



1. Covenant Day Message

Walking Together, Loving the Church

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

We are now well into the winter season, and I send you warm greetings and blessings from the Shrine for this July Covenant Day. In our newsletter last month, we looked at Mary's relationship to Christ and how, if we give ourselves completely to the Mother of God, she leads us to her Son, and through Christ, to the Holy Spirit and the Heavenly Father – to the Triune God.

In Schoenstatt, we believe that the place where we find Mary is in the Shrine. Our Shrine is for us a place of grace where we come to find Our Blessed Mother, together with the Triune God. It is a place which offers us peace, a home and many blessings. It is also a place from which Our Blessed Mother educates us. But of course, all this isn't possible without the contributions we make to the Capital of Grace and offer to Our Blessed Mother in the Shrine... "Nothing without you, nothing without us".

We hear the words of Father Kentenich:

"A very simple but beautiful thought which we must never forget is that we not only see the position of the Blessed Mother within the entire plan of salvation; no, but we also see her and her mission in a special way – we may surely put it like this – as bound up with our shrine. From there, from this little spot, she wants to fulfil her mission through us, her small instruments; she wants to bring about a renewal of the newest times and to imprint the

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features of Christ as perfectly as possible upon them. Our shrine has such a mission, such a task, such a central task for the formation of the newest times, for the formation of the new time into Christ, for the formation of a new world."

(J. Kentenich Retreat for Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, March 9–14, 1966)

When we renew the covenant we made with our Blessed Mother, with our father and with one another we do so asking for the graces we need to continue the mission which Father Kentenich was given for Schoenstatt and for the Church.

On this covenant day, my prayer is that Our Blessed Mother may continue to guide us so that we can continue the mission which was given to our Father and founder, so that Schoenstatt may be a blessing for the Church and society.

In covenant loyalty, may we as Australian Schoenstatt Family, continue ...

Walking Together, Loving the Church

Father, I may awake with new strength to rekindle my love. Let me joyfully greet you together with all your Schoenstatt.

We are united in the shrine where the flames of our hearts beat for our Mother Thrice Admirable who, through us, wants to build your kingdom.

We kneel in the Holy Spirit and sing jubilant hymns to Christ, who sends us with her as instruments to change the destiny of nations.

(Father Kentenich, Opening lines of the morning consecration in Heavenwards)

Shirley Hall



2. Marriage Camino W.A.

Thanks to many prayers, we had a fine day for our Mariage Camino at Mt Richon WA on Saturday, 8th June.

Two couples came for the day. One couple was from the Armadale Parish and the other from the Attadale Parish. Sadly, another couple were unable to attend due to illness.

The two couples eagerly joined Philomena & David Theseira on a pilgrimage journey around our Schoenstatt property visiting 15 Pillars all directed towards reflections on our marriage, our relationships and our family. The introduction into the day was a reflection on communication and the difference between communication for information, which is needed for the running of a household, and communication for intimacy. This latter kind of communication should build trust and deepen intimacy in conversation about the couple themselves, not about other people, places or the chores that need to be done. This is sharing who each one is, not just talking. We can talk to anyone, but we can only share with someone we trust. It requires vulnerability.

Vulnerability is not weakness, on the contrary – it is the courage to be honest with oneself and another. This sharing involves a gift of self, a gift which builds on and deepens openness and trust in the other’s love and acceptance. Experiencing self-acceptance and acceptance by another of who we are is extremely affirming and liberating. Communicating for intimacy sets us up for success in our efforts to love one another.



One cannot love what one does not know; the better one knows the other’s interior self, the more aware and responsive one can be to them.

Following this introduction and encouragement to intimate communication, reflections at the 15 different pillars took place over the course of the day. After each reflection we broke to discuss questions privately concerning the particular topic e.g. “We have found each other: you and me”; “love may hurt”; “growing together through difficulties”; “together we are stronger”; “we remain faithful”.

We had a break for lunch and then did something for fun. Each couple dressed up – the husband in a suit jacket and tie, and the wife with a veil and posy of flowers. They then had their photo taken as a remembrance of their day. They thought this was a great idea.

After our fifteenth station, we went into the Shrine for some quiet reflection time, followed by some prayers and a hymn to Our Lady.

Just as we finished packing up for the day, the rain came down. We know it was a blessing from above once again.



3. Women's Breakfast At Mulgoa

On Saturday, 15. June, the topic: "The Dignity of Woman", captured the attention of almost 60 women, who departed from the daily routine of preparing breakfast – and drove to Mulgoa where breakfast was already prepared – plus receiving a bonus – a talk was to follow!

Sr. M. Isabell was the guest speaker who began the topic with a thought-provoking quote from Hans Von Balthasar who wrote in (1986):

"Each human being has been given a specific 'mission' or vocation from God, and therefore exists in the order of grace as 'one who is sent' by God with a specific task."

"A unique charism, a unique gift. The 'mission' which each individual person receives from God is essentially and socially orientated to all other 'missions' of all other human beings."

Moving forward, the thought of each person having a specific mission was unrolled. If it is God given, then a woman cannot be defined by her role as wife or by her role as mother, friend, partner, colleague, competitor or as cheap labour . . . she transcends all these roles.

As the women listened to a quote from St John Paul II, the horizons widened still further. In *Mulieris Dignitatem* (1987), it is stated that:



"The dignity of women is measured by the order of love, which is essentially the order of justice and charity."

A helpful explanation then followed explaining what radical feminism actually is – taken from the writings of B. Albrecht (1988.)

"Radical feminism is expressed in the ideal of the completely autonomous woman, who no longer finds her identity in 'partnership' of complementarity' with man."

St John Paul II then explained further, the unique and decisive need for the continued effort to transform culture, to create a 'new feminism', that supports life.

"Women occupy a unique place in doing this, through their thought and action, which is both unique and decisive."



Creating a 'new feminism,' rejects the temptation of imitating the model of 'male domination', to acknowledge and affirm the true genius of women in every aspect of life and society and overcome all discrimination, violence and exploitation - the culture of death.

The consequences of the culture of death, can only be overcome by a counterculture of life."

The above are just a few motivating quotations used by Sr. M. Isabell.

If anyone is interested in more, you can ask Shirley (movtoffice@schoenstatt.org.au) to send you a copy of the complete text.

Time was given for discussion among friends and then questions could be asked. Sr. M Isabell's clear and sometimes humorous responses were gratefully appreciated.

A vote of thanks was offered to Sr. M. Isabell and to the women who had prepared the breakfast. After a quick cup of coffee, the group slowly dispersed and following is just one of the echoes from the morning:



"I would like to send my gratitude and praise for the recent Women's Breakfast that I attended at Schoenstatt. The talk - The Dignity of Woman by Sr. Isabell was very insightful. It's great to hear what she had to say and put it into action in our everyday lives. It was inspirational to hear how as women, we have an important place not only in our families but in the church and to value our place in society and community. I would highly recommend attending this event if the opportunity arises again. Thanks"

Vanessa.



4. Coffee, craft, and Conversation

Sr M. Rita

On Saturday 15th June fourteen young women took up the invitation to spend a relaxing afternoon for “Coffee, Craft & Conversation” with the Sisters. This new initiative turned out to be a beautiful and enjoyable afternoon, and everyone had a great time already asking when the next one will be.

The afternoon began with a short testimony about my personal encounter with the blessed Mother in the shrine after which the young women were encouraged to speak with the Sisters and ask questions whilst making cards – a relaxing craft – and enjoying an afternoon coffee. The conversations ranged from vocation questions to talking about parish life and their involvement.

Unfortunately, two of our younger Sisters from the Philippines who had planned to join the afternoon, still had Covid, but it was a great joy that the other three of our young Sisters from the Philippines, who had arrived during the week, could join in the afternoon and interact with the young women.

The day concluded at 5pm in the shrine with prayer and song. One could sense a deep and prayerful atmosphere, and everyone appreciated the beautiful singing from the Sisters.

After taking a couple of group photos, some of the girls helped with the clean-up and the Family Hall was ready for Sunday Mass in no time. Here are a few pictures for you to enjoy!



5. Joy for our Schoenstatt Sisters

June 10 saw the arrival of four young Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary from the Philippines.



Australia and the Philippines are one Province, but these Sisters were coming to visit the Sisters and the Province house for the first time. They were able to stay for three weeks which was a great joy for both the older Sisters as well as the younger ones.

This time together gave our younger Sisters an opportunity to get to know more about the Province history as well as getting to know the individual Sisters in person, rather than always via Zoom.

Once Fr. Biberger, the Director General of the Sisters Family, arrived on June 19 there were gatherings of all the province Sisters – three were able to travel from Perth for the occasion. One special day was an outing where the sisters visited the places in Sydney where our Sisters have been active over the years. First, we were able to visit a newly blessed “Schoenstatt Meeting Room” in Old Mount Druitt. The MTA picture, which for more than 50 years was in Sacred Heart Church Mount Druitt, now has a place of honour in this new meeting room.



At Holy Family, Emerton, we were able to visit the former Sisters' House which is now a Centre for Australia's First Nations people. Here too the former Chapel has been named the Schoenstatt Sisters' Room.



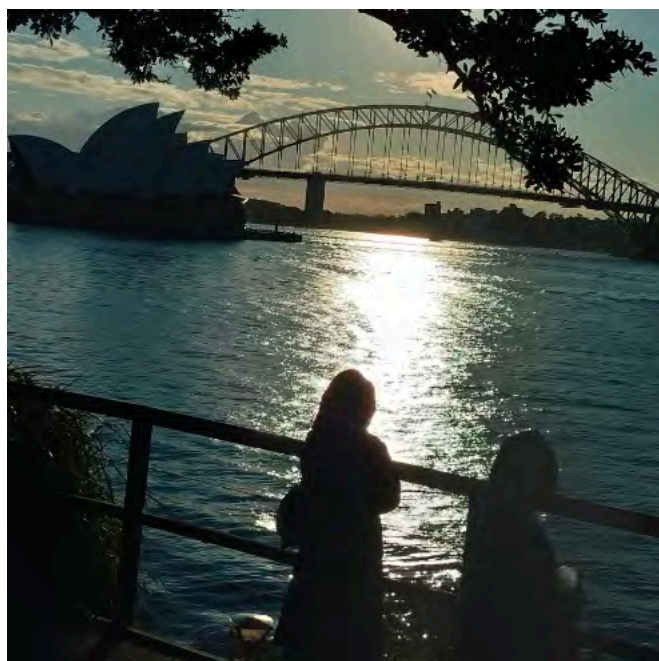
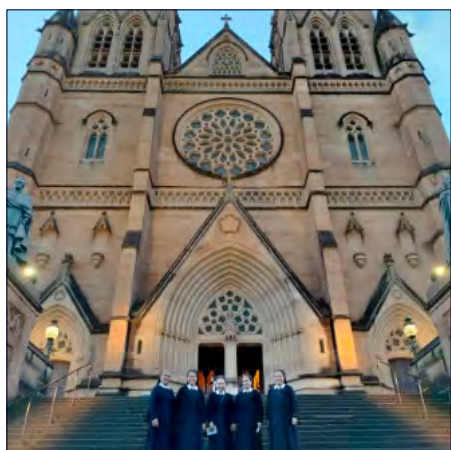
The Sisters' first province house was in Ashfield where now Wesley Mission offers various outreach programmes for homeless people etc. The staff of Wesley Mission were very hospitable and allowed our Sisters to see rooms in the house which are now offices, and we were able to compare pictures from the past - e.g. where the former Chapel was, the living room etc. - with the present day usage.



The first Sisters to arrive in Sydney were carers for an elderly woman who lived in Vaucluse and so after driving past this house (most probably renovated by now) we had a picnic lunch at Watsons Bay and enjoyed the ocean at the Gap.



The final two stops were Lady Macquarie's Chair to see the Harbour and then St. Mary's Cathedral, where, at the back Chapel, we were able to sing praise to our Blessed Mother, to the joy of one of the staff.



The Sisters spent five days in Retreat given by Fr. Biberger. This gave them a time for reflection and inner renewal. Homilies each morning helped all Sisters to grow more deeply into the province ideal.

The whole time was very blessed and everyone agreed it was too short – a repetition is definitely needed.

We Sisters give thanks to God and our Blessed Mother for this time, not only with the Sisters from Cebu but especially for the three weeks spent with us by our Director General, Fr. Bernd Biberger.



6. Movement Meeting with the General Director Of the Sister' Family

It was a very special time when representatives of all the branches of our Movement gathered for a couple of hours with Fr. Bernd Biberger, the Director General of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. Fr. Biberger is a member of the Secular Institute of Diocesan Priests – the same community to which Fr. Denis belonged.

He was visiting the Sisters Family for three weeks and was happy to meet members of the Movement.

This meeting took place on Sunday afternoon 7th July and we were happy to welcome Fr. Matthew, the brother of Sr. M Olivia, the youngest sister of our province who is still in Schoenstatt Germany. Fr. Matthew is the assistant priest at Mosman parish in Sydney.

To see members from the families, mothers, single women, men, sisters, PMA and even volunteers from the Pilgrims' Centre take this opportunity to learn more about our international movement was a joy as well as being an enriching experience for the almost 40 people present. We had to continue widening the circle as more and more people arrived!

Members of the movement had sent in some questions which they wanted Fr. Biberger to answer and so we began with these questions. The first question asked about how the movement is growing in other countries and whether we can learn something from their approaches. With this we were taken into some of the amazing developments in Burundi (Central Africa) where there are regularly 3000 plus attendees at special events; in Costa Rica where there are no Schoenstatt Fathers or Sisters permanently present but where the Family Branch has grown the movement to an extraordinary degree; in Paraguay where the Family Branch is also very active – there are Schoenstatt Fathers and Schoenstatt Sisters present in the country giving inspiration but the families are the most active. The fourth country mentioned was Hungary where again the families are very active and the movement there is realising the importance of also developing other branches. As to what we can learn from these countries the point came over very strongly that the dedication of the lay people and their apostolic spirit is what makes a difference.



Fr. Biberger, in answering other questions pointed out the importance of the Covenant of Love in our spirituality, that is, our love for the Blessed Mother, our father and the Shrine. Faith in Divine providence is also something which we need to foster by looking for God in all encounters and activities of our everyday lives.

In his capacity as Director General of the Sisters Family, Fr. Biberger is a member of the General Presidium, and he was also asked about its composition and task. When asked who guarantees the authenticity of the founder's teaching, the answer was the General Presidium. Fr. Biberger explained that there is no hierarchical structure in Schoenstatt as every Branch is independent but that all are united in the Covenant of Love. The representatives of the six Secular Institutes and the various Unions who belong to the General Presidium are then responsible for ensuring the "mens fundatoris" (the mind or teaching of the founder). There has to be a full consensus among the members before anything can be passed on to the rest of the Schoenstatt Family; even if one representative



disagrees then discussion has to continue until consensus is reached. This is truly a synodal way of governing.

It is impossible to cover all the sharing of this amazing afternoon but if anyone is interested, there is a video (not professional) which may help to pass on some of the information shared.

Fr. Biberger was thanked for the time he gave to us and for the very valuable sharing. We were all challenged to think about how we can encourage others to discover the riches of our Schoenstatt Spirituality.



9. INFORMATION AND LINKS

Shrine Opening Hours

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

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

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

Melbourne: St. Luke's, Wantirna, Divine Mercy Chapel

Opening hours: <http://www.stlukeswantirna.net/>



Links

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

Videos for Covenant Sundays

Video for July	A Church renewed in Spirit and Prayer http://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia
Video for June	Conversation in the Spirit https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia
Text for May	31 st May 1949 – 75 Years of Schoenstatt's Third Milestone (no video this month – text available upon request)
Video for April	A Listening Church https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irJsgelSBTM
Video for March	A humble and healing Church https://youtu.be/4DBfVXL6GAs
Video for February	An inclusive and welcoming Church https://youtu.be/qfGr5DBMcnc

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 before the beginning of each month

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