

Opening the Year of the Shrine Current

Message of Fr Heinrich Walter on 18 October 2011

We are looking at the shrine with the eyes of our Father and Founder. In the Founding Document his eyes of faith saw that God wanted to start something new here. He asked Mary to sanctify this simple place with her presence. He connected this process with the programme: Speeding up our self-sanctification and thus transforming the chapel into a place of grace!

The shrine has become the Blessed Mother's great workshop. This is her workshop where she educates apostles; it is her school of love for "new people" and for our communities. Through the covenant of love we as a Family become a holy space for our times, a living shrine for all peoples. Life around the shrines all over the world tells us about three experiences. Let us place these experiences in the context of the challenges facing our epoch.

In the shrine we find a home, we are at home

God is not an idea, he is a person in Jesus Christ. He had a Mother with whom he personally experienced what it is to be at home. Mary supported him throughout his way through life until the foundation of the Church. The whole mystery of redemption becomes an experienced reality here when we converse with Mary. God comes very close to us. This makes this place holy, along with our home and place of work. God lives among us. In Mary he turns towards us. We find a home where we are understood, where we are loved and can learn to love. A home is formed through the first and most basic experiences of our lives. If we are loved, we put down roots, we want to remain there. If we love something, we look after it carefully and with great respect and tender care.

Finding a home is a key process in our times. In everyday life it is what Fr Kentenich called the cultural question of our epoch. This experience has to be seen in the context of the great challenge of migration and globalisation, as well as the preservation of creation. Each day thousands of people leave their homes. On our streets and in our towns and cities we encounter people from every culture. Who of us knows the inner suffering of the many people who have been uprooted? They lack the will to live when their roots have been severed. The consequences set their stamp on the lifestyle and social coexistence of people, and the way we deal with the goods of this earth.

(In Spanish)

In the Year of the Shrine Current we want to deepen our experience of being at home. Of course we hear the cries of the millions of people who are physically and psychologically homeless. We think here of the immigrants. We can call to mind the pictures of thousands of refugees. It cannot leave us indifferent. We want to bring

Mary into the picture. We personally want to be a Family that offers them a home. Mary needs our hospitality so that she can offer a home to these people. This happens in our home shrine, it happens also through the Pilgrim Mother and above all in our heart shrines. So the grace of a home has a divine and a human face. Many of us do great work through our open hearts, through projects and initiatives. The right to be near the Blessed Mother in the shrine and in our Family is a contribution we make for the people in our turbulent times of migration and global change.

In the shrine we experience transformation, healing and conversion

(In English)

We know about superficiality and indifference in our surrounding. We know physical and emotional hurts. Everyone has his wounds. Testimonies give us courage to begin anew and to bring everything to the Blessed Mother: A mother recounts, "When the Pilgrim MTA comes into our house, the atmosphere changes every time. Then we talk differently with each other." The story of our vocation is a story of transformation in our hearts. Here we find the highest quality of love represented in Mary, and she wants to lead us to it.

The shrine is the cradle of sanctity as the Founding Document says. This is not only true for our youth who carry a great idealism in their hearts. Their radicalism keeps us older ones awake, too. During this year may we recognize when and where there is a need of a turn in our life, to come closer to the will of God. Those personal steps purify and sanctify the realm of our family so that Mary may touch the hearts of people through our common witness.

We bring this experience when we enter into dialogue with the world around us. Behind the indifference and arbitrariness we encounter there is often a hunger for more. We know unredeemed people, we know about the suffering and need in clinics, orphanages and slums. We hear about anxiety and a sense of inferiority, of envy and hatred. Even between the Churches and Christians there is need for reconciliation, transformation and healing so that the world may believe.

If we believe in the power of transformation, we have to take this need and suffering in people into our prayer and into the shrine. However, the capital of grace means for us offering practical help and social actions. The grace of transformation through the Blessed Mother needs our hands and feet for actions and gestures people can understand.

(In Spanish)

In the shrine our hearts are touched and we are sent out as apostles to carry out our mission

Klaus came directly from the *Misiones* in Emdingen to take part in the Vigil with our Holy Father in Freiburg. Balancing on his friend's shoulders he lifted high the picture of the Queen of the Apostles, the Great Missionary. This photo went round the world

and is a symbol of our motto: Your Covenant – our Mission. Speeding up our self-sanctification is closely connected with apostolic fruitfulness. That is the goal of all sanctification, because we are an Apostolic Movement. In the past few years we have been given many such initiatives. The living flambeau torch of the *Misiones* constantly receives new bearers. This is a symbol of our apostolic attitude. Activism is not the point. Mary gives us an awareness of the problems and concerns of our people. She helps us to understand where and how God wants to use us as his instruments. We allow ourselves to be led by God's loving Providence.

Some of us were able to experience the actual ecclesial context in Rome yesterday. Our Holy Father sent out representatives of more than 150 communities from St Peter's to carry out a new evangelisation in the Church and world. Let us recall the continental mission which the Church in Latin America has started. It is a great concern of the Pope. This why he has convoked a Synod of Bishops for October 1912 to discuss the content and ways of a new evangelisation.

The shrine current is our contribution to the fruitfulness of the Church in the face of the challenges of our epoch. Our little shrine, the daughter shrines in other countries, the thousands of home shrines and the three hundred thousand Pilgrim MTAs are closely connected with the world in which we live. We not only have a shrine in which the Blessed Mother is at work. In a living covenant of love the Schoenstatt Family is a living shrine for the peoples of our earth.

Dear Schoenstatt Family, I hereby declare the Year of the Shrine opened. May the streams of grace flow!

Translation of the original English and Spanish passages: schoenstatt.org