

Schoenstatt Movement

Australia

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1. COVENANT DAY MESSAGE

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

Dear Schoenstatt Family Members,

I wish you all many graces and blessings from the Shrine on this 18th December as we continue our journey through Advent and approach the wonderful season of Christmas.

This has been a very stressful year for many as they struggled with the affects that COVID has had on their lives and the lives of their family members and friends. I am sure that many of you are now looking forward to being able to gather with family and friends to celebrate this Christmas season.

However, I would ask you to take a few minutes to “listen” to some words from Fr. Kentenich that you might like to reflect upon as we approach Christmas:



"You see, history repeats itself. Salvation history. Salvation history began with the birth and the "Yes" of the Blessed Mother. If the modern world is to return to Christ, the Blessed Mother must give new birth to Christ. Again, I am presupposing that interiorly you accept this idea. But if you would want to reflect on that idea or to speak about it, we have to provide a new foundation and study it closely, otherwise you will never understand Schoenstatt and the covenant of love in all its depth.

The Blessed Mother wants to create a new world from here, Christ is to be born anew. Again, it seems to me you must feel the same as someone who told me today: The more I study "Heavenwards," the more answers I can find there. – Often, with just a few words a new view opens up. It's merely a matter of time until we grasp it. We give you thanks for all the gifts which we have received in such abundance: for choosing Schoenstatt as the place of Christ's rebirth.

Do you understand what this means? It is not as if Christ were being reborn anywhere and everywhere. No, no. You have to understand the full impact, the great idea – he must be reborn. That's why it is so very important for us to uphold what we wanted from the beginning. What is that? Love for the Blessed Mother. The Blessed Mother is not only the way to a deep love for the Father, but the Blessed Mother is also the way to the rebirth of Christ here and now, for the newest times."

(From: "With Mary into the New Millennium", Pp, 10-11)

*Your shrine is our **Bethlehem**, pleasing to God through its sunrise.*

There you gave virginal birth to the Lord who chose you as his Bride and Mother.

In your miraculous fruitfulness you brought forth the Sun of Righteousness.

*You have graciously established Schoenstatt so that our times can see the Eternal Light.
From there you want to go through our dark world
as the Christ-bearer sent by God.*

*Jubilantly place the Lord into my soul anew,
so that, like you, I may perfectly resemble him.
Let me be a Christ-bearer for our times,
that they may shine in the brightest radiance of the sun.*



As this is our last newsletter for 2021, on behalf of the members of the NCC (National Central Committee), I want to thank all members of our Schoenstatt Family for their support during this year and wish each of you a very happy and holy Christmas season. May the Blessed Mother and her Son, send you and your family, rich blessings and graces from the shrine and continue to be with you in the coming year.

United in our Covenant,

Shirley Hall



2. Celebrating 30 Years of our Schoenstatt Shrine

On Sunday 14th November, a crowd of around 250 people gathered to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the blessing of the Schoenstatt Shrine at Mt Richon. The day was beautifully warm and sunny, as people filled the seats under the shade of a large marquee.

After a gathering hymn, the outdoor Holy Mass was celebrated by Bishop Don Sproxtton, with Fr Matteo Verdi and Deacon Patrick Moore from Armadale Parish, Fr Antony Suresh from Kalamunda Parish and Fr Richard Charlwood from Ukrainian Catholic Church, Maylands all con-celebrating.

In the bishop's homily, he highlighted the Shrine as 'a home for us, where the Lord enables us to accept the grace of living our faith. It is a place that restores us to be able to live that faith, and enables us to witness that faith to others. It is a sign of God's presence among us. We thank the Lord for all the work needed to build and maintain this Shrine, and the constant number of visitors who receive so much here, because this chapel stands at this spot.



We thank God and the sisters, and those who worked with them, to enable us to have this wonderful gift in our Archdiocese.'

Following the homily, seven Pilgrim Shrines were blessed by the bishop. These images of Jesus and his Mother Mary will now travel among a number of homes in the Parishes of Bateman, Whitfords, Thornlie, Maida Vale and in the Light of Jesus Perth Family community, South of the River, to encourage prayer in families.





Many visited the festively decorated Shrine at the conclusion of Mass, then gathered at Emilie House to enjoy fellowship and an abundance of food, with some even sharing their memories of the building of the Shrine 30 years ago. Many commented that the celebration was ‘uplifting’ ‘with a prayerful atmosphere’ ‘a beautiful celebration’ and that they were ‘happy to have come.’

Someone who received one of the Pilgrim Shrines said: ‘Our Lady is already working miracles of grace even before she comes to visit my home’ and she then shared a specific grace she recently received; while another one said: ‘I was so looking forward to this day, when I will receive the Pilgrim Mother Shrine. Now I am so happy to have her with me!’

Special thanks to the many who helped prepare the event, not least to those who provided such a bountiful spread for all to share.

More photos can be viewed on www.schoenstattwa.org.au



3. Let my Life be a Great Magnificat!

This was the motto chosen by eight novices from six different countries - Australia, Brazil, Chile, Germany, Austria, and Vietnam—for the celebration when they received the dress of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary on the Feast of Christ the King in the Adoration Church on Mount Schoenstatt.

As was shared in last month's Newsletter, Olivia Lukaszewicz, from South Australia, entered the Sisters' Community at the end of last year and has been preparing for this day throughout the year in a period of candidacy and postulancy.

For this memorable celebration, the novices in white bridal dresses processed into the Adoration Church to the sound of the bells of the Adoration Church, an experience which was very moving for the many who were watching online.

Father Bernd Biberger, General Director of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary and main presider of the celebration, welcomed all the guests, including the priests from the parishes to which the novices belonged, but especially the parents, relatives and friends who joined the celebration via live stream. Various languages for the readings and festive songs were used throughout the celebration, fitting for an international group of novices.



In his homily, Father Biberger, depicted the Magnificat as the Blessed Virgin Mary's song of praise and added that the novices do not only want to sing the Magnificat of the Blessed Mother, but they want to testify to her Magnificat through their lives: "Let my life be a great Magnificat!". 'Just as the life of the Blessed Virgin Mary is a testimony to how God works wonders, so should their lives also be a testimony to God's saving deeds'. Father Biberger expressed that the outward expression of this is the sisters' dress that the novices received following the homily. He also mentioned that the novices wanted to give their motto to all who participated in this celebration, because: "If our life is a great Magnificat, then we become witnesses to God's love which is not far from us but close to everyone who turns to him."

When the novices receive the dress of a Schoenstatt Sister of Mary, they also receive a new name which they themselves select. Olivia has chosen Sr. Maria Olivia, and this was announced by the Superior General, Sr. M. Aleja Slaughter at the beginning of the clothing ceremony.



It was a great joy to see the novices return to the Church in their Sisters' dress. Following the celebration Sr. M. Isabell, our new provincial, Sr. M. Rita, Sr. M. Emmylou and Sr. Mary Hazel, all from our Australian province and working at present in Schoenstatt, together with other sisters from English speaking countries joined with Sr. M. Olivia to celebrate with her. Because of the time difference it was only on the following couple of days that Sr. M. Olivia was able to connect with her family in Australia, a long-awaited joyful reunion online!!

One of several echoes following the celebration was:

"Heaven is rejoicing over the new Sisters of Mary, over their yes to Jesus and to their striving to set the Blessed Virgin Mary present in this world. The world needs authentic witnesses to consecrated life!"

Let us pray for Sr. M. Olivia and her fellow novices.





4. A Parish Rejoices and Celebrates

The Parish Priest of Sr. M. Olivia's Home Parish in South Australia, Fr. Peter Zwaans, shares the joy of his parishioners on the occasion of Sr. M. Olivia's Reception.

At about 10pm on Sunday the 21st of November, my phone started buzzing. Text messages were flying in from my parishioners: "German's not my strong suit. What was the name? I didn't catch it!" Throughout Brooklyn Park/Richmond, family, friends and parishioners were watching the livestream of the *Einkleidungsmesse* (Mass of Reception) of the Novices of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. We couldn't wait to see our sister in her sisters' dress, and we were all waiting with anticipation to find out what name we would call her from that moment on.

I don't think anyone was placing bets, but then I suppose if there was a book running, they probably would not tell the parish priest. Still, with my school-boy German, I was able to send out the message, our Olivia Lukaszewicz will be Sr M. Olivia! The following day I received more emails from the people of the parish saying how moving they had found the ceremony and how fortunate they felt to have been so involved in this great moment. I have no doubt that Sr M. Olivia's vocation will be a wonderful blessing to the Schoenstatt community, but it has also already been a great gift to the Brooklyn Park/Richmond parish.

Around here, everyone knows Olivia; if not by name, then at the very least by description – she's the girl with the blonde hair who reads at Mass and is always sitting at the front of the church and praying. Since she left for candidacy and postulancy in Schoenstatt, she's been gone but certainly not forgotten. She wrote several times to the parish to keep us all up to date on her progress and there has been a subtle (but good!) pride that our parish brought forth a vocation to the consecrated life.

In the lead up to the *Einkleidungsmesse*, the parish decided that the best gift we could give would be a spiritual bouquet, and so over the course of a month, 222 parishioners contributed: 562 Masses, 1125 Rosaries, 1394 decades of the Rosary and 3397 *Memorares*. One boy came up to me after Mass one Sunday and proudly recited the *Memorare* off by heart, because he had been praying it nightly for Sr M. Olivia. In the nine days before the Mass of Reception, 153 parishioners joined in praying a Novena to the Mother Thrice Admirable and we all received a taste of the spirituality of Schoenstatt.





When the day had finally arrived, we gathered for an hour of Adoration in St John Bosco's church in the presence of the Pilgrim Mother Icon (made by Sr. M. Olivia's father), which travels among the families of the parish, and then at the conclusion of the hour we all scurried home to tune-in to the livestream from Germany. And that's when the text messages started to fly – "she's beaming!", "she looks so happy", "the religious dress really suits her", "it looks like she's made for it." For so many of us, it was a joy-filled moment and the culmination of prayerful anticipation.

After all of this prayer and preparation it seemed incredibly fitting that the day was accompanied by such providential feast days: celebrating Christ the King, the young novices appeared as princess brides. Additionally, the 21st of November is also the feast of the Presentation of Mary, and just as the young Mary was set apart for God's purposes, so too these young women were responding generously to the vocation which they had heard and were consecrating their whole selves to God. It is especially fitting that the spirituality of Schoenstatt sees the sisters as 'another Mary'. And so, just like Mary, we see that Sr M. Olivia has consecrated her mind, heart and body so that she may be entirely for Christ – and this humble parish, our little Nazareth, could not be prouder!

Over the past four years that I have been parish priest, I have been asked countless times, "Is Olivia your sister?" And she has been asked just as often: "Is Fr Peter your brother?" Admittedly, we do look enough alike for it to be a common mistake. But now, finally, I can say a wholehearted: Yes! She is my sister. She is our Sr M. Olivia!



5. Mini-Pentecost Congress

In June 2022, our international Schoenstatt Movement will hold a “Pentecost Congress” at original Schoenstatt. This is a follow-up to the first Schoenstatt International Pentecost Congress held in 2015, following the celebration of Schoenstatt’s centennial in 2014.

The 2015 Congress produced a five-year plan and a memorandum setting “A Way Forward for the International Schoenstatt Movement at the Beginning of the Second Century of its History.”

Members of the Congress said a new yes to the covenant of love with Mary. They experienced the Original Shrine as the radiating centre of our worldwide multicultural Movement. They experienced an international Family in unity and diversity. Finally, they agreed to a threefold task as they were sent out into the new times: “We choose the way of holiness. We live authentic and strong attachments. We make a missionary option.”

The planned Congress for 2020 was postponed because of COVID, giving the opportunity to plan in ways other than originally foreseen. A synodal way was introduced and the members of our movement in countries around the world were invited to hold “Mini-Congresses”.



The purpose of these Mini-Congresses was to look at the central values that embody our country and to ask ourselves about the impact of Schoenstatt in our present-day church and society. Our reflections will contribute towards the international Congress next year when it is envisioned that a meaningful plan for our Movement for the next five to ten years will be proposed.

Our Australian Schoenstatt Family was able to hold our “Mini-Pentecost Congress” on November 27. We had participants from the various States of our country and for this reason the Congress was held on-line.



We recognised and appreciated the opportunity to gather together to reflect on the life currents in our small movement and rejoiced in the various ways in which our members are contributing to the Church in Australia.

This may be on a small scale, cognisant with our very small movement, but none-the-less valuable for the parishes to which we belong.



We had been asked to describe life currents in the country through which Schoenstatt's charism becomes fruitful both on a personal as well as an ecclesial level.

A report from our discussions and sharing is presently being formulated but the following were some of the life currents which were identified.

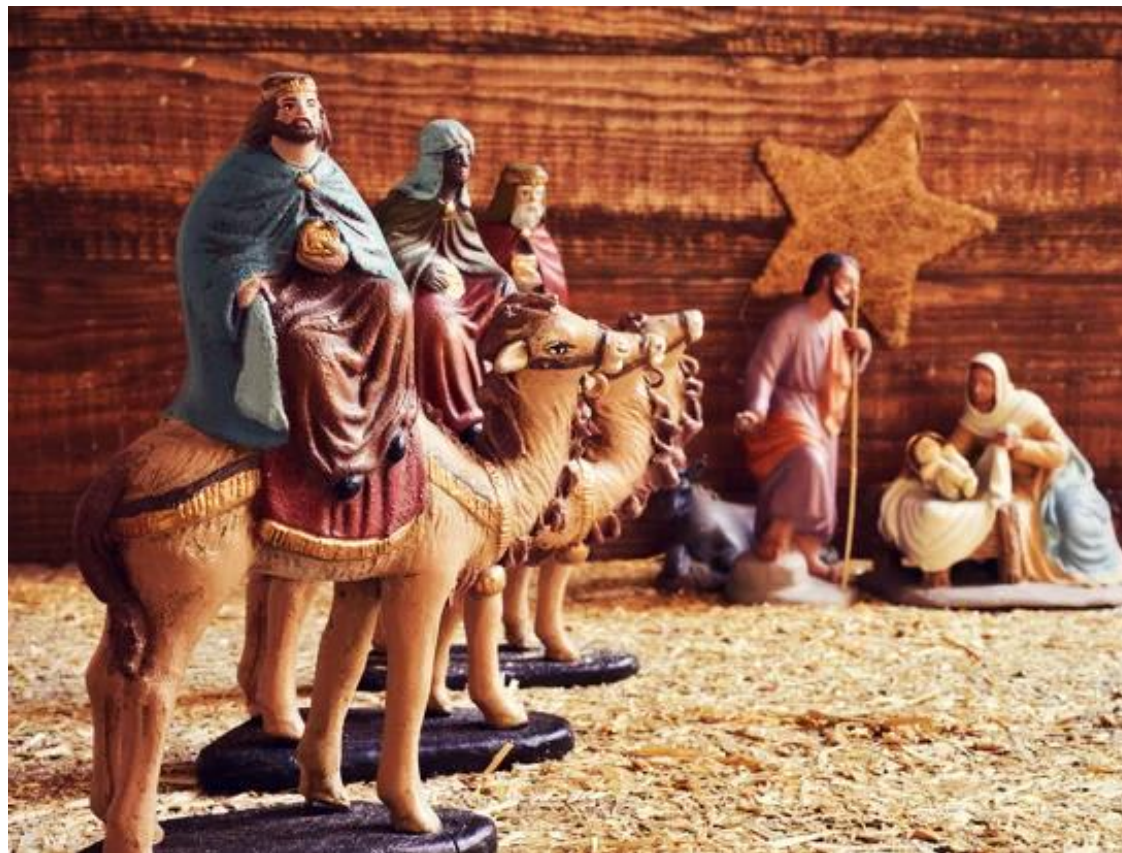
- We recognised that, due to Covid and the necessary increase in the use of technology we have grown as a family within our national movement, becoming a "National Family" and experiencing a closeness that did not exist before.
- The monthly Newsletter for Covenant Days combining a Schoenstatt reflection with news reports from Schoenstatt events around the country has made us more aware of the spiritual impetus given to many who attend the various functions which are offered.
- In the service of the Church, Schoenstatt members are involved in various capacities within parishes: as catechists, lectors, acolytes, in parish choirs, leading scripture groups, RCIA, etc.
- Offering formation for families and children through reflection days involving sacramental preparation, focus on liturgical seasons and marriage Caminos.
- Monthly videos on our YouTube Channel – this year offering reflections about the Domestic Church – have offered further means of formation as well as evangelisation.



All these initiatives have fostered life in the hearts of people, in their Schoenstatt groups and parishes.

In addition, the Pilgrim Mother Apostolate has become a very real “life-current” in our Australian Schoenstatt Family. This apostolate is active in parishes as well as across parishes and is vital in bringing Christ and his Mother into the homes of many people to offer them the graces that our Mother Thrice Admirable intercedes for us in her Schoenstatt Shrines. We identified the need to continue working to offer this apostolate to many parishes but at the same time to invite those involved in the Apostolate into a deeper commitment through involvement in the various Schoenstatt Groups in the Movement.

Considering our Australian Mission, to be “One Heart in the Father for the Family of God” we believe that the many contributions the members of our movement make to the family, professional, social and ecclesial life, whether small or large, are helping towards the renewal of our church and society in Australia. We want to continue to ‘make a difference’ wherever it is possible.



6. Advent Retreat at Mt Richon, WA

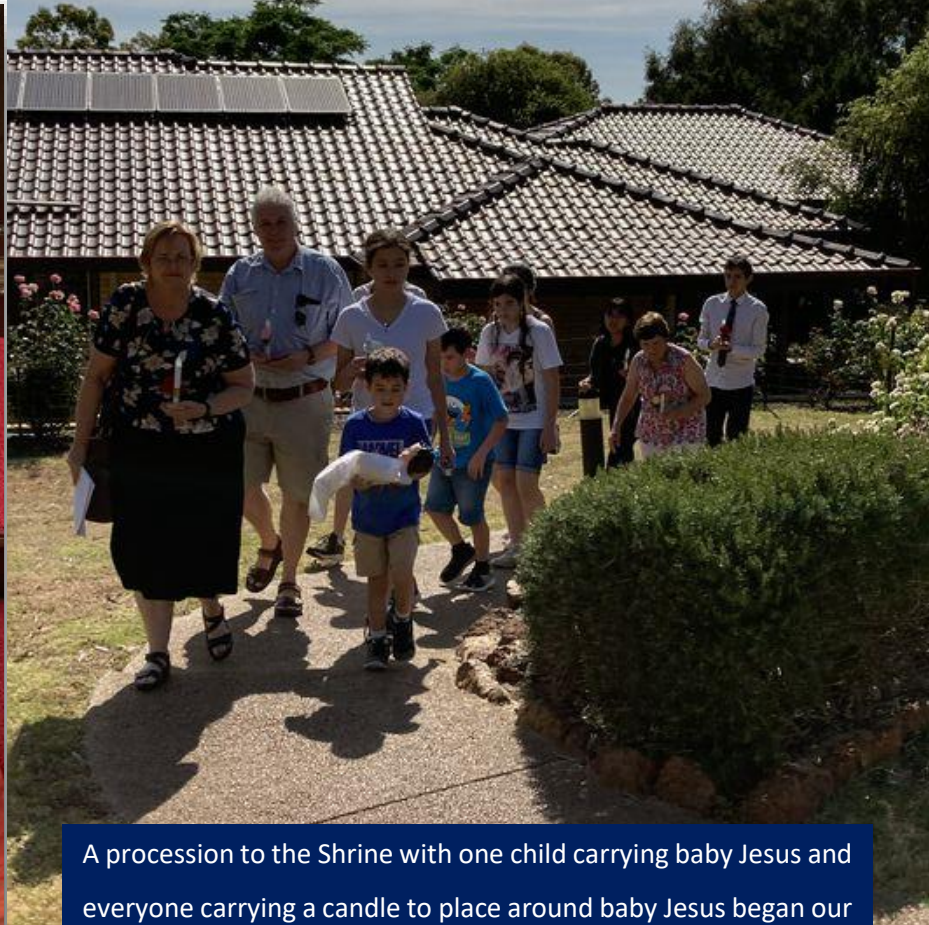
A small but eager group of families took part in an Advent Retreat on the first Sunday of Advent, Nov 28, 2021

The afternoon began with a presentation about Advent from Philomena Theseira (A Family Branch Leader/Catechist) setting the scene for reflections about the importance of Advent as a time of preparation for Christmas.

Each participant then chose a 'flashcard' which encouraged them to share with each other about a special memory from their chosen card. e.g. a tradition, sharing, candles, baking, visiting, singing, greetings, peace etc.

The family activity had everyone joining in making a lapbook about Advent and the meaning of the Advent Wreath and candles. They also made a cut out paper Advent Wreath. Both these activities were enjoyed by all.





A procession to the Shrine with one child carrying baby Jesus and everyone carrying a candle to place around baby Jesus began our final prayer service. This included prayers, hymns and the opportunity for everyone to place their petitions/offerings in the jar. (Nothing without you, Mother and Queen, Nothing without us!) This celebration was very meaningful for each one of us.

Afterwards we enjoyed getting to know each other more as we shared afternoon tea together. Thank you to the families that came and to the helpers, David, Ida and Timothy.



7. Information and Links

➤ Shrine Opening Hours:

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

Mulgoa Shrine, NSW. Open daily 8 am – 7 pm (QR code and wearing of masks inside essential)

Mt Richon / Armadale Shrine, WA. Open daily 7am – 7pm.

The Kew Shrine, Melbourne, VIC is closed until further notice.

➤ 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.**

If you wish to participate in the Zoom meeting on Covenant Sundays (3-4pm AEST) please register at movtooffice@schoenstatt.org.au

➤ Links:

Official Schoenstatt Website

<http://www.schoenstatt.com>

Schoenstatt Australian Website

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

Schoenstatt Australia YouTube Channel

Video for December Covenant Sunday – Longing for God - Christmas

www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia

Recent videos on this Channel:

Video for November Covenant Sunday – The Domestic Church & Advent Customs

<https://youtu.be/FnU5o-IMwqM>

Video for October Covenant Sunday – The Covenant of Love and the Home Shrine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8n09dT8kxtc>

Video for September Covenant Sunday – Mary's Mission

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

The Sisters singing the consecration prayer may be viewed at:

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

During Christmas you may enjoy watching the Sisters singing Christmas Carols.

This video was taken in 2020.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNgdKrr_tCo&t=107s

➤ Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

Please send to movtooffice@schoenstatt.org.au before the beginning of each month.

