

Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour grows in size and mission

By Barb Ernster

This October 3rd marks the annual Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour, when school children around the world will adore Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament and pray the rosary for families. The Children's Holy Hour and its spread across the world, has become a primary focus of the World Apostolate of Fatima USA, Children's Program, according to its national chairman, Connie Schneider of St. Paul, Minnesota.

The event occurs every First Friday in October, the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, and has been growing every year since its inception in the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in 2003, to honor the Year of the Rosary. Schneider, who was on the board of directors for the WAF diocesan division, and currently serves as its president, received the blessing of Archbishop Harry Flynn to hold a school children's Holy Hour at the Cathedral of St. Paul with the Office of Marriage, Family & Laity, to celebrate the Year of the Rosary.

"Most pastors said it would never happen," recalled Schneider, "but the cathedral was filled to capacity. Over 3,200 children assembled in the St. Paul Cathedral to pray the Rosary before the Blessed Sacrament."

Because of its great success, the local Apostolate was greatly inspired to grow the program nationally and received Pope John Paul II's blessing for the 2004 event—the "Year of the Eucharist." By 2005, the international body of the World Apostolate of Fatima promoted the event, and participation from dioceses and schools around the world grew. By 2006, the event was broadcast to 40 different nations on the Eternal Word Television Network from the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C., as more dioceses around the world participated.

Now in its 6th year, the Basilica has become the "Eucharistic epicenter" of the Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour, said Schneider. This year, Father Patrick Byrne, Secretary General of the Pontifical Society of the Holy Childhood Association, will lead the children in the Holy Hour, spiritually uniting the prayers of the world's children, which will be broadcast on EWTN.

Because of the time zones, Schneider said it is not important that dioceses and parishes participate at exactly the same time, rather that they help the children understand that they are part of a global Holy Hour on that day, and give some background on the Fatima message. For spiritual unity, their Holy Hour should include praying the Eucharistic prayers of the Angel of Peace, the entrustment prayer to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, and the World Mission Rosary for the families of the world. The Children's Program has developed a guide for the Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour and children's adoration in general, which will be available soon.

Last year Schneider was overjoyed to receive an Apostolic Blessing from Pope Benedict XVI in a letter, in which he wrote, 'I am deeply grateful for the many good efforts of the World Apostolate of Fatima, and in particular, I think of the many graces that come to so many young people through the Children's Program...It is my hope and my prayer that each of the children who participate in this Holy Hour will be ambassadors of Jesus Christ to other young people and to the world.' (February 8, 2007).

This year's theme will center on the 100th anniversary of the birth of Blessed Francisco, to whom the overarching program, "Children of the Eucharist, Friends of the Hidden Jesus," is dedicated. Schneider said it is fitting to dedicate this effort to Blessed Francisco, known among the three shepherds as "the consoler of Jesus."

The words of the Angel of Peace to the shepherds in the third apparition, "Console your God," deeply impressed Francisco, who spent the rest of his short life wishing to console the hidden Jesus in the tabernacle of the parish church, primarily by praying the Rosary, making sacrifices and adoring Him, she explained.

"Blessed Francisco was never privileged to hear the Angel of Peace or Our Lady, and what he learned, he learned primarily from listening to Lucia and Jacinta and the various questions he presented to them," said Schneider. "Is it possible that Jesus had a greater role for him than what we understood up to this time? It was only Francisco that God told how sad He was, and this moved Francisco to pray for hours before the hidden Jesus."

Schneider sees the Worldwide Children's Eucharistic Holy Hour as a "call within a call" by Our Lady for children to follow the example of Francisco in our times and bring their prayers to the "hidden Jesus;" hence, the name of the program. By following the way of Blessed Francisco, they will learn to pray with joy, "Jesus, I desire to console You," she said.

"It is our hope that clergy around the globe will join in and gather the children of their dioceses and parishes before our Eucharistic Lord on October 3rd," said Schneider.

The fruit of the global event is ongoing promotion of children's Eucharistic adoration in parishes, schools and families and helping the world's children live the message of Fatima, she added. Children of the Eucharist, Friends of the Hidden Jesus is sending it's own "call" to children worldwide to become enrolled in the "school of the Immaculate Heart of Mary." The goal is to have one million children enrolled in the school, to help the Immaculate Heart of Mary bring the world back to God.

"Children will become active missionaries in their homes, parishes and schools, as they follow the way of Blessed Francisco and 'console the heart of Jesus' in the Blessed Sacrament," she said.

For more information, go to www.childrenoftheeucharist.org, or contact Connie Schneider at connieschneider@earthlink.net.

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Sidebar:

Letter from the Archbishop of Goa, October 6, 2006:

“As I write these words, I am watching, through the Eternal World Television Network, the children of the world bowing profoundly before Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, in the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington D.C. And to know that they are being joined by children worldwide, including my own diocese, fills me with an overwhelming inner joy! Could there be anything more beautiful than this?

Jesus in the Gospel has a special predilection for the little ones. So has Mary, His Mother, and she has consistently shown this in the course of history. Jesus and Mary seem to entrust to children the problems of the humankind and of the Church. And when children pray, with the simple and complete trust that can be only theirs, their faces are adorned with a special glow that leads, nay drags onlookers to experience the Divine.

Let us entrust the children of the world with those things that worry us most and we shall receive the ‘*consolation of the incomparable victory of their precious prayers!*’ (Pope Benedict XV at an audience of children in Rome, July 1916). And may their angels intercede for us all and lead us to the Bosom of the Holy Trinity!”
Archbishop Filipe Neri Ferrao, Archbishop of Goa and Daman (India)