

Schoenstatt Movement

Australia

August 18 2023

| Volume 4, Number 8

1. Covenant Day Message

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

Blessings and greetings for this Covenant Day – 18th August. Last Tuesday, the 15th of August, we celebrated the Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This Feast Day should be a sign of great hope and joy for us all because it is a reminder that God not only showed his merciful love for Mary throughout her life, but he also shows His merciful love for us during our life. It is an affirmation of the dignity of all human life.

We see this dignity reflected especially in the life of Our Lady and in the way in which she always responded to the will of God with a joyful “yes”. It is Mary’s wholehearted willingness to participate in God’s purpose that makes her bodily assumption into heaven a beacon of hope for everyone.

Mary fulfilled the mission given to her by the Heavenly Father and became a perfect and authentic witness to holiness.

In speaking about Mary’s role for mankind, Father Kentenich said in 1954:

When we now ask Our Lord why He draws His Mother so closely to Himself, why He united her so intimately with His own Person and His work – all in all, why He places her so much in the foreground that He would give her to us from the cross as His last will and testament, then He will answer very clearly and certainly: It is the plan of the Eternal Father.

1. Covenant Day Message
2. Schoenstatt’s Covenant of Love
3. PMA Reflection Day for Coordinators and Members
4. Finding generosity and the Spiritual - everywhere
5. Formation Day for Women
6. Information and Links



God created human society in the image of the Triune God. Just as the Blessed Trinity is bound together in the manner of a family, human society should also be a family. In this family Mary is the Mother. Mary is not like a signpost on the road which points the direction but then stays behind without accompanying the hiker. Just as a mother in the natural order takes her children with her to God, so does the heavenly Mother. The more we are at home in her heart, the more quickly and surely will she find us a home with herself in God.

God could also draw us directly to Himself without a magnet, which means He could give us graces without Mary. But since He has decided it differently, we must follow the law which He has given. St. Bernard tells us: God simply determined that all graces should come to us through Mary. And Leo XIII points out that graces flow from the heart of Mary. God gives us the graces, Our Lord has merited them for us, and the Blessed Virgin intercedes them for us.

Because God has decided it should be that way, we are simply dependent on her and her love for us, and our love for her cannot be great enough. But, once again, that does not mean that whoever dedicates himself first to the Sacred Heart and then makes his consecration to the Blessed Mother does so because Our Lady could or would give him something which Our Lord cannot give. By no means!

Whoever consecrates himself to both Hearts, whoever turns to both with his plea, is merely conforming to the order of grace and drawing diligently from all the sources of grace which God has made available to us according to His plan. It is always God who gives us grace; it is always the God-Man who has merited the graces for us; and it is always the Blessed Mother who intercedes for us and who, in a certain sense, has even co-merited them for us under the cross. Therefore, whoever gives and consecrates himself to Our Lady and who prays to her gives a wholehearted yes to the complete plan of God, and he may consequently expect an immense divine blessing.

From: "Mary, Our Mother and Educator", P.39-40

On this August Covenant Day, we ask our Blessed Mother to take us more deeply into the covenant of love with her, so that we may respond more wholeheartedly to the will of God and share more fully in her mission for Schoenstatt and the Church.

Blessed Mother.....
Let us walk like you through life,
let us mirror you forever,
strong and noble, meek and mild,
peace and love be our endeavour.
Walk in us through our world,
make it ready for the Lord. Amen

(Heavenwards, p.171)

Could I ask you to also pray for those members of our Schoenstatt Family who are struggling in any way, especially with illness, either themselves or members of their family. May our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt, send them grace and blessings from her shrine in this time of suffering.

United in Covenant loyalty, Shirley Hall

2. Schoenstatt's Covenant of Love

Why is the Schoenstatt consecration called a “Covenant of Love”?



We know that from his ninth year, Joseph Kentenich had a deep and lasting devotion to our Blessed Mother. And so, it is not surprising that for Father Kentenich, the Covenant of Love with Mary, the Mother of God, in the shrine became the central charism of Schoenstatt's spirituality. It is also the charism that Schoenstatt offers to the Church. This covenant is not just a means to an end, but the soul of everything that Schoenstatt is and does. In the Covenant, which is based on our Baptismal Covenant, Our Lady leads us to our final goal: the heavenly Father. She does this through offering us the pilgrims' graces and by leading us to our father and founder, who has been given to us as a transparency of God the Father.

But how did the term 'Covenant of Love' come into being and how did the Covenant develop into the Covenant celebrations that are now held across the International Schoenstatt Family on the 18th of each month, or for us here in Australia, on the 3rd Sunday of each month – our Covenant Sunday?

From the very beginning of Schoenstatt, the consecration was always understood as a mutual covenant between Mary and those who consecrated themselves to her in the Shrine. Theologically, it was understood as a specific way of fulfilling the injunction of Our Lord before He died: “Woman, behold your son... [Son,] behold your Mother” (Jn 19,26f).

As a form of Marian consecration, it was in continuity with the consecration of the Marian Sodality (Schoenstatt's first community form), and until 1944 it was simply called the “consecration” or “MTA–consecration”.

Inquiries from the Diocese of Trier (in which Schoenstatt sits) in the mid–1930s forced Schoenstatt to come to a clearer grasp of what it meant by “consecration”: it is not a *contractus bilateralis onerosus* (a litigious contract “forcing” Mary to honour our prayers and sacrifices), but rather as a *contractus bilateralis gratuitus*, namely a contract entered into by both parties (the MTA and Schoenstatt) freely and out of love.

In 1944, while in Dachau, Fr. Kentenich coined the precise term needed to express this – the covenant of love. “Covenant” was a better word than “contract” for it expresses a more generous spirit and a personal act of self-giving, and “love” made it clear that the foundation was not justice or a false self-righteousness, but truly love.

The term “covenant of love” was quickly adopted by Schoenstatt as the official name for its Marian consecration and it has been used as a keyword in Schoenstatt vocabulary ever since.

(200 Questions about Schoenstatt, Fr. J. Niehaus, p.47)

Why do we celebrate the Covenant of Love each month?

In the time following World War II, millions of displaced people streamed from East to West, travelling through Germany on the way. Father Josef Barton, himself a refugee, was given the task of caring for refugees in the so-called “refugee apostolate”.

In 1947 he held the first retreat course for refugees in Schoenstatt. Many of the participants made their covenant of love with the Mother Thrice Admirable, finding in the shrine a home and new strength to bear their heavy cross. During the final discussion, they expressed the need to foster their contact with Schoenstatt. Father Josef Fischer, Movement Leader at that time, suggested making the 18th of every month a “Covenant Day” with a renewal of the covenant of love of 18th October 1914. The idea also came up of having a “Covenant Book” in the shrine with the names of all who had made the covenant with the Mother Thrice Admirable.

This idea was passed on to Fr Kentenich, who immediately gave his agreement in writing. On the next occasion, 18 July 1947, the first “Covenant Mass” was celebrated in the original shrine, and the first pages of the Covenant Book lay on the altar. Fr Kentenich was in South America at the time and passed on the idea. The individual Schoenstatt Centres took up the idea enthusiastically and the monthly renewal of the covenant became a popular feature. As time went by, the Covenant Day united the worldwide Schoenstatt Family every more strongly.

Our founder's view of the Covenant Day

“It is not enough that our Lady has made this her place, her dwelling. Whoever knows Schoenstatt's history, will know – as we can read on the altar border – Nothing without you, but also, nothing without us! Unless our Lady can gather a ‘guard of honour’ around herself, that is, men and women who uphold the shrine with their sacrifices, she will not be able to work here in the way we have described. She wants to be our educator; she increasingly wants to implement the education of people and nations.

“We want to bring our sacrifices to the shrine on the 18th of every month. Why should we do this? Our Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen needs our contributions to her capital of grace. She wants what our Saviour wants. He did not want to die only for me, for only one person; he wanted everyone to be saved. Our Lady needs our prayers and sacrifices to accomplish this.” (Monday Evening Talks, Vol 1, 20.2.1956)



What does this day remind us of? That we form a community united in love with one another and with our Lady. What are we renewing today? We are renewing our exchange of love, hearts, and sacrifices. Not just we do this, our dear Mother Thrice Admirable also does so. She exchanges her heart, her love, and her sacrifices with us. We are renewing our exchange of hearts and love.



We on our part say 'Yes, Father; yes, Mother' to this exchange of hearts, love, and sacrifices. Let us not overlook that an exchange of sacrifices is an essential part of this.

We should renew this communion of love and sacrifice with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt very often. Schoenstatt members all over the world renew their attitude of love and sacrifice on the 18th of every month. They bring our Lady all their sacrifices on the 18th.

We do not come empty-handed to our shrine. Nor do we leave it with empty hands. Our hands are filled with graces. Why do we bring our sacrifices to the shrine? So that they can become a means to sanctify us. We should not ask for this grace for ourselves alone, but also for others, for the whole world. 'I sanctify myself for them' (cf Jn 17,19). We bring our sacrifices and place them on the paten on the altar, so that our Lady can save and sanctify souls. We should renew this attitude every 18th for the coming month.

(Monday Evening Talks, vol 1, 18.2.1956)



We should renew this communion of love and sacrifice with the Mother Thrice Admirable and Queen of Schoenstatt very often.

3. PMA Reflection Day for Coordinators and Members

“My peace I give to You..” (John 14:27)

Every year we hold a Midyear Reflection Day for Coordinators and Members of the Pilgrim Mother Apostolate. This year it took place on Saturday 8 July, and we were blessed with a really beautiful day. We had thirty-six people taking part in the day.

The day began with a talk by Father Paul (Father Pawel) Barszczewski OP unfolding the theme: “My peace I give to you...” (John 14:27). Fr. Paul began by explaining Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) and the four steps that it entails:



1. Lectio (reading)
2. Oratio (praying)
3. Meditatio (meditation)
4. Contemplatio (contemplation)

Father then looked at the situation in today’s world where we can experience fear, anxiety, depression, conflict, brokenness, war, etc. which all make us restless. Peace (Shalom) is not only the absence of war, but it means to make good, to make full restitution and restoration. This does not refer only to practical restoration of things but an overall sense of fullness and completeness in mind and body. When we say to someone ‘peace be with you’ it means we wish the other person well. We wish the person good health in body and soul; we wish the person inner peace.



Father continued by saying that peace and rest belong together as Shabbat and Shalom. Shabbat means in Hebrew to stop and to sit. God created the world and rested on the seventh day. God has given us Sunday to honour him and to slow down, to rest and to stop from our daily activities. “How appropriate! Our lives are on the move, especially today. There are always places to go and things to do. If we continue our lifestyle, things become stressful, priorities begin to shift and our focus on God can easily fade. The Lord knew that we would need to stop and to sit on a weekly basis. Not for His sake but for ours!”

Father Paul added that “for those of us who like to ‘get things done’, this can be a challenging decision. If we are honest, it’s often not a decision about taking a day off, but it’s about trusting God. Do we trust that God will do for us in 6 days what would take us 7 days to complete? Do we trust Him enough to help us prioritize our lives and live the best life He

designed for us? When we try to do everything by ourselves, we are really struggling with trust issues. We often just work harder trying to make up for the things in our life that we have lost or that we are afraid to lose. In the long run, this rarely works.” These words from Father Paul challenged us. We not only want to achieve inner peace but to radiate peace in our surroundings, to be peacemakers for others as Jesus was.

**We not only want to achieve inner peace
but to radiate peace in our surroundings,
to be peacemakers for others as Jesus was.**

Morning Tea was followed by Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament with the Opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation. This time of silence was a beautiful opportunity for the participants to reflect on what they heard during Father’s Talk.

Holy Mass was a Marian Votive Mass “Mary Queen of peace”. Father Paul gave an inspiring homily reflecting on the Annunciation. He encouraged the participants to imitate Mary who always said yes to the will of God. Our yes can bring us peace in all circumstances in life.

The Team had prepared lunch for us and this was a good opportunity to catch up with friends.



In the afternoon Sr M. Rebecca gave a workshop on how to bring the Pilgrim Mother to more people. The coordinators and members enjoyed this and with enthusiasm the group shared the initiatives they had found during their discussions. We then prayed the Rosary in front of lit candles in the form of a rosary. The day ended with a Closing prayer and Benediction in the shrine.

Here are some echoes from the participants:

“This is my first time attending a retreat. What I experienced was beyond my expectations. Father’s talk taught me to slow down and prioritise my prayer life. Thank you for the day.”

“Everything was fantastic! That was my first retreat in a Sydney Church. I would say the retreat event went very well and was very well organized no doubt. Honestly, I was impressed by all the Team members who were very helpful. I was especially impressed by Father’s talk explaining to us how to keep our faith alive. Fr Paul chose the theme of the retreat perfectly as it reflected what the world really needs today. “My peace I give to you” refers to many things we need to practice in daily life: politeness, love, and peace with one another. In this modern world, everyone becomes very busy and selfish. Not many people share their love with each other. So, through peace, our spiritual life would grow. Praise the Lord.” (Participant from Melbourne).

“Thank you for organising the retreat. Father is a real teacher. The talk made me feel at peace despite the challenges in my life. God should be the priority”.

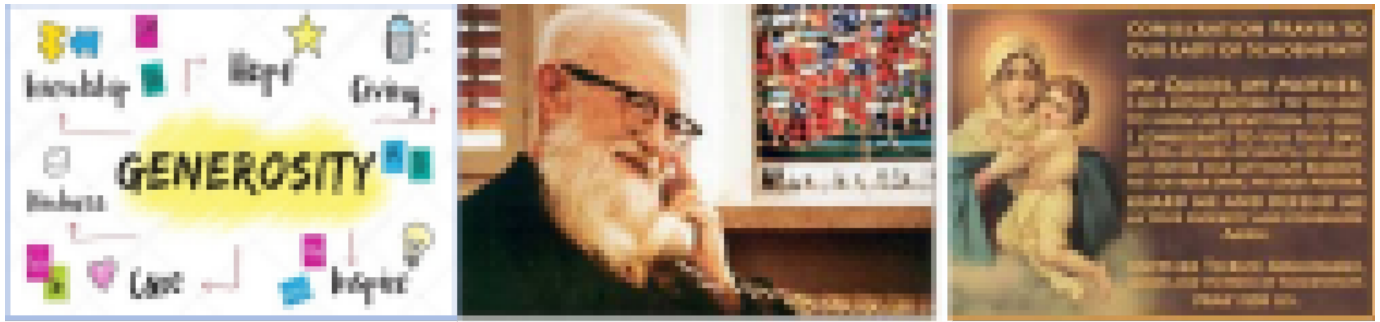


Thank you for all who attended the retreat and for all who contributed to make this day a blessing for all.
Thank you to the PMA Team and especially to Agnes who is responsible for the PMA Midyear Reflection Day.

May God grant us peace!

Sr Luisa Maria

4. Finding Generosity And The Spiritual – Everywhere



Generosity is the topic of an article written this month for my Probus Club Newsletter. As the Club Welfare Officer, I wrote about how our Club is run on the generosity of the members, particularly the ones who run an event for people to participate in and how important thanking them is. Generosity is an interesting concept which crosses particularly well over to the spiritual plane. Mary's generosity, Father Kentenich's generosity and what I will call 'Marketplace Generosity' all come together to show how it can change lives for the better, even if the spiritual can be what I would call 'covert' as in the following Marketplace story:

What's really important

A few years ago, at the Seattle Special Olympics, nine contestants, all physically or mentally disabled, assembled at the starting line for the 100 – yard dash. At the gun they all started out, not exactly in a dash, but with the relish to run the race to the finish and win.

All, that is, except one boy who stumbled on the asphalt, tumbled over a couple of times, and began to cry. The other eight heard the boy cry. They slowed down and paused. Then they all turned around and went back: every one of them. One girl with 'Down's Syndrome' bent down and kissed him and said, "This will make it better." Then all nine linked arms and walked together to the finish line. Everyone in the stadium stood and the cheering went on for ten minutes.

(Bob French – Pg.147 in "Chicken Soup for the Soul" 1996. J. Canfield, M.&P. Hansen, – Health Communications Inc.)

Can you see the generosity in the turning around to help the wounded rather than focussing on winning? Can you see the spiritual care of the Down's syndrome girl who tried generously to uplift the spirit of the wounded boy? Can you feel the spiritual joy of nine linked arms and the understanding of the crowd?

Mary's generosity is her 'Yes' answer to the Holy Spirit's request that she consider being the 'Mother of God' and her ongoing care of us. Fr Kentenich's generosity comes from the fact that, "What Father experienced as a help in his own life he generously shared with all those entrusted to him. He drew them into his own confidence and led them to Mary, the object of his childlike confidence."¹

Mary's generosity is her 'Yes' answer

Where did his confidence come from? In his own words:

What insecurity, uncertainty was our lot in Dachau! How many worries, day, and night. And yet! Our greatest worry was to be carefree in boundless trust in God's fatherly care. (...) When I consecrate myself to Mary, I give everything to her. She knows of my love. She (generously) gives me all her maternal care and love. She (generously) protects me if God so will it.²
(Brackets mine)

Mary's 'Yes' goes on forever. Father shows us how his belief in the consecration, expressing his generous giving, his belief in her care and protection is seen by him as why he himself can pass that on. He sees it as his lifelong task to bring others into the promise that Mary will generously care for each of us if we commit to our part of the 'Nothing without You – Nothing without us' transaction of the 'Covenant of Love'.



Looking at the picture of generosity above: Generosity promotes friendship, raises hope, encourages giving and kindness, and care given inspires hope. If Fr. Kentenich had been in the crowd that day when the Down's syndrome girl kissed the boy and all of them got up and linked arms and walked toward the finish line, he would have been heartily clapping and hoping that this story would inspire us all.

As Schoenstatters we ought to be generous with our Covenant Promise' as we walk with linked arms, together with Mary and Father Kentenich in sharing our Schoenstatt beliefs with others as Father Kentenich so generously did.

Angela

Footnotes

1. Sister M. Christin Diedrich, "Blindly I Trust", <https://schoenstattersistersofmary.us/the-prayer-of-confidence/>
2. Kentenich, Unsere Marianische IV, Marienschwestern, Liebfrauenhoehe, 1982, 2. Auflage, 38,51.

Nothing without You - Nothing without us

5. Formation Day for Women

On Saturday 12th August, approximately 20 women from the Mother's Branch and one member of the Single Women's Branch came together for a time of formation. The topic was a continuation of April formation day which focussed on Schoenstatt's Third Milestone – the 31st May, 1949.



Sr. Elizabeth who presented the day, firstly shared a video about the 31st May, the events leading up to it and those following on from it in the life of Father Kentenich. She then went into more detail about some of the reasons why Fr. Kentenich felt it necessary to write a letter to the Bishop of Trier in response to the findings of the Episcopal Visitation that had been conducted in Schoenstatt.

While the results of the visitation were overall generally favourable to Schoenstatt, Father Kentenich wanted to address the concerns he had about the state of the Church

and society. He believed that he needed to act out of love for the Church and Our Lady. He said, “Tua res agitur, clarificata te” – “your work is at stake, now glorify yourself.”

When Father Kentenich placed the first part of his letter on the altar in the shrine at Bellavista, Chile, he said, “We can only face the coming battle in the strength of the Holy Spirit. We need the gift of the Holy Spirit.” This was very meaningful as this act took place on Pentecost Sunday.

Sr. Elizabeth spoke about how over the centuries the Primary Cause has been separated from the “secondary causes”. That is, God is the prime mover or Primary Cause of everything, and His creatures and related things are “secondary causes”. God uses these secondary causes – created things and human beings – and they are intended to lead us to Him, to help us to attain attachment to Him. However, an understanding of this has been missing for many people, who don't see God in the ordinary, everyday things and situations of life.

We shared some examples that relate to practical everyday life. For example, think of a person, in isolation from family, friends and colleagues and how this might seem the best way to understand the “essence” of the person. But can a person be truly understood without knowing their family and friends?

In the same way, we can go straight to Christ, or the Heavenly Father, but it is a much richer experience if we come to Christ through Mary, and they lead us through the Holy Spirit to the Heavenly Father.

We looked also at the role of the father in the family. If the father is no longer seen in the right way, then God's Fatherhood is not understood in the right way. The same applies to the role of the mother in the family. Both the mother and the father are “stepping stones” leading their family to God. It is through the parents, that the child learns about God and is led to God, and to Mary.

Sr. Elizabeth also spoke about what Father Kentenich called, “mechanistic thinking” and how this separates ideas from life, God from secondary causes, life process that belong together and ideas that belong together. She then spoke of what Father Kentenich called, organic thinking as a counterpart from mechanistic thinking.

It relates ideas and life, God the Primary Cause with secondary causes, life processes that belong together and ideas that belong together.

An interesting aspect of the day for the ladies, was looking at the role of women in relation to mechanistic thinking as opposed to organic thinking. For example, if I am a woman, I must recognise what my task is as a woman, within the framework of creation. I cannot try to do this as a man, or in a manly way. In this way I am become a 'secondary cause' in fulfilling my proper function in relation to others.

With this in mind, we looked at the statement that today many women don't want to be 'like Mary'. They don't see Mary in her rightful place nor with the right attitude. For example, they see her as a 'handmaid', meaning for them, a 'servant', a 'slave' to others. They don't see Mary as a strong, dignified woman as exemplified through her life. This loss of identity of womanhood has corroded the image of women in many ways, yet it is the woman who often influences the man, and it is the woman who to a large extent influences society and culture.

In her relationship to God, a woman should be a child of God. Just as Mary was the handmaid of God in her childlike attitude, so too women should embody childlikeness. We spoke about how important it is for women to be true children of God, to be able to be children with each other. Not childish, but in coming together and having fun and a good laugh, it can not only allow us to get to know each other much better on a natural level, but it can also lift our spirits and help us to grow together.

It was a day of real 'formation' for all of us who attended, whether newer to Schoenstatt, or having been part of Schoenstatt for some time. It is always a joy for these groups to come together and share their knowledge, their experiences, and their gifts. This has been a real gift for our women's groups in coming to know each other and form a Schoenstatt community of women.

The day finished with a prayer time in the Shrine in which we gave thanks to Our Blessed Mother for all her help in these turbulent times, in helping us to rediscover our womanliness and motherliness, and to ask Our Lady to help us live our mission in a truly Christian and authentic way.

Below is some feedback from the day:

- * Thank you, Sister Elizabeth, for our wonderful formation day. I really got a lot out of the topic: the third milestone.
- * It was good seeing others from our mothers' groups. I really enjoyed the formation and discussions. Thank you.
- * Thank you, Sister Elizabeth, for conducting the formation day yesterday. It was very meaningful, and I still have lots to learn about Schoenstatt.

Thanks to all who attended the day and contributed to the friendly, collegial spirit of sharing and supporting each other as part of the women's branches of Schoenstatt.



6. Information and Links

Shrine Opening Hours

Mulgoa Shrine, NSW. Open daily: 7am – 7.30pm

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

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

Links

Official Schoenstatt Website	http://www.schoenstatt.com
Schoenstatt Australian Website	http://www.schoenstatt.org.au
Our YouTube Channel	www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia
Western Australia Website	http://schoenstattwa.org.au
Schoenstatt Men Website	http://bit.ly/47x72n1

Videos for Covenant Sundays

August	Sr Bonitas - a life for Schoenstatt in Australia https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia
July	Fr. Kentenich, the Priest https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdTDGLtcJSU
June	Documentary: Father Joseph Kentenich, A Prophetic Vision www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdTDGLtcJSU
May	31st May, 1949. Father's daring action: A Letter of Recommendation. www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia https://youtu.be/NFFWJqPgTj4
April	Gertraud von Bullion: A Letter of Recommendation https://youtu.be/AiyZytmileM

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 by the beginning of each month.