrontation’* – COVID-19 - diminish our zeal and efforts to bring the Schoenstatt mission to the world, but appeal to the Blessed Mother to bless and make this initiative fruitful.

I personally think Zoom meetings are a great way forward, especially for families with young children who are unable to get to the Shrine, or the elderly who are unable to travel and yet would yearn to participate in such celebrations – such a way to meet gives all an opportunity to see, hear, share and pray together. I hope it continues.





**To sum up:**

**Angela Benson, Mothers' Branch Sydney and NCC Member** sent a spontaneous echo at the end of the Covenant Celebration:

"Despite the technical glitches today, I just want to say for me, today was awesome! So many people gathered together to celebrate a January Covenant Day just before the 20<sup>th</sup> January Milestone. As Father Denis would have said "so many people on the train" and he always said Aussies were slow to rise to the occasion. But not today!!! They were out in force!

Well done to everyone involved.

In the Covenant, Angela

**The Next Covenant Sunday Zoom Celebration**

Sunday February 21 at 3pm (ADST); 2pm (AEST).

If you would like to join, please contact your group leader or  
[movtooffice@schoenstatt.org.au](mailto:movtooffice@schoenstatt.org.au) to get the link.





### 3. A Chance to Sharpen the Tools – under Mother's Watchful Eye.

Paul and Fiona Webb - Family Branch, Toowoomba, Qld



Giddy all from Toowoomba. We take this opportunity to wish you and your loved ones every blessing from our Sacred Heart Parish Church, our Home Shrine and our Heart Shrines. We also take this chance to share some reflections on how we have and will hopefully continue to grow through whatever life throws at us. The plan is to review our thinking going into last year's national conference, then to look at how we take key learnings forward as a domestic, Schoenstatt and Church family.

**2020 Conference prelude** – thinking about the impact of COVID going into the conference with the theme of “The Domestic Church and the Home Shrine”.

Our experience has been a distancing from the Church/Parish Community and from sacramental life. Although this is theoretically limiting, there were some elements of "freedom" in our personal acceptance. We found lockdown actually reduced significantly the "ministry duties" of ourselves and our children. Combined with reductions in commitments to other extracurricular activities we actually had more family and home maintenance time.

In a faith sense, there was also a sense of richer spiritual life even without the Mass. Morning consecration and morning offering was not "crammed in" between morning Mass, work etc but rather was (closer to) a considered start to the day. Access to the Divine Office, particularly Morning and Evening Prayer, was better appreciated and this "hidden gem" of ecumenical Church liturgy that can be celebrated at home is better appreciated.



We are not sure of the timing and residual impacts of a post COVID environment, but we hope we can take this family faith experience forward with us.

...Morning consecration and Capital of Grace gives an assurance that someone “greater than I” has the big picture in hand so I can focus on my part on this day. The potential of the group is greater than the sum of the potential of the individual parts. ... Together Fiona and I have seen God bless our efforts, far exceeding what we could ever have hoped to achieve individually. How do we as a movement garner this collective capacity of a group of wonderful individuals to serve the Church and God's work on earth

### Conference key messages

From keynote address by Sr M. Isabell we heard the family (in all its various iterations) is the oldest, most threatened and yet, (as highlighted by COVID) the most critical element of society. The family, the Domestic Church or Church in miniature is the building cell of society. ...ordered to guard, reveal and communicate love.

To know who you are you must first know where you come from. Fr Kentenich (1952) points to the imperative of the formed individual, the formed personality and the formed domestic church. Formation rather than form as the key to bringing Christ to a changing world. The home is the first and the primary school of formation. Formation includes but is also so much more than what we now call education.

From the Home Shrine, the domestic church is a community in dialogue with God. The Home Shrine can be the conduit for the blending of the natural and the supernatural experience in an ever-dynamic faith and secular life....

### 2021 sharpening the tools from our Schoenstatt Toolbox

During and (God willing) beyond COVID we have the chance to strengthen our faith with the Home Shrine and other tools in the Schoenstatt toolbox. The Shrine, the Home Shrine, the Heart Shrine, personal/couple/group ideal, Capital of Grace and Spiritual Daily Order. Using these tools and sharing our experiences with each other, we can learn, live and share the gems our founder established for us under our Mother's watchful eye. In the January Newsletter we heard from Shirley how Fr Kentenich found freedom in his decision to accept imprisonment. On covenant Sunday in January we heard from Bernard and Jane how this freedom is sometimes hard to find in the lived domestic church – cos life is messy. But just as we saw Schoenstatt flourish coming out of Dachau, the messiness of family life can be rich and rewarding.

Through the year we will hear more reflections on the lived experience of members of the Schoenstatt family through newsletters and Covenant Sunday sharings. Together we can learn, live and enrich our lived faith reflecting on a number of topics relating to our motto and striving for this year “Family, be what you are: Domestic Church”.

We look forward to sharing the journey with you.

Yours in the Covenant,

Paul and Fiona Webb and family.







## 4. Mothers' Group Retreat

**"Mary and Martha Mothers' Group"  
Retreat January 2021**

**An exercise in how five Mothers can  
educate each other and**

**learn from Fr. Kentenich's teachings**

Our group has been together since the 2018 Conference and the members pictured, along with Anne Walsh who was absent, have met monthly for meetings at the Shrine and over that time held three retreats for ourselves. Our main guide over this time has been Fr. Kentenich using the first two books of the "Brushstrokes of a Father" series letting him "speak to us" from the pages of the books.

Nowhere has that been more apparent over the past times together than at this retreat held over the 19<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> January 2021 which of course is centred around the "Second Milestone" of Schoenstatt. The reason being, that all five of those present prepared talks for discussion centred on the last 200 pages of "Brushstrokes 2".

**Topics picked and focused on were:**

- 1. Leadership and Education**
- 2. Long standing sufferings – where the lack of a home is fulfilled by "Being at Home in the Shrine"**
- 3. "Silent, Hidden Heroism"**
- 4. "When all seems lost – I am at home."**
- 5. "You shall make the working day Holy".**



Attendance at Mass on the property during Covid had risks for the older Sisters so we had to be resourceful and find local masses to attend. The picture above is taken at "Sacred Heart, Warragamba, now under the guidance of Fr. Giovanni along with his seminarian Michael who took the picture for us. This parish was formerly under the guidance of Fr. Evans, a Schoenstatt Father, hence the Unity Cross in the background of the picture. This was a special Mass because we had to go on "Pilgrimage" so to speak so that we could attend a Mass on the "20<sup>th</sup> January". The following day we were fortunate to continue the pilgrimage theme by attending Mass at "St Mary's Mulgoa" again celebrated by Fr. Giovanni.

Our themes for our five discussions gave us a sound knowledge of how Father Kentenich perceived leadership and education of people, forming the Movement under these principles. The theme of long-standing suffering made us very much aware of how in this suffering time of Covid that we can feel right at home, in our home, because of our awareness that Mary is with us in our homes radiating her graces from the Shrine into our homes, particularly where a "Home Shrine" is in place. Angst of having no control over things going on in our lives was exemplified and the story told showed us how a strong faith in Mary and Fr. Kentenich can be rewarded for the better good. Another life story told, demonstrated how, when all seems lost, it can be - over time - a learning curve to point one more toward the saving hands of God and our Mother.

Finally, the topic of "Everyday Sanctity" was well presented by Jenny and the conclusion added after it, by the priest who was on retreat at the Shrine who offered us the chance for a second Mass on Thursday. It was a good concluding topic to remind us that while we are fortunate to be removed from the world into "Kairos Time" while we are on retreat, we, like the miner in the story (*below*), are called to go back out into the world more spiritually uplifted, apostolically minded and work from that.

*"One miner had the job of lubricating the motors that pumped fresh air into the mines below. In one hand he inconspicuously held his rosary, in the other hand his oil can.*

*The men asked if this was right. This helped us conclude that prayer and work must go together. One must unite with God the thought God has for this situation. Prayer then leavens one's work. The miner had an important and fine occupation; he had to deliver air to the miners below, the most precious and important thing there is, even more precious than water and bread".*

What should his prayer be?

*"To thank God for the wonderful air, the most precious and yet least expensive thing in the world;*

*To rejoice that he was permitted to deliver the air to the miners;*

*To pray for his companions, so that the air would flow to them;*

*In this way we came to the sanctification of work and everyday sanctity". (Brushstrokes 2: page 212).*

It is certainly a privilege to be able to take time out from our everyday life, but it is even more of one to be educated by one's companions in Mary, as in our Mothers' group where our guiding principle is to learn to sit more at the feet of Christ and learn to adopt the principles of "Mary so that our Martha" oriented world in our parishes has a spiritually oriented balance to it.

What is our group prayer? That more mothers would be inspired to take time to gather in groups to learn and educate each other about Mary, Fr. Kentenich and Schoenstatt and become able to educate each other by their knowledge and love of Mary using Schoenstatt education material.

*Angela, a member of the Mothers' Branch for over 30 year*



## 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>

#### Schoenstatt Australia YouTube Channel

[www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia](http://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia)

#### Video for February Covenant Sunday:

Centre place of the Domestic Church – Home Shrine

#### Recent videos on this Channel

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

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qb4rpUPIF4o&t=124s>

Christmas Carols with the Sisters at Mount Schoenstatt:

[https://youtu.be/cNgdKrr\\_tCo](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>

### ➤ Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

Please send to [movtooffice@schoenstatt.org.au](mailto:movtooffice@schoenstatt.org.au) before the beginning of each month.

ISSN 2652-6875

