



January 18 2025 | Volume 6, Number 1

## 1. Covenant Day Message

*United in the Covenant - Pilgrims of Hope*

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

Welcome to our first Schoenstatt Movement Newsletter for 2025 – for this Covenant day – 18<sup>th</sup> January. I wish you and your family many blessings and graces from the Shrine for this day and for this year.

I hope that you had a very blessed, happy, and holy Christmas with family and friends, and that you have had a good start to this new year.

During this Jubilee Year, (which began on December 24<sup>th</sup> with the opening of the Holy Doors in Rome and will end on January 6, 2026), we want to be united as pilgrims of hope.

We want to strive to make this year a time of joy and hope for us all. While we cannot ignore the pain and suffering that we know is always around us, we also cannot become anesthetized in the face of problems.

That is not what hope is. To have hope means to CHOOSE to focus on the good and beautiful things that inspire us every day and, simultaneously, to believe in the good that is yet to come. And to keep trusting in a loving, gentle and kind Father God.

In keeping with our motto for this year, we want to strive together, “United in our Covenant of Love – Pilgrims of Hope”. We want to look at the world

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with joy and hope, knowing that humanity can improve but to achieve this, we must make our contribution, even if it is only a 'drop in the ocean'.

As "Pilgrims of Hope", we entrust ourselves to Mary and ask her to fill our hearts with hope. United in our Covenant of Love we can rest assured that Mary will be constantly with us, educating us and helping us to be pilgrims of hope. During this year may we reflect hope and be an oasis of encouragement, joy, and confidence to all those we encounter. Fr. Joseph Kentenich explains,

*"The Christian feels the harshness of these setbacks, but his will and his heart are reassured by the conviction that nothing happens by chance; everything comes from God's will!" [1].*

According to Father Kentenich, God does not command evil but allows it to happen when he knows that even better things can come from it, and in this lies our great hope. As Pope Francis said:

*"Hope is not an empty word, or a vague desire of ours that things may turn out for the best; hope is a certainty, because it is founded on God's fidelity to His promises.*



*The Christian cannot be satisfied with having hope; he or she must also radiate hope, be a sower of hope. It is the most beautiful gift that the Church can give to all of humanity, especially at times in which everything seems to be dragging down the sails" [2].*

I wish each of you many blessings and graces from our Shrines, that with Our Blessed Mother, we may radiate hope, joy and peace to all whom we meet during the coming month.

United in our Covenant of Love,

Shirley Hall

[1] Father Joseph Kentenich; Dr M. A. Nailis. Everyday sanctity - vol 1.

[2] Pope Francis. General Audience. 11.12.2024

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## 2. Celebrating Schoenstatt's Second Milestone 20<sup>th</sup> January 1942

This event is referred to as Schoenstatt's Second Milestone. Why is it so important in the history of Schoenstatt?

On 20<sup>th</sup> January 1942, Father Kentenich, a prisoner of the Nazis in the Gestapo prison in Koblenz, Germany, freely chose on this day not to use an opportunity he had been given to have a medical examination which may have allowed him to be excluded from going to a concentration camp.

After much soul-searching, Fr. Kentenich had concluded that God's will for him and Schoenstatt was to turn down the offer and freely embrace the concentration camp. In this concrete moment of

the family's history, he saw the urgent need to challenge his followers to trust even more radically in God's power over human power. He was able to write a few short letters on January 20 that were smuggled out of the prison. A few lines from these letters capture the spirit of his decision:

*"The answer came ... to me during the consecration [at Mass]. Our priests should take the Inscriptio and Blank Check seriously, especially some of the older ones. I will then regain my freedom. Please understand my decision on the basis of faith in the reality of the supernatural and in the interwovenness of fates of the members of our Family." "Please fulfill one*

*request for me: See to it that the Family takes the Blank Check and Inscriptio seriously... Then I will be free.”*



His decision had been combined with the declaration of his belief that his freedom would depend on the family committing to the Blank Cheque (total conformity to God’s will) and the Inscriptio (love of the cross). This expressed the “interwovenness of fates”– which was that his well-being would be determined by his family.

He was convinced that in God’s eyes he and his followers were a family. In this faith, he relied on the reality of the supernatural world, the reality of the covenant they had made and the union of destiny among the members themselves. His concern was not about a particularly heroic act. His intention was to open our eyes to the deep dimensions of our connectedness as a spiritual Family created with him and around him. Without being aware of this background, we will not truly understand our father.

Fr. Kentenich characterized the inner meaning of January 20 as “standing in divine confidence” or an act of heroic hope or trust. He spent much of the rest of his life actively challenging the members and communities of his movement to “get up onto the stage of January 20” and make this milestone their own so as to reach the interior freedom so needed for our times.

The profound effect of this milestone can be seen in Fr. Kentenich’s characterization of January 20 as “the axis of the entire history of the family.” The importance of inner freedom, total self-giving and radical trust in God, always important to Schoenstatt, were now sealed in a way that made them inseparable from Schoenstatt’s identity. The role of Fr. Kentenich also began a new phase of development: whereas he was previously more in the background of the public awareness of the movement, he was now thrust more into the foreground because of a heightened public appreciation for his role as founder.

Moreover, January 20 marked a new stage of growth for Schoenstatt’s experience as a family. The realization of the “inter-wovenness of fates” of founder and followers enhanced the sense of

belonging together. Thus the 20<sup>th</sup> January marked a new stage of growth for Schoenstatt’s experience as a family and this connectedness can also be seen in the events that followed – such as Schoenstatt’s third milestone (31<sup>st</sup> May, 1949) and father’s exile in Milwaukee for 14 years.

During a four-week Tertianship in Brazil in 1952 Father Kentenich said in referring to the 20<sup>th</sup> January 1942:

*“Seen in a supernatural light, we are a real family: I and my followers -- my followers and I. If we are a real family in God’s plans, then our destiny is interwoven, our destiny is interconnected in the supernatural sense. Practically speaking, the sacrifices my followers make on my behalf are really for my person; I count on this reality, and it has proven effective. By the same token, the sacrifices I offer on behalf of the Family are a means to save the Family. This offers a much greater security than if I had the whole Gestapo on my side.*

*Seen within the framework of the whole Founding Document and the covenant of love, it had to be taken for granted that the condition [for my freedom] was the Inscriptio made by the whole family.*

*My Inscriptio protected Schoenstatt, and the Inscriptio of the Family gave me back my freedom. This is a classic example of spiritual interconnectedness, of mutual interwovenness. Here you see the new person in the new community, not only talked about but exemplified and lived.”*

(From: “In Union with the Father” – JK Brazil, 1952 and, “200 Questions about Schoenstatt”, Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, 2005)



# 3. Covenant Sunday Gatherings in Mulgoa

As many of you will be aware we have started a new initiative this year at Mount Schoenstatt to promote the Covenant of Love. The 'Covenant Sunday Gatherings' are especially planned not only for our Schoenstatt members, but also for the many pilgrims (over 200) that regularly come to our 11am Sunday Mass.

For a long time, we have been celebrating the Covenant of Love on the third Sunday of the month, rather than on the 18<sup>th</sup> which usually falls on a weekday. But it has been often observed that only a small group would go to the shrine after Holy Mass to renew the Covenant of Love and even a smaller group that would stay for fellowship afterwards. This is why the idea of the 'Covenant Sunday Gatherings' was born.

Since July 2024, at the beginning of Holy Mass, the Schoenstatt Flag and the Australian Flag has processed in with the priest and altar servers. After Holy Communion a short explanation is given about the Covenant of Love, the Shrine or the Capital of Grace etc. Everyone is then invited in a moment of silence to write down their contributions of love and volunteers then collect these and place them in the jar at the front.

Following the Holy Mass, we go in procession to the Shrine to renew the Covenant of Love. The jar, covenant book and the two flags lead the procession as we pray a decade of the rosary. Almost everyone who attends Mass participates in the procession.



It is always such an amazing sight to see so many people in and around the shrine to renew the Covenant of Love. Everyone is then invited to a

BBQ lunch and many people stay on and continue their conversations. Each Schoenstatt branch takes turns in being responsible for the "Covenant Sunday Gatherings" each month.

There are many fruits of this new initiative already. It allows a covenant culture and atmosphere to develop where we can speak openly about, provide information and invite others to seal the Covenant of Love. It also allows a space where we and other Schoenstatt members can provide a witness to our spirituality as well as a chance to invite the many pilgrims to our various events.

It is also very important for the Schoenstatt members and branches as it allows them an opportunity to be apostolic and promote what they cherish so much.

Sr. M. Rita



# 4. Advent & Christmas Carols at Mount Schoenstatt

This year we celebrated the Advent and Christmas Carols at Mt Schoenstatt, Mulgoa on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> December in the Family Hall. It was a very prayerful and joyful evening with the central focus being on preparing our hearts for the coming of Christ. The Schoenstatt choir accompanied by Sr. M. Elizabeth on the organ and Agnes Simon with guitar were able to create a very beautiful atmosphere and lead the approximate 100 people in attendance in song and prayer.

The evening began with an explanation and lighting of the three candles on the Advent wreath whilst singing “We’d like to announce the time of Advent”. Then the prophets Isaiah and Micah appeared, and each one proclaimed their prophecies of the coming of our Saviour. Amongst the many positive echoes received, many mentioned that it was very nice to have the prophets of the Old Testament introduced and being part of the evening.



The next scenes to be acted out were from the New Testament beginning with the annunciation, Mary’s fiat, her visit to Elizabeth, the journey to Bethlehem and ending with the Nativity scene along with the shepherds and wise men. It was such a delight to see many families get involved with most of the actors being youth or adults. Another highlight was during the Magnificat when all the children were invited to walk in procession with battery-operated candles in their hands and a star leading the way.





There was a sea of cameras as both parents and children enjoyed this beautiful scene.

It was clearly evident during this evening that God and the blessed Mother always provide, take care and actually have better plans than we ourselves can ever have. This can be seen in the following two situations:

In the days prior Sr. M. Elizabeth and Regina Rossetto were looking tirelessly without luck for a mum with a little bub to play Mary and Jesus. In the end they asked a young woman Dona Simon who was at the time visiting from Melbourne to play the part of Mary. This was a very personal and special gift for Dona as she had secretly wished to play Mary this year.

Another example of God's providence was that it was advertised that children should come dressed as angels and shepherds and there were a few angels but unfortunately no shepherds had arrived. That was until Fr. Pawel walked in with a very fitting hat, thinking the carols would be outside. So, we stuck a shepherd's staff in his hand, and he played the part of "the main Shepherd" perfectly!

After the wise men arrived and presented their gifts to baby Jesus everyone was invited to write down their personal gifts and offerings that they wanted to give to Jesus. These were then collected by the Wise Men and brought forward.

At the conclusion everyone was invited to go to the shrine to pick up a candle with a quote from Fr. Kentenich to take home which was very much appreciated.

After the final hymn of "Silent Night" everyone gathered at the back of the Hall for fellowship which lasted long into the night, again a testimony of the very blessed, joyful and family-like evening.

Sr. M. Rita Baysari



## 5. Jubilee Indulgence at our Shrines

Our Shrines at Mt Richon in Perth and at Mulgoa in Sydney have both been made special places of pilgrimage for the Jubilee Year 2025. This is a wonderful privilege. There is even a new sign at Mt Richon to make sure visitors know where to go!

In an official letter from the Bishop of Parramatta, the diocese of our Schoenstatt Shrine in Mulgoa, regarding the Jubilee Year 2025, the Bishop wrote:

*“A Jubilee Indulgence is granted to those who make a Jubilee pilgrimage during the year.*

*For those who cannot make a jubilee pilgrimage due to illness or other circumstances, you are invited to take part in the spiritual movement that accompanies the Jubilee year, offering up the sufferings of their daily lives, and participating in reconciliation, prayer, and the Eucharistic celebration.”*

### Why the Indulgence is so important

St Paul says, in his letter to the Romans, “hope does not disappoint” (Rm 5:5). Pope Francis begins his explanation of the Jubilee Year with those words and it is worth reading by clicking [here](#).

In his explanation Pope Francis says that “the indulgence is a way of discovering the unlimited nature of God’s mercy” (para.23). He encourages us to remember that the Jubilee is about God’s indulgence, or special mercy.

It is there for us to reach out and accept in hope, both for ourselves as well as for those who have gone before us.

Schoenstatt sees the slow but necessary organic growth we all experience on our journey through life. The Jubilee Year is all about accepting God’s grace for a period of intense growth in our journey to holiness, for both ourselves and for others, through our striving for the Jubilee Indulgence.



### Why our Schoenstatt Shrines?

The Church does not invite us to simply visit Mount Schoenstatt, but to make a pilgrimage there. The journey involved in a pilgrimage reminds us that our lives are also a journey.

This Jubilee Year provides an opportunity to make that journey more intense. Speaking of all Marian Shrines in the world, Pope Francis wishes “during the Jubilee Year, may these shrines be sacred places of welcome and privileged spaces for the rebirth of hope.” (Hope does not disappoint, para.24)

### The conditions for obtaining the Indulgence:

- Pilgrimage to a Church designated as a Jubilee Church (among others our two Schoenstatt Shrines)
- Works of mercy and penance
- Reception of the sacrament of reconciliation
- Celebration of the Eucharist
- Prayers for the intentions of the Holy Father: Profession of faith: I believe in God the Almighty..., Our Father..., Hail Mary..., Glory be...

Also click [here](#) to read Decree on the Granting of the Indulgence.





# 6. ‘Christmas Star’ Initiative

As many of you have experienced there is a constant stream of people visiting the Shrine in Mulgoa. We were all aware that this would only increase during the Christmas period. So, to engage and possibly open a door for an interaction with the many visiting pilgrims, the “Christmas Star” idea was born.

On Christmas morning two beautifully decorated signposts went up next to the shrine. The poster had a short reflection about Christmas, as well as an invitation to write one’s own name or the name of someone you care about on a star and place it on the tree with the indication that the Sisters would be praying for those whose names were on the stars.

Within minutes the first colourful stars were hanging, and many families were already taking photos. After the 11am Mass the “Christmas Star” initiative was announced and the approximately 250 stars that had been prepared, unfortunately were all used straight away. Within the next few days, a couple of sisters as well as volunteers continued to cut up more colourful stars relentlessly.

By New Years Day there were over 600 stars hanging on the tree creating a magnificent view. It didn’t matter what time of day it was, there was always so many people in and around the shrine. Often there were many families standing under the tree adding another star or simply enjoying the amazing atmosphere and image that was daily growing. An older couple mentioned that they would bring their grandchildren the following day so that they too could enjoy this wonderful scene. Another couple took a photo of their star and sent it to their grown children so that they would know that they are being prayed for.

The Christmas Star initiative was a brilliant success and a great joy for many people. Next year we will definitely need to start preparations earlier and possibly even think of ways of expanding this idea further.





# 7. Children's Liturgy Mount Schoenstatt

It has been a year since we began offering Children's Liturgy at the 11am Mass at Mount Schoenstatt Mulgoa, on the first Sunday of each month.

We have been inspired by a text from St John Paul 11, "the Christian life of the faithful, young and old is intended to develop, with God's help, an as yet initial faith, and to advance in fulness and to nourish day by day.... It is a matter of giving growth, at the level of knowledge and in life, to the seed of faith sown by the Holy Spirit with the initial proclamation". The Directory for Catechesis 2020 also indicates that it is a unique formative activity of the church that out of respect for the different age groups of believers efforts are made to keep the Gospel of Jesus Christ alive for all.

Our team has been guided by the following thoughts:

1. We believe that faith is transmitted through interpersonal connection and is nourished within the circle of the community.
2. We express our faith with liturgical prayer and bear witness to it with the power of charity. We read and proclaim the Gospel witnessing to an encounter that keeps the focus on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnate in the history of humanity in order to bring to fulfilment the revelation of the Father's saving love.
3. Our goal is the living encounter with the Lord who transforms life that takes place in the light of encounter.
4. When we share the Word and celebrate the Eucharist together, it fosters fraternity and make us holy and a missionary community, more understanding and with a deeper experience of the liturgy.
5. This process is the living encounter with Christ oriented toward forming persons who get to know Jesus Christ and his Gospel.



As mentioned above the Children's Liturgy is held on the first Sunday of the month. The children are sent out by the priest before the Readings and are joined by two catechists and a Sister who guide the children in understanding the Gospel or specific theme of that particular Sunday. The children then return to the Mass celebration at the Offertory. We follow the 'The Liturgy of the Word with Children' (Katie Thompson) 2020, as recommended by Sister Mary Louise, the Liturgy Educator for the Parramatta Diocese and supported by CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development). The children have enjoyed the work activities that reflect the Gospel Reading and the take home activity.

We have noted that the children's attendance has increased between 7-20, with ages ranging from 4-10 years with increasingly more interaction from the children. The parents are also encouraging their children to attend the liturgy.

For us, it is such a joyful and fulfilling ministry.

Edna & Agnes Aldana



- 1 Directory For Catechesis, Pontifical Council For Promoting New Evangelization, 2020 St Pauls Publications, Strathfield
- 2 Ibid. C.f. pp. 53-104

# 8. 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	<a href="https://www.schoenstatt.com">https://www.schoenstatt.com</a>
Schoenstatt Australian Website	<a href="https://www.schoenstatt.org.au">https://www.schoenstatt.org.au</a>
Our YouTube Channel	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia">https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia</a>
Western Australia Website	<a href="https://schoenstattwa.org.au">https://schoenstattwa.org.au</a>
Schoenstatt Men Website	<a href="https://bit.ly/47x72n1">https://bit.ly/47x72n1</a>

## Videos for Covenant Sundays

Video for January	Meaning and Purpose of the Jubilee Year 2025 <a href="https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia">https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia</a>
Video for December	They also serve who only stand and wait <a href="https://youtu.be/dHsqSvvRoKQ?si=CrRPtvEGnsaaXtJ4">https://youtu.be/dHsqSvvRoKQ?si=CrRPtvEGnsaaXtJ4</a>
Video for November	Schoenstatt – How is it Synodal? <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTC2UMassbA">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTC2UMassbA</a>
Video for October	The Importance of the Capital of Grace <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut-le-CQuDs">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ut-le-CQuDs</a>
Video for September	A Church walking together <a href="https://youtu.be/I1dYTE9ktI">https://youtu.be/I1dYTE9ktI</a>

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