

“MADE FOR GREATNESS”

What happens when you take thirty young people from diverse backgrounds and levels of faith, place them in a small, isolated region of our Diocese, in the depths of winter, away from all television and with very limited phone and social media contact? Riots, rebellion or at best resentment you might think, especially when you add to that early mornings and late nights spent in the church; but that’s not what happened. Instead what took place was the most gentle and profound outpouring of grace and healing; in short it was an encounter with God!

On Monday afternoon, July 6, twenty-one young people from Mildura, Red Cliffs, Ouyen, Birchip and Ballarat together with nine other young people from Sydney and Melbourne gathered in Ouyen to take part in a retreat for youth aged 15 - 25. The retreat, held over three days, featured daily Mass, the rosary, adoration, guest speakers, reconciliation, live music, lots of food and fun. This event was supported by the Diocese of Ballarat Foundation.



The theme of the retreat was “Made For Greatness”, taken from a quote of Pope Benedict in which he warned that “the world will offer you comfort and luxury but . . . we were not made for that; we were made for Greatness”. Greatness isn’t living in glamour or the headlines, it requires struggle and self sacrifice. In our first-world, disposable society spirituality is ignored, if not treated with contempt and consequently we lose sight of the fact that we are God’s creation and made to be with Him. By contrast the aim of the “Made For Greatness” retreat was to show youth that true happiness and peace is obtainable, it happens when we live a life in communion with God. So in essence the retreat was about discovering God and that’s just what happened! Hearts were healed and touched, faith was awakened and in some cases rekindled and many new friends were made.

Marie Shaddock

