National Newsletter Schoenstatt Australia



March 18 2024

l Volume 5, Number 3

1. Covenant Day Message

Walking Together, Loving the Church

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

At our National Conference last October, we focussed on the Synod being held in Rome at that time. In convening this Synod, Pope Francis had invited the entire Church to reflect on synodality and what it means for the each of us.

During our conference we were made aware that:

"Synodality expresses the nature of the Church as the People of God journeying together, in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the Gospel and to participate in the mission of the Church" (Preparatory Document, 1).

Journeying together in the spirit of synodality means walking together, listening to each other and discerning what is being said. For us in Schoenstatt, it is an invitation to make our Covenant with the most diverse partners with whom God brings us together in whatever ways. The synodal phase of the Church opens many doors for us to expand the Schoenstatt Covenant of Love – in the words of our founder:

"as a Covenant of Love with all members and divisions of the Church but also as a Covenant of Love with all people around the world".

December 31, 1965.

We experience the Covenant of Love as a gift and as a mission, as we walk together facing the ever-

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present challenges in the Church and the world in a learning, open and truly synodal way.

From all our experiences in the October Conference we expressed our striving for this year as: "Walking together, loving the Church". Walking together can also be seen as walking together as a community.

Being in a community means being part of something that is larger than ourselves, it means working together, supporting each other and growing together in our faith. We want to create a community that reflects the love and compassion of

Christ. For us in Schoenstatt, this means gathered around our Lady, united in our Covenant of Love.

As part of a community, everyone should feel valued and loved, where they can feel at home and come together to worship, to learn and to serve.

In Schoenstatt we have the example of Father Kentenich who throughout his life, did not act on his own; he always counted on his followers, as a community, as a family.

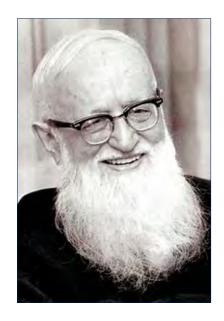
On 31st August 1966, Father Kentenich said:

Our image of the community has permanent features characterized by the holistic nature of our covenant of love. We have always known that the covenant of love with our dear MTA should be seen and lived as an expression, a protection, safeguard and means for the covenant of love with the Blessed Trinity and the covenant of love among ourselves, the covenant of love with each other and for each other.

.....Today we take it as a matter of course that we all have grown into an indescribable community of destinies, community of tasks and community of hearts the like of which can probably not be found anywhere else.....This way we lived in a spiritual union with each other, in each other and for each other so that we really understand only now what the image of the new person in the new community is all about. We might also sense that in this way we are approaching an ideal which the Church of the future will naturally feel urged to reach out for and that then the Church may rightly apply the praise to itself: See, how they love one another.

(From: "With Mary into the New Millennium", J. Kentenich)





Father, I may awake with new strength to rekindle my love.

Let me joyfully greet you together with all your Schoenstatt.

We are united in the shrine where the flames of our hearts beat for our Mother Thrice Admirable who, through us, wants to build your kingdom.

We kneel in the Holy Spirit and sing jubilant hymns to Christ, who sends us with her as instruments to change the destiny of nations.

We will soon conclude our Lenten journey and begin the beautiful season of Easter. May we celebrate the season of Easter, continuing to walk together, united in our Covenant of Love with Our Blessed Mother and our father and founder and with each other,.

In unity in our Covenant of Love,

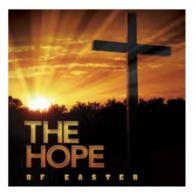
Shirley Hall

2. Holy Week and Easter

"This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad"

Later this month, we begin our celebration of Holy Week with the Good Friday ceremonies of the Lord's Passion (29th) and the celebration of the Resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday (31st March)

The following is an extract from a sermon that Father Kentenich gave on Easter Sunday 29th March 1964. In that sermon he said:



He has risen,
Alleluia, alleluia!
That means not only
that he has risen
from the dead but
that through his
resurrection and all
he suffered in
connection with the
resurrection, he has

obtained for us the grace that one day our bodies will also rise again and that our souls will have life everlasting. Therefore, be not afraid. It would be more appropriate to say, 'Rejoice! Rejoice!' Why? Because the Lord has risen. Rejoice, because the Lord has risen and thereby assured us that we too shall rise gain, not only our souls but also our bodies.

My dear listeners, am I then correct when I say: If we also believe as the Mother of God did, then we may rejoice with the Church at Easter. We may take part in her rejoicing. In this spirit we wish each other a blessed and joyful Easter. That means, we wish each other first and foremost a growth of an all-embracing and living faith.

Once more, if we really have tried and continue to try, to the best of our ability, to give our hearts to Our Lord, so too we shall take part in the joy of Easter. Therefore, when we wish each other a happy and joyful Easter it means we wish each other a greater love towards Our Saviour.

Christ has risen! What does it mean to us? It answers all our questions. Christ has risen! I, too, shall rise again and consequently I shall master life with all its problems and draw nearer to heaven, until one day I shall take an everlasting part in the transfigured life of Christ.

Deo Gratias

A childlike courageous 'yes'
to my way of the Cross.
A childlike joyful 'yes'
gives the Father the greatest joy.

My 'yes' should not just be a "Fiat" but also a 'Deo gratias' ('Thanks be to God').

We must remember that behind the cross is always the Father's love and God never sends us more than we can handle.

'Childlikeness before God', Fr. J. Kentenich, p.60

May the blessings and joys of the Easter Season be with you and your family.

Christ is Risen, Alleluia!



3. Men at the Shrine

In 2024, the Dad's at the Shrine event has expanded to be Men at the Shrine, welcoming all men every month for a time of prayer and fellowship.

The hour begins with a short reflection by Fr Pawel Barszczewski OP, himself a member of the Schoenstatt movement. These brief reflections will also utilise our Schoenstatt spirituality and seek to introduce or lead men more deeply into the teachings of Fr Kentenich.

Incidentally, we are looking to form a new men's group in a few months' time, so any men who may be interested in being part of a men's group are welcome to contact Fr Pawel via paul73op@gmail.com.

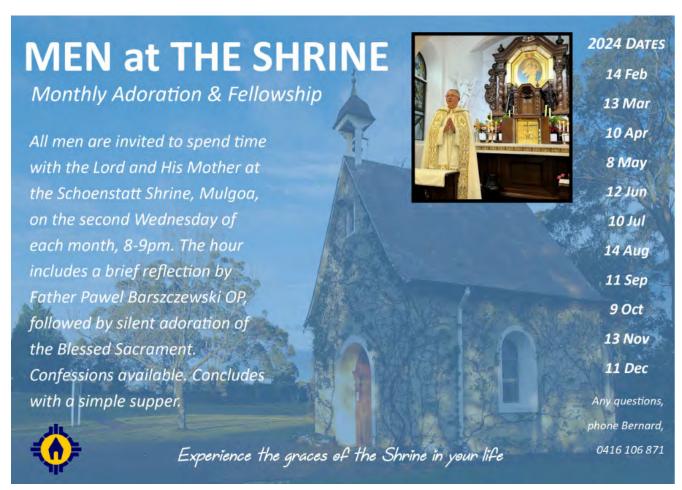
The Holy Hour itself is held in silence and confessions are available. At the end of the Hoy Hour after the men chant together the Salve Regina they head to the information centre for a quick tea or coffee and an important chance to build connection and friendship.



So, if you are a man living in Sydney please join us and if you are a woman, be sure to pass the invitation on to any men you know. For all dates and contact information see the flyer or the advertisement on Facebook,

https://www.facebook.com/events/ 923123839290946/923123849290945 or contact Bernard via bernard@foolishwisdom.com or 0416 106 871.





4. Lenten Retreat for Women NSW

Michelle Davis, Single Women's League.

Agnes Aldana, Single Women's League & PMA

Coordinator

The 2024 Lenten Retreat Weekend for Women took place at Mt. Schoenstatt, Mulgoa from Friday evening, 16th February to Sunday afternoon, 28th February. The theme was taken from Jn 3:16 – "FOR GOD SO LOVED THE WORD…"

It was pleasing to see 17 ladies being with us for the start of the retreat on the Friday evening.

I am a child of God, our loving , merciful Father

Sr. M. Elizabeth began with an introduction to the weekend, sharing with us what she hoped we would gain from this weekend – that God loves me – personally and unconditionally. While this is the truth, many of us find it difficult to fully believe and accept due to some of the older Catholic Religious education which tended to portray God as a judge and thus instill fear, our family of origin, and for our modern world the loss of Fatherhood.

The belief that God does not love me anymore or that I am unworthy when I sin can get in the way of a personal and loving relationship with our Loving Father God (and the Trinity). Sr. Elizabeth's hope was that during this weekend we would come to appreciate even more that God is not only our Father, but that He is a loving and merciful Father who loves us not because we are good, but because He is Father. My self-worth is that I am a child of God the Father. I am valuable for what I am – a child of God.

For God (or any father), to be a father they must be in relationship with the child. So, to accept God as my Merciful Father, I must accept that I am his child. Lent is a perfect time to reflect on the Father's word's to Jesus "This is my beloved Son (child) in whom I am well pleased", words which we can apply to ourselves once we have opened ourselves to the Father's merciful love. Lent is a time for us to pray, strive and repent – to make our relationship with God/Jesus/the Holy Spirit, stronger, to start over, and rise to a new life in Christ on Easter Morning after journeying through his passion and death.

During the evening, we were also introduced to the "theme song" that would be sung at the beginning of every gathering, "Dilexit Me" (He – God – loves me).

Mary facing the suffering of the Cross



On the Saturday morning, it was wonderful to see about 35 ladies seated in the Conference Hall, ready for the morning's sessions. Sr. M. Isabell began by drawing us into the Paschal Journey, the end days of Lent, leading up to the deepest act of Love where we are invited in to identify with Christ's life, suffering and Resurrection.

As humans with a broken nature, we do all we can to avoid suffering, we tend to think that if God allows suffering in my life, it is a punishment. In fact, suffering is part of being a Christian – identification with Christ, who we profess to follow and strive to be like. Every life has some element of suffering.

Sr. Isabell shared with us that Our Lady went through a process of growth and maturation. Mary remained loyal to her "Let what you have said be done to me". Although she struggled to fully understand all that would be asked of her in the moment of the annunciation, she fully believed and her "Yes" was firm. We see Mary fully living out her YES at the crucifixion, watching her Son suffer and die: in the sculpture of the Pieta, the baby she carried in her womb, we now see as an adult in her arms.

She cradles the lifeless body of her son under the cross, her faith and belief still strong. Sr. Isabell shared with us passages from Isaiah, God's letter identifying the role of the servant.

She spoke of how Schoenstatt's Covenant of Love and spirituality assists us in our understanding of our personal mission, opening our hearts to receive God's graces and live the fullness of life in love and relationship with God as a child (servant) after the example of Mary. She challenged us to try to see life through the eyes of God.

Our relationship with God the Father



In the second session, Fr. Pawel spoke of God as our Father, all knowing and ALL LOVING. He shared that in scripture there are 120 names for God.

Fr. Pawel was very honest and shared with us his journey of how he grew to understand that God is Love, rather than the God of "fear" that was instilled in him as a child – that God the judge is looking to catch you out, and his maturation of getting to know the loving merciful Father-God.

Fr. Pawel used from scripture (Mt. 6:6-1) the prayer Jesus taught us: the "Our Father", to accept God as Father, to accept the truth that we are invited into a relationship of love not duty.

The truth is, NOTHING can take away God's love for us. He then broke open for us the very well–known passage Luke 15:11–32: The Prodigal Son and how neither son had a relationship with their Father. This passage highlights our relationship with God, that sin is not a blockage to God loving us, it is our closed hearts or us dwelling on the "I" and my unworthiness.

God wants our relationship with him to be restored, for us to accept his love. We are called to a relationship not of fear and duty but of freedom and love. We just have to accept the love of God.

One example of how to do this is the great Thomas Merton who said: when you pray "Take Time" to build friendship and a relationship with God – just talk to God. Jesus showed us how to have an intimate relationship with the Father, to spend time in prayer. There are many examples of Jesus in prayer.

Growing to see God as Father



The final session for most of the women who attended the Saturday was given by two of the members from the Mary and Martha Mothers group, Angela and Zenny.

They shared the significance of previous experiences from their lives in growing to see God as Father through their family life, and particularly in their relationship with their own fathers. They shared how God's love has both led and carried them through their lives.

Relaxing with the Father

As it had been a rather intense day, Sr. Elizabeth offered a session on the Saturday evening entitled, "relaxing with the Father". During the day we had spoken about Father Kentenich, as a transparency of God the Father. However, for some of the ladies at the retreat they knew nothing or very little about Schoenstatt's founder, so Sr. Elizabeth offered to show a film on the life of Father Kentenich. It was interesting to note that even those who had been involved in Schoenstatt for some time, also attended.

In the Father Room



Afterwards the ladies all went to the "Father Room" where Sr. Elizabeth explained the meaning of the room and some of the things found in the room, such as the Father Statue and the red carpet on the floor.

As this was an evening with the Father (Father Kentenich as well as God the Father), the group sang a number of "Father songs", interspersed with some actual experiences that people had had with Father Kentenich that reflected his fatherly qualities, such as his caring of and concern for others, his sharing of all he had (especially in Dachau), sharing his love for Our Blessed Mother with others.

Afterwards we went to the Shrine for night prayer and the opportunity to give thanks to Our Mother Thrice Admirable and God the Father for all the blessings we had received during this day.

Sunday morning

On the Sunday morning, it was wonderful to see many of the ladies who had been taking part in the retreat since the Friday evening, still spiritually empowered from the sessions and other retreat activities so far.

As some went for an early morning walk, others spent time with the Blessed Mother and her Son in the Shrine. A few of the ladies who had been there on the Saturday, came back for the Sunday, together with 3 newcomers, bringing our group back to about 25 ladies.

Living with the Father



After the Morning Prayer in the Shrine there was a Session – 'Living with God the Father' – presented by Ann Panitz, from the Fiat Mother's Group. Here, she talked about her experiences in 'Living with God as Father' and her 'father – child' relationship with her own father. At the end of the talk, Ann gave us some suggestions on ways to build a stronger relationship with the God the Father. These included speaking with the Father, spending time with the Father, prayer and sacrifices for the Father and our Blessed Mother and most importantly, to remember that God loves us and accepts us in our weaknesses because He is a merciful Father.

Covenant Sunday

As our Covenant Sunday also fell on this Lenten Retreat Weekend, the Covenant celebrations were programmed into this day. Although this would not normally be part of the Lenten Retreat, it did allow some of the newcomers to experience what a Covenant Sunday means for our Schoenstatt Family members.

As part of the normal Covenant Sunday Celebration, talks and input are video prerecorded but on this day, the input - 'An Inclusive and Welcoming Church' - was presented live at Mt Schoenstatt and via zoom for others participating outside Mount Schoenstatt. The talk, which was presented by yours truly, is a portrayal of the whole picture of what makes a welcoming church as encapsulated in Schoenstatt. Here also was mentioned an example of a welcoming church depicted in the Parish where yours truly, humbly belongs - St Michael's Parish in Meadowbank. The Covenant Sunday Input was presented in conjunction with the Motto for this year: 'Walking together, loving the Church'. It was wonderful to see how the 'newcomers' so wholeheartedly took part in the celebrations.

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Conclusion of the Retreat

At the conclusion of the day, Sister M Elizabeth summarized the main points presented during the weekend and gave us a summary "package", filled with abounding thoughts to ponder in our hearts: the merciful love of God which is the reason which motivated God to create us, to lead us and to rule us.

Yes, God is love. God is merciful love, his very nature, his very essence is love.

Yes, we are endlessly secure in the Father's love, and nothing can separate us from the one who loved us so much that He brought us into existence and continues to accompany us every second of our lives; the one who so loved us that he sent his only Son to redeem us through his suffering and death but who also give us unending hope through his Resurrection.

It was a weekend filled not only with rich spiritual input, but also a real sense of community and walking together. During our Covenant discussions it was great to hear from people who were new to Schoenstatt, who had never been to Schoenstatt before, speaking of how welcomed they felt and how after just a short time had felt all their anxieties about coming to something unknown, leaving them.

As we concluded this enriching weekend in preparation for Easter, and "walking together", the women all went home with blissful hearts, feeling loved and loving God after an awe-inspiring retreat weekend "for God so loved the world . . ." Jn 3:16.

for God so loved the world



5. The Covenant Of Love In Melbourne

For our Schoenstatt Family in Melbourne there was great joy to be able to experience the first Covenant of love entered into before the image of our MTA in her "new abode" in the Divine Mercy Chapel at St. Luke's, Wantirna.



Holy Mass

After some time of preparation, the Simon Family entered into their Covenant of Love during Mass on Saturday 24 February. Fr. Pawel and Sr. M Elizabeth had come from Sydney for the occasion and about 40 Schoenstatters, together with friends of the family and some parishioners, joined for this special occasion.

The Simon children were also fully engaged, joining their parents in the Rite of Consecration and being readers during the Holy Mass.

The readings of the day, God's word to us on this special day, were providentially fittingly directed to the covenant God made with the people Israel, reminding us that God will always be faithful to his Covenant with us but that we must do our part in surrendering everything to Him.

In Fr. Pawel's homily he pointed out that we are in the season of Lent and that we are called at this time to true conversion, which means that our hearts should be one hundred percent dedicated to God; we surrender all our hearts and all our souls to Him. Sometimes we find this hard and so this is why we make a Covenant of Love with the Blessed Mother – she is the one who is always faithful to her side of the Covenant, and she will help and guide us to true conversion so that we truly become God's people.

Entering into the Covenant of Love



Following the homily we processed to the Divine Mercy Chapel at the back of the Church to celebrate the Covenant Rite.

There was a beautiful atmosphere as Simon and Bindu, together with their children, prayed their consecration prayer and received from Fr. Pawel their medals, the symbol of their Covenant with our MTA.



At the end of Mass we once again gathered in the Chapel to thank our Blessed Mother for the gift of her Covenant of Love with us and in particular we welcomed the Simon Family into our Schoenstatt Family in Melbourne. Fellowship and an afternoon of formation followed.

Our relationship with God the Father

Fr. Pawel shared with us Jesus' image of God the Father and the importance of our relationship with the Father, who is loving and merciful. Sr. M Elizabeth then shared with us aspects of Fr. Kentenich's life, presenting him as a transparency of God's fatherly and merciful love.

Fr. Kenteních always pointed to the Blessed Mother as the one who leads us safely home to our heavenly Father



For those who were new to Schoenstatt, this was an opportunity to learn a little about Schoenstatt's founder and why we are grateful to God for having given us such a father who helps us to understand a little, the love of our heavenly Father.

Fr. Kentenich always pointed to the Blessed Mother as the one who leads us safely home to our heavenly Father.



6. Home Shrine Blessings

While Fr. Pawel and Sr. M Elizabeth were in Melbourne, we were able to witness two Home Shrine Blessings.

Simon Family

The Simon Family, following their Covenant of Love, wished to have their Home Shrine blessed. They invited two other families and a representative from our Melbourne Schoenstatt Family join them in this meaningful celebration. Simon and Bindu were very grateful to be able to invite our MTA into their home to make it a Schoenstatt Shrine from where our Blessed Mother wants to distribute the graces and blessings she intercedes for us in every Schoenstatt Shrine.

come and stay with us

The MTA picture was carried to every room in the house where one of the family members prayed: "Dear Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen, and Victress of Schoenstatt, come and stay with us and make this room, our ______ (kitchen, living room, bedroom etc.) your shrine."



As part of the Home Shrine prayer that the family members prayed, we heard:

"Mother, at all times help us to feel your presence in our home and on this occasion, when you come to dwell with us, we crown you as Queen of our Family. Remind us when we face challenges and struggles in everyday life, that you are our Mother and will always be with us in the Covenant of Love."

The Diaz Family Home Shrine

A similar celebration took place on the Sunday evening in the West of Melbourne when Fr. Pawel blessed the Home Shrine of Lidia and Victor Diaz, one of our Spanish speaking families.

Lidia and Victor named their Shrine: "Annunciation".



We wish both families rich blessings from our MTA in the months and years ahead. We remember that our father and founder always said: "I firmly believe that no one who lives his Covenant of Love in loyalty will be lost".

I firmly believe that no one who lives his/her Covenant of Love in loyalty will be lost

7. Lenten Retreat in WA

Philomena Theseira

Our Schoenstatt Marian Lenten Retreat Weekend (2-4 MARCH 2024) was held at the Vincentian Retreat Centre in Karrakup (15 minutes south of our Shrine in WA). It's a lovely tranquil place out in the bush which allowed us time away from our everyday lives.



We had 18 people stay, over the two nights, and 11 others who came for two or three days as day-trippers.

Everyone eagerly participated in our four sessions over the weekend, which were very well presented.

Session one was 'Walking together - Loving the Church'. This included a pilgrimage walk, 'journeying together' along a track, with prayers and hymns.



Session two was 'Encounter with Christ' and included looking at the change that took place in Saul, who then became St Paul. This was followed by a 'Penance Reflection' and allowed time for participants to go to Reconciliation with Fr Varghese.



In the evening, we had a shared dinner. Everyone was very generous in bringing food to share. We had lots of food left over for lunch the next day. After dinner we had various games and got to know one another more.

Session three, on Sunday, was 'With Mary Listening to the Holy Spirit'. For this we had a 'listening and discernment' session, looking at the Scripture passage, Luke 2:43–51 'His Mother treasured all these things in her heart.' A lot of good discussion came from this. Afterwards we had Stations of the Cross in the Chapel.





Then in the afternoon, we all travelled to the Shrine for Holy Mass which included five women making their Covenant of Love. These women had been prepared for this official acceptance into our Schoenstatt Family by Sr. M Luka. Fr Joseph Rathnaraj was our celebrant. It was a very special occasion for all of us to celebrate, and of course was followed by fellowship.



After getting back to the Vincentian Centre it was time to organise our BBQ dinner. Here again lots of delicious food was prepared and enjoyed, with enough for Monday lunch. The evening was then handed over to a young man named Karl who led us in two fun games which we all enjoyed.

Session four, was on Monday morning and it was on 'Encounter, Listen, and Discern'. We looked at these three words using part of Fr Pawel's talk from the last National Conference. Afterwards, we had testimonies from four people. They were Abby, Karl, Sr Thomasine and Sandra.



The testimonies were very inspiring and the highlight of the weekend. They reminded us that Mary is always there for us. When life gets tough, just remember, "Do not forget the surest and easiest way, do not forget Mary!"

A big thank you to the Retreat Co-ordinating team, all those who presented on the weekend, our facilitators Angelique and Ida, and our musicians. Everyone really enjoyed the weekend. It was at a good pace, and good friendships were formed, so I am sure that we will see everyone at the Shrine again in future.



8. Lenten Reflection Day For young women And Shrine Time

Sr M. Rita

Young women were invited to spend a day of reflection to prepare themselves during this time of Lent. A small group of four young women gathered in Bethany and really enjoyed the day taking away many new insights, motivations and tips for their own personal Lenten Journey.

Three short inputs were given by Sr. M. Rita:

- 1) Focus on Jesus as the tree of love,
- 2) Focus on us, the branches of our brokenness and
- 3) Focus on Mary the woman under the cross.

After each talk, the young women were invited to have their own personal silent reflection, writing at least one point on a post-it note which was then added to the wall. At the end of the day each of the Post-Its were read out as a sort of summary



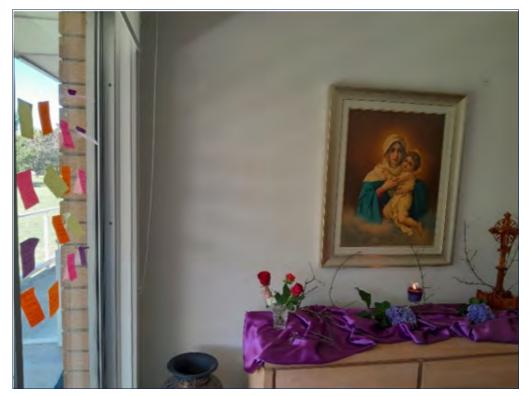
A particular highlight of the day was the Stations of the Cross which was prayed at different areas in the garden. In the late afternoon the young women also had the opportunity to bind their own crown of thorns that they could take home as a reminder and inspiration during Lent.

The day concluded in the Shrine with the first Shrine Time. This is a Holy Hour for youth and young adults in the shrine every fourth Sunday of the month.

A further 9 young people joined and were able to spend some time in prayer, song and reflection before the blessed Sacrament.

Fr. Peter Kruk OP was available for the Sacrament of Reconciliation and gave the Eucharistic blessing

at the end. At the conclusion of Shrine Time the young women were able to accept their crown of thorns which were placed upon the altar. All the young people also received a unity cross as a reminder that Mary and Jesus also go along with us on our daily journey which sometimes may also be a way of the cross. Afterwards there was a short and joyful gathering in the Pilgrim Centre with refreshments.



9. INFORMATION AND LINKS

Shrine Opening Hours

Please check the websites for updated opening times of the Shrines.

Mulgoa Shrine, NSW. Open daily: 7am - 7.30pm

Mt Richon / Armadale Shrine, WA. Open daily 7am - 7pm.

Melbourne: St. Luke's, Wantirna, Divine Mercy Chapel
Opening hours: http://www.stlukeswantirna.net/



Links

Official Schoenstatt Website https://www.schoenstatt.com
Schoenstatt Australian Website https://www.schoenstatt.com

Our YouTube Channel https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia

Western Australia Website https://schoenstattwa.org.au

Schoenstatt Men Website https://bit.ly/47x72n1

Videos for Covenant Sundays

March A humble and healing Church

https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia

February An inclusive and welcoming Church

https://youtu.be/qfGr5DBMcnc

January Baptismal Covenant: foundation of synodality in a lay movement.

https://youtu.be/TuctlCpVByE

December Father's Homecoming from Exile

https://youtu.be/8m7M1ZQWxvE

The Sisters singing the consecration prayer may be viewed at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29tXet2DQQ

Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

Please send to movtoffice@schoenstatt.org.au before the beginning of each month

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