

5. Kew Shrine Melbourne

Recent historical events at Kew and the Kew Shrine



The Schoenstatt Shrine at Kew, the first Shrine in Australia, was blessed on 11 May 1952, and was built on the property of the Pallottine community. As history goes, the Shrine at one stage became dormant from a Schoenstatt point of view with no active Schoenstatt community until 1994, when it was once again frequented in the beginning by a small group of Schoenstatt members, namely Vince and Emily Dawson, Rose Paynting and a few others. Vince and Emily made a point of visiting the Shrine and renewing their Covenant of Love each month on or around the 18th of the month.

Simultaneously, the Pilgrim Mother Apostolate started to grow when Jean and Anton Jansz brought the first Pilgrim Mother Shrine from Mulgoa to Melbourne, the beginnings of a now flourishing Pilgrim Mother Community. In 1999 the Schoenstatt family joined together for a nine-week Novena to the Blessed Mother before her special feast of the Assumption on 15th August, imploring her to once again take possession of the Shrine and to dispense her graces from the Shrine. We promised our co-operation in the Covenant and since then have been bringing her our contributions to the Capital of Grace. A flourishing community was born; a community who gathered regularly for Covenant Days and special Feast days including the Feast of the Assumption every year after a nine-week Novena.

The current situation started on 11 August 2022 when the Schoenstatt community received a letter from the head of the Pallottine community, Fr. Dean Bradbury, advising us of the intended sale of the property, including the Pallotti House and the Shrine. At this time, we were given three options, and they were:

1. The Shrine could be moved to another site
2. The Shrine could be dismantled and stored
3. The interior could be stripped and those items that are deemed necessary for it to remain in use as a Shrine could be relocated somewhere else.

This news was met with great sadness as we had come to cherish and love our special place and many of us have spent the last +-29 years of our lives coming to the Shrine to pray and join with our Schoenstatt family. Over the years we have appreciated the support and guidance of our Moderators, including Sr. M Elizabeth and Sr. M Isabell, our Schoenstatt fathers, Fr. Francisco, Fr. Ivanhoe Allies, Fr. Marcelo, and Fr. Prabhu, all who travelled down to meet with us several times a year. In the most part, our community was run solely by lay people, having no religious stationed in Melbourne.

What were we to do? We do not have the finances to purchase property to relocate the Shrine. We racked our brains for months trying to figure out a way. We approached other communities, and churches to find a way forward. We became anxious and implored the prayers of the wider Schoenstatt family, both national and international. Meanwhile the sale of the property was drawing closer, with no possible solution in sight. Initially we were told by the Pallottines that we may have our last celebration in the Shrine in August 2022. Later we were told that we may still be able to celebrate Foundation Day in October 2022. Even later we were offered early December, as the property was expected to be sold by the end of December 2022. And again later we were told that the sale would be finalised by the end of January 2023.



At this time we were preparing for the visit of Sr. Elizabeth to Melbourne from 10 February to 17 February. The property had not been sold as yet. As usual, the Schoenstatt family prepared a programme for Sr Elizabeth's visit, which included several meetings with the community at various locations. With this visit there followed a sequence of events all in the space of a week which can only be viewed as Our Lady's loyalty to her Melbourne Schoenstatt Family and her eagerness to find a solution for a "new home" for her.

Firstly, out of the blue I received a telephone call from Frances Baum, a person who had come to know of the sale of the property, and who had a big interest in the Shrine and was searching for information about what would be happening to the Shrine. Frances contacted Schoenstatt by looking up the movement on Google and ended up making a call to Schoenstatt Western Australia, where my contact details was passed on to her. Frances is the granddaughter of the architect of the Shrine, Mr Hermann Baum who had died two weeks prior to the blessing of the Shrine in 1952. Frances was hoping to meet with the Schoenstatt community, and I immediately made an appointment for Frances to meet up with myself and Sr. Elizabeth on Saturday, 11 February 2023.

1. The meeting with the Architect's family

This was the first of a series of events in the week of Sr Elizabeth's visit where Divine Providence and Our Lady's guidance was so tangible. Sr Elizabeth and I met with Frances Baum (granddaughter to the Architect) together with two of her siblings, Veronica and Justin, and her father, Martin Baum (son of the architect) and Sr. Frances (daughter of the architect).

Unbeknown to us, Frances and her family had frequented the Shrine regularly to celebrate family occasions and in memory of their late grandfather and father, who had also been the artist who painted the stations of the cross in the Shrine, the Holy Spirit symbol, and the Relief at the front of the Shrine depicting St. Vincent Pallotti and Fr. Kentenich.



This meeting was significant as we learnt about the family's history and connection with the Shrine and most importantly that, given how the Shrine was built, with its many pillars reaching metres into the ground, the Shrine could hardly be uplifted and moved. This was a huge revelation to us, as it would pave the way for further planning. Up until then we were hopeful of relocating the Shrine.

2. The meeting with Fr. Shane Reade – Salesian father at Lysterfield

The context of this meeting was that many months ago, when various options were being explored at a planning ZOOM meeting with Sr Elizabeth and the Melbourne Schoenstatt committee, the idea was raised that perhaps we could approach the Salesians for a place on their property at Lysterfield, where they owned acres of farmland, and where the Schoenstatt family had spent time on retreat at their Retreat centre. As per Divine Providence, Sr. Elizabeth mentioned on this occasion that it just so happened that Fr. Shane Reade, resident at Lysterfield was up at Mulgoa on that day. Sr Elizabeth would approach Fr. Shane and enquire about the possibility. The outcome was that Fr Shane was keen and eager to meet with the Melbourne Schoenstatt family upon his return to Melbourne. Fr. Shane's enthusiasm continued after the first meeting. However, weeks later on 14 September 2022, Fr. Shane responded, much to our disappointment, that the offer was no longer an option. The Salesians had other projects in mind.



Suddenly, just prior to Sr. Elizabeth's visit, Fr. Shane contacted our community and requested a meeting. This was arranged for Monday, 13 February 2023, with Sr Elizabeth accompanying us. Fr. Shane offered us one of three spots on the property as he said he was keen to have the Shrine. He had visited Kew earlier and felt that Our Lady was compelling him to make us this offer. Discussions followed about how we were now going with option 3 rather than relocating.

3. The third event of this week was a meeting with Fr. Dean Bradbury – Pallottine father.

On 16 February Fr Dean Bradbury agreed to meet with Sr. Elizabeth and the Schoenstatt members at Kew. The purpose of our meeting was to advise of our plans and to enquire as to the progress of the sale. We were hoping to request all the non-fixtures in the Shrine, including the Shrine doors before the sale of the property, and the new owners took over. The meeting was successful, and Fr. Dean advised that we may have all the non-fixtures, including the original MTA picture, the plaques commemorating the Blessing of the Shrine and the one remembering the pioneers, the Stations of the Cross, the Holy Spirit symbol, the Relief at the front of the building, the Tabernacle, the bell and the doors. Everything, except the doors could be collected once the contract was signed, and the doors at settlement. Later that evening, Fr Dean called me and said that the Schoenstatt community should collect everything by Monday, 20 February 2023. The community put out an urgent call and gathered all the help needed for this historic moment and planned to celebrate Covenant day on Saturday 18 February for the last time in the Shrine, and thereafter dismantle the items in the Shrine.

Our Final Celebration at the Kew Shrine

We were pleased to see all the pioneers gathered together for the celebration on 18th February. Two people present were also at the Shrine for the Blessing on 11/5/1952, and they were Martin Baum and Fr Pat Jackson, both happy and grateful to be part of the celebration which saw a mixture of emotions, gratitude for Our Lady's blessings over almost 71 years and sadness that the Shrine would no longer exist in its original form.

We thank everyone who has joined us in prayer on this day and also as we discerned God's will for Our Lady's Shrine at Kew. Now we begin a new era and invite all to pray that it may really be possible to invite our MTA to take up her abode at a new location, which we hope will eventually be Lysterfield.

Karin Southgate for the Victorian Schoenstatt Family.





The Shrine
stripped
bare



Lysterfield: A
new home for
the Blessed
Mother

