

# Pontifical High Mass

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presided by the Apostolic Nuncio in Germany

**Archbishop Jean-Claude Périsset,**

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on October 18, 2009 at 10 :30 a.m.

in the Pilgrim Church in Vallendar-Schoenstatt

on the occasion of the

**95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Founding of the Schoenstatt Movement**

(The 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time: [Cycle B]: Isaiah 53:10-11; Hebrews 4:14-16; Mark 10:35-45)

Official Transcript of the Spoken Word<sup>1</sup>

*If he gives his life as an offering for sin,  
he shall see his descendants in a long life... (Isaiah 53:10)<sup>2</sup>*

## **SERMON**

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The First Reading of today's Liturgy, taken from the fourth servant song of the Prophet Isaiah, offers us a key to understanding Christ's mission as the Savior of the world as well as opening perspectives concerning the activity of his disciples in the mission of the Church. Why? Firstly, because Christ and the Church form one entity, just as the Apostle Paul illustrates in his letter to the Colossians when he writes: "*He*" - meaning Christ - "*is the head of the body, but the body is the Church*" (Colossians 1:18); and secondly, because Christ himself invites his disciples: "*Whoever wishes to come after me must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.*" (Mt 16:24), and thirdly, because Christian life - united with Christ - is the sacrifice that we bring before God, as the Apostle Paul writes to the Ephesians: *So be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and handed himself over for us as a sacrificial offering to God for a fragrant aroma.* (Ephesians 5:1).

Today's celebration - the 95th anniversary of the founding of the Schoenstatt Movement – in which members worldwide participate, is an excellent opportunity to look back in appreciation and to reflect on the activity of the Schoenstatt Movement. The Movement gives gratitude for the charisma of Father Joseph Kentenich, who in faithfulness to God's grace, called it into existence. The story of his life relates - as with most of the Founders in the Church, but not exclusively to those who founded Orders! - the admonition which we have just heard from Jesus to his disciples. The cross, which was laid upon his shoulders more often by Church authorities, belongs to the followers of Christ when we surrender ourselves to His Church. This allows us to reap rich fruit today from his sacrifice and his fidelity to Christ. Moreover, as we now celebrate this special occasion, we are invited, under the protection of Mary, to follow in his footsteps along the same path of redemption and renewal.

1. Every anniversary - like the one the Schoenstatt Movement celebrates today - reminds us of an event that we not only gladly remember, but that should also become an incentive for us in the future. Returning to the roots of a Movement does not simply mean going back, rather it relates much more to its current effectiveness – and where necessary and possible - complying to new developments in addition to testing its existing authenticity while looking back at its origin, so as to strengthen the initiatives of the Movement.

The event referred to by this day of remembrance, is part of a "*Chronos*", meaning that it is linked to a certain moment in the passage of time and in this sense, an historical event. Exactly 95 years ago, on October 18, right here in Schoenstatt, Fr. Kentenich addressed the young men whom he had gathered to form a Marian Sodality for the first time - probably without being fully aware of the historical significance of this happening.

This past occurrence also contains the character of a "*Kairos*" - a moment of grace: as an event of the Church, in the Church, and for the Church. In the Second Epistle of Peter, we read: *But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years like one day. (2 Peter 3:8)*. One further reference to this first dimension of the Schoenstatt Movement: the founding of the Schoenstatt Movement is an ecclesial event, which means a human event or a human act, inspired by the grace of God.

The second dimension - after time - is geographic: for instance in using a map, one needs at least two coordinates to find a specific location. Yes, Schoenstatt is here in the Rhine

Valley, surrounded by hills of the Westerwald; the Schoenstatt Movement however, is prevalent throughout the world. A special feature lies in the fact that there are in existence almost 200 Marian Chapels, built as faithful replicas of the Original Schoenstatt Shrine. In no way does this fact reflect a type of “magical thinking”, as if these material elements would presume to take the leading role in the spirituality of the Movement. Still, it is helpful to us humans, when we have certain fixed identifications or customs that make us feel at home. In this sense, it is understandable that the members of the Schoenstatt Movement find the same Shrine and the same Marian image at their local centers, thus allowing them to feel at home wherever they are and share their spirituality with others.

What the patriarch Jacob said about the local temple by calling it “*Beth-El*” meaning “God’s House” as he made his way to Laban after having his dream on the outskirts of Luz, applies here as well: “*In solemn wonder he cried out: ‘How awesome is this shrine! This is nothing else but an abode of God, and that is the gateway to heaven!’*” (Gen. 28, 17). Even more than just the place of Jacob’s dream, the Shrine may be considered a gate of heaven, because Mary herself is also thus named in the Litany of Loreto as “*Gate of Heaven*” and “*Golden House*”.

There still remains a third element for consideration if the Schoenstatt Movement is to be fully delineated: that is, its specific density. “*Density*” is a term found in many different areas: in the natural sciences, in modern electronic imaging, it is also used in literature when one speaks about the density of a text, and a term equally valid in the fields of philosophy and theology when used to compare the essence of God, angels, and human beings.

In the sphere of the Church, the Schoenstatt Movement has established its own density and therefore has found its place therein. Now it depends on its members to see to it that this density – its characteristic properties, its charisma – is maintained and promoted in other ecclesial organizations by accordingly fostering adaptable forms.

2. To be able to grasp your responsibilities as members of the Schoenstatt Movement in the Church and for the Church, it is helpful and important to always orientate yourselves on the place of origin and examine your roots. What did Fr. Kentenich do for the mission of the Church by founding the Marian Congregation and later the Movement – what has he achieved?

One thing was particularly important to him: using the necessary means to promote the Christian life in today's society. As a recognized educator, Father Kentenich outlined a pedagogy in order to intensify the Christian education of the members of the Movement. The charisma of the Movement is clarified by this special quality and therefore also demands diverse and appropriate instruction within their various initiatives. For that reason the Schoenstatt Movement is always Catholic, meaning that it is adaptable to different cultures and implants itself without losing its basic element of unity.

Educational achievement involves a great responsibility. It can by no means entail utilizing the advancement of knowledge for the perpetuation of power, because the victims will be deliberately viewed as of no consequence. As far as the word etymological is concerned, the educator is someone who leads, accompanies and guides the child in the right direction. He or she challenges the responsibility of the person concerned, and supports the development of the learners abilities. For this, the educator needs wisdom and patience, as a Sister of St. Vincent once told us as seminarians during an orientation for her internship class in catechetical training: *"One doesn't tend a plant for self-satisfaction, but in order to give it a chance to bloom."*

Do we not have in Christ himself, the best model of a Teacher who engaged his audience through stories, as the Evangelist Mark asserts: *"Without parables he did not speak to them, but to his own disciples he explained everything in private."* (Mark 4:34). This methodology of Jesus corresponds perfectly with his approach to share in our human existence, as the Apostle Paul writes in his letter to the Philippians: *"Who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, coming in human likeness..."* (Philippians 2, 6f). In the Second Reading taken from the Letter to the Hebrews, we heard something similar.

Consequently, our reflection has led us to our deepest roots: to Christ, our Savior, and the source of our mission in the Church. *"Do whatever He tells you."* (John 2:5), Mary exclaims to us today, as she once did to the servants at Cana. She is our patroness, our mother as Mother of the Church. She will be – just as with Fr. Kentenich - at our side, so that we may follow the will of her Son.

Amen!

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<sup>1</sup> English Translation by Sr. M. Angela Macari, Schoenstatt International

<sup>2</sup> Bible Quotations taken from The New American Bible: