

Structure and Organization of the Schoenstatt Movement

1. Introduction

The diocesan or regional committee is part of the Schoenstatt movement, it is the guild that coordinates the branches of the Movement in a diocese or region; thus, to review the structure and the organization of Schoenstatt permits us to renew and remind us of the work that we do and in this way clarify our roles. It also permits us to disperse doubts and analyze situations.

The intention is that in the light of the organization and structure of Schoenstatt we may look back at our own actions and see what successes and difficulties we have experienced in the coordination or leadership that we do. For this reason we want to see what are our functions and attributions in the context of the organization of Schoenstatt.

2. Some aspects of the structure and organization of Schoenstatt

There is literature available that permits us to study in more detail the principles of the structure and organization of Schoenstatt. Here we want to look at several central points, concretely in two important criteria.

2.1. The importance of life

To speak about the structure and organization of the movement it should be said that this is the fruit of a long development, of years of observation and guidance on the part of Fr. Kentenich, especially as he guided the Sisters of Mary, and in a greater way all of the Family. For this reason, the organization of Schoenstatt is a fruit of life. Fr. Kentenich himself insisted that the forms and structures should be an expression of life and spirit and that we must take care to maintain the primacy of life and the spirit above that of the organization. According to his thought it is preferable to have a strong and overflowing life united to a weak organization than to have an iron clad or very structured organization and weak life.

The structure and organization therefore is a product of the process of life and not of a desk or study or human plans. Thus, according to the thoughts of Fr. Kentenich, the organization should provide security and a pathway so that life continues to develop and grow; as such, the structure and organization are at the service of life.

2.2. The importance of universality

For Fr. Kentenich, the charism of Schoenstatt is a gift for the Church. Schoenstatt is at the service of the Church and as such it possesses as she does a universal character. This means that any baptized person can have access to this way of life, thus a first guiding criterion is that no one should be excluded, any person can belong to Schoenstatt.

A second guiding criterion within the universal character of the Movement is in relation to the openness that Schoenstatt should have towards all the degrees of commitment – that they are expressions of different vocations – which means that people can participate in Schoenstatt from a minimum to a maximum degree according to their vocation.

These two guiding criteria permit Schoenstatt to be structured in the following way:

- 1) According to universality and depending on one's state, and
- 2) According to universality and depending on one's commitment.

We thus have four columns to structure Schoenstatt from the point of view of state in life: two columns correspond to natural states, male and female; the other two columns correspond to states of vocation: families (marriage) and priests (or religious).

Later on a fifth column was created mostly as a result of the Second World war: the column for the sick. These terminally ill people represent a reality that has particular characteristics and because of their self-giving and sacrifice, as bearers of pain and sickness, they contribute greatly to the Capital of Grace.

From the point of view of the degree of commitment, a structure developed that we know today as different forms of belonging. According to the commitment level that each person assumes (according to their vocation), they belong to this or that community within Schoenstatt, and this gives us such a form of being ordered within the structure.

We have thus degrees of commitment that go from the general Movement and Pilgrims to the Institutes. The degrees of commitment say nothing and mean nothing in relation to the quality of the commitment since all of us are called to sanctity per the Schoenstatt spirituality. We have a clear example of this in don Joao Pozzobon who is in the process of being beatified and who, strictly speaking, belonged to the widest circle of commitment, the Pilgrims.

When we speak about belonging to the structure of Schoenstatt in a determined community due to commitment level, we are talking concretely about a division or subdivision that occurs from three fields of commitment that define what it is to belong:

- a) Apostolic commitment: The person belongs to one or the other community according to the degree of apostolic commitment
- b) Relationship with the community: The degree to which a person or couple commits with others of the same branch to form a community that is broader or smaller, determined as such by their integration into Schoenstatt.

c) Lastly the third field refers to aesthetic work; that is, to the field of spiritual depth as a person or couple. In accordance with the spiritual commitment that they assume according to their apostolic commitment, the person or couple also determines their integration into a certain level of the structure of Schoenstatt.

It is important to say that the degree of commitment in the community and aesthetic fields represents the foundation, and is at the service of appropriately accomplishing the apostolic commitment, which is the essential element that defines participation at one level or another of the structure.

3. Orgnaziation

Through organization we understand the way that different members relate to each other within each category and level in order to achieve the community's purpose. Normally persons who have been incorporated by a certain degree of apostolic commitment and belong to one of the columns set up a community that necessitates a determined organization. For this reason, we have two types of organization within Schoenstatt which are the membership organization (interior organization of each community, ie Couples Branch, Boys Youth, Family Institute, Women's Federation, etc) and the territorial organization that is oriented towards organizing different Schoenstatt communities from a certain area or region. This has created a territorial differentiation from the broad international level down to the smallest diocesan level.

Thus, we have:

- a) General Presidium (representative of the institutes and int'l. federations plus Movement Director) [In Schoenstatt, Germany]
- b) National Presidium (rep. of the institutes and federations plus Movement Director)
- c) Central Committee (Movement Director and the Moderators of branches and pilgrims)
- d) Diocesan Committee (Movement Coordinator and/or Diocesan Director, branch leaders and leaders of pilgrim movement)
- e) Movement Director
- f) Movement Coordinator

For our work as Coordinators on the Diocesan level, we are fundamentally interested in having a vision in relation to the National Committee and the Central Committee, because they are two organisms with which we will have a permanent relationship as Diocesan Coordinators.

4. Family Coordination at the Diocesan Level

The Diocesan Coordination of the Family, like all guiding organisms in Schoenstatt exercises their service based on the principles of authority that our Father and Founder Fr. Kentenich developed throughout the life of the Movement. In the

following talks we want to deepen the style of guidance and spirituality that sustains this. We are principally interested in realizing anew what are our functions and our attributes that are developed within the handout about the “States and Guidelines of the Schoenstatt Family in Chile.” (2003).

In light of these guidelines we want to be aware of the importance of our work in the diocesan perspective, from our own local Family that we guide to the national Family.

4.1. Importance of the Diocesan Coordination for the Diocese

As Diocesan Coordinators we are representatives of the Schoenstatt Family as a Movement in the diocese or zone where we live. We have the mission and task of being Schoenstatt in our dioceses, which means, to radiate the charism of our Father and Founder Fr. Kentenich in the diocese or zone where we are. This means that we are a fountain of life for our spirituality for the actual diocese. This means that the Covenant of Love, our bond to the Shrine or Wayside Shrine, and our relationship with Fr Kentenich make new life develop that has a positive influence in our local Church.

On the other hand, the purpose of the Schoenstatt Family is to form apostles who are instruments of evangelization in our diocese, through their being and through their actions.

As a diocesan Family as a whole, helped primarily by the Diocesan level coordination, we are called to be exemplary cases of the Church in miniature; to put forward the model of the Church designed by Fr. Kentenich through our being, our communion and our actions.

Finally we have influence and action in the diocese through our projects, which have a clear, concrete and effective orientation of service to the Church and to the society where we are.

4.2. The importance of being the Schoenstatt Family

As Diocesan Coordinators it is up to us to strengthen the bonds and the channels through which life flows in the diocese that allow us to continue building the work of Fr. Kentenich. The meetings and all the instruments of coordination that we count on such as the creation of spaces of formation (workshops, conferences, etc) are fields that are important to keep in mind and to develop, united to the actions and projects meant to strengthen our own family, in the work of the diocesan coordination.

4.3. Our relation to the National Family

Fr. Kentenich conceived a polar organization for many of the Schoenstatt communities so that various different forces would be at play in order to permit a greater dynamism in the life of the Family. Thus also the diocesan community does not represent an isolated entity, no matter how autonomous it may be, since it is

incorporated into the Family at the national level. We have at this level of territorial organization different polarities, in this case the diocesan and national polarity. The diocesan coordination, especially the Diocesan Coordinators, are partners of the Central National Council of Moderators, with whom they remain connected primarily through the Movement Director, and also through the Moderators that have been designated to the service of the concrete Family.

The Diocesan Coordinators are the first interlocutors of the Movement Director. In accordance with the polar model designed by Fr. Kentenich, out of this structure it is hoped that a permanent interchange of life-streams and impulses towards service would flow between the national structure and diocesan structure. For this to happen, it is fundamental that there be a well functioning diocesan coordination and a permanent mutual relationship, whose responsibility at the national level is assumed by the Movement Director with the National Secretary.

Compiled by Fr. Ivan Simicic, Movement Director in Chile 2009