



Wreccsam Clarion



Issue no 10
September 2023

The newsletter of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Wrexham –
serving the parishes of North and Mid Wales

To make clearly known
To declare
To clarify
To call to prayer



Bishop's Column

It was with joy that we along with many other Catholics and others from across Wales and England were able to return this year in pilgrimage to Lourdes. For our Diocese it was the first time for three years and although the party was smaller than in previous years an enjoyable and prayerful time was had by all and fortunately for us without excess delay or pain with the flights; unlike a couple of the Dioceses with whom we shared the time in Lourdes who had 24 hour delays.

The time that we were in Lourdes was exceptional and wonderful in that it was the week before the World Youth Day in Lisbon and there were many tens of thousands of young people on their way to Lisbon making a stopover in Lourdes. Exceptional and wonderful in that I don't recall ever having seen and heard such an international cross section of the world's Catholics and this reflected in the praying of the Rosary during the Torchlight Procession. Never before in Lourdes have I heard the 'Hail Mary ...' prayed in so many different languages, the Asian and South-east Asian out-numbering the European. And so those words of the Lady to Bernadette to 'Tell the priests to build a chapel/sanctuary, and that the people are to come in procession' have perhaps never been so true as now one hundred and sixty-eight years later when we witness the growth of the Church on the continents of the world beyond Europe, it being there that the Church is building despite in many cases religious and political persecution and a real threat of martyrdom. Which brings me to the second of our annual domestic pilgrimages. In about six weeks time we have the commemoration of St. Richard Gwyn and the annual Mass in the cathedral, this year on Sunday 22nd October. Richard a layman, husband, father and schoolmaster was publicly executed in Wrexham in 1584, three hundred years before the Apparitions in Lourdes. He was the first of the Welsh martyrs of the forty martyr saints of England and Wales. Though betrayed, convicted with false evidence and trumped up charges he remained faithful throughout his trial and to the very last moments of his life, praying, 'Jesus, have mercy on me,' being the last words on his lips.

Remember - You can access websites and links by clicking with your cursor on any part underlined.

URGENT!

Grandparents' Day

Last Day to book, this SUNDAY

See Page 2 for details

Some people will remember the procession through Wrexham from the Beast Market (now Eagles Meadow) to the Cathedral prior to the celebration of Mass, but sadly that ended some twenty years ago for lack of support. As we remember it is the prayer of the commemoration Mass and all Masses continuing to be celebrated in Wrexham and across the Diocese that is the witness to the Faith and the fidelity of our forebears without whom we would not have the freedom to worship now as we please and educate our children in Catholic schools which are now as cosmopolitan as Lourdes. I invite you now to put this date (3.00pm. Sunday 22nd October) in your diaries to be part of this pilgrimage to Wrexham to commemorate the martyrdom of St. Richard Gwyn and to celebrate the faith he proclaimed in life and death.

For your children and young people who return to school in these days, St. Richard Gwyn pray for them and for us.

With every good wish and continued prayer, + Peter

Contents:

This month is a **BUMPER** Edition of the 'Clarion'.

AS well as the usual items of information and reflection, there is a **FOUR PAGE SUPPLEMENT**, of the accounts of the **World Youth Days** in Lisbon. These are the personal encounters of the Young People who attended, and our thanks to them for responding so quickly and efficiently to the request for their experiences! Also, **Fr Ebuke** has provided a reflection and a valuable insight.

September is SVP month, and celebrating 190 years, we include on page 3 the first of several parts of the history of the SVP in England and Wales.

On Page 8, you can join a reader as he visits the Tomb of St Peter. We encourage other readers to tell us of theirs!

September is a new beginning for schools, and even the 'Clarion'. So, on page 9 in 'Children's Corner' we take a look at how many "New Year's" we can celebrate!

Please remember, we welcome contributions and comments -email clarion@rcdwxm.org.uk

Visit the Diocesan website: www.rcdwxm.org.uk

Diocese of Wrexham
Marriage and Family Life Commission



Sunday 17th September 2023
10:30am – 4pm
At Noddfa Centre, Penmaenmawr, LL34 6YF

Join us for a day of celebration, prayer and activities to reflect on the gift and wonder of being grandparents.

- Morning crafts, activities and reflection walk.
- Afternoon guest speaker, Dr Susan Longhurst, will be discussing the importance of grandparents within the journey of faith based on her work *Who joins the Catholic Church and Why?*
- Concluding with Mass, celebrated by Bishop Peter Brignall.

BOOKING IS ESSENTIAL BY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2023
Cost - £15 per head which includes a light buffet lunch and refreshments.

To book and to find out more, please contact Jeanie Larkin
Email: mfl@cwrwm.org.uk Tel: 07542 268728

Prayers to Saint Anne:

O Glorious St. Anne, you are compassionate toward those in need who invoke your heavenly intercession. Burdened with life's difficulties, I place myself before you, and ask that you assist me with the petitions and intentions I now recommend to your special protection.

Saint Anne, with your husband Joachim and your daughter, the Virgin Mary, you gave the example of an ideal family. Help my family be as closely united as yours and that of Jesus. Make us love and help one another as you did. Saint Anne, you were a spouse, a mother, and a grandmother.



Typical image of St Anne



The Basilica of Ste Anne d'Auray, Brittany

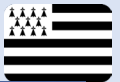
Who is the Patron Saint of Grandparents?

Of course, it is Saint Anne, mother of Mary, and Grandmother of Jesus. She and her husband Joachim were the inspiration behind the faith and love of Mary. How great was their love! Enough to inspire their grandson! And today, Grandparents should not underestimate the influence, and the love from which their grandchildren will inherit success and formation.

Saint Anne is patroness of unmarried women, housewives, women in labour or who want to be pregnant, grandmothers, mothers and educators. She is also a patroness of horseback riders, cabinet-makers and miners. In the Middle Ages, she became increasingly identified as a maritime saint, protecting sailors and fisherman, and invoked against storms.

Saint Anne has two colours, red and green, one for love, the other for rebirth, as she bore the New Eve, Mary.

Saint Anne is the Patron Saint of Brittany, and your Editor happily participated in the Breton Mass and Blessing of the Sea, which takes place all over Brittany around July 26th



Prisoners' Sunday 8th October 2023 'This day...with me...paradise' Lk 23:43

Pact is the major Catholic charity working to support women and men in prison, and their children and families in many parts of England & Wales.

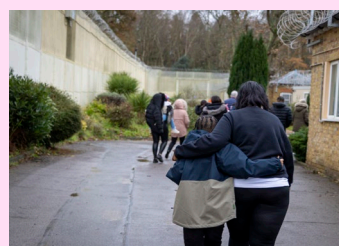
There are no women's prisons in Wales. This means women from the Wrexham diocese who are serving a prison sentence will be further away from their children and families, perhaps in HMP Styal or even HMP Eastwood Park (Gloucestershire).

To support families in this situation, Pact runs the important Visiting Mum project. Our staff and volunteers help with travel, and with managing relationships at such a distance. Our work means that children are more able to stay in touch with their mum while she is inside, reducing distress for both of them. Children supported by Visiting Mum told us:

'I love my mum and I still need to see her, even when she's here.' (*'Rydw i'n caru Mam ac mae angen i mi ei gweld hi, hyd yn oed pan fydd hi yma.'*)

'If I was granted a wish it would be to live with Mummy.' (*'Tasen i'n gallu cael dymuniad, byddwn i esisiau byw gyda Mami.'*)

On behalf of HMPPS, Pact operates the Prisoners' Families Helpline. Our fantastic team of caring staff and volunteers provide a listening ear, sound advice and vital signposting, 7 days a week. We responded to almost 40,000 calls from worried family members in the past year.

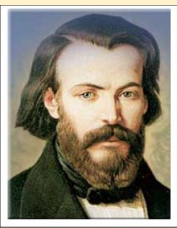


"Bishop Peter will celebrate Mass at 10am in the Cathedral on Prisoners' Sunday. How beautiful and how fitting that prisoners and their families will be brought before the Lord in the Cathedral as well as in parishes in the diocese". Pact CEO Andy Keen-Downs

It is Prisoners' Sunday on **8th October**. Pact will send a Prisoners' Sunday information pack to every parish in the week beginning 18th September. It contains a message from our President, Cardinal Nichols, a poster (in Welsh and English), bidding prayers and information about Pact's work supporting prisoners and their families.

We humbly request that parishes consider taking up a second collection to support the work of Pact in the year ahead. Your support means we can do more for prisoners and their families. You can choose a nearby Sunday for the second collection if that helps. We recognise that this is a difficult time for many families - for those who have a loved one inside too.

Pact Prisoners' Sunday information and resources: [Marking Prisoners' Sunday | Prison Advice and Care Trust](#)



SVP – Our Founder

Frédéric Ozanam Rendu

Sr Rosalie

Frédéric Ozanam was born 23rd April 1813, of committed French Catholic parents.

His father was a doctor, but in an age where medical provision had to be paid for, he gave his services to the poor, who constituted at least a third of his patients, for free.

His mother formed a group of women to tend at the bedside of the sick and poor. In this way, Frédéric was schooled by their marvellous example in the importance of helping those less fortunate than himself.

At 18 he went to the Sorbonne University to read law. The epoch changing French Revolution had taken place 40 years previously. Catholics were viewed with much suspicion, because the Church was seen as part of the 'royal' establishment

Frédéric decided to form a discussion group with a few friends of like mind. They called themselves "**Conference of History**". Their method was to write a response to all the anti-Catholic lectures. The "Conference", however, was mainly a talking shop. Frédéric and his friends were spurred to action when a student attending a discussion challenged Frédéric himself, by asking "*What are you doing for poor people today?*" For Frédéric this was a turning point. He and his band of friends resolved to help the poor in imitation of Our Lord.

He had 2 major influences in his early life:

The first was an older man, a journalist called Emmanuel Bailly. He was the one to encourage their enthusiasm, keeping their spirits up when the going got tough.

Emmanuel introduced them to the second, a Vincentian Daughter of Charity, Sister Rosalie Rendu who was experienced in working with the poor of Paris.

Sister Rosalie Rendu became their mentor and she gave them two pieces of advice.

"Be Kind and love", she said, "for love is your first gift to the poor. They will appreciate your kindness and your love more than all else you can bring them".

The second tip she gave them was: *"When you meet the poor, you meet Christ."*

Adopting St Vincent as its patron saint Frédéric established The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVP). It continued to grow and by 1841 it had 2000 members across Europe and the Americas. The SVP came to England and Wales in 1844.

By 1845 Frédéric was married with a daughter and his life became a balancing act between work, family life and involvement with the poor through the Conference of the SVP. He used his influence in the academic world to speak out against injustice. He started talking about basic wage, the length of the working day, pensions, and legal protection of children.

Tragically Frédéric, having suffered ill-health for some time, died in 1853. Even in times of convalescence, he worked to found SVP conferences wherever he could.

Frédéric was beatified on 22nd August 1997 by Pope John Paul II.

SVP

The first Conference of the Society in England and Wales.

One of the members of Frédéric's Conference was a young Englishman called George Wigley who planned to set up the Society here. Frédéric's advice was to contact as many influential people as possible in English public life.

Wigley contacted Frederick Lucas, editor of The Tablet and an influential Catholic. As a result, Lucas published a series of articles entitled "French Charity". The whole series of articles had considerable influence, and a meeting was arranged at the Sablonniere Hotel, Leicester Square, in London.

The hotel was owned by Mr Pagliano, who attended the meeting with George Wigley, Frederick Lucas, George Blount (later to become prominent as a long-serving National President) and eight others. This led to the foundation of a Conference on 12th February 1844. Brother Pagliano became the first English SVP President. Before 1845 dawned, there were five separate Conferences in London. Five years later in 1849, there were 14 Conferences in England and Wales with a membership of 274 'brothers'.

One of the articles in The Tablet, written by Lucas, described the desperate conditions of the poor in general. He also referred specifically to the apathy of the State towards them, and to the indifference of influential Catholics, expressing the view that they could have done much more:

"Who except the clergy visit the poor? As far as we laity are concerned, the approved plan seems to be to manage all by a secretary, to avoid all dirty work whenever it can be avoided and to labour by a committee; or we try to do charity by nothing so vulgar as the sweat of the brow, in which all must labour, but by polite, genteel, not over-strained exertions of ladies and gentlemen in white kid gloves. We have already endeavoured to introduce to the favour of our readers a French society for lay persons. We refer to the Society of St Vincent de Paul".

Although Frederick Lucas simply used the word "poor", a new expression had come into use during the 1830s and 1840s. The word "pauper", which meant "the poor who need to turn to others for help".

When Frédéric Ozanam visited The Great Exhibition at the Crystal Palace in 1851, some SVP brothers arranged for him to visit the London slums where, amongst the teeming poor, lived many of the Irish Catholics. Later he wrote of these visits, aware of how the well-off could be snubbed by polite society if they were foolish enough to help the poor, person-to-person:

"What courage the English brothers need to shake hands with down-and-outs, in an aristocratic land, where contact with the poor is thought to declass and degrade".

Poverty in General

In the early part of the 19th century, large workhouses were built with the resources of a number of smaller areas acting in union – Union Workhouses resulted, and were, generally speaking, forbidding places. Members of families were segregated. Workhouse clothes were provided; meals were often spartan and eaten in total silence; visitors were not allowed, and smoking and drinking alcohol were forbidden. Dickens's novel Oliver Twist gives some idea of life in a workhouse. Yet, although it is easy to criticise the workhouse system, it did at least provide shelter, clothing, a regular, if meagre, diet and burial when they died. Outside the workhouse, conditions for the poorest were often appalling.

The workhouse

In 1801 some £4 million had been spent on a population of 900,000. By 1832, the cost had risen to £6 million for a population of 1.5 million. A Royal Commission in 1832 concluded that too much money was being spent on the poor and that the cost was ruining the country. The resulting Poor Law of 1834 was designed to discourage people from claiming relief.

By 1844, when the infant SVP was set up in England, relief was refused to people except in exchange for work. However, those already in work complained that if work was given to the inmates of the workhouse, there was a loss of employment outside. As a result, the only work available to workhouse inmates was stone-breaking or oakum-picking (untwisting thick old ropes to use for waterproofing ships).



The Sablonniere Hotel,
Leicester Square



A Workhouse



Oakum



ST BEUNO'S OUTREACH
IN THE DIOCESE OF WREXHAM



**Praying with St Beuno's Outreach:
'As one friend to another ...'**

In this monthly reflection, St Beuno's Outreach invites you to pray with an image and a verse of Scripture or other material.

This month we celebrate the Season of Creation, from 1 September (World Day of Prayer for Creation) to 4 October (the Feast of St Francis of Assisi).

It is a time when Christians across the world pray for the whole of creation, and especially for the protection of this fragile and beautiful planet.

Reverence and love for God's gift of creation are at the heart of Ignatian spirituality, which encourages us to seek God in all things.

St Ignatius wrote:

All the things in this world are created because of God's love, and they become a context of gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily.

Our scripture verse comes from Psalm 8.

**How great is your name O Lord our God, through all the earth.
When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and stars which you arranged,
what are we that you should keep us in mind, mere mortals that you care for us? (Psalm 8: 2, 4-5)**

After spending time with these words and looking at the image, you may like to ponder:

Where am I most aware of God's good gifts in the creation around me?

How do I want to respond to a loving God who has created me within this immense universe?

How does my faith affect my values and choices in trying to care for God's creation?

As I consider the thoughts and feelings arising in me as I pray, what do I want to say to God, or to Jesus?
Speak as one friend to another.

You can download the weekly Prego at <https://stbeunosoutreach.wordpress.com/>
Contact us at stbeunosoutreach@beunos.com

Relics of St Columba, St Andrew and St Margaret of Scotland are 'touring' the UK!

The Knights of St Columba are supervising the tour of the Relics of St. Columba, St. Andrew and St. Margaret of Scotland

The Relics will be in the Diocese of Wrexham from 15th to 17th September as follows:

15 th pm	Wrexham	Cathedral
16 th am	Mold	St. David's
16 th pm	Rhyl	Our Lady of the Assumption
17 th am	Colwyn Bay	St. Joseph's
17 th pm	Llandudno	Our Lady Star of the Sea.

At the time of going to press, detailed plans were not available. Anyone wishing to venerate the relics should contact the parish or the local Knights of St Columba for precise information

Charismatic Renewal Weekend 13th to 15th October 2023

Take time out to praise God, listen to his word and share your faith at the Loreto retreat centre Llandudno.

Organised by "SHREX" a joint initiative of the Wrexham and Shrewsbury service teams. For information contact Steve Halsall by email stehalsall@yahoo.co.uk
Booking --Rita Wilkinson (07803 281 971) ritawilkinson18@gmail.com
C O S T: £164.00 - includes accommodation all meals and teas & coffee. Please email Rita with any special dietary needs.

Payment: £30 deposit if you cancel up to 4 weeks before.

Bank Transfers to: Co-operative Bank, Ac Title SCCR/DST Account No 65485026 Sort Code 089299, Ref: 'Your Name' please

THE POPE'S PRAYER INTENTION - September

We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane life conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never considered of lesser importance.

Gospel Year of Matthew



The Triumph of the Cross

And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews."

And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. The tombs were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

(Matt.27:25-37, 50-53 ESV-CE)

O cross of Christ, the Christians' hope,
Guide of the wanderers, haven of the storm-tossed
Victory in warfare, firm foundation of the world,
Physician of the sick, resurrection of the dead,

Have mercy on us.

The cross is the guardian of the whole earth,
The cross is the beauty of the Church.
The cross is the strength of kings,
The cross is the support of the faithful.
The cross is the angels' glory, the demons' destruction.
From a hymn for the feast in the Orthodox Church

The Season of Creation 1st September – 4th October 2023

"Let Justice and Peace Flow" is the theme chosen for Season of Creation 2023, the international ecumenical celebration we hold each year from September 1, World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation, to 4 October, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

Further information, resources and ideas to observe the Season can be found [Season of Creation - Catholic Bishops' Conference \(cbcew.org.uk\)](https://www.cbcew.org.uk)

THE CYCLE OF PRAYER

During Ordinary Time (Autumn), i.e. from September to Christ the King we are asked to pray for these intentions: The Spread of the Gospel, Students and Teachers; the Harvest; the Fruits of Human Work, and the Reverent Use of Creation; Justice and Peace in the World, All Victims of War; Young People; prisoners and their families.

"Laudato Si'", Creation and 'ecological conversion' –

some individual reflections *(part one of two, by VB)*

In his [talk](#) *to young people in France in 2020, Pope Francis explained that *his* ecological conversion occurred during the 8 years between 2007, when he attended the Conference of the Latin American Episcopate in Aparecida, Brazil, and 2015, when he wrote the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* - "From Aparecida to *Laudato Si'* was, for me, an inner journey", a "journey of ecological conversion".

He said, "there will be no new relationship with nature without a new human being". The human heart needs to be healed from its selfishness, its greed, its pride, and its claim to be the master and despot of the world, he said. To him, an ecological conversion means the harmonising of thinking, feeling and doing, with tenderness imbuing all. He wants us to realise that our roots are interrelated with nature, because that realisation will encourage us to live in harmony with creation.

The *Laudato Si'* Movement (LSM)'s Animators – people, who have taken the online [Course*](#) have embraced ecological conversion in order to educate and inspire action to tackle the environmental crises.

Here are some individual stories of that 'ecological conversion':

John told me that the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* changed his life (*maybe all of our lives!*). He thinks that "any eco-conversion has to start with yourself and a serious look at your home

life". Lockdown gave him the opportunity to clear out loads of stuff from his home, the sort of inessentials that we all seem to amass. It also enabled him to start the practice of contemplating creation in his garden. This spiritual exercise has boosted his ecological conversion. He sees his tasks now as, among other actions, working to spread knowledge of the Encyclical in his parish and in wider communities.

Susan, like John, saw lockdown as providing an opportunity to pause and reflect on our lifestyles. It forced people to face the environmental crises and to realise that we humans, individually and en masse, are responsible.

Through studying the LSM Course in 2020, she learned to read nature and creation as a revelation of God. "The way I practise my religion now is totally different" she says. Her life has undergone "fundamental changes".

Like John she spends more time with nature, which has increased her sense of wonder "at the beauty and balance which exists there". To reduce packaging, she buys unwrapped fruit and vegetables, and to reduce her carbon footprint she is trying to eliminate meat from her diet. She has taken to cycling as a way of exercising while at the same time appreciating nature.

Martin shares John and Susan's feeling that connecting with nature is a priority for achieving an ecological conversion. He thinks we should make time every day to do this, to help us see God in everything.

**if reading on-line, click on the word for more detail*

A moment of history and ecumenism



Bishop Peter Brignall
Bishop of Wrexham,
and
Bishop Gregory Cameron,
Bishop of St Asaph
sign the historic agreement of
co-operation at
St. Winefride's Well, Holywell.

The site includes the Well and grounds, and the church of St James, above the Well.

Signing Agreement - Holywell

An historic agreement to recognise and celebrate the significance of the holy well and Shrine of Saint Winefride, Holywell was signed by Bishop Peter and Bishop Gregory of the Anglican Diocese of St Asaph on July 12th 2023.

The Bishops have pledged to work co-operatively towards the development of the whole site in Holywell as an integrated place of worship, pilgrimage and tourism, while maintaining the distinctive tradition of worship associated with the Shrine.

Bishop Peter Brignall said during the service: "The history and tradition of Saint Winefride and Holywell provide an opportunity for the church in the 21st century as a place of witness and evangelisation. So many facets of Winefride's story will appeal to the world today. In some ways she can be seen as a patron or example for women who experience domestic violence or abuse. There will be people who come for the heritage, architecture and history but also those who come for healing and an encounter with the divine physician through Winefride and her traditions.

"St Winefride's Well is also a reminder that faith is the centre of ordinary life. The pre-Victorian engravings on the walls tell a story of people washing their clothes in the holy well. If we can put faith at the centre of life today, that is all well and good. I am delighted to sign this statement of intent at this time."

The Bishop of St Asaph, the Rt Revd Gregory Cameron said during the service: "The site of St Winefride's Well and associated buildings is a world class place of pilgrimage, sacred to Christians across all traditions down through history. We have huge hopes for the development of the Shrine site, with the local priest, Father Dominic using St James' as a centre for healing and community.

"Today's signing of the statement of intent is really making public what we already do together; we're co-operating to establish this special place to welcome all Christians and people of all faiths, sharing as much as we can, while maintaining our distinctive traditions."



MARTIN LUTHER KING ANNIVERSARY

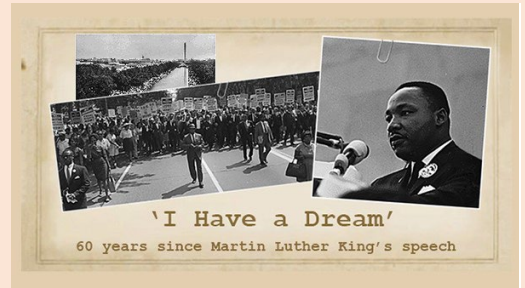


Photo: US National Archives and Records Administration
28th August was the 60th anniversary of Dr Martin Luther King Jr's monumental 'I have a dream' speech, which some would consider to be one of the greatest speeches of all time.

Although six decades have passed since Dr King's legendary speech, neither time nor events have diminished his influence or legacy. Dr King's speech still remains an inspirational call for us to work for an equitable world

More information and resources can be found on the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI) website [MLK_60th Anniversary I Have a Dream \(Welsh/English PDF\)](https://www.ctbi.org.uk/MLK-60th-Anniversary-I-Have-a-Dream-Welsh-English-PDF) the speech itself can be read and heard on: <https://www.npr.org/2010/01/18/122701268/i-have-a-dream-speech-in-its-entirety>

MARYVALE INSTITUTE

Maryvale Institute has announced the continuation of the Bachelor of Divinity (BDiv) and Licence Programmes, allowing them to begin recruiting new students immediately.

The Maryvale Higher Institute of Religious Sciences (HIRS) is the **only** ecclesial institute of this kind in the English-speaking world. It operates both the B.Div and Licence Programmes.

The Ecclesiastical BDiv is a five-year part-time, collaborative-learning degree programme in Catholic theology providing a comprehensive exposition and analysis of Christian doctrine based on the study of the sacred Scriptures, the works of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, and the documents of the Magisterium.

The Licence in Divinity: Pathway in Catechetical Sciences is another qualification of the Holy See, distinct from an STL. It is a three-year, part-time programme, aimed at those in leadership positions in catechetics and in other positions of responsibility.

To enquire, please contact Deacon Harry Schnitker:

researchcentre@maryvale.ac.uk



**Communications
in the
Diocese
Of
Wrexham**



**David Tarbrook
Communications Officer**

Coming to work in my current role as diocesan communications officer was something that happened quite by accident and not something that I had ever envisaged.

Prior to working at the Curia, I worked in various and varied roles as a qualified nurse - on the wards at the Maelor, as an occupational health manager for a large international company, a Diana nurse for terminally ill children and finally as a Health visitor.

That all changed however, nine years ago when I decided to take a sabbatical for twelve months! During that time, I wrote to Bishop Peter to see if there was anything I could do to help or support the diocese on a voluntary basis ... and the rest as they say, is history.

I didn't really know a great deal about communications – especially within the Church, but that all changed as I began to network with the other 28 Diocesan Communications Officers around the UK!

Unlike the other dioceses, where there are large communications teams, I am a team of one and my role is varied and quite extensive, as I undertake a number of tasks as required by the Bishop and the Diocese. My remit includes –

- editing both the provincial and national directories,
- building and updating the diocesan and St Winefride's Well websites,
- running all diocesan social media channels,
- writing press releases and
- acting as the diocesan spokesperson.

I also create all diocesan ID badges and manage the diocesan mobile phone

account. In addition to this, I'm involved with creating and producing church literature, posters, leaflets, banners etc.

During covid – I managed and monitored daily all live streamed Diocesan Masses and services.

My work also involves working with the press, radio and television and I work alongside other faith groups. As 'comms' officer, I work closely with our Safeguarding, Education, and Marriage and Family Life departments.

I collaborate with my fellow 'comms officers' around the UK, monitoring and reporting on current news, and use the opportunity to evangelise the Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In addition to all this, I undertake any other work as required by the Diocese and the Bishop, as the curia is a very small team, and I am just one of two people who work on a full-time basis.

Therefore, I can be called upon to undertake practically anything which needs doing.

I appreciate that I don't always get things right, and that communications within the diocese could always be improved, but I do what I can, with the tools that I have, and only wish that there were more hours in the day!

Never in the history of our diocese, has there been a greater need for evangelisation, and I pray that in some way I might contribute to this, in my role within communications and the curia.

David can be contacted at communications@rcdwxm.org.uk for any help or advice on Diocesan 'comms!!'

Candidacy Mass

Recently, at St Mary the Virgin, Ruabon, Bishop Peter celebrated the rite of candidacy during which **David Tarbrook** was accepted as a candidate for ordination as a permanent deacon in two year's time.

The Rite of Admission to Candidacy is an important step for each man on his journey towards ordination to the diaconate. The intention to receive Holy Orders during the rite was expressed publicly by David, which was then accepted by Bishop Peter.

Please keep David in your prayers and pray that others will answer the Lord's call to the Permanent Diaconate and the Priesthood.



David with Bishop Peter in Ruabon on the occasion of his 'candidacy Mass'.

Around and About in the Diocese

A surprise visit to the Tomb of Saint Peter.

Some years ago on a visit to Rome I was fortunate to have a 'private' Tour of St. Peter's with an English Vatican Guide. Some months previously I had read in a Knights of St. Columba Magazine a letter inviting any Brother who was planning a visit to Rome to make contact. I did contact the writer but did not receive a reply.

One morning at my hotel, a receptionist said she had received a message for me, could I please call this number? I was puzzled - 'who on Earth would know me in Rome?' I called the number and discovered it was the gentleman who had issued the invitation in the Magazine.

We arranged a meeting place, a doorway on the perimeter of the Vatican, his instructions were very good and I found the place easily. We were a group of three. A Canadian Priest, a young man from Malaysia and myself.

We toured St. Peter's Basilica: our guide was very knowledgeable and patient, answering our questions. The three of us were spellbound. After a while he indicated that we should follow him.

We descended several flights of stairs descending deeper and deeper until we reached the site of massive excavation. The space we were standing in appeared to show St. Peter's Basilica was propped up on newly built columns and cross girder supports. We walked down a passageway to an ancient burial place - a mausoleum. We saw where there was a change from pagan to Christian interments.

Proceeding further down the passage we saw an inscription in Greek. According to our guide it read, "Peter is within". The burial place of Saint Peter! The hairs on the back of my neck stood up: I was kneeling at the Tomb of Saint Peter! Peter, the man whom our Lord had entrusted with the Keys of the Kingdom [Matthew 16:19](#)

We spent some time in silent prayer in front of the Tomb, trying to comprehend the reality of where we were.

Leaving this amazing place we climbed the flights of stairs and emerged in the crypt of Saint Peter's Basilica. Surrounded by the tombs of previous popes, the dozens of pilgrims and tourists must have wondered where on earth we had come from.

An amazing, unforgettable experience!

Our guide, (for older readers, he was a doppelgänger for the actor Deryck Guyler), invited us back to his flat for tea and cakes, which were very welcome indeed!

(A Reader's contribution – thank you NT!)

Answers to the 'New Year' quiz on the back page:

- a) January 1st
- b) 1st Sunday of Advent, Nov/Dec
- c) September 1st (age groups change).
- d) April 6th
- e) Between Jan 21 and Feb 20
- f) Rosh Hashanah Sept 29
- g) Hijri Sept 22nd
- h) Jan 14th
- i) Vikram Sawant March 22
- j) Diwali, mid Oct-Mid Nov

Looking Ahead....

Events and Invitations

September

- Sunday 10th Education Sunday
- Thursday 14th Feast of the Triumph of the Cross
- Friday 15th Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows.
Titular feast of Wrexham Cathedral
- Sunday 17th *Evangelii Gaudium* Day
(previously Home Mission Sunday)
- Sunday 24th Harvest Sunday
- Wednesday 27th World Tourism Day.
'Tourism & Green Investment' Dicastery for Evangelisation
<http://www.evangelizatio.va/content/dam/pcpne/pdf/PastoraledelTurismo/44Messaggio/Messaggio%20GMT%202023%20-%20Inglese.pdf>
- Thursday 28th Our Lady Star of the Sea (Stella Maris)
World Maritime Day.

October

- Friday 6th CAFOD Harvest fast Day
- Sunday 8th Day of Prayer for Prisoners and their
Dependants.
- Monday 16th Feast of St. Richard Gwyn
- Wednesday 18th Feast of St Luke, Evangelist
- Friday 20th Mass for Healthcarers
follows the feast of St. Luke
- Sunday 22nd World Mission Day
Pilgrimage to S. Mary's Cathedral for the
commemoration of St. Richard Gwyn, Martyr

November

- Wednesday 1st Solemnity of All Saints.

SHALOM WORLD - 40 MARTYRS OF ENGLAND & WALES.

Shalom World an international Christian Television Channel under the spiritual direction of the Carmelites of Mary Immaculate (CMI) are currently running a weekly series *The 40 Martyrs of England and Wales*, a high quality production focussing in turn on our Reformation Martyr Saints. The series can be seen online:

<https://www.shalomworld.org/show/40-martyrs-of-england-&-wales>

'Some of the presentations are stronger than others, sadly St. Richard Gwyn is not in my opinion one of the best, but all are worth watching to get a fuller picture of what our religious ancestors suffered for the faith in order that we are able to practise it in freedom to-day.'
+Peter.

The October Edition of Clarion will be published for Sunday 1st October.

Please submit your articles as early as possible during the week of 18-23rd September. The final deadline is Sunday 24th September, for distribution on Thursday 28th September. Your co-operation is appreciated!

Wrexham Clarion is published by the Diocese of Wrexham, Bishop's House, Sontley Road, Wrexham, LL13 7EW
Telephone 01978 262 726 Views expressed are not necessarily those of the Bishop or the Diocese.

For further information and contributions please contact the Editor, Mark J. Philpot at clarion@rcdwxm.org.uk

The newsletter is distributed through parish email lists.

To register for your copy individually, please email your request to communications@rcdwxm.org.uk



THE BACK PAGE
Bishop's Engagements, and a 'gallimaufry of serendipity'

BISHOP PETER'S ENGAGEMENTS

DATES FROM THE BISHOP'S DIARY

September

7	6.30pm	Confirmation	Denbigh
15	12noon	Feast of Our Lady of Sorrows	Cathedral
16	2.30pm	Makhel Multicultural Mass	Cathedral
17	3.00pm	Grandparents' Day Mass	Noddfa
20		Board of Trustees' Meeting	Bishop's Hse

October

5.	6.00pm	Thanksgiving Mass	St Anne's Menai Bridge
8.	10.30am	Prisoners' Sunday Mass	Cathedral
9	pm	Presbyteral Council Meeting	Loreto
10-12		Clergy Conference	Loreto
17		Feast of St Richard Gwyn Mass	SRG School
17	6.00pm	Clergy Finance Evening	St David's Mold
18	6.30pm	Confirmation	Ruabon
20	7.00pm	Health carers Mass	Cathedral
22	3.00pm	St Richard Gwyn Pilgrimage Mass	Cathedral
25	11am-2pm	St Winefride's Shrine & Well	Holywell
		Open Forum - Stamford Gate Hotel	

Children's Corner

For those about to go, or return, to school.....

Happy New Year!!

After the 6 week summer holidays, a new year dawns. Perhaps you had 'end-of-year' tests or exams in June or July. Now you start a 'new year', and you hope for a 'new beginning', a "new year's resolution" – to do better?

But we have New Year's Resolutions in January, don't we?

How many "New Year's" can we have?

Even working adults regard the 'holidays' as the reward at the end of the year, and September as the return to work!

Here are a few 'New Year's celebrated in the UK

.... can you place when they occur? Even these may vary!!

(answers on page...)

- a) The (Gregorian) Calendar New Year
- b) The Liturgical New Year
- c) The Academic New Year
- d) The Financial (Tax) New Year
- e) The Chinese New Year
- f) The Jewish New Year
- g) The Islamic New Year
- h) The Eastern Orthodox New Year
- i) The Hindu New Year
- j) The Gujarati New Year

Russian and Japanese New Years are celebrated on January 1st, but others may take place throughout what we know as the 'Gregorian Calendar'.

Some countries with different New Years include:

Cambodia, Sri Lanka, Ethiopia, Assyria, Iran, Bengal, Korea, Bali, Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), Mongolia, Pakistan, and Australian Aborigines.

It has been estimated there are at least 26 different New Years!

So, wherever you may be, it is still acceptable to wish you

A VERY HAPPY NEW YEAR!

EDUCATION SUNDAY - 10TH SEPTEMBER

The theme for 2023 is "Where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them." *Matthew* 18:20. This day we pray that God will fortify those working to make our schools places of learning and sanctuary – not just teachers and leaders but all the support staff whose tireless work sometimes goes unnoticed.

We pray for all our primary and secondary pupils – particularly school leavers who have had such a difficult journey in recent times – and remembering students in higher education and vocational training.

Resources for parishes and schools can be found at: <http://www.catholiceducation.org.uk/schools/education-sunday>

and ecumenically

<https://www.cbcew.org.uk/education-sunday-prayers-and-resources/>

We take this opportunity to congratulate our young people who have had successes at A-Level and GCSE level and wish them well in their future career and education choices. To those who have not achieved as much as they wished we recognise the difficulties of the last few years in their education and encourage them to persevere to use their potential and their qualities to work for what they desire and is going to be best for them.

**EVANGELII GAUDIUM SUNDAY –
17TH SEPTEMBER**

The Third Sunday in September, formerly called Home Mission Sunday, is now Evangelii Gaudium Sunday. Named after Pope Francis' first (solo) Apostolic Exhortation on the Joy of the Gospel, the day offers the Catholic community in England and Wales the opportunity to celebrate the beauty of our faith and our commitment to witness to the fullness of life in Christ. A mandatory (second or retiring) collection is taken up in parishes this weekend to support the Bishops' Conference in its work of evangelisation nationally and in local projects.

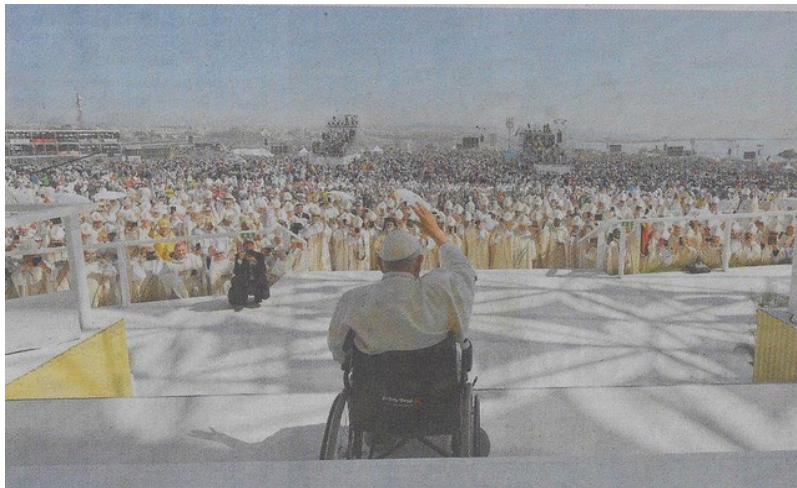
**A simple rule of thumb for parents and teachers:
Children learn what they live.....**

If children live with...:

- ...criticism - they learn to condemn
- ...hostility – they learn to fight
- ...ridicule- they learn to be shy
- ...shame – they learn to feel guilty
- ...tolerance – they learn to be patient
- ...encouragement – they learn confidence
- ...praise – they learn to appreciate
- ...fairness – they learn justice
- ...security – they learn to have faith
- ...approval – they learn to like themselves
- ...acceptance and friendship-
they learn to find love in the world

Wreccsam Clarion

WYD Supplement



Pope Francis acknowledges the 1.5 million Young People in Lisbon. He celebrated Mass with 10,000 priests, 700 Bishops, and 30 Cardinals. Exhilarated by the young people, the Pope seemed 'tired' on arrival, said the Portuguese President, but as each day progressed he gained strength, 'threw away his papers', and spoke from the heart.



In these pages, the stories from the Young People themselves are given in full: their experiences deserve to be told!

On the 26th of August, three of us from Wrexham Diocese, joined dioceses from South Wales to attend the 2023 World Youth Day in Lisbon.

We started off in Porto where we stayed at a camp attending our basic needs therefore we were immediately away from the luxuries of our home lives, stripping us to our core values and selves.

Since I didn't know the other pilgrims at all, I found it difficult at the beginning to get out of my comfort zone and be more sociable than I was used to. I kept quiet and to myself, isolating myself from possible early friendships and connections. However we attended a Mass every day, celebrated by the 7 clergy and Archbishop Mark. In the Archbishop's first homily, he said "be open", and something so simple gave me the courage to start to get to know people.

We travelled to Fatima in our second week, where we were greeted by beautiful opera music echoing from the sanctuary. Through the week we travelled in and out of Lisbon for WYD events but in between we took some time of prayer in night vigil services, masses and rosaries, penance around the sanctuary and even a question and answer with the Archbishop and the clergy.

Through the trip I felt conflicted at times when faced with such a large range of Catholics, from traditional viewpoints to more open and modern ways of thinking. I found it very difficult to navigate my own faith through this range since I was constantly in a place of questioning and doubting. I questioned the whole point of the trip and where my faith was going, feeling as though I had to be a certain type of person in order to be loved by God. However, in the first speech of Pope Francis, he simply said "you are enough" which immediately reaffirmed my faith, that I am loved as myself, unconditionally. As well as beautiful confession with Archbishop Mark, I strengthened my own personal relationship with God. These moments gave me courage to open

myself up to the experiences in front of me, to have no expectations but fully to embrace every moment.

In Lisbon itself, it was inspiring to see 2 million Catholics from across the world coming together to celebrate God's love. We immediately had something in common with each person there. 2 million smiles greeting one another, creating a safe, accepting and loving community. I will cherish the trip, from the moments of doubt and emotional intensity, to the lovely friendships and deep conversations. Thank you, Wrexham Diocese, Rhuthun and parishioners for help funding this trip for us. We are deeply grateful. *Bethan*

ooo000ooo

Curiosity was my main drive for taking part in World Youth Day.

'Why would hundreds of thousands of people gather just to see the Pope?'

'What does it offer that makes people so eager to join? To leave their lives behind for just two weeks of their time?'

Questions like these had plagued my mind as the days to World Youth Day were slowly approaching. But then, three days into the pilgrimage, the answers came in the form of a photo. A photo born from an experience.

It was after Mass. Our group from Wales was simply taking pictures by the altar when suddenly France came rushing in, wanting to join the picture taking. As Wales were jokingly booing France, Spain sneaked in. Not to be outdone, Brazil loudly joined as well. In the end, Canada and even more countries joined! What was supposed to be a photo of 59 people, grew into more than 200.

It was then that I realised, "Ah, so this is why! This is what it means to partake in World Youth Day." It's the fellowship between people in gatherings like this that reminds us that Christ is here and alive through us. That we should not just seek him in times of need and sorrow, but also in times of great joy. And most important of all, this fellowship gives us strength to grow our faith in God and the courage to spread his word.

Although this moment was only a small part of my time in Portugal, it left such a significant impact on me throughout my World Youth Day experience. It had changed my reason of being there. It was no longer out of curiosity, born to satisfy my questions, but curiosity born to a desire to learn more about the Catholic faith. *Frances*





"Mary arose and went with haste!" This was the Bible passage chosen by Pope Francis to be the theme of the 2023 World Youth Day held in Portugal this summer. Together with a group from Wales, I am forever grateful to God for the blessing of having attended!

The sheer joy and magnitude of the World Youth Day, (a Catholic festival established by St John Paul II which takes place in a different location every four years) was unlike anything else I had ever experienced! It was a glimpse of heaven, to be with 1.5 million young Catholics. This is how I imagine heaven- a party where everyone is truly happy!

The pilgrimage was a celebration of faith, an injection of hope, and a testament of God's healing love. It became clearer throughout how giving our lives to God, offering everything up to Him, in return for His perfect love and divine mercy, is where we truly find our freedom.

To see the universal Church in all its diversity and vibrancy was a gift, and a reminder that we are never alone in our faith. "The Lord's is the earth and its fullness, the world and all its peoples" Psalm 23.

What was particularly special was to be able to celebrate our Welsh Catholic identity on a global platform. Everyone loved the Welsh dragon! There is a special mission for the Church in Wales entrusted to all of us. This is why God has placed us here in Wales, in this part of His vineyard: to draw many souls to Jesus through Mary. Pope Francis reminded us that "we arrive as pilgrims and leave as missionaries!" This is a huge responsibility! We may be the only encounter some people have with Jesus! But Pope Francis also reminded us, "do not be afraid" and that the Church is a place for "everyone, everyone, everyone!"

As part of one of the WYD music concerts, a musical artist called DJ Brazil was proclaiming the Good News of the Gospel through rave music! We were dancing and moshpitting to the words of the Gospel! Talk about living out our faith as young people in the 21st century! It highlighted how faith can give a joy and peace which makes no sense in this world...nobody was drunk or high, we were high on life, high on God's love! It was truly transcending and reminded us of the Bible passage: "and be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."

Ephesians 5:18

It was providential that this year's theme revolved around Our

Fatima was such a big part of the WYD celebrations. Fatima is a place in the countryside, north of Lisbon where Our Lady appeared to three young shepherds in 1917 - telling them about the importance of praying the Rosary, of penance and of sacrifice, and to pray for the conversion of sinners and for peace in the world. Our Lady appeared to three humble little children, which reminds us always be children of God. Faith requires humility.

It was fascinating to learn that the bullet which almost assassinated St John Paul II fits perfectly into the Crown of Our Lady of Fatima. What a clearer symbol that Our Lady guides us towards peace, towards God's divine mercy and forgiveness! In a world where sin has become fashionable and nations are destroyed by war, Our Lady's message is still just as relevant today as it was a hundred years ago. Our Lady is asking us for help!

We were blessed to have seen Pope Francis so close when he came to Fatima to pray the Rosary with sick young people who couldn't attend a lot of the WYD events. The Holy Spirit is working so clearly through Pope Francis and seeing his smile brought tears to my eyes!

We were so lucky to have such wise and sensitive formation whilst on the pilgrimage from the homilies, reflections and question and answer sessions given by the clergy of the group, as well as spontaneous chats whilst journeying together. We were reminded "we're all on a pilgrimage within a pilgrimage" and that God's grace is at work in all of us. He has called each one of us by name to the WYD for a reason!

This became very evident when Jimena, a teenage girl from Spain who had lost 95% of her eyesight regained her vision after receiving the Eucharist at Mass in Fatima. Together with her loved ones, she'd been praying a Novena to Our Lady of Snows and on the last day of the Novena- she regained her sight! Miracles can happen! Archbishop Mark reassured us of this, adding, "when you return home, don't doubt that what you witnessed here isn't true... hold onto the joy and blessings of these days!"

We couldn't have attended WYD without the prayers, voluntary support and financial aid provided by Wrexham Diocese. Thank you! Diolch! Obrigado!

We are forever grateful and hope to have shown how the world needs World Youth Day, and that the fruits, friendships and blessings which came from this amazing pilgrimage will give glory to God for generations!

Alys



We Went as Pilgrims, Returned as Missionaries

Young people from the Diocese of Wrexham were among the 1.5 million people on the ground to welcome Pope Francis in Lisbon for World Youth Day (WYD) 2023. The theme was: “Mary arose and went with haste” (Lk 1:39). It was a unique gathering of young people from different parts of the world. It was a celebration of unity in diversity and a display of the universality of the Catholic Church around the Pope who is the visible sign of the Church’s unity.

Pope Francis In his address at the welcoming ceremony, told young people that God has called each person by name because He loves each one of them. He also challenged the young people taking part in World Youth Day to help one another, not to forget the importance of the gathering, and to see the event as showing the vibrant echoes of God’s call of love.

The Pope called on the young pilgrims to reflect on the awesomeness of God’s love for humanity. In his words: “God loves us as we are, not as we would like to be or as society would like us to be. We are called and loved as we are with our defects and limitations, but also with our desire to move forward in life.”

As a community of God’s loving children, the Holy Father explained that the Church is “a community of brothers and sisters of Jesus, sons and daughters of the same Father. There is room for everyone in the Church.” He also invited young Catholics not to be but to have courage with the assurance that each person is loved.

Highlights of Events in Lisbon

1. **Prayer and Reflection:** This featured various prayer sessions, including the Stations of the Cross, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and the recitation of the Rosary.

During the Stations of the Cross, Pope Francis remarked: “We are going to journey with Jesus along the path of his suffering, along the path of our worries, the path of our loneliness”. He explained that in those moments that we cry and weep, Jesus is there with us, because “he accompanies us into those dark places that make us cry.”

Although Jesus walks along with us he expects something from us: “he desires our company, he hopes that we will fix our eyes on him. Perhaps he hopes to open the windows of my soul, of your soul, of each of our souls. How unattractive are those self-centred souls that strive and smile only inwardly? They make no sense! Yet, Jesus walks along expressing his hope through love and tenderness, to give us consolation, to dry the tears of our lives”.

2. **Cultural Exchange:** WYD is known for its diverse representation of cultures and languages. Participants from different countries had an opportunity to share their traditions, music, and dances with others which fostered a sense of unity among the young people during our stay in Lisbon.

3. **Catechesis Sessions known as “Rise Up”:** The sessions gave the young people opportunities to reflect on the major themes of the pontificate of Pope Francis such as mercy, synodality, integral ecology, and social friendship. Bishops, priests, religious and lay men and women led different sessions to help participants in deepening, appreciating, and understanding their faith. Young people were encouraged to become actively engaged in issues of community development.

4. **Youth Festival:** It afforded young people opportunities and outlets to showcase their talents and connect with one another outside of formal religious activities. This event featured concerts, exhibitions, and cultural performances. The peak of it all was the performance by a team of some 50 young people from 21 different countries during the opening ceremony.

5. **Pilgrim Journey:** An outstanding feature of the 2023 WYD was the pilgrim journey of more than 6 miles to get to the venue of the vigil and closing Mass. It was a journey of joy and hope that included processions, parades, and bands of different diverse groups.

Farewell Ceremonies

Pope Francis thanked all the pilgrims who made it to the venue. He recalled the figure of the Blessed Virgin Mary who “set out and went with haste” to visit Elizabeth (Lk 1:39). According to the Pontiff, “Mary did something that was not asked of her, and that she did not have to do. Mary went because she loved, and whoever loves flies, runs, and rejoices.” He invited everyone present to recall people who had been rays of light in their lives, and who had prepared their hearts for joy: parents, grandparents, friends, priests, religious men and women, catechists, youth leaders, and teachers.

According to Pope Francis, those significant people are the “roots” of our joy. Therefore, in order to offer joy to others, it is necessary that we must first search for joy and train ourselves to be joyful. Each person can be the root of joy for others. Joy is not to be kept under lock and key but must be shared. The Holy Father asked the young people to become missionaries of joy to the world.

Pope Francis at the closing Mass, echoed the words of St. Peter on the mount of the Transfiguration: “Lord, it is good for us to be here!” (Mt 17:4). After six memorable days with young people in Lisbon, the Holy Father exclaimed: “Indeed, how good it has been to share this experience with Jesus, with one another, and to pray together with joyful hearts. Now, what will we take back with us as we resume our daily lives”? He provided the answer with three words: to shine, to listen, and to be unafraid.

“We shine by welcoming Jesus into our hearts and learning to love as he does. To love like Jesus: that is what makes us shine, makes us do works of love, it is not by projecting a perfect, well-ordered, refined image of ourselves, or by appearing to be powerful and successful, nor by putting ourselves in the spotlight, for that type of light is blinding. Whenever you do works of love, you become light. But the moment you stop loving others and become self-centered, you extinguish your light.”

The secret of life is to listen – “to listen to what Jesus is saying, what he is saying to your heart. For he has the words of eternal life for us, he reveals that God is our Father, that God is love. He shows us the way of love. When we learn how to love as Jesus does and listen to him in order not to take the wrong path; it is only then we become unafraid. “Do not be afraid!” (Mt 17:7).

“To all of you, dear young people, who are the present and the future, yes to all of you. Jesus now says: “Have no fear”, “Do not be afraid!” You have come here as pilgrims, is now time to return as missionaries. The Church and the world need you, the young, as much as the earth needs rain.” Jesus knows each of your hearts, each of your lives; he knows your joys, your sorrows, your successes and failures. He knows your heart. Today, he says to you, here in Lisbon, at this World Youth Day: “Have no fear, take heart, do not be afraid!”.

As Clement, one of the pilgrims confessed, World Youth Day 2023 in Lisbon was a monumental event that brought together young Catholics from around the world, for a week of spiritual enrichment, cultural exchange, and empowerment, in prayerful reflection and other friendly activities. Participants were able to connect with their faith, learn from one another, and draw inspiration to live as young disciples of Jesus Christ.

WYD 2023 Talks – St Joseph’s Parish, Colwyn Bay
These talks were given to the parishioners of St Joseph’s Colwyn Bay

Amy

Good morning, first of all I want to just say a huge thank you to everyone who helped us get to WYD, whether that be words of encouragement or financial support. It was a truly amazing experience and I cannot describe how much I appreciate your kindness.

I would like to share with you some of my key takeaways of WYD. First of all how generous and welcoming the people of Lisbon were to us. There were volunteers from the local parishes there to assist in any way they could, both in the village in which we were staying in, called Caneças, and all through the city. Not just the volunteers were showing their kindness but also the local people, how they managed to put up with the endless crowds and still keep a friendly smile on their face baffles me - but that’s just the love and community spirit of world youth day shining through.

Next I want to share with you some things that Pope Francis shared with us. ‘Do not be afraid’, he said. He wants every single one of us to fulfil our dreams and aspirations, despite any fears or doubts we may have - to go ahead and do not be afraid. He also said, ‘todos todos todos’, which in English means ‘all of us, all of us, all of us’. He was saying how God loves all of us and there’s space in the church for all of us no matter if we’ve made mistakes or had troubles with our faith, there will always be room for all of us. Another lesson I learnt whilst there is how we can always get on and be friends with people, even if we don’t speak a word of the same language. Whether that be through a friendly smile, a helpful gesture, a shared song, a sign of peace or a dance. And when we did speak the same language, the shared purpose of being there meant there was always a conversation to be had of where each other was from and if they were enjoying their time at World Youth Day. I have made many friends in Lisbon and for that I am grateful. Thank you for listening.

Evie

My time at World Youth Day was definitely one to remember. There of course were ups and downs but the ups definitely outweighed the downs. As well as making amazing friends within the group we were travelling with, who I will be visiting in Ireland later this year, I also made some great friends with other young people from Canada and America - mainly Michigan, California and Idaho. My favourite part of World Youth Day was definitely the catechesis in the mornings. They were a great way for us to meet others and get to know each other better whilst also deepening our faith through talks given to us by bishops or other pilgrims from all over the world.

Chike

My World Youth Daây experiences were getting to share my faith and beliefs, with other people from different parts of the world. What made the trip a success was the support and generosity of each other in the group and good leadership. The locals were very supportive, friendly and made us feel very welcome, as if we were part of their own community. For my first World Youth Day, it was great to see other Catholics from Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa and other groups praise the Lord in their own language and culture. It also gave me the chance to make new friends, through masses and other activities. The best thing about it was that nobody from a different group made you feel like a stranger. Finally, I would like to tell others that are preparing for their first World Youth Day, which will be in South Korea, to be prepared for the unexpected. It won't feel like a proper holiday, but I promise you that you will come through it and you will meet new people, make new friends, share and grow in faith.

Lucy

I really enjoyed my first time at World Youth Day as you get to share your faith with millions of other people from all over the world as well as learn about different cultures. I enjoyed meeting everyone from different countries from all over the world and made friends from group activities we did, as well as meeting new people from the masses that we attended. Our group was amazing - we all supported and encouraged each other all the way through even on the days where it felt hard. We faced some challenges but we all came together as a group and supported each other through until the end. The locals in Lisbon were so, so friendly and helpful and were always there if you needed help with anything. They made us feel very welcome! I would tell anyone thinking of going to the next World Youth Day that will be hosted in South Korea to just go for it! It is an experience you'll have for life to meet and make friends with people from all over the world and you'll never forget it! Thank you for listening.

