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APOSTOLIC MOVEMENT OF SCHOENSTATT

**Opening Celebration of the Jubilee Year  
of the 100th Anniversary of the Founding**

*Schoenstatt, October 18, 2013*

**ADDRESS**

**The Sign of the Door**

1. This evening we will enter into the jubilee year of the Apostolic Movement of Schoenstatt through the door of the Original Shrine.

On October 18, 1914, ninety-nine years ago from now, this door was, so to speak, opened from within, after someone else had knocked. Looking back we know: The step over the threshold made history. Since that day the cemetery chapel of the old cloister of Schoenstatt was to be opened wider and wider and become “a place of pilgrimage, a place of grace.”

With that something new began. A covenant came about: “knocking” and “opening”: ... Since then countless people have gone through this door, people of different nationalities and ages. They have found a home here at this place of grace. Many testify that their lives have decisively changed under the glance of the Mother of God. And whoever goes back into his world through the door of the shrine is no longer alone, and missionary fire burns in his heart. The torches we lit today at the tomb of the founder are a sign for that: The fire of October 18, 1914, has not gone out.

If we mark the beginning of the jubilee year today through the festive opening of the door of the first Schoenstatt Shrine, we thus place ourselves anew in a certain sense into the history of the origin, and at the same time into the blessing and the fruitfulness of the almost 100 years since then. The contact with the grace of the origin is vital to the future of Schoenstatt. The grace of the origin: That is the covenant of love.

From this perspective let us consider a little about the message of the door to the jubilee year.

2. The door reminds us above all of Christ, who says of himself: "I am the door; if anyone enters through me, he will be saved" (Jn 10:9). He is the door to life, the door to the Father, the only and true door into the Kingdom of God. To go through the door of the jubilee year means to choose Christ anew at this *kairos* of the history of the Schoenstatt Movement, to avow oneself entirely to him. In the Schoenstatt Shrine, the cross and the tabernacle take a central place. For many years the doors of the tabernacle have been opened daily for adoration – in this and many other shrines. And when we look at the picture of the *Mater Ter Admirabilis*, she holds her Son out to us, so to speak; she points to him. The *odigitria*, she who shows the way, as Eastern Tradition likes to call Mary, shows us HIM: the "Way, the Truth, and the Life" (cf Jn 14:6).

The jubilee of the covenant of love with Mary is therefore for us a new decision for Christ. It is a fundamental decision, the most important of one's life – a decision that concerns our entire existence and our destiny. Blessed John Paul II said: "The person who wants to understand himself thoroughly [...] must with his unrest, uncertainty and even his weakness and sinfulness, with his life and death, draw near to Christ. He must, so to speak, enter into him with all his own self, he must 'appropriate' and assimilate the whole of the reality of the Incarnation and Redemption in order to find himself."<sup>1</sup> Benedict XVI emphasized: "Being Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction."<sup>2</sup> We go through the door and enter into HIM anew, into his person, into his life. We accept the Child in the arms of the Blessed Mother into our life anew.

We stride through the door of the jubilee year with joy and gratitude for the great deeds of God in the almost 100-year history of the Movement. It is a long way marked by the joyful, glorious, luminous, but also the sorrowful mysteries – similar to those we contemplate in the rosary. You, dear Schoenstatt Family, have the opportunity in this year to follow the ways God has led you. This is important, even indispensable, for it is your movement's intense experience of God, which expresses itself there in the individual stations of history. The Lord was always faithful to his promises. He has not disappointed you! In the strength of this history you can go into the future full of hope.

We stride through the door of the jubilee year also in the awareness that we have not always responded in a fitting way to God's unfathomable gifts of grace. Our limitations, our weaknesses, our sins are there ... We take even these experiences along with us over the threshold of the shrine. To celebrate the jubilee rightly and in the spirit of genuine gratitude includes remembering the primacy of grace in our own life and in

<sup>1</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Redemptor Hominis*, 10.

<sup>2</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Enc. *Deus caritas est*, 1.

the life of the Movement, and thus letting ourselves be guided to humility, penance, and conversion of heart. God has not called us to be his cooperators because we were brilliant or perfect. His greatness is his mercy. The image of the merciful Father belongs essentially to the experience and the message of Schoenstatt. If we surrender ourselves to the grace of God, just as we are, he can allow his rich harvest to grow – even out of the ground of our faults and limitations. We are not the authors but merely the instruments of apostolic success. But we are allowed to carry the fire of Christ within us. And whatever we give, we have first received from him. “We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done” (Lk 17:10).

3. We step through the jubilee door into the holy space and encounter the love of our Redeemer. What St. Paul testified of himself is also a basic experience in Schoenstatt: “The love of Christ impels us!” (2 Cor. 5:14). The decision for Christ always carries within itself an urge of the heart. The flame of a “holy restlessness” must burn in us. The yes to Christ, which becomes concrete in the covenant of love with Mary, has to grow and mature with you throughout your whole life! Each one of us must carefully foster in our hearts the longing for surrender to God and others. Let’s not allow our hearts to be put to sleep by that which we think we have already achieved! Let us keep alive the restlessness of a lasting search for the traces of God, for his countenance, for the truth. Let us keep the restlessness for Christ alive: to proclaim him, to make him known, to take him everywhere. The Church expects that from a Marian movement!

“The love of Christ impels us!” In many countries the picture of grace of the *Mater Ter Admirabilis* is on the way to the people in a great *Peregrinatio*. Mary seeks those she can win for Christ. She lets herself be carried into homes, schools, and prisons. Remain with Mary on the way over the hill country of our time! Go to the geographical and existential peripheries of the world. This world needs the restlessness of our love, which urges us to step out of the snail shell of our selfishness and go out to meet others. Look especially for those who take the last place, the marginalized, the suffering. In them we can recognize the countenance of the Lord. I know about the many initiatives of the Movement in the educational, ecclesiastical, and societal realms, about your special commitment to families and youth. May this jubilee year be for the whole Schoenstatt Family a year of grace, in order to renew the “holy restlessness” of love and to give oneself like Mary more and more to Christ and to people.

4. One last point. Through the door that is Christ, we enter into the house of Mary, our Mother and Educator, who is honored in this shrine as the Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt. We want to live this special time of the jubilee with her and renew our covenant, in which, as Father Kentenich explains, the heart of the whole Movement beats. Let us allow ourselves in a special way in this year to be educated by our heavenly Mother. What does she want to teach us? Pope Francis explained in Brazil what it means concretely to let oneself be guided and educated by Mary: “When the Church looks for Jesus, she always knocks at his Mother’s door and

asks: 'Show us Jesus.' It is from Mary that the Church learns true discipleship. That is why the Church always goes out on mission in the footsteps of Mary."<sup>3</sup> And on another occasion the Holy Father made it clear that Mary is truly a Mother: She helps her children (us!) to grow. She takes care that we don't become satisfied with a comfortable life. She teaches us to master the difficulties of life. Like a good mother she urges us to accept challenges. Sometimes she also puts us to the test; she teaches us to fight and not to fear the obstacles on the way. She implores strength for us not to give up our great ideals, to struggle against mediocrity, and to go the way of holiness.

"Dare to be glowing saints, in whose eyes and hearts the love of Christ beams and who thus bring light to the world," Benedict XVI called out to the youth in Freiburg<sup>4</sup>. The Schoenstatt Movement has brought forth a whole rank of such radiant people in the 100 years of its existence. I name only Blessed Karl Leisner, the Servants of God Joseph Engling, Sister Emilie, Mario Hiriart, John Pozzobon ... Yes, truly: their "hearts have caught fire!"<sup>5</sup> Today the Church needs "glowing saints" more than ever – our world needs them! Schoenstatt has what Bl. John Paul II called a "pedagogy of holiness,"<sup>6</sup> a personal and communal way of growth in love. Remain on this way! Share this way with many others. Then the longing of Fr. Kentenich can be fulfilled: "that new men and women arise/ who are, like Christ,/ both free and firm on earth,/in joy and in sorrow."<sup>7</sup>

This jubilee year, which begins this evening in the sign of the door of the Original Shrine, is the *kairos* of the big Schoenstatt Family. My heartfelt greeting and blessing goes to you, dear friends all over the world: May the jubilee year be rich in graces for all of you! Many blessings for the Schoenstatt Jubilee!

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<sup>3</sup> FRANCIS, Homily at the holy Mass in the National Shrine of Aparecida, in: „*L'Osservatore Romano*“ (it), July 26, 2013, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> BENEDICT XVI, Prayer Vigil with the youth in Freiburg, September 24, 2011.

<sup>5</sup> Founding Document, Oktober 18, 1914.

<sup>6</sup> JOHN PAUL II, Enc. *Novo Millennio ineunte*, 30.

<sup>7</sup> Hymn of Thanksgiving, *Heavenwards*