



March 18 2026 Volume 7 Number 3

United in the Covenant – Pilgrims of Hope

1. Covenant Day Message

Dear Schoenstatt Family and Friends,

Greetings and blessings for this Covenant Day – 18th March as we continue our Lenten journey.

In our novena for vocations to the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary internationally, and specifically in Australia and the Philippines, we focus this month on the perseverance of both the Sisters and the Schoenstatt members in re-



conquering the shrine in Melbourne.

In 1994, a small group, most of whom knew Schoenstatt from overseas countries, took up the challenge to “reconquer the Kew Shrine”. This they did by bringing their contributions to the Capital of Grace regularly to the Shrine with regular visits from the Schoenstatt Fathers and Sisters to Melbourne helping the people understand more and more about Schoenstatt, the

Covenant of Love and the importance of contributions to the Capital of Grace. Thanks to the perseverance and loyalty of these Schoenstatt members, Sisters and Priests, in 1999 it was felt that it was time to once again invite the Blessed Mother to take possession of the Shrine in Kew and continue the task she undertook in 1952 to transform this Shrine into a place of grace.

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Perseverance and loyalty are foundational virtues, with perseverance representing the steady, hard-working pursuit of goals despite obstacles, and loyalty signifying deep, consistent commitment to people or principles. Together, they build trust, sustain relationships through challenges, and drive success.

Sr. Annette Nailis (a Schoenstatt Sister) related how when Fr. Erhard was visiting Fr. Kentenich in Milwaukee, he asked him, "Father, if you were now free, what is the first thing you think you would do?" (...) I remember the answer exactly. Father said, "You know, if I could do as I wished, the first thing I would do is visit everyone in the whole world who remained faithful to me." Sr. Annette concludes: Of all the virtues, faithfulness/loyalty was one of the most important to him. (...) He was so totally human and so nobly human that the first thing he would have done– even though this was not a practical possibility– was to travel the world to say thank you to all of those who remained loyal.



Again, when someone who was in Rome with our founder wrote:

"I got to know Fr. Kentenich in Rome in one of the most difficult moments, and I was amazed at his absolute calm and complete trust in Providence. I will never forget the words he said at that time, "I am always happy in the hands of the Blessed Mother."

"As long as I am in my nest, I need not fear the lightning flash. This nest is my own Mother's heart, which always bears me heavenwards, to God, the wellspring of all bliss The Father of all mercy and love." J.K.

Father Kentenich often said, ***"No one will be lost who is loyal to his covenant of love"*** and he also said, ***"If you look for me you will find me in the Shrine."***

Not only should we be inspired by Father Kentenich's loyalty and perseverance during the many difficult years of his life, but we are also reminded that our Blessed Mother is also with us. Mary was always loyal and persevered when Jesus was being so severely treated leading up to his death on the cross. We believe that despite all that was taking place. Mary continued to trust in the Heavenly Father and believe that her Son, Jesus, was the redeemer who had come to save each of us.

As we continue our journey towards the holy season of Easter, may we always walk with Our Blessed Mother and our father and founder, remaining loyal to our Covenant of Love.

Wishing you all many blessings,

Shirley Hall

2. 2026 Annual Victorian Schoenstatt Family Retreat

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The Annual Victorian Schoenstatt Family Retreat took place on Saturday 14 February at Holy Family Parish Hall, Doveton, and on Sunday 15 February at the Victorian Schoenstatt Chapel in Wantirna. Around 30 members participated in the Retreat overall.

Sr M. Elizabeth Foley led the Retreat and expounded many important aspects of Schoenstatt's history and spirituality.



Highlighted were the following:

On Saturday, the Letters sent by Father Joseph Kentenich on the occasions of the Blessing of the former Kew Shrine and the National Shrine in Mulgoa were discussed. The parallels in the letters and content being inspired by Sacred Scripture were illustrated in the discussions. *"Today Salvation has come to this house (Luke 19:9) ..."*

– Today, Our Mother Thrice Admirable, Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt has made her home in this place ... in this Shrine which she has selected to be the place from where she distributes her graces; the need to encourage people to visit the Shrine, though challenging, and to bring their contributions to the Capital of Grace, was emphasised.



The forthcoming '*Naming of the National Shrine*', where the need to give the Shrine an identity that God has willed it to be, according to his plan and mission, was explained. The mission of the Australian Schoenstatt Family had been earlier identified –

"One Heart in the Father for the family of God". Post the recent National Schoenstatt Conference, it was agreed, that the National Shrine will be named '*Consors Patris*' (Helpmate of the Father), highlighting the need to be united with God the Father as we endeavour to serve the Church.

The history of the name "*Consors Patris*" was further explained by Sr. Elizabeth in great detail, from the passing of Sr Bonitas in 1952 to the crowning of the Blessed Mother in Western Australia in 1958 as '*Consors Patris*'. Ten years later, the Picture

of Grace was brought to Mulgoa when the National Shrine in Mulgoa was blessed on 19 May 1968. In 1994 a similar crowning took place in the Sisters' Shrine in Rome, and the Crown from the Australian National Shrine was taken to Rome. When it returned to Australia, it was seen as an opportunity to involve the whole Schoenstatt community – resulting in the Crown travelling around Australia for twelve months. Then in October 1995, the Picture of Grace was re-crowned in the National Shrine as *Consorts Patris* by the Australian Schoenstatt family.



Associating the title of *Consorts Patris* with the express mission of 'One Heart in the Father for the Family of God' was discussed at the recent National Conference. The Schoenstatt movement's mission is to serve the Church and serve God. God's plan was that the Blessed Mother be the chosen instrument to be the permanent companion 'helpmate' through all of eternity. From the moment she gave her Fiat 'Yes', she became "Consorts Christi" and consequently also then became "Consorts Patris".

The naming of the National Shrine as the *Consorts Patris Shrine* will occur on 6 April this year in Mulgoa. This is the actual date of the arrival of the first Schoenstatt Sisters in Australia 75 years ago.

Other topics discussed over the weekend included –

The Covenant of Love – the need to encourage more people to enter into this deepened renewal of our Baptismal Covenant. Our mission is a co-participation of the Blessed Mother's mission. Knowing and living out the Covenant of Love is important in this journey.



Pilgrim Mother Apostolate (PMA):

The need to know and understand the difference between the *Schoenstatt Movement* and PMA was explained.

The History of the PMA and the story of Venerable John Pozzobon was illustrated in a power point presentation. The PMA evolved with 30 smaller replicas of the Auxiliary Shrine being made and given to families to use to visit families in their circles.

John Pozzobon died at age 80 in 1985. He was elevated to 'Venerable' by Pope Leo the XIV on 20 June 2025.

The title of *Mother Thrice Admirable Queen and Victress of Schoenstatt* was also explained: **Queen** during the difficult time of WW II – to take control over the situation as Queen, when war was reigning.

Victress – to celebrate the victory of Father Kentenich's return from Exile in Milwaukee.

The renewal of the Covenant of Love took place at 3pm preceded by the recitation of the Rosary.

An exciting finish to the two days was the Commissioning and sending out from the Schoenstatt Chapel a new Coordinator – Rukmani de Silva – a member from Jean Jansz' PMA circle.

Much fellowship was enjoyed by all on both days, and I want to thank all participants and a very special and grateful thanks to Sr M. Elizabeth for her dedication and commitment to the Victorian Schoenstatt Family.

Florida Nugara



3. Women's Retreat Mulgoa

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This retreat with the theme, "Listening Heart", was very special in that we had the most participants that have attended in a long time. There were 28 women attending for the whole weekend with another 20 who attended for Saturday only. Of these at least 12 were at Mount Schoenstatt for the first time, four being from Adelaide.

The atmosphere was uplifting with the women ready to mix, open to learn and exchange with each other.



The talks centred on the theme with different aspects.

We heard about the importance of listening and how we should be listening; how Our Lady listened from the hour of the Annunciation till Calvary; our response to listening which can indicate in how far we are integrated or disintegrated personalities; listening as Fr. Kentenich did with his ear on the heart of God and his hand on the pulse of the time; and finally the transforming characteristics of a listening heart. Four of our Women's Branch leaders gave inputs: Shirley Hall, Michelle Davis, Zenny Custodio and Angela Benson and Sr. M Isabell shared her wisdom with the theme: Listening Heart: Call and Response.

Fr. Gregory OP gave a very meaningful homily fitting to the theme and we were blessed to have three priests for Confession. Reflective Stations of the Cross and an hour of adoration during the afternoon were all part of the programme.

For the newcomers we were able to introduce the 'Father Room' which has been given a new location in the Pilgrims' Centre



A relaxing evening on Saturday night, also connected with the theme, was not missing.

The weekend concluded with a summary on Sunday afternoon by Sr. M Elizabeth followed by a devotion in the Shrine, which Shirley prepared.

The following are three echoes from the weekend, which give some idea of how much the weekend was enjoyed.

Echoes from the “Listening Heart” Retreat.

Attending the Lenten retreat at the Mount Schoenstatt Shrine in Mulgoa with my mother was one of the most spiritually enriching experiences I have ever had.

From the moment we arrived, there was a deep sense of peace that seemed to settle into our hearts. The sacred stillness of the Shrine created the perfect space to truly encounter God in a personal and intimate way. The theme, “*Listening Hearts*,” was not just something we reflected on, it was something we lived throughout the day.



We were invited to slow down, to quiet the noise of daily life, and to listen — really listen — to what the Lord is whispering within. Throughout the retreat, I felt my heart soften. Layers of distraction, worry and busyness seemed to fall away. In their place came clarity, peace and a renewed desire to draw closer to God this Lenten season. There were moments of profound stillness where I felt seen, known and loved by Him in a way that is difficult to put into words.



Sharing this experience with my mother made it even more beautiful. To pray side by side, to reflect together, and to witness one another being spiritually nourished was a gift I will treasure forever.

I left the Shrine feeling spiritually refreshed, deeply enriched and gently transformed. The retreat awakened in me a deeper awareness of God’s presence in the quiet and strengthened my desire to carry a listening heart into everyday life.

This was more than a retreat; it was a sacred encounter. I am so grateful to Sister M. Elizabeth Foley and to the Mount Schoenstatt Shrine community for creating such a grace-filled space. I cannot recommend this Lenten retreat enough to anyone longing to deepen their faith and rediscover the beauty of listening to God with an open heart.

Francesca

“Our full weekend retreat was truly a grace-filled and enriching experience. There was so much to learn, reflect upon and bring into our daily lives. It gently reminded us how important it is to slow down, be still and truly listen – to God, to others and to what is happening within our heart, through the talks, prayer, silence, and sharing. My heart was touched. It helped me see how a listening heart opens the way for deeper faith, better understanding and a closer relationship with God. It was not just learning with the mind but transforming the heart.”

This retreat has beautifully prepared us for the coming Lenten journey – inviting us to walk with greater awareness, humility, patience, compassion and love. I am so grateful for this opportunity, for the guidance I received, and many graces God

poured out during the weekend. Truly a listening heart opens the door to spiritual growth with deeper union with God

*With a thankful and Joyful heart,
Tessie Corpus”*

“Unfortunately, I was only able to attend the Saturday of the retreat weekend. This day included Reconciliation, Mass, and the Way of the Cross. As well, Sr. M. Isabell shared with us her reflections on “call and response—listening with our heart. Sr. Isabell explained that our hearts should be ready to listen without being distracted. She spoke about the purpose of the sacraments, especially Baptism, which calls us to have not only a hearing heart but also a responding heart.



When our hearts are ready to listen, how we should respond was very well explained by Zenny Custodio in her talk on “listening to the pulse of the times.” Using examples from the latest sad incidents in our State (including the Bondi shootings), it reminded me how God teaches us

even in our suffering, just as Jesus did while carrying His Cross in the saddest moment of His life, and how we are called to respond.

The examples of Mary’s journey, from the Annunciation to Calvary, presented by Michelle Davis in her reflection on: Mary’s Journey from Annunciation to Calvary”, delivered in a calm voice, reminded us that we have no excuse to live with a disintegrated personality.

It was a good spiritual day, enriched by Fr Gregory’s affirmation during his sermon of how we can be integrated and become a light and salt to others.



*It was also lovely to be with Sr Elizabeth who had organised this day so well and to end it with the opportunity for us to celebrate her 50 years of commitment to Our Lady, our Queen and Mother of Schoenstatt (as 7th February was the 50th anniversary of Sister’s Reception into the community)
God Bless, Jessy Sebaratnam*



4. Lenten Reflection Day for Women - Mulgoa

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The Lenten Reflection Day, held at Mount Schoenstatt on 28 February was spiritually enriching and was attended by 58 people from diverse backgrounds. It was so good to see such a big number. Interestingly, most of the attendees were new faces or some who come regularly to Schoenstatt but have never been aware of the Retreats being offered.



In the opening prayer, we prayed for strength to carry on in an environment where faith is dismissed, and hatred, division, revenge and other evils are preferred responses to whatever happens around us.

We prayed never to lose heart, to be strengthened in the face of adversity and evil.

To trust in God, do what good we can and leave the rest to Him. Remain confident in God.

The Talk/Reflection about Lent by Sr Mary Louise was especially helpful. Sister explained that Lent, being the beginning of the 40-day journey to Easter, is a time to move beyond rituals. It is a time of preparation for the

Easter Celebration of the Pascal Mystery when we are challenged to renew the paschal mission in our lives and to discover our true self through the Sacraments and Scripture. With Jesus rising from suffering, pain and death, we will rejoice if our journey through “turning away from sin” has been sincere. Easter could not have happened without Good Friday.

We need to recognise sin in our lives and ways in which we can seek conversion so we can grow in relationships with God and our own family.

It is good if we ask ourselves:

- Can I do more to improve or be better connected with the Church, my Parish, my family?
- What does “turn away from sin and be faithful to the Gospel” look like in my life?
- What is the significance of the ashes for me during Lent. The people of Nineveh repented. What is the depth of my repentance?

Other aspects mentioned were that Lent is a time for us to open our hearts to God; to take time to turn away from sin and seek reconciliation; to strive to be faithful to the Gospel; and to use Lent as a time of longing, preparation and of penance.

Jesus endured temptation as He fasted for 40 days in the desert and was tempted to turn rocks into bread. As human beings we are also tempted like Jesus and He invites us to be on guard always.

It is in this time of the year that we need to focus on the Death and Resurrection of Jesus. We want to rise to a new life, living with Christ. To enjoy Easter, we have to go through the death of Jesus. Let the Easter Candle remind us to let the Light of Christ dispel the darkness of sin in my/our world. Only Jesus can fulfill the longing we have inside us.

Sr. Mary Louise emphasised the three pillars of Lent which focus on Fasting, Almsgiving and Prayer

Fasting:

- Abstaining from food helps us recognize our true hunger for the living God.
- Beyond abstaining from food, prayer and attentiveness to the needs of others is important as we strive to place God back at the centre of our lives.
- We can speak with care and kindness, avoid use of harsh words and abstain from harsh judgment to make room for others
- On a practical note, Sister suggested that at the end of each day, we ask ourselves these questions: When did I say too much? What THREE kind words did I say?



Almsgiving:

- It is not only about giving away unwanted material things or giving financial donations to the poor.
- It is also making sacrifices for others such as avoiding or fasting from eating food that we think others cannot afford.

Prayer:

- Prayer is a response to God's presence in our daily lives.
- It is our lifeline to God.
- The Holy Spirit initiates prayer. Seek His help.
- Make time for intensive prayer, with authentic listening being an integral part
- Along with the Catechumens, renew our faith.
- There are many different types of prayer.
- Prayer is a deep practice of daily and spiritual renewal, reflection, and is a crucial part of Lent.
- St Paul reminds us to "pray without ceasing"
- Prayer lifts our intimacy with God and gives guidance

As part of our day, we could share in the blessings of an hour of silent Reflection, Prayer, Confession/Reconciliation as well as recitation of the Holy Rosary and Holy Mass.

In the afternoon session there was the possibility for creativity through Craft. All materials necessary to create/design a Cross, so relevant to Lent, were supplied. Everyone appreciated the finished product of a colourful Cross which can be used as bookmark.



Fellowship during the lunch break was important for catching up and sharing the riches of the day which was not complete without the sale of nicely decorated candles, other religious articles, mini plants etc and the yummy sweets prepared by Anne Walsh along with knitted items – ready to warm someone up when the cold weather comes.



One echo from the day was:

“Following the suggestions offered during the day, I found that when I took my daily walk, I had complete free time to spent in prayer with God without interruptions from family and friends. It made me appreciate the time I spend with God. I could remind myself that:

Lent is conversion towards an authentic living with God.
Lent is a time of Repentance.
Lent makes us aware of the Life of Christ.
Lent is time for more intensive prayer.
Lent reminds us to make time available to God.”

Zenny Custodio, Anne Walsh and Madge Miranda



5. Information and Links

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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/>

➤ Events

- ❖ Covenant Sundays – Third Sunday of each month 11am Mulgoa, NSW; 3pm Wantirna, VIC; 3pm Mount Richon, WA
- ❖ Men at the Shrine – Second Wednesday each month 8-9pm Shrine, Mulgoa
- ❖ Shrine Time – for young adults – Second Sunday each month 7-8pm Shrine, Mulgoa

➤ Links:

Official Schoenstatt Website	https://www.schoenstatt.com
Schoenstatt Australian Website	http://www.schoenstatt.com.au
Our YouTube Channel	https://www.youtube.com/schoenstattaustralia
Western Australian Website	https://schoenstattwa.org.au
Schoenstatt Men Website	https://schoenstatt-men-australia.mailchimpsites.com

- #### ➤ Zoom Gatherings for Covenant Days – 18th of the Month 7.30 – 8.30 pm AEDT

Videos

March 2026 - History of Schoenstatt Family in Melbourne <https://youtu.be/a9EAWZ69i0c>

February 2026 - Mary, our Consors Patris Queen <https://youtu.be/447oQFt0yDY>

January 2026 - The Beginning Years in NSW – Early History: Schoenstatt Sisters.
<https://youtu.be/ELxWG1ROyv0>

December 2025 - Consors Patris – Helpmate of the Father https://youtu.be/JT4Z_5VHaKA

Note: These last videos don't upload from Schoenstatt Australia YouTube site

November 2025 - An outline of the Sisters' History in Australia
https://youtu.be/_qTvhUsu9uA

DON'T FORGET

We are all Schoenstatt" - A Challenge Shared by All

It is time to unite, embrace our origin and together spread our Covenant for the future.

The International Schoenstatt Movement continues to need our support

How to Donate

Donations can be made through various channels, mainly through the [Donorbox](#) platform.



- #### ➤ Contributions to the Newsletter are welcome.

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

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