

# Life generates and enkindles life: A few tips

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Articles that appear in schoenstatt.org are written for the **readers**, not for the organizers of events. They do not replace chronicles or minutes of meetings.

Whatever serves to enkindle life in the readers is suitable for an article. Whatever has moved or touched someone so strongly that they take the time to report on it will most probably enkindle new life, or motivate and inspire life.

To write an article **is a service to someone else's life**; it is a genuine service that shares with others the river of life and grace generated by the covenant of love in a definite historical and geographical setting.

## **1. Observe and observe again**

Each article begins with an observation. To observe means to allow oneself to be touched by life, to take note of stories and the expressions of life, and to be fascinated by the life generated by the various manifestations and possibilities of the covenant of love. To observe means having an eye for whatever moves and interests people, including the details of their lives. To observe as a journalistic attitude means being prepared to take a back seat and allow oneself to be surprised by the dynamic manifestations of life.

*Practical tips:*

- Observe what is happening from the perspective of a participant, not an organiser.
- As you observe what is happening, relate it inwardly to someone.
- Observe what is happening from a definite perspective: Not everything, but what is observed has to be passed on intensively and authentically.

## **2. What to observe: real life**

Since the 18 October is a life-process, which becomes tangible in the shrine, Schoenstatt's history can be compared to a river of life. Life-processes, rivers of life, move us and touch us inwardly. Life is enkindled by life – that is how Fr Kantenich built up Schoenstatt.

As Christians and Schoenstatters we are convinced that God and the Blessed Mother are at work. Admittedly, private revelations are extremely rare occurrences. So we describe God's and the Blessed Mother's actions in what we observe, and leave it to the reader to discover the actions of God and the Blessed Mother in what we write.

***In order to observe and write about life-processes, the following applies:***

- Don't concentrate so much on the organisation, but on the motivation
- Don't concentrate on the form, but on the spirit
- Don't write about an abstract idea, but actual life
- Don't write about theory, quote examples from life
- Don't teach, relate experiences
- Don't concentrate on the thoughts, but on the people
- Don't emphasise duty, but generosity
- Don't try to write a report, tell a story
- Don't concentrate on what someone should be doing, but on what I want to do
- Don't highlight good intentions and resolutions, but their application in life
- Don't give the details of the programme, relate what moves the heart.

This is important for observing what is happening, but also for composing the article. This approach is diametrically the opposite to traditional journalism and requires a lot of rethinking, although it is in keeping with "new journalism" (even though it was developed and applied by Fr Kenterich right at the beginning of the twentieth Century).

### **3. We observe with personal interest and a selfless attitude**

Writing an article can be compared with a birth. It requires that we take a personal interest and have a selfless attitude. Only when the event I am describing has passed through my heart will it awaken life.

As a reporter I allow the reader, who can't be present and for whom I am observing what is happening, to use my eyes, ears, mouth and heart.

*Tip:* The grammatical form for observations is the third person unless you are dealing with something that calls for a distinctively personal report in which the observer is at the same time the one who is generating life.

### **4. What to write: Stories, not sermons**

Each experience is genuine and true. It is possible to share and pass on experiences, but you can't copy them. Experiences and life-process have a direct effect, they don't usually need to be commented upon.

Wherever possible pass on the core message through real stories or observed experiences. In this way real life is passed on, and not slogans, theories, ideologies or moral sermons.

Stories and examples allow the reader the freedom to be touched and to respond, or not. Readers may find it "fascinating for others", or for themselves, they may pick up the enthusiasm and be inspired and motivated by what they read.

Sermonising ("and the moral of the story is ...") destroy life processes and should be absolutely avoided.

### **5. How to write: with humility and joy – linked up and spanning borders**

We write articles with the same attitude with which we offer every apostolic endeavour: with humility and joy in the attitude of the Magnificat.

No event exists in isolation. Thinking and reports that span national boundaries and the sections of the Movement add weight and effect to every article.

*Tip:* Every author should also be a reader.

[See also: Concept of communication at schoenstatt.org](http://schoenstatt.org)

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