



# United in Mary — on fire we go forward!

Based on the talk from  
Father Mark Niehaus, October 13, 2019

## United...

A motto is a tool used to remind us of certain truths. Just like little jingles remind us to buy one type of peanut butter, these reminders can help us stay focused on truths. In this case, what we as a Schoenstatt Family would like to work together on for the coming year.

Allow me to unpack the motto a little, particularly from the angle of **unity**.

Among the group that chosen to help us formulate the motto, unity was a word that came up numerous times. All agreed that unity was important for us. This year we want to have that experience of unity. And yet, what is unity? What does it really mean?

To begin with, we want to safeguard our Schoenstatt experience. Our unity is built out of our common Schoenstatt history. Of course we are not a simply a museum. As Pope Francis mentioned to our Schoenstatt Father community, we should not keep our charism in a jar on a shelf. Everything we do must have some of our Schoenstatt flavor. That is why we need to study our history and our Father's way of thinking to acquire the Schoenstatt perspective. Father Carlos Boskamp used the image of coffee with milk and sugar. It may have lots of milk and sugar but needs coffee to be coffee. Our Schoenstatt experience, too, can have lots of other things added but needs the coffee of the Shrine, our Covenant of Love and our Founder to be Schoenstatt experience.

Our **unity**, first of all, **comes out of our deep Schoenstatt history**. To some degree we most connect to the founding of our Movement, to the original stories and life, to the thinking and people who built Schoenstatt. To study the life of Father Kentenich and Joseph Engling, for example, helps us to share a common history and life. Naturally, this history moves closer to us as well, particularly in the life and stories of Father in Milwaukee during his exile.

Secondly, **we are united in our post-founder history**. We have lived over fifty years since Father Kentenich passed away. There are important moments of grace that mark how our Schoenstatt Family has grown and developed. Most notably was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our founding in 2014. Appreciating just how broad and diverse our Movement is, makes these moments of grace very important in our history and uniting us today.

With the canonization today of St. John Henry Newman, a man who inspired our Father in many ways, we learn that doctrine is not stagnant. This growing experience of faith makes **the study of our recent and local history a place of unity**. God's providence works now in our areas, with us in our strengths and weaknesses, in our gifts and difficulties. To know our present times and reality instructs us on the particular unity of today.

## Lack of Unity

The merely academic study of our Schoenstatt history, is probably not the reason that attracted us to the need to stress unity this year. I venture to say that we desire unity because of real needs we see in our Schoenstatt communities.

These needs somehow make unity difficult. Confronted by these disunities, we want to find ways to unite ourselves. If we work together, we are confident in the Covenant of Love that we can find unity.

There seem to be three areas that challenge our unity:

1. **Distances:** The first area is the reality of distances in our Schoenstatt communities.
  - There could be simply physical distance, some live in Oregon others in Florida.
  - This could be language and cultural differences, different customs, manners, and other expressions.
  - This is the easiest challenge to address.
  
2. **Differences:** This is part of our experience. All of us are different.
  - First of all, this can be because of the order of being. For example, 100 years ago, Father Kentenich discerned that women could be part of Schoenstatt. He noticed the difference and that their interest showed a place of Schoenstatt to grow. Such an order of being difference could be our vocations or nationalities.
  - Another area could be found in different political views.
  - Different people have different preferences. This does not make another person good or bad, just with different tastes. This is apparent with views on Pope Francis and liturgical opinions.
  
3. **Denial:** Part of the human experience is denial. This leads to a lack of acceptance!
  - We all have blind spots that we often deny. We may not see how we treat

certain people or do things that are perceived as mean. We others to help us to cover those spots and together our blind spots diminish.

- Where there is human community, there is always need for forgiveness. If we deny that Schoenstatt has forgiveness issues, then we will not grow. In seeing the truth that we have hurt others and been hurt by others we can apologize we need admit that we came out too strong here or there. We need to admit it and move on!
- We also need to count on the fact that there is personal and communal sin. It is part of the reality and of the experience. When we examine our conscience at night, we bring this aspect into it, the aspect of the community. At times, things become an issue because someone has expressed dislike for something and the rest agree, or the other way around.

## United in Mary

We have asked to be united in Mary! We are not simply with Mary, not next to her, under her, or above her. In our motto we are saying that we are *in* Mary. Like St. Paul, he speaks of living in Christ and that Christ lives in him. In the covenant of love, we live in Mary and Mary lives in us! All we do and are is Marian. For us, that means connecting all we serve in the Movement to the Mother of God.

Unity in Mary means to learn about each other and together make a personal connection to the Blessed Mother. This will often help us understand each other more. Technically, the Blessed Mother would not have to engage us or even like us. And yet, because God the Father wants her to, she wants to be with us, she likes and loves us. She wants to be here; She wants to be with you! The personal connection to the MTA, gives options to make up for something that may have been done incorrectly or even

something that was unhelpful. By bringing to Mary in the shrine, she can use that for benefit of all involved.

Here are some points that may help us, in Mary, **to build unity**:

- **Prudent honesty:** Sometimes it is necessary that we draw other's attention to our differences and what we deny. To be honest, at a prudent moment and with charitable words, we can look at things for what they are and move on.
  - **Joyful realism:** We live in the moment we are at now. This means with the people and strengths we have now. It is ok that we don't have the manpower to run as many meetings or do the same things done in past years. This realism is joyful because the Blessed Mother and the Holy Spirit can help us be creative with the people and resources we have today.
  - **Not to take ourselves seriously:** Unity is built easier when we do not take ourselves too seriously. Mistakes are part of ministry and when we can laugh at ourselves this is healthy and good. We do not have to be the perfect masterminds behind everything. We just trust and go forward. We just want to give the Blessed Mother all the possible opportunities to transform souls and transform the world.
- The covenant of love: celebrating it, renewing it.
  - Helping around and seeing the needs where we are.
  - Praying for each other in our groups, sharing our needs.
  - Songs that unite us in our ideals and in our Schoenstatt experience.
  - Draw our children and grandchildren into the Schoenstatt experience.
  - Taking responsibility for our centers and shrines and coordinating our work among ourselves.

## United On Fire

Unity also comes in the mission!

The Holy Spirit ignites the fire of the mission in me! Often the most effective way to build unity is by working together. Those areas that set our hearts on fire are fundamental. To have Mary stated directly in our motto is a wonderful chance to burn together for our Mother and Queen. Also, wherever Mary was on fire, we too are on fire. We know that she blazed with desire for her Son's mission.

If we want the Church to live and learn the experience of Schoenstatt we need to come from our most basic experience. Out the conviction that God is present in us, something we experience historically out of our Deep History, our Post Founder history and our life today. Life sets life on fire!

Our job is *in Mary*!

Where are the things that help unity grow?  
Where can we work together?

For example, for those of you gifted by living close to a daughter shrine, the gives us a natural place to be united. What can we do in the shrine? This is a unity aspect.

What are the unity strengths, when thinking of those in your area? What are the challenges, too? (from the public)

## United We Go Forward

All of us at some point, like St. Ignatius, will have to choose the standard, the flag we want to carry out into the world. Our flag is Marian. Schoenstatt wants us to move forward on fire with our mission, in deep union with our Lord.

It is our conviction that united in our MTA we want to be on fire with the mission we have received and make this experience a reality.▪