



**ADDRESS OF HIS HOLINESS FATHER FRANCIS
TO THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE GENERAL CHAPTER OF THE SCHOENSTATT FATHERS**

*Consistory Hall
Thursday, September 1, 2022*

Dear Schoenstatt Fathers:

I thank the new Superior General, Father Alexandre Awi Mello, for his kind words, as well as for his service as secretary in the Dicastery for the Laity, Family and Life. And for other previous services, since we have known him since he was a "young colt", he was my secretary in Aparecida, then my guide during the visit to Rio de Janeiro, and then my secretary causae. Thank you for your collaboration during these last years in communion with Peter's Successor, in favor of the whole Church. I wish you a fruitful ministry in this new responsibility entrusted to you. I would also like to thank Catoggio, you are returning to Africa. Thank you, thank you.

Dear Fathers of the Schoenstatt community, I pray to the Holy Spirit to make fruitful all the work you have done during the General Chapter.

The mystery of the redemption that Our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for all humanity and the whole world has the characteristic note of the Hebrew word *berith*, pact, covenant. The blood of Jesus shed on the Cross and offered as a sacrifice of love for all of us (cf. Mk 14:24; 1 Cor 11:25) has established an everlasting relationship between God and mankind: a covenant of love, a covenant of salvation.

And you, dear brothers, perform a beautiful service for the Church and the world, especially by accompanying families in the various events and difficulties they are going through, proclaiming to all members the beauty of the "Covenant of Love" that the Lord has established with his people. Today there are many marriages in crisis, young people who are tempted, elderly people who are forgotten, children who suffer. And you are the bearers of a message of hope in these dark situations that every stage of life goes through. And this is progressing a bit in conjunction with the erosion of human values, an erosion that is being savagely carried out by ideological colonizations of all kinds.

The world increasingly demands that we provide answers to the questions and concerns of the men and women of our time. We often see that the nature of the family is under attack by various ideologies, which shake the foundations that support the personality of the human being and, in general, of the whole of society. Moreover, within families, there is often a gap in the understanding between the elderly and the young. Recently, in my Wednesday catechesis, I stated that the covenant between the generations, that is, between the elderly and the young, is what can save humanity (cf. ***Catechesis of the General Audience***, 17 August 2022), since this preserves personal and family identity; we do not only inherit a genetic heritage or a surname, but above all we inherit the wisdom of what it means to be human, according to God's plan. The mystery of our redemption is therefore intimately linked to the experience of love in families. And let us not forget that, ultimately, faith is always transmitted through the dialect in families, through the elderly, through grandparents.

I am thinking of the model offered to us by the Holy Family, and especially by the Virgin Mary, who cares with tender and committed love for all her sons and daughters, especially the poorest, in body and spirit. In the beautiful hymn of the Magnificat, she proclaims the feats of the Lord, who "casts down the mighty from their thrones and exalts the lowly, fills the hungry with good things and sends the rich away empty" (Lk 1:52-53), referring to the promise, to the covenant made with "our fathers" in faith (cf. Lk 1:55). The Blessed Virgin Mary, venerated with great love by each of the members of the Schoenstatt community under the title "Mother Thrice Admirable," is a role model for everyone, encouraging us to build bridges based on fraternal charity and the sharing of goods with those most in need, while at the same time giving us the wisdom and courage to go out to meet those who have strayed from friendship with the Lord, to win them back with the testimony of the new life in Christ, which is characterized by mercy.

On my bedside table I have enthroned the image of Our Lady; this was done by Alexandre, and then, after fifteen days, he brought a crown to crown her. In other words, I got all your rituals

completed [of your 'sect', I have it myself (laughs)]. So that every time I go into my bedroom, the first thing I see is that, and I have to remember you.

I encourage you, dear brothers, to go forward in your apostolates, always renewing yourselves with the grace of the Holy Spirit and being courageous in opening new ways at the service of families, to make the beauty of the Covenant shine forth - Covenant, the beauty of the Covenant - established between God and mankind, with the spirituality and the experience of Christian values. May Our Lord Jesus Christ, through the mediation of the Mater Admirabilis, always grant all the members of the Schoenstatt community abundant fruits of holiness. May God bless you and please do not forget to pray for me. Thank you very much.

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