

Homily Father Alexandre Awi - Original Shrine March 5, 2023

Farewell and Inauguration of the Rector of the Original Shrine

The appointment of a new Rector for the Original Shrine is a **providential opportunity** to reflect on the role of the Original Shrine in our life as a Schoenstatt Family at the service of the Church. We want to express our gratitude for Father Pablo Pol's service during these three and a half years of dedication and entrust Father Ignacio Camacho's ministry for the next three years into the Blessed Mother's hands. But, above all, we want to become aware once again of the importance of this place of grace in our lives and "beyond".

Today's gospel could not be more appropriate! Divine Providence, on this second Sunday of Lent, gives us a fantastic text that has everything to do with our Schoenstatt Original Shrine. Even if we wanted to, we could not have chosen a better text! The transfiguration of the Lord - which according to tradition occurred on Mount **Tabor** - is nothing less than "the favorite idea" of our Father and Founder, Father Joseph Kentenich, when on October 18, 1914, he revealed to the sodalists:

"It seems to me that I can manifest to you a secret favorite idea. St. Peter, after having contemplated the glory of God on Tabor, exclaimed in rapture: "It is good to be here! Let us build three tents here!" These words come to my mind again and again, and I have often asked myself: Would it not be possible for our little sodality chapel to likewise become for us the Tabor on which the glory of Mary would be revealed? (...) All those who come here to pray shall experience the glory of Mary and confess: "It is good for us to be here! Here we will build our tents, here our favorite place." A bold thought, nearly too bold for the public, but not too bold for you."

These words found an echo in the hearts of the congregants and, more than 100 years later, they **continue to find an echo in our hearts**. This place - as well as all the more than 200 Schoenstatt Shrines scattered throughout the world - is our **Tabor**, our favorite place, from where Mary attracts and educates hearts to send them out on mission. In this Tabor we experience the glory of Christ and Mary, we have an encounter with them.

I come from a country, from a Schoenstatt Family, which is especially marked by the Tabor ideal. In his visits to Brazil, Father Kentenich left us the **Tabor as an ideal and mission**. There are **four elements** present in Father Kentenich's messages to our Family: *the biblical Tabor* (which we find in the Gospel), *the Shrine as Tabor* (as we read in the first founding document), *the Tabor of heroic childlikeness* (since the man who - like Jesus - has the experience of the

Tabor feels that he is a "beloved child" of the Father and is ready for heroism, even as far as the cross, given that the Tabor is the preparation for the passion of the Lord) and *the Tabor as mission* (to make the whole world a place where one can experience the glory of Christ and Mary, where one can live as a new man in the new society).

Therefore, today's Gospel invites us to **renew our awareness** that the Original Shrine - and with it the whole network of Schoenstatt Shrines (daughter shrines, home shrines, heart shrines) - is a Tabor, "where it is good to be", where we are welcomed, transformed and sent forth.

Let us remember that **Schoenstatt is not a movement that has a Shrine**, but a Shrine (a network of shrines) around which a movement has developed. The first thing is the Shrine, then comes the movement, the first thing is THIS Shrine, this Tabor! Then comes the whole movement, and then, as an "extension" of THIS shrine, the whole network of shrines. For the prophecy was fulfilled: this is "a place of grace, for our (Pallottine) house and the whole German Province and perhaps beyond". We, those present here, who come from the four corners of the world, but especially those who accompany us via the Internet, are the "beyond" of Father's prophecy.

Consequently, the **Rector of the Original Shrine** (and all those who collaborate with him) has as his mission the **same mission of the Original Shrine**: to be a Tabor for the whole world. The expression "It is good to be here" **is not limited to the physical walls** of this shrine. The "three tents" were "enlarged", "extended", as in the prophecy of Isaiah 54:2-3 (which is trending in these times of Synod): "Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch out the curtains of your tabernacles, spare not; lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For thou shalt spread out to the right hand and to the left; And your descendants will inherit the nations, and make the desolate cities inhabited."

The mission of the Original Shrine Rector (and all those who collaborate with him) is not limited to this physical place, but he must make **the message of this place reach the whole world**. In this sense, I want to thank Father Pablo Pol, his collaborators, Schoenstatt TV, the work of the "International Coordination of the Movement" (IKS) and all those who in recent years have made the Original Shrine a truly international shrine, all those who have helped to **"extend", to "enlarge the tents"** of this place. In this sense, the time of the pandemic was a providential gift that "accelerated" this process.

The mission of the Rector and his collaborators is the mission of the Shrine: firstly **to welcome**, to give spiritual shelter, to provide the personal encounter with Christ and Mary ("To welcome is to evangelize", is the motto of the Marian Shrine of Aparecida in Brazil), secondly, to help in the

spiritual transformation (by Eucharistic celebrations, confession, the spiritual accompaniment, the invitation to self-education and all the Schoenstatt pedagogy, being that the Capital of Grace is an excellent means in this regard), and third, the **apostolic sending forth** (what in Brazil we call "coming down from Tabor" to live the faith in the midst of the world).

Furthermore, I am convinced that the Original Shrine can **become a great world center of pilgrimage** - physical and virtual - like the great Marian shrines of the world. We know that it is "a **bold thought**, almost too bold for the public, but not too bold for you," Father Kentenich would say. But "whoever knows our Family's history will have no difficulty in believing that Divine Providence has special purposes" for this place. A place that wants to become ever more international, ever more a center of pilgrimage, ever more a center of irradiation of Schoenstatt's spirituality for the Church and society.

We have already **experienced this in recent years**: there was indeed a greater international projection of the Original Shrine (for example, Masses in Spanish, English, Portuguese and other languages), a greater outreach through the Internet (website and SchTV), worldwide Apostolates were held around the Shrine (to unite us as an international Schoenstatt Family, for example, the crowning of the Queen of Health, or during the "Weeks of the Original Shrine"), and our Shrine even became one of the places from which the rosary was prayed with Pope Francis, which was transmitted worldwide.

Schoenstatt is a shrine that has a movement. We are a Tabor that radiates and extends its tent to the world. We are called to be "**specialists in the pastoral care of shrines**". Surely, **we still have much to grow and learn** with others in order to fully fulfill our mission. But that does not diminish our mission. People need it, the world needs shrines, special places where Christ and Mary are present, places where we experience the power of being welcomed, inner transformation and apostolic sending forth. Do we believe in it? Let me end by paraphrasing our Founder:

I place this project "**confidently in your hands**" (especially in the hands of the Rector and his collaborators and I also commit myself to it), "as well as its fulfillment, and I will not hesitate to enter it into our chronicle. **Future generations may then pass their judgment upon us!** Will we reach our goal? As far as it depends on us," my dear brothers, "and I no longer pronounce that with uncertainty and doubt, but with complete confidence, none of us will allow anything to be lacking." May the Blessed Mother, from this Original Shrine and all her network of Schoenstatt Shrines, make our efforts fruitful. Nothing without you, Blessed Mother, nothing without us. Amen.

Summary:

The appointment of a new Rector of the Original Shrine is a providential opportunity to become aware once again of the importance of this place of grace in our lives and "beyond". The transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor is our Founder's "favorite idea" about this place. His words, more than 100 years later, continue to echo in our hearts. In fact, Schoenstatt is not a movement that has a Shrine, but a Shrine (the Original Shrine and its network of shrines) around which a movement has developed. For this reason, the Rector of the Original Shrine (and all those who collaborate with him) has as his mission the same mission of the Original Shrine: to be Tabor for the whole world. We thank all those who are making the Original Shrine a truly international shrine, all those who have helped to "enlarge the tents" of this place, so that it can become a great world center of pilgrimage and of irradiation of Schoenstatt's spirituality for the Church and society. We have already experienced this in recent years. We still have much to grow and learn with others, but the project is "in our hands". May the generations to come judge us!