

Welcome – Planning Conference (J.K. House 01.02.09)

Dear Movement Leaders, Sisters working in the Movement,

and national representatives of our Movement,

on behalf of the General Presidium I welcome you all warmly. We have awaited your arrival with longing; the teams have prepared everything with great love. Please feel at home. We have often heard when visiting some countries: *mi casa es su casa* – my home is your home. Today we can answer: *nuestras casas son sus casas* – our home is your home. *Bienvenidos*, most welcome!

Father is gathering his worldwide leaders into his home. This already begins the preparations for the great jubilee 2014. We look with one eye towards Davos in Switzerland. There the elite of the world economy have gathered. They have far greater competences in their ranks, they have political and economic power. We keep them in view as they manage the world crisis while we look at the same world from another perspective. We are also concerned with bringing about a better world, a more moral world, borne by humility towards God and solidarity in a mutual covenant of love. Davos has a disadvantage – it doesn't have our father to give them prophetic orientation. This advantage is an obligation for us in these days to do high quality work in responsibility to him and the whole Movement.

We are our father's closest collaborators. We are his leaders. He welcomed us outside with open arms. He has opened up his house to us. His house is our house. We are at home with him. The eldest amongst us will say: At that time, when we were in Rome in 1965, it was simply different. He interpreted the Council to us, he united all the spiritual currents that were alive in our ranks, he gave us security in interpreting the times, he led us and he educated us. We miss him. The younger participants have not got to know him in this way. They have found a way to meet him and they say: He lives in us. His charism is alive in us. He is at work through us. He interprets world events through us. We take his work into the future.

Dear leaders,

as a Family we bear his charism. He only has us. He is proud of each one of us. His legacy lives on in us. In family-like trust we can show one another the life that has grown, all that we have come to know, as well as the open questions. In a family, what matters is that we complement one another. No one has everything, but each has been given a share in his charism, and only together are we big and strong. After visiting many countries I have always returned to the original shrine enriched. The original charisms of the local Families are our great riches. We may complement one another. In my mind's eye I see before me the warm love for our father expressed in the statue in Querataro, the service of reconciliation in Bujumbura, the influence of young families around the shrine of Los Pinos, the social and political responsibility in Asuncion, the pedagogical passion in the many schools, the competence in building up marriage and the family, the missionary verve of thousands of young people in the Misiones in this month, and the will to build

shown at the “Forum for the Future” in Germany. We want to hear these testimonies. They show that our father’s charism is alive in the Family.

We are beginning a **week of federal leadership of our Movement**. The authority of the founder, the way he formed life and led us, has no successor. We don’t have a President with the same authority as the founder, as the Fokolare Movement has. Fr Kenterich wanted to give the world another model that he copied from life. He conceived of his work as a federal entity. This includes that we are authoritative in principle, but democratic in application. The International Presidium has the ultimate responsibility for Schoenstatt’s charism and the unity of the Family. However, it does not have the right to act. It is the co-ordinating body for what you, who bear the responsibility with the national centres of the Movement, set in motion. Our father led by means of moral authority and spiritual currents. It is a real art. He left us the structural principle, which necessarily has to work with only the most necessary obligations, and requires a great deal of freedom. What is decisive, however, is constant cultivation of the spirit, so that vitality and constant renewal are ensured. We know that our federal structure sounds really good, but it is a great challenge. It can block life or paralyze it, instead of generating vitality and dynamic life. We are on the way to learning how to exercise it better. So I am happy that most of the members of the Presidium could be present. We have the unique opportunity to listen to the testimony of the life in 33 countries. We can spend a week in more direct communication with one another. This will prepare the ground so that after the conference the Presidium can draw from what we have experienced together in order to confirm the ideas and suggestions that have been worked out, and clarify open questions.

We want to **make use of the opportunities offered by a federal structure and way of doing things**. Through it our father wanted to achieve an increased fullness of life – more vitality; he wanted to open the door to the stronger life and make it possible for initiatives to be taken at the grassroots level. All this will be achieved in the spirit of generosity. Genuine life comes from within and from small cells. The multiplicity will give rise to creative tension. This is also how he conceived of the courses in our Federations and Institutes. This opportunity will function if we give one another an advance of trust. Each of us wants to give our best out of love for the Family. None of us can do everything, we need one another. Each one adds his or her share of the charism, his or her piece of our father’s prophetic mantle. May the Holy Spirit drive from us our own claims to power. Then we can deal with one another without fear and enkindle one another with the fire of our mission.

At the beginning of these days let us ask the Blessed Mother for **the following attitudes in the spirit of the Cenacle**.

On the feast-day tomorrow may she give us this spirit when we go on pilgrimage to the original shrine.

- Respect for the witness of the life that has lived in the sections of the Movement and the countries.
- Respect for national and cultural originality.

- The attitude that it is not the numerical size and nationality that matters, but the gifts of the Spirit and the life that has been brought about by grace.
- Trust that reaches deeper than every preconceived opinion, every suspicion and every prejudice.
- Attentive listening that will help us to pick up what God is wanting to say to us through the others.
- The courage and self-confidence to express what the voice of the Holy Spirit is saying to me.
- Love in our covenant that sets us free from our own ideas and needs in order to serve the common good.

Dear Family of our father,

We live in the covenant of love with Mary, and through her with the Triune God. May this week prove to us how deeply we live in a covenant of reciprocal love between nations and communities. Wherever Mary is, the Holy Spirit is close by. May he lead us, show us the way, and give us open hearts and our father's courage.

A warm welcome to our father's house!