

**Speech from Hermann Gröhe
German Health Minister
Member of the German Parliament**

**At the Centenary Celebration
of the International Schoenstatt Movement
on 18th October 2014**

Your Eminence, Cardinal Lajolo,
My dear Cardinals and Bishops
Father Walter,
Minister President Dreyer,
Dear guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Especially to all of you Schoenstatt people from far and near.

I thank you for this invitation and the possibility to address you all here this morning at this wonderful jubilee celebration of the Schoenstatt Movement.

I am delighted to be here as a member of the German federal Government but also as an active Christian within the Protestant Church, who has been happily married to a Catholic for many years. I think that as Catholics and Protestants we are united in what Jesus said, in accordance with the support from Mary at the feast of Cana: "Do whatever He tells you."

Ladies and gentlemen, exactly 100 years ago on the 18th October 1914 as Father Kentenich sealed the first covenant of love in the Marian Chapel of Schoenstatt; it was his intention to encourage the young people at the time to have a personal relationship, a personal bond with God. From this attachment to God they were to draw hope and strength to act. The young people were also encouraged to develop their character according to the Christian values and ideals, and to live as such in their own surroundings and accept responsibility for the world.

Today, all around the world Schoenstatt people are very involved through their faith and through their service to their neighbour and society at large.

My dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am deeply convinced that we as Christians can only bear testimony to the humanitarianism of Jesus, proclaimed to us and as well as bearing testimony to God when we ourselves support such a human world and work towards one.

Many changes are taking place in our world at top speed for us as Christians where we need to act.

One very important contribution for a more human world is our support for each other in our society. In Germany we are experiencing a huge, dramatic demographic change and we need to support the working together of all generations and families. Parents and children ought to have space in the future to make and develop their own decisions and the older generation need to know that they have a place in our society. Our society needs the young and the old with their life experiences. I am very happy that the Schoenstatt Movement is very active and supportive in the area of family life, marriage, working and living together as generations. Thank you for this service.

In many countries the demand to suppress and misuse people is greater therefore a challenge to us to rebuild a united society. You only need think of the many Christians who face hardship persecution in 50 countries out of the 200 that exist, because they remain true to their faith. Religious freedom, a fundamental human right, has been withdrawn from them. We owe them our solidarity and intercession. As a Christian community we must stand up for a religious community for all people, regardless of their religion.

Living together well also means that we should never ignore ethical guidelines, next to our rights and the law. As a Christian and minister for health it is very important for me to do all I can to safeguard human life. In a world where scientific advancement is increasing and opening more doors, we need to be clear that not everything which is possible is morally correct. There are so many complex questions as to how to protect embryos after the prenatal diagnosis and after end of life care, as well as the questions about life itself. As Christians we want to safeguard and protect life from its very beginning until the end. It is therefore important in conflicts, that we do not point the finger but offer a helping hand. I am very grateful that so many committed Christians are involved in the fields of care, Hospice work and in the accompaniment of the dying. Thank you for your service in these fields.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Our Christian faith is geared towards our world and this you as Schoenstatt People prove through your work, your commitment and activity in so many countries around the world. I offer

you today most sincerely my respect, my recognition and my gratitude. For your work in the future let me wish you from the bottom of my heart, strength, endurance but also God's blessing and a wonderful jubilee celebration.

All the best