

**Address of our Holy Father during the Audience for the  
International Schoenstatt Movement  
Castelgandolfo 9.9.2004**

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the International Schoenstatt Movement!

1. I am happy to welcome you here to Castelgandolfo. The dedication of the shrine *Matri Ecclesiae* had brought you to the Eternal City in these days. The building of an international Schoenstatt Centre in Rome reveals and deepens the attachment of your Movement to the successor of Peter and to our holy Mother the Church.

I thank the President of the General Presidium most sincerely for his kind words. They show how in their love for the Church the various branches of your Movement allow themselves to be enkindled for the apostolate in the world of today and for the ideal of Christian holiness.

2. Your Movement is growing in its responsibility for society and for permeating social conditions out of the spirit of Christianity. Time and again I have tried to awaken this responsibility for the world in our Church. So I want to strengthen this commitment in you, which can take on many and varied forms. It includes the very practical defence of life precisely when it is endangered and threatened by a spreading culture of death, which shows most terribly in abortion. In this all believers are challenged to be "signs of light", which the world constantly needs.

Schoenstatt's endeavours are particularly directed to the family as the fundamental cell of the Church, of culture and society. Following your founder's advice, you give the Cross and the picture of Mary a place of honour in your homes, so that they become "home shrines of the Church" (cf Apostolic Letter *Familiaris Consortio*, 55), where Mary works as Mother and Educator. So Mary continues to come to the people as the "Pilgrim Mother of God", that they may experience her motherly help and love.

Our Church requires a re-vitalization of the life of faith and apostolic action. This commitment unites the many ecclesial communities and spiritual movements which the Spirit of God has awakened on the threshold of the third millennium. They are an answer of Providence to the many challenges of our times.

3. Your new shrine in Rome is dedicated to Mary, the Mother of the Church. May the *Ancilla Domini* accompany and guide you in your service to the Church, so that the features of the *Mater Ecclesiae* may become ever more clearly visible in the Body of Christ.

Therefore, with all my heart I impart to you and all who belong to your worldwide Family my apostolic blessing.