

Barbara Kast



God's

Tabernacle

~ Bearing Christ and Schoenstatt to the people.

If God has been at work in a life, if this person has sought God sincerely and with all his or her heart, we have to bear witness to it.

In every human life we find highpoints and lows, light and shadow. However, what is important in the end, is not so much the individual qualities and merits, as the Lord's activity in this life.

Looked at in this way, one has to come to the conclusion that Barbara Kast's life was guided by a divine plan and a mission.

Fr. Esteban J. Uriburu, Schoenstatt Fathers, Biographer



Barbara was born as the second of ten children to Michael and Olga Kast-Rist on July 24, 1950 in Thalkirchdorf , Germany. On August 6, she was baptised in her parish church. In 1951, the family moved to South America and settled in Linderos, Chile.

Her baptismal certificate reads:

“In the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, I was born again to new life in the waters of baptism and taken into the kingdom of Christ. My father and mother gave me St. Barbara to be my example in battle and victory. I shall remember this very specially on the feast of my patron saint, on 4th December...”



Kast Home in
Thalkirchdorf,
Germany



Barbara's childhood began with her attending a boarding school called Saint Ursula's in Maipu. In 1957, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8th in the Church de la Purisima, Barbara made her First Holy Communion.

"...everything was very nice; in every pew there were girls dressed like angels. I was very happy, because I was being allowed to receive Our Lord. After Mass we went home and I was given lots of presents. It was the happiest day of my life."

Diary Entry



She looked forward to being picked up each Friday to go back home with her family where she was surrounded by a religious atmosphere. Each night Barbara would say her prayers with her mother, they “thanked God for the day, asked for forgiveness for their faults, and ended with three Hail Marys and a petition for purity.”

“When I was small, Mother always prayed with me; I shall never forget how often we asked God to keep me pure at all times. At first, I didn’t understand properly why I should pray for it, but now I know why, because this is one of the most essential characteristics of a tabernacle.”

5-11-1968



In 1966, Barbara was moved to a new school which was run by the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary. She was described as a “hardworking, intelligent girl with a strong character....She is very ambitious, which gives her persistence to cope with every trial...



...She has enjoyed a sound, Christian education at home, and is therefore able to decide for great ideals to which she commits herself completely.”



Barbara with her Mother and Father

In September 1966, Barbara was sixteen. She met a young man who attracted her greatly. He spoke very openly to her of his feelings and asked her to become his steady date. Although she longed for nothing more earnestly than this, she refused.



“For me, going steady is a serious undertaking on the way to marriage. I want to be the only woman in the life of a man with whom I go steady or marry, and I am not yet mature enough for that.”



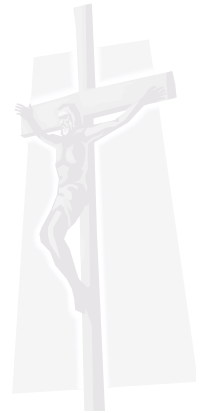
“Mother Mary, my greatest wish has always been to belong completely to someone who is worthy of this gift. It reminds me of my first love... At that time, something caused me to say no to it all. From the very first moment, I knew that you were behind everything.”

5-11-68

On January 20, 1968, Barbara joined together with a few high school girls and university students at a camp run by the Schoenstatt Movement. The days at the camp were a time of grace for Barbara and led her to a deeper encounter with Christ and his Mother.

In a letter to a friend while at camp, she wrote:
“It is very difficult to tell you what we are doing because our greatest experience is that God and Our Lady are very close to us. The prayers we say in the morning and at night and before the various gatherings are simply fantastic! They contain so much that one feels very small before God.”

The talks given that week centred on Our Lady as the Christ Bearer, the Woman who knew how to carry him in her heart, and how our hearts should eventually manage to be a little tabernacle in which Christ can dwell.



She returned home to Linderos in great excitement. She found her parents, brothers and sisters at tea and told them all about the camp. In a letter to a friend she wrote how much the camp meant to her:

“Our mission – Father send us out, your presence urges us on!... It means that God sends us out into the world because he is not present there. God is absent from the world, and we should battle to bring God to the people.... I am most enthusiastic, and at every moment I ask my Mother to enlighten me and give me the strength to fulfil this task.”



“In the Schoenstatt Shrine, Our Lady gives the strength and special graces we need for this mission.”



Bellavista Chile

Her days at the camp, gave Barbara a youthful idealism -- all her searching, her urge to give herself -- received a clear and firm direction, it brought a real change in her life. Barbara decided to join Schoenstatt and to participate with her whole soul.



“Mother, you have given me a lot of work to do, work for you. Since I have now discovered that my main task is to serve, I will give up everything that prevents this and I will follow you. This is the only way I can become happy, Mother, as you well know. Thank you Mother for choosing me to be your instrument; I want to meet your expectations.”

In April, there was an introductory course for new members during which Barbara and her group were given more information about Schoenstatt. The following month, although she did not yet qualify, she was invited to attend the national gathering of group leaders because she was such a born leader.

When she was appointed group leader, she felt all the more that she was a child of the Mother Thrice Admirable and more dependent on her.

Nothing Without You

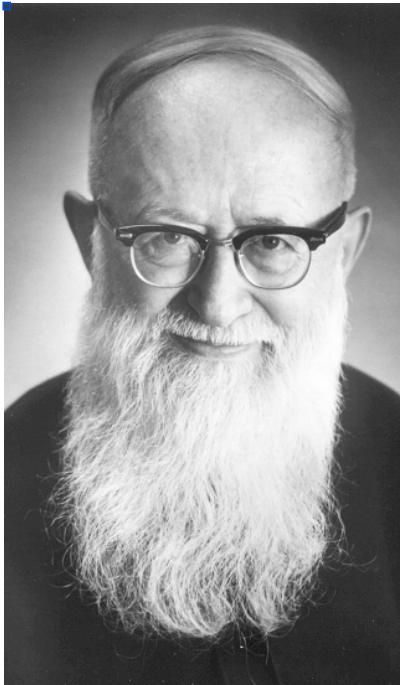
“Dear Mother, you really surprised me today – I should be group leader for a time. I really don’t know Mother, what I should do or say. Please, Mother, don’t leave my side ...”



Nothing Without Us

“...Help me to lead my group ever closer to you and to God. Thank you Mother, for trusting me.”

Barbara never met Fr. Joseph Kentenich, the Founder of Schoenstatt. Nevertheless, she admired him and made use of every opportunity to deepen her attachment and her understanding of his mission for the Church. On September 15, 1968, she was deeply saddened by the news of Father Kentenich's death.



Father Joseph Kentenich
Founder of Schoenstatt

“Beloved Mother, you have taken Father Kentenich out of the Family to yourself and have left us behind as the founder generation...”

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“...I want with all my heart to carry on the work of our father and founder, and he will bless the group and also me from heaven, so that the work we do will also be fruitful.”

Diary, October 18, 1968



In the Schoenstatt Movement “the personal ideal” can be described as the loving plan that God the Father has for each individual person he creates from all eternity. Barbara contemplated her ideal in her diary, and clarified:

“Mother, I may not omit to mention my discovery of the living God, of Christ, who is present in my heart, in the hearts of people, in the Tabernacle. Mother you have brought it about that I gradually discovered my personal ideal, the one for which God has destined me:



I WILL BE GOD’S TABERNACLE!

So that you Beloved Mother and Christ will live on through me, that you take up your abode in my tabernacle, and that, having opened the doors, you will give yourself to everyone through me.”

On another occasion she returned to this topic and asked Our Lady to enlighten her. She closes her diary entry with a description of her mission in the world:

Bearing Christ



Inspired and supported by you , Mother, I see what I have just written as my task in the world – to allow myself to be completely penetrated to the depths of my being by God and Christ, and then to give him to others. That is my mission, Mother to bear Christ to the people....

Diary 18/19

and Schoenstatt to the people

Dearest Mother, I know that I have a great mission in Schoenstatt and that this aspect has to be clearly expressed in my ideal: many people have to find their way to you, to Schoenstatt, so that you can give them a home, transform them and send them out.

Diary 44

Belonging to Schoenstatt does not imply a vocation to consecrated life. However, a Schoenstatt youth possesses a high degree of readiness to answer God's call should it be given to him or her. Many young people involved in the Movement feel called to a virginal lifestyle. Barbara discussed the matter with some of her friends.

Barbara's friend, Carmen Delia recalls:
“...we returned to the question of vocation. Barbara told me she wasn't sure whether marriage would answer her longing for infinite love. She felt God's call, but had not yet decided upon her way.”



“Mother, I beg you to send me peace and complete happiness very soon. I need a way and a support along this way. Besides you, I need someone with whom I can reach you. Please let me recognize soon whether this ‘someone’ is Christ or a human partner.”

Diary, December 20, 1968

“If you liked it so much”
her five year old brother
said after her return from
camp, “why don't you
become a Sister?”



The end of the year 1968, brought Barbara much excitement. She had final examinations, high school graduation, and after a year of preparation her “Covenant of Love” -- or Schoenstatt Marian Consecration -- would take place. To her great joy, the day she had chosen to seal her dedication, December 8th finally arrived.

On the eve of her consecration, she asked a Sister of Mary to place her medal into the Shrine tabernacle for the night..



“My medal will always remind me of my personal ideal, because it is now wholly consecrated, it was in the tabernacle. It will always remind me of my real name.”

Diary 70/71

“Dear Mother, just as I tell you today that I love you most fervently, so I also tell you that I am weak and that I need you...

Here I am, Mother, I am wholly yours...

Mother, I don't know which way you have foreseen for me, but with great trust I tell you that I will walk it without fear, because I know you will never let go of my hand...”

Diary 72-74



Barbara had the great joy of seeing one of her long-standing wishes being realised – she received a Fiat 600 that December. “Yes, I’ve got a new car. Now I’ll have more time to attend other Schoenstatt meetings. I know that is why it was given to me.”



“So, on the day the Father calls me, I shall go to meet him with Christ, because before this Christ has already been vitally present in my heart since I am his tabernacle.”

Diary 44

Barbara was driving alone early on the morning of December 29, 1968. At about 7:40 am she collided with a delivery van. She was taken to the hospital and died 20 minutes after being admitted.

Her funeral, attended by hundreds of family, friends, classmates, and Schoenstatt members was held on December 30. She was buried in the cemetery at Buin, Chile. Fr. Carlos, a family friend, passed on a message from Mr. Kast to all present at the graveside:

“Barbara’s father wants it said publicly that he is not angry with God about what has happened. On the contrary, he thanks God for the gift of being allowed to have this daughter with him for 18 years.”



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