
MESSAGE

FOR THE OPENING OF THE YEAR OF THE MISSIONARY CURRENT

Fr. Heinrich Walter, President of the International Presidency of Schoenstatt

Dear Schoenstatt Family,

I am very close to St Peter's grave and am looking onto St Peter's Square as I greet you all over the world. Our Holy Father has invited me to take part in the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelisation for Passing on the Christian Faith. That is why I cannot be in the Original Shrine today. It is a sign from Providence that we are able to unite our shrines in this way with the great Cathedral of Christendom here in Rome. Our mission is the mission of the Church. We want to serve her with our charism so that through the working of the Holy Spirit the Church may be given new vitality. That is the greatest objective so far of the Synod Fathers. Some speak of a new Pentecost. That should also be our concern.

Our pilgrimage to the jubilee and to the Original Shrine leads us into Schoenstatt's original source. We want to drink from the deepest source and in this way renew our charism for the times in which we are living. Gratitude for God's guidance through the hundred years of our holy history again awakens in us the spirit of the beginning. We drink from this spirit, from the Founding Document, from Fr Kentenich's spirit of faith, and the strength of the witness of the lives of the founder generation. In the past year we have deepened our experiences with the shrine. We have again cultivated all the ways in which our shrine lives in our family – starting with our relationship to the Original Shrine and reaching to living in and from our heart shrine. This deepening now leads us to our mission: Your covenant our mission.

This Year of our Mission begins in the context of the Church. Providence has guided us in such a way that along with the universal Church we are looking at the essence of the Church. The Church has a mission to evangelise the world. After his resurrection our Lord commissioned his disciples to do this. Our Holy Father has opened the Year of Faith and reminded us of the Council. He spoke of the spirit of the Council and of the pilgrimage through the desert of our times. For this pilgrimage we don't need a bag of provisions, no bread, no second shirt, but only the Gospel and the faith of the Church. After fifty years he sees that it is necessary to issue a call for a new evangelisation, so that the spirit of the Council does not grow weak.

With our Year of the Missionary Current we find ourselves in the middle of the river flowing through the universal Church. That is a great joy and at the same time a challenge. Fr Kentenich's talks on the path of the Church following the Council, which he gave in Rome just fifty years ago, only now reveal their full significance. This gives us courage to understand the Year of the Missionary Current as a practical contribution to the renewal of the Church. All that we do in this spirit is motivated by love for the Church. We want to help the Church increasingly to become the soul of our modern culture and civilization.

Why are we emphasising the missionary current? I see two main points. Everything we do as Schoenstatters has to be given a missionary character. Whether we lead groups, or are in charge of social projects, whether we hold Adoration, or visit the sick, whether we are preparing for the World Youth Day, or caring for children, we do everything because we are aware that this is our mission. We do it wholeheartedly because we are

gripped with enthusiasm for our mission. The other perspective is that in preparing for our jubilee we have become aware of many missionary initiatives that are being undertaken in many parts of the world. We have seen that there is great vitality in these initiatives. We notice gratefully that this missionary spirit has gripped above all the communities of our youth. We need to be informed about these initiatives. They can unite us so that many tiny streams can become a great river. The missionary current will bring new life and strength to all the expressions of life in our Family. I would like to mention some of these initiatives by name.

The Campaign of the Pilgrim Mother possesses the greatest strength, as I have discovered in discussions on the sidelines of the Synod of Bishops. The "*Madrugadores*" (early risers) in Latin America, and the "Men's Rosary" in Brazil bring thousands of men together every week at the shrine and in parish churches for a time of prayer together. The missions conducted by the youth and families in Latin America have already taken hold also in Europe. In many countries communities and sections of the Movement have started social and pedagogical projects.

In addition there are many little missionaries whom no one mentions by name, but whom God sees. These are the people who carry out their duties faithfully out of love. They are the people who place their hidden contributions to the capital of grace in the jar in the shrines. They are those who deliberately don't want to be mentioned, because they do everything very quietly and with deep joy for the Blessed Mother and for Christ.

The Christians of the future will be a missionary Christians if they want to retain their faith in the opposing wind of society. We are forced to do this by the world in which we live. It challenges us to be witness and to confess our faith. To start with, missionary work requires us to overcome ourselves in many ways. It is like jumping into cold water. Then our hearts are transformed. Our uncertainty dissolves and our hearts are set free. In all humility we grow in self-awareness, in trust in God and the certainty that Christ and the Blessed Mother want to go with us to the people around us.

Let us look at the root of our missionary spirit. It is our covenant. It is the glance of the Blessed Mother. Her eyes tell us that she knows us and love us. Our answer is to give ourselves to her. It is a covenant of love. The source of every mission is love that takes hold of the heart and the whole person. That is the calling we hear when we are talking to Mary in the shrine. She is the Great Missionary; she is looking for covenant partners to carry out her mission.

During the vigil at the opening of the Year of Faith St Peter's Square filled with flambeau torches. Catholic Action had called for a torchlight march. It reminded me of the torchlight march of the young men to Rome a few years ago. In the meantime the Schoenstatt Young Men all over the world have united to form a missionary generation. They chose fire as their symbol. Today we all went to enter into this missionary current. Each of us may add the flaming torch of our hearts so that the fire grows in size, and so that it can be seen far and wide and set many human hearts on fire.

I now declare the Year of the Missionary Current opened.

Translation: Mary Cole, Manchester, England