

And what does God want to give our nation through Schoenstatt and through you at this time?

Sermon by Fr. Juan Pablo Catoggio

Dear brothers and sisters,

1. We are celebrating the 15th Anniversary of our Sion Shrine. This time Providence made us “run”, because of the rain, to the Church of God the Father; our Shrines are intimately united, precisely each one in its own way, but together by necessity, they are Father’s Shrines: Father’s Nazareth and Father’s Sion.

What does the Shrine signify for us?

It has given and continues to give us a center for returning, a gathering place to meet and not lose our foundation. It is home where we land time and again to give Mary our weariness, confide our worries and projects, and where we consult her to see if all is going well, where we return to regain our strength. In the Shrine, God calls those He has chosen, and in this way He has freely and with generosity given - each a vocation.

The Shrine is our home and our school; it is our north, our compass, our source. What is the secret of all this? It is the Shrine, the presence of the living God among us, the strength of Mary in the Covenant of Love with her in the Shrine. I have said it many times: “For Schoenstatters, the Shrine is our ‘home,’ no one lacks a home, we are all ‘owners’ of the Shrine.”

2. At the beginning of this month about ninety delegates from thirty-two countries gathered in Schoenstatt to exchange ideas and to plan 2014.

They began with this question:

What does God want to give the Church and the world through Schoenstatt at the present time and in the future, not only 100 years ago?

I would like to make this question more concrete:

- What does God give you through Schoenstatt?
- And what do I give Schoenstatt?
- And what does God want to give our nation through Schoenstatt and through you at this time?

Let us set aside the first two questions and reflect on the third question. Only in this way, as Saint Paul said: “leaving the past behind and moving forward.” (Philippians, 3), can we celebrate the Schoenstatt centennial, not by *writing* history, but *making* history in the future.

We are living in difficult and demanding times: the global financial crisis threatens a recession and unemployment of great magnitude, not even the

atmosphere of change and hope that Barack Obama brought seem to calm the spirit -and least of all business. Many are torn between illusions and fear. Whatever provocation or simple excuse serves to inflame violence and set off new wars,

in our nation it seems that we cannot or we do want to realize it. Behind the power struggles the real needs and the truly needy are set aside. We imagine enemies and conspirators and we cover up the real problems. And that is how we go - almost frivolously as if politics has become frivolous! Where are we going? Who knows?

We need to think. We are disintegrated because of lack of center, we are faced by the lack of a project and common dream, we are without direction by lack of a hand that will open horizons and show us the way, we are without values that are worthwhile because of the lack of credible and convincing role models, we are without strength because of a lack of men and women of the caliber of the circumstances, we lack leaders, we lack, someone in charge.

4. This is how we are approaching the bicentennial of our nation next year, what does God want to give us through Schoenstatt and through you to the Church, and the world of today?

Let us listen to these words:

“It is a mission that is born of the era, it is a mission for the era. Whoever wants to understand Schoenstatt, should understand the era. Each one of us experiences it: we live in an era that is like volcano. It is feared - and minute by minute there is danger - that it will explode and that lava will bury a part of the world on its path...Fear and troubling reign everywhere. The people sigh out of fear... Fear! And moved by this fear we see masses of men who turn to the economy. The anxiety of the infinite finds no satisfaction. Christ is no more, but the interior impetus towards the infinite does not remain silent. For this reason it goes toward the economy, towards the world of the economy. And moved by the same attitude they throw themselves to the pleasures of this world. And the result? We feel it: the heart continues to be empty, infinitely empty...Yes, renewal of the world, in an era in which everything is in crisis, in which a personal God has died and because of this the personality of many is destroyed, in an era in which humanity slips into the abyss. In spirit we see a small Shrine, much smaller than the great Shrines...It does not attract people who are in search of comfort, rather it attracts men and women who want to intervene in history and who are not afraid to set high demands on themselves. In spirit we see one and I don't know how many houses, the Provincial House of the Sisters, a university...And all those buildings: what do they want to accomplish” To mold men and women who will vigorously intervene in destiny, in the history of the present world.”

These are the words of our prophet, when he blessed the cornerstone of the Father Shrine in 1949. How timely they are!

We want to help to build the Argentinean bicentennial; like we want to do wherever God calls us to forge his kingdom: in Paraguay and Uruguay, in Italy, or in Nigeria.

In Schoenstatt God gives us a dream, a project for the Nation of God, of a new nation.

He gives us a home where we can always go and recharge our strength.

He gives us a school of new leaders, of new “parents of the nation.”

He gives us vocations of all kinds, which strongly consecrate themselves to the service of his kingdom.

He gives us the strength of the Covenant, the strength of that God to whom Mary sings in the Magnificat: for his mercy, for his power, and for his loyalty, that for God who fulfills his promises, and for He for whom nothing is impossible.

In the movie *Bella*, Verstegeu begins with an excellent phrase, “If you want to make God laugh tell him about your plans.” _ God laughs at our plans, they are little things for him. We, who in Schoenstatt learned in the often difficult language of Providence, can also say: if you want to make God laugh, tell him about your plans, if you want to be amazed, ask him about his plans!

5. The Pope proposed a Pauline Year, so that the Church, the Christians, could be stirred up with the passion of this great saint who laid the foundation for the origins. Schoenstatt was born and grew under his flag. Father did not absolutely identify himself with anyone as much as he did with him. Paul is the Man with a great passion for Christ, by whom he felt loved to the extreme, “who loved me and he gave himself for me” - and for this reason Christ is his life! Paul is the apostle and missionary par excellence: “I cannot but preach the gospel! I am all for all.” He who gave himself as his Master did for his. From the jail, Father told us to read Philipians!!
He is the universal man: heart of Paul, heart of the world.

6. In this spirit we want to face things and share with you, as usual, our projects and great anxieties:
 - As you can see, it is a decisive year in this adventure of accompanying our brothers in the founding of Schoenstatt in Nigeria. Two are here for the first time for a visit. Two will come at the end of the year to stay for a couple of years in our region to live and to learn the work with the movement in Schoenstatt Family of Paraguay and Argentina. And as you know, Father Andrés will depart (to Nigeria) after Easter for three years. Let us all go with him - he, you, all of us.

- This year we will have two priestly ordinations, on May 2nd in Córdoba. How many vocations will the Blessed Mother give during the course of the bicentennial, of the year 2010? It depends on you and of us. We are offering you a holy card for the 15th Anniversary of the Shrine with the prayer for vocations: Perhaps we can especially offer our Capital of Grace in the Shrine during the first week of every month.
- And we want to ask God to grant us the generous and simple attitude of Father Enrique. This is the spirit we want for Sion and for all our Schoenstatt Family: “Here I am, Lord, send me!”

When the Founding father died in 1968, Father Enrique, who at that time was the first superior of our community, represented us at his funeral. He placed a little box with soil from Argentina in the coffin and a short letter that read: “Beloved Father, receive this soil from Argentina which you visited years ago, that you profoundly loved and that anxiously awaited you. We send it wrapped in the flag so that it will speak to you of our sorrow at this time, of our gratitude for your life and for our desires. Now that you cannot come and many will not see you, we want to be bearers of your person, imitators of you and we want to continue your work...we want to be your transparency and we want to transmit your spirit to this land serving the Family, the Church and the people of Argentina in a priestly manner”
 “Here I am Lord, send me”

Celebration of Sion, 02-22-09