



January 18 2026 | Volume 7, Number 1

1. Covenant Day Message

United in the Covenant - Pilgrims of Hope

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

Welcome to our first Covenant Day for 2026 – the 18th January. I wish you and your family many blessings and graces from the Shrine and hope you had very blessed and holy Christmas and a good start to this new year.

This month I would like to focus on the 20th January, 1942 which is referred to as Schoenstatt's Second Milestone. Such is its importance that Father Kentenich often spoke of it as "the axis of Schoenstatt's history" and the "interwovenness" of fates between himself and his Schoenstatt Family.

This was the day on which Fr. Kentenich decided not to use any natural means to avoid possible transportation to the concentration camp. He believed that his freedom would be secured if the Schoenstatt Family took seriously their commitment to the Blank Cheque and Inscriptio. He put his fate in the hands of his Schoenstatt Family.

On one occasion in reference to the 20th January, 1942, Father Kentenich said:

"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.... Do you understand this extraordinarily deep supernatural attitude? I did not want to be liberated by natural means; I did not want to be liberated by the doctors or the Gestapo....

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We have made a covenant with the Blessed Mother, and this is a reality. We were earnest about the covenant of love... Seen within the framework of the whole Founding Document and the covenant of love, it had to be taken for granted that the condition of 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)

The 20th January was for Fr. Kentenich the deepening of his Covenant of Love with our MTA, the deepening of the first milestone of 18th October 1914. This milestone asks us to look at what the Covenant of Love means for us in our life and what responsibility do we take to continue the work of our Father even during difficult and frustrating experiences that may come our way. This year I hope we can spend some time looking at how we can 'walk together', as "Pilgrims of Hope". What does the "interwovenness" of fates mean for us as members of Schoenstatt here in Australia? How can we participate in celebrating the "milestones" in our Australian Schoenstatt history this year, as one Family, united in our Covenant of Love?



Further to Schoenstatt's Second Milestone

Because of the importance of the 20th January 1942 in the history and formation of Schoenstatt, I would like to include two reflections.

REFLECTION 1

WHAT NO ONE ELSE COULD SEE

Fr. Heinz Dresbach was one of those closest to Fr. Kentenich in Dachau. He soon grasped how important January 20 was to the Founder and included here are two short reflections by Fr. Dresbach to help us appreciate the magnitude of this event:

January 20 was an especially clear, powerful impulse from above, a grace from above which corresponded to the Founder's decision. On January 20, no one in Schoenstatt could see that the whole situation was an open door except for Father with his keen faith in Divine Providence. He was afraid that he would be misunderstood and thought ungrateful. After all, they had done so much, including things that were not without danger, in order to free him from prison, and he did exactly the opposite.

But when he noticed that they understood and were trying to go along, that they wanted to follow his urging and striving with all their strength for the Inscriptio, then his distress was finished. For him it was new proof that the Holy Spirit was behind it, and that the Mother was at work.

Fr. Dresbach adds a second consideration:

Family. *Now when we think of the Family in the Dachau era, it is not only in terms of the little Schoenstatt Family in Dachau and Block 26, but also in terms of the large Schoenstatt Family, to the extent that it was already around the world.*

And we already know.... through January 20 and the following time in Dachau the covenant of love greatly matured in all directions and attained an unmistakable culmination in the heart of our Father through his decision of January 20, which he made based on his responsibility for the Family. He decided to accept death, for this was the practical content of his decision to go to Dachau – it was much more likely he would not

return alive than survive. He was therefore ready to give up his life for the Family.
(Fr. Dresbach, talk 1978)

REFLECTION 2:

ACTIONS SPEAK LOUDER THAN WORDS

When Father Kentenich returned from Dachau in May 1945, he made this short, but powerful statement about his motives for the decision of January 20, 1942:

"We want to form a new man on the soil of freedom rooted in attachments. You know how often I have spoken about these things.

I know that words have great value, but deeds have an even greater value. I consciously wished not to accept my freedom, but to implore for you the grace to be able to make the right use of your freedom until the end of time.

Fr. Kentenich, Talk 21 May, 1945"

(From: Brushstrokes of a Father, Vol.3, Fr. Jonathan Niehaus, Pp92–93, 94)

PLEASE NOTE: TWO IMPORTANT MESSAGES:

1. NOVENA AS A JUBILEE GIFT FOR OUR SISTERS

By now you will have received a copy of the Novena for January. We hope you will join us in praying this novena in thanksgiving for the work of our Sisters in Australia and the Philippines, and as a Jubilee gift for vocations for their international community. As you will have noted, we are sending the novena out both as a text in the main section of the email, but also as an attachment, so you can print a copy for yourself or to share with others as you wish. You can also find the novena each month on our website: <http://www.schoenstatt.org.au> You can of course, pray the novena as you wish throughout the month.

2. COVENANT ZOOM GATHERING

For the next few months, the zoom gatherings that take place on the 18th of each month will be held from 7.30pm – 8.30pm. This change of time is a trial only to see if this new time suits people better.



Please also note that for most months there won't be a text to accompany the video.

The topic for each month will relate to the history of the Sisters in Australia and the Philippines, as presented in the novena for that month.

This means that included with the Zoom link, we will forward a copy of the history as presented in that month's novena.

In the spirit of the 20th January, 1942, with faith in our Covenant of Love, and a trusting belief in the loving Providence of God, I wish each of you many blessings and graces from the Shrine for this Covenant Day and throughout the coming month.

United in our covenant,

Shirley Hall

2. Review of the Jubilee Year Pilgrimages: a sign of hope in Australia

Sr. M. Olivia Lukaszewicz

Over the past 12 months, thousands have set out on pilgrimage to walk through the doors of the Schoenstatt Shrine in Mulgoa, Australia. This is one of three designated pilgrimage sites within the Diocese of Parramatta. As Pope Leo XIV officially closes the Jubilee Year of Hope on 6th January, 2026, the Schoenstatt Shrine has offered countless people an experience of hope and spiritual renewal as they encountered God's mercy and Mary's transforming power of grace from the Shrine.

To date, a total of 40 registered pilgrimage groups coming from various parishes, communities, and education institutions within the Parramatta, Sydney and Broken Bay Dioceses, intentionally journeyed to Mount Schoenstatt as part of the Jubilee Year. Many of these groups, be it large or small, included Holy Mass in the Shrine and the Sacrament of Reconciliation in order to fulfill the criteria necessary to obtain a plenary indulgence as part of their visit to the Shrine.

Within these groups alone, an estimated 3,000 people walked through the iconic wooden arch door of the "little white chapel", as it is so often referred to by visitors. This number excludes, of course, the thousands of individual pilgrims who



may have come alone, or with their family and friends as part of a personal visit. Parishes as far as Woy Woy on the Central Coast of New South Wales, communities from various ethnic groups such as Nigeria, Tonga, Vietnam, Sri Lanka and China, (just to name a few), and young people from various youth groups and college's, all came in great number to pray and be filled with God's hope in their lives.

The experience of welcoming groups

Throughout this Jubilee Year, I was assigned the task of organising and accompanying each pilgrimage booking. I have been truly amazed at the number of people who have walked through the doors of the Shrine this year, and what has amazed me even more, is that so many of these pilgrims were first-time visitors to the Shrine. Each time a group arrived, I would ask how many people were visiting for the first time. On every occasion, at least 50% of hands would go up. I found this aspect so encouraging to think that our dear Blessed Mother still has so many lives to touch in Sydney and beyond, as we continue to spread her mission from Schoenstatt.

As part of their pilgrimage schedule, many groups took up my offer of having a talk given to their pilgrims, introducing them to the Schoenstatt spirituality and the uniqueness of the Shrine. The most important thing I wanted people to know is that the Schoenstatt Shrine is a tremendous place of grace, not only in this great Jubilee Year, but always. Mary is the closest person to God, and her entire mission from the Shrine is to bring people closer to all members of the Holy Trinity. She does this by cooperating with Jesus and distributing the graces He merited us from the Cross, to all those

who implore her Motherly intercession from the Shrine.

The second most important element that I wanted to share with the pilgrims were the three pilgrimage graces – that Mary accepts and loves each person just as they are, that she educates us to be disciples of Christ by transforming us from within, and that this is what enables us to go out into the world as apostles and instruments in God's hands.

As the community of the Sisters of Mary in Sydney, we pray that the Jubilee Year of Hope has indeed be a great source of spiritual renewal for the Church, and for every person that walked through the doors of the Schoenstatt Shrine in Mulgoa.

The Jubilee indulgences continue.....

As advised in November, for the 100th anniversary of the Schoenstatt Sisters Institute, Pope Leo XIV has granted the gift of a Plenary Indulgence. This indulgence may be obtained during the period from October 1, 2025, to November 4, 2026.



This means that here in Australia, the gift of this indulgence for the Jubilee Year may be obtained at the Schoenstatt Shrines at Mt. Schoenstatt, Mulgoa and Mt. Richon, W.A. as well as in the chapels of the Schoenstatt Sisters.

*... she educates us to be
disciples of Christ by
transforming us from
within ...*



3. The “Fourth Milestone” of our history - Diamond Jubilee of Fr. Kentenich’s Return to Schoenstatt.

Last month we celebrated 60 years since the return of our founder to Schoenstatt after 14 years of exile in the United States. Fr. Alexandre Awi Mello, the president of the General Presidium, invited all to a Mass in the Adoration Church on December 17 to “give thanks for the powerful intervention of our Blessed Mother, our MTA, in our history. It is always important to try to understand the ways of God in our lives and in this case in the life of our founder and our Schoenstatt Movement.” For more articles about this milestone in our history visit “News and Articles” in the website: Schoenstatt.com. There is also a short documentary about the history at the same location: <https://bit.ly/3LwzAqk>

200 Questions about Schoenstatt by Fr. Jonathan Niehaus is a further resource from which the following extract (pp. 142–145) is taken.



The “fourth milestone” refers to the **important historical events of 1965 (60 years ago)** that resulted in Fr. Kentenich’s reinstatement and return to his work in Germany. The primary dates are:

- October 22: Pope Paul VI signs the decision of the consistory of cardinals that effectively drops all decrees against Fr. Kentenich (this day was exactly 14 years after Fr. Kentenich left Germany in 1951).
- December 22: Pope Paul VI receives Fr. Kentenich in a private audience. Fr. Kentenich promised that Schoenstatt will do all it can to help realize the mission of the Church in the post-Vatican-II era.
- December 24: Fr. Kentenich returns to Schoenstatt, Germany and celebrates his Midnight Christmas Mass in the Original Shrine. The return to Germany is sometimes referred to as the “second miracle of the Holy Night”. In a beautiful gift of Divine Providence, the actual day of Fr. Kentenich’s return from the exile years to Schoenstatt, Germany, took place on December 24, 1965 – indeed, the Holy Night!

The fourth milestone also coincides with the solemn closing of Vatican Council II (December 8, 1965). Fr. Kentenich, who was in Rome at the time, symbolically blessed the cornerstone for the future Schoenstatt Shrine in Rome (the Shrine that was later dedicated on September 8, 2004) and spoke of Schoenstatt’s part in realizing the mission of the Vatican Council.

“... give thanks for the powerful intervention of our Blessed Mother, our MTA, in our history. It is always important to try to understand the ways of God in our lives and in this case in the life of our founder and our Schoenstatt Movement.”

Importance for Schoenstatt

Given its coincidence with the end of Vatican II, the fourth milestone is also connected with the mission of the Church “on the newest shores of the times”.

In this light, Schoenstatt not only has a mission for the Church (the mission of 31 May, 1949 – the third milestone), but also a mission with the Church as she works to accomplish the work entrusted to her by Christ. This co-operation, with the official structures and hierarchical leadership of the Church, took concrete form when Fr. Kentenich made a definite promise to Pope Paul VI. (see below)

Importance for Catholic life and faith

The fourth milestone can also increase our appreciation for the Church, bringing into focus not only what I can do for the Church, but also how my part is complemented by working together with all others for the one great goal of building up the kingdom of God.

Fr. Kentenich's Promise to Pope Paul VI

On December 22, 1965, Fr. Kentenich was received by Pope Paul VI in a brief private audience.

Paul VI had prepared a text in which he personally expressed his thanks to Fr. Kentenich for his loyalty to the Church and for his founding such a tremendous apostolic work, which is so needed by the Church right now.

With this he confirmed his rehabilitation.

At this point Fr. Kentenich made the following promise in return:

“In the name of the Schoenstatt Family, I heartily thank you for the good works you have lavished on Schoenstatt to an extraordinary degree, but also for my personal rehabilitation.”

In gratitude for everything which Your Holiness has done, we want to diligently work to help realize the unique mission of the post-conciliar Church for our modern times. And all of this under the patronage of the Mother of the Church.”



At this time, Fr. Kentenich gave the Holy Father a chalice for the church to be built in honour of “Mary, Mother of the Church”. As Fr. Kentenich stressed a few days later when he returned to Germany, it was Schoenstatt’s role to actively contribute to the realization of the mission which the Church had undertaken at Vatican Council II.

“In the name of the Schoenstatt Family, I heartily thank you for the good works you have lavished on Schoenstatt to an extraordinary degree, but also for my personal rehabilitation.”

In gratitude for everything which Your Holiness has done, we want to diligently work to help realize the unique mission of the post-conciliar Church for our modern times. And all of this under the patronage of the Mother of the Church.”

4. Advent Journey for Young Adults

On 7 December – the second Sunday of Advent – 15 women joined Sr M. Rita and myself for an Advent Journey, a young women's retreat aimed at preparing the women's hearts for the coming of Christ into the world at Christmas.

Blessed with mild overcast weather, the day began with a bush walk at the end of Fairlight Road. Starting at the Rock Lookout, overlooking the stunning Blue Mountains and Nepean River, we walked 2.5km in silence to Riley's Lookout. Along the way, we stopped at particular checkpoints where there were various reflections, intended to reflect on the year that has been and to look forward to the birth of Christ and the New Year. Many women made the comment that the walk was well worth the reward of the views, and that the reflections along the way, together with the opportunity to be in nature, brought them closer to the presence of their Creator.

Lunch followed at 'Bethany' where we all enjoyed making our own wraps and sharing in wholesome conversations with one another.



To end the day, we made our way to the Shrine for a Holy Hour where a devotion to Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament was prayed, together with the singing of Advent hymns. The young women were also given the opportunity to write a letter to Baby Jesus for Christmas, noting their petitions, their thanksgivings and especially their striving for the rest of the Advent season.

Each participant was then invited to approach the altar where a little Baby Jesus was waiting to be received by them with open arms, together with a heart where Advent striving could be written and serve as a symbol of preparing a manger for the Christ child. Overall, the young women were most grateful to be able to take time out of what is usually a very busy time of year for what is always most important – God.

Sr M. Olivia Lukaszewicz



5. Christmas Celebration: Melbourne Schoenstatt Family

The day dawned bright and clear on Sunday 7 December when the Melbourne Schoenstatt family gathered at St Luke's Church, Wantirna for its annual Christmas celebrations and to greet our Mother Thrice Admirable in her new Melbourne Home.

The Schoenstatt family joined the St Luke's parish community for Mass at 10 a.m. presided by the Parish Priest, Fr Joseph Amal. Following Mass, the Annual Nativity Play took place in the parish hall – wonderfully presented and choreographed by Delmi and Alexander Carbello – complete with a 'live Baby Jesus – which retold the beautiful Christmas story.

The narration was presented both in English and Spanish, with the 'actors' (members of the Schoenstatt family) chosen on the day.

In their magnificent costumes, they played their roles to perfection. At the end of the Nativity Play, Santa Claus made an appearance much to the joy of everyone, handing out chocolates to all.

The Spanish Community had also organised a Christmas raffle which was drawn with many members receiving several prizes. The proceeds of the raffle were donated to the Melbourne Schoenstatt movement.

The celebrations ended with a fellowship lunch, catered for by the Schoenstatt family. It was a great way to end another memorable year. Grateful thanks were extended to all who contributed in so many ways to make the day a celebration to remember.

Florida Nugara



6. Advent and Christmas Carols at Mount Schoenstatt

On Saturday 13th December many Schoenstatt movement members, as well as families, friends and staff gathered in the Family Hall at Mount Schoenstatt for the annual Advent and Christmas Carols. With a mix of prayers, songs and roleplay everyone enjoyed a very beautiful and meaningful evening.

The evening began with the lighting of the three candles on the Advent wreath together with an explanation of the rose-coloured candle of joy. To continue this Advent focus, in contrast to many other standard singing of Christmas Carols, at Mount Schoenstatt the evening began with a reflection on the Old Testament provided by two prophets appearing, predicting the birth of Jesus our Lord and Saviour.

A reflection on the scenes of the Annunciation and Visitation was also given to really set the background of the birth of Christ. During the hymn of the Magnificat, proclaimed by Mary when she visited her cousin Elizabeth, it was truly wonderful to see all the children holding battery-operated candles and processing throughout the Family Hall praising with Mary the wonderful deeds the almighty God had done.

Shepherds, Angels and the Three Kings (men from the family branch) were not missing but obviously, the highlight of the play was the nativity scene. This was even more special this year as there was a real live baby Jesus.

The characters acting out Mary, Joseph and Jesus along with a little shepherd boy and angel were a family who sometimes attend Holy Mass at Mt Schoenstatt.

The family was very proud to be asked to assist in the nativity play and even went out to hire their costumes. What was very beautiful and moving was that the little one fell asleep in his mothers' arms during the final hymn of "Silent Night".



At the conclusion of the Advent and Christmas Carols Fr Pawel OP gave us all a final blessing and also blessed the food. A light supper was on offer, but everyone had pitched in and brought a plate so it seemed like a real festive Christmas dinner. Many people stayed for some time afterwards as there was such a joyful sense of community present. A very big thanks to everyone who helped out in one way or another.

Sr. M. Rita





7. Christmas Star Initiative

Jesus through his birth on Christmas Day brought light into our dark world and redeemed each one of us with his infinite love! Every one of us is like a bright star, born with a specific mission to light up the world.

On the morning of 25th December 2025, the "Christmas Star" initiative began for the second year. The many visitors to the Schoenstatt Shrine in Mulgoa were invited to write their names and the names of those they wished to pray for on a coloured star and hang it on the tree.

Within the first hour the tree was quickly transformed into a very colourful display. After the 11am Christmas Day Holy Mass there was a flood of people in and around the shrine taking advantage of this very simply yet attractive initiative. Many people were taking photos as they hung up their stars or were taking family photos in front of the beautifully decorated tree.

Throughout the year Sr. Mary Louise had cut up over 600 stars which were quickly gone in just the first few days of Christmas. People became very inventive, resorting to writing their names on the paper contribution slips from the Shrine and hanging them also on the tree. The sisters promised to pray for all the people whose names were written on a star and have done so during this Christmas period.

Sr. M. Rita Baysai



8. New Year at our Shrines

For the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, this New Year had special significance. It began the calendar year in which they will celebrate 100 years of their community. So it was with special joy that they experienced the many people who came to the Shrines to honour the Blessed Mother and to usher in the New Year 2026.

At our Shrine in Mount Richon, WA, more than 250 people gathered to welcome in the New Year, beginning with prayers and singing from 11pm – midnight. Two different choirs accompanied those present during the prayer time as well as Holy Mass. At midnight, following the view of fireworks from distant Perth on the horizon and the singing of the Te Deum (Holy God we praise your Name) as the Shrine bell rang, Holy Mass in honour of the Mother of God began the New Year. Fr. Tim Cororan was the main celebrant, with Deacon Patrick Moore assisting. Fr. Tim's homily encouraged all the people who, in turn, were amazed at the number of different ethnic groups represented: Indians, Sri Lankans, Africans, Filipinos and more. It was such a meaningful way to begin the New Year.

At Mulgoa, the scene was a little different, beginning with Holy Mass in the Family Hall at 11pm, celebrated by Fr. Pawell OP. Fr. Pawell encouraged the similar number of people as at Mount Richon, to give thanks for the many blessings of the past year as well as to look forward with hope to the New Year about to begin.

Shortly before midnight, everyone moved to the Shrine where the bell rang at midnight, and all joined in singing the Te Deum.

Fr. Pawell then prayed to God and the Blessed Mother expressing in words the thoughts in many hearts; thoughts of thanksgiving as well as for hope as we draw close to the culmination of the Jubilee Year of Hope. It was a wonderful scene outside and inside the Shrine as people wished each other all the best for the New Year.

What was amazing were the scenes at the Shrine during New Year's Day. Close to 400 people attended the 11am Mass and following Mass and throughout most of the afternoon, pilgrims/visitors lined up to be able to spend a short time in prayer in the Shrine.

Everyone was patient, waiting their turn. It was such a display of love for the Blessed Mother and her care for all these people. They simply came in huge numbers to express their gratitude and to ask for blessings for the new year.

This display of the deep love and trust in the Blessed Mother and her Son was a special gift for the Sisters in this their Jubilee Year.





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/>



Events

- Covenant Sundays – Third Sunday of each month
11am Mulgoa, NSW; 3pm Wantirna, VIC; 3pm Mount Richon, WA
- Men at the Shrine – Second Wednesday each month 8–9pm Shrine, Mulgoa
- Shrine Time – for young adults – Fourth Sunday each month 7–8pm Shrine, Mulgoa

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://schoenstatt-men-australia.mailchimpsites.com

Videos for Covenant Days - 18th of the Month 7:30 - 8:30pm AEDT

Video for December 2025 Consors Patris – Helpmate of the Father

https://youtu.be/JT4Z_5VHaKA

Video for November 2025 An outline of the Sisters' history in Australia

https://youtu.be/_qTvhUsu9uA

Video for October 2025 Anchored in Hope

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

DON'T FORGET ... WE ARE ALL SCHOENSTATT – A CHALLENGE SHARED BY ALL

The International Schoenstatt Movement continues to need our support to finance these three projects:

THREE PROJECTS, ONE AIM

1. **Maintenance of the Original Shrine:** An emblematic and sacred place for the entire Schoenstatt Family
2. **Support for the International Coordination of the Movement**
3. **Funding of an independent study on the cause of our Father and Founder**

HOW TO DONATE

Donations can be made through various channels, mainly through the [Donorbox](#) platform.

We are all Schoenstatt! It is time to unite, embrace our origin, spread together our Covenant for the future.

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

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

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ISSN 2652-6875